

NANO TOOLS FOR LEADERS®

EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Nano Tools for Leaders® are fast, effective leadership tools that you can learn and start using in less than 15 minutes — with the potential to significantly impact your success as a leader and the engagement and productivity of the people you lead.

Contributor: Adam Grant, The Saul P. Steinberg Professor of Management, the Wharton School; Professor of Psychology, the University of Pennsylvania; author of three *New York Times* bestselling books that have sold over a million copies and been translated into 35 languages, including *Give and Take*, on why helping others drives our success.

THE GOAL:

Increase motivation and productivity by showing your employees the positive difference their work makes on the lives of others.

NANO TOOL:

Show your team the positive effects their work creates in other people's lives. Research by Professor Adam Grant shows that one five-minute interaction with those who benefit from the organization's products and services can produce up to a 500 percent increase in employee productivity. When clients, customers, and other end users express feedback and appreciation, employees develop stronger beliefs in the impact and value of their work.

Interaction also increases empathy for customers, even when the interaction is virtual. Research with radiologists who have no patient interaction has shown that attaching a photo of the patient to an X-ray enhances their effort and accuracy, yielding 12 percent increases in the length of their reports and 46 percent improvement in diagnostic findings.

HOW COMPANIES USE IT:

- Volvo collects stories from drivers and passengers about how the company's safety designs have saved their lives.
- Wells Fargo managers show videotapes of customers describing how bankers' loans have made it possible for them to purchase homes and pay for college.
- Medtronic invites patients who have benefited from the company's medical devices to tell their life-changing stories at an annual holiday party. Engineers and technicians also attend approximately 70 percent of all operations where Medtronic devices are inserted.
- A large global accounting firm regularly gives their back-office accountants a chance to attend client presentations and meet with customers to hear direct feedback.



ACTION STEPS:

1. Identify groups of people who benefit from your team's work but have never shared their feedback, such as clients, customers, suppliers, or coworkers and managers from different divisions and departments.
2. Arrange short interactions with your team: invite the beneficiaries to share their stories and express their appreciation to your team via emails; short videos; or live, in person or via video conferencing.
3. Find new stories to share on a regular basis to keep engagement alive.
4. Ask team members to share their own stories about how their work has made a difference.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- "The Power of Pride at Facebook," *Fast Company* (Apr. 11, 2017). Describes an internal study conducted by Adam Grant and Facebook's HR department that examined three factors that contribute to pride and engagement.
- "From employee experience to human experience: Putting meaning back into work," *2019 Global Human Capital Trends, Deloitte Insights* (April 11, 2019). Explores the need to move beyond thinking of work in terms of perks, rewards, and support and focusing instead on job fit, job design, and meaning.
- *Give and Take: Why Helping Others Drives Our Success*, Adam Grant (Penguin, 2014). Dispels commonly held beliefs about success, demonstrating how generosity and encouragement not only create engagement but also drive individual achievement.
- Adam Grant teaches in the [Leadership and Management Certificate Program](#) (four courses, offered online).

ABOUT NANO TOOLS:

Nano Tools for Leaders® was conceived and developed by Deb Giffen, MCC, Director of Innovative Learning Solutions at Wharton Executive Education. It is jointly sponsored by Wharton Executive Education and Wharton's Center for Leadership and Change Management, Wharton Professor of Management Michael Useem, Director. Nano Tools Academic Director is Professor John Paul MacDuffie, Professor of Management at the Wharton School and Director of the Program on Vehicle and Mobility Innovation (PVMi) at Wharton's Mack Institute for Innovation Management.