

What's the missing ingredient for successful business?

Hope is the ingredient that gets many startups and small businesses through the early stage battles for revenue, lack of funding, and the demands any business owner need to address on an ongoing basis.

By [Eksteen de Waal](#) 7 Feb 2020



Source: pixabay.com

Anyone who wants to be a leader in today's world needs hope. Not only to believe in but to give to others. Studies reveal that if you want loyalty, commitment, or innovation, you need to give hope.

In fact, a recent applied positive psychology paper cited hope as the primary driver for innovation, which makes sense, as the purpose of innovation is to make tomorrow better than today.

And in a world that is driven by innovation, a new style of leadership is needed – one where hope leads us to a better future.

Edelman's latest trust barometer revealed that ethics has superseded competence when it comes to driving trust. It also shows that fear has eclipsed hope, with 66% of people believing that leaders cannot successfully address our country's challenges, and 83% of those who have jobs fear losing them. Hope is fading and fear is rising."

While hope may sound a bit 'new age hippy', and not a business word in a world defined by numbers, metrics and profits, ultimately in the words of Simon Sinek: "The business of business is the business of people. Taking that a step further, I believe that the people in business is in the business of hope.

Hope must not be mistaken with optimism, which is only the belief that something will be better. Hope is both direction and path to get there, which infuses hope with both the desire and the ability to create a better future."

Improving lives

Every business is ultimately selling hope. Products bring the hope of improving our lives, profits bring the hope of growth and prosperity, but people are neither products nor profits. These are results created by people. People with hope drive innovation, they are persistent, they chase goals and they are motivated.

There's no escaping the fact that in a world bogged down by chasing after money, people need more, we need something that costs nothing but can mean the world – we need hope.

Things go wrong in our world all the time, triggering us each day with a flood of the stress hormone, cortisol. It makes us sleep badly, eat too many carbohydrates, live a keyed-up and stressful life and yet helps us very little in our daily work. It impacts our prefrontal cortex and suppresses our executive functions - specifically working memory and inhibitions. Ultimately, it robs us of our ability to think clearly and keep us from ineffective outbursts.

In the longer term, a life without hope leads to feelings of hopelessness, issues with self-worth and a sense of disconnectedness. Now add to this that people start avoiding each other and not talking, to seemingly avoid the anger and outbursts and you end up with a perfect storm.

The future

What can we do about this? Remember that hope has two components; a future destination and the path to get there. Here are some tips you can use:

Firstly, walk up to the person you are least likely to talk to at work, irrespective of who they are in terms of pecking order, colour or creed. Tell them that you have five minutes time to spare between meetings, and simply want to check how they are doing. Then listen, listen without judgement.

As a leader, you will find things you never knew about your company and its people. Excuse yourself after the five minutes. Do this for 20 days and each day vary the question or ask them to elaborate on a thought or idea they might have had the day before. If you want to level this up, take them a cup of their favourite beverage. A small act of human kindness (non-transactional) provides a hit of oxytocin that counters our stress hormones.

Next, start saying thank you and be specific. Regardless of what someone delivers to you, inspect it, read it or look at it and find one thing you can say thank you about. Remember that appreciation starts with thank you and ends with a wow, that is amazing.

Finally, help others around you to set goals that are achievable. Set milestones that can be reached each week and give recognition for the goals achieved. Goals are the one place where the achievement matters, the size does not.

And above all go out there and spread hope, look for the light at the end of the tunnel and help others find theirs. Spread it around and you will see the change in loyalty, engagement and innovation that you foster. And maybe, just maybe hope can help us save our world.

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