



Our Mission

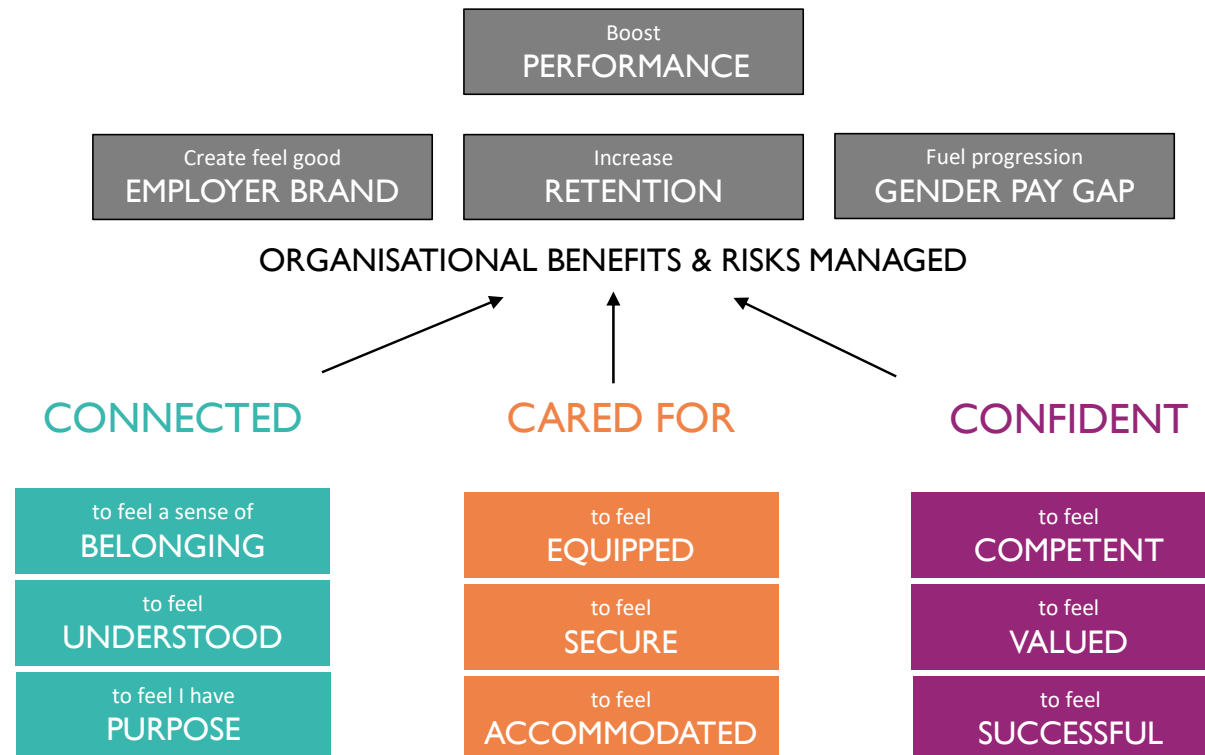
To keep everyone, everywhere feeling **confident, connected** and **cared for** when they take extended leave from work.



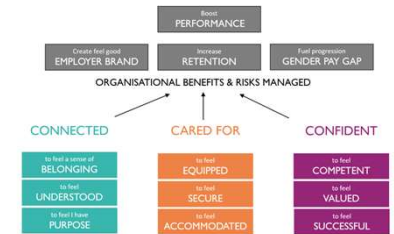
Comeback Community™



Nine Needs of Leave Framework



CONNECTED Psychological Underpinnings



To feel a sense of **BELONGING**

- Self Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 1985) recognises that people are motivated to grow and change by three innate and universal psychological needs: autonomy, competency and connection with others.
- Neuroscience-based SCARF model (David Rock, 2008) of engagement focuses on the social aspects of motivation where the R stands for **RELATEDNESS**. Relatedness focuses on how connected or safe we feel with others. It also concerns our sense of belonging and affinity in a particular group. When we form bonds with people, our brain's reward centre lights up. Oxytocin is produced, which encourages collaboration and trust.
- According to a meta-analysis co-authored by Dr Julianne Holt-Lunstad, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Brigham Young University, lack of social connection heightens health risks as much as smoking 15 cigarettes a day or having alcohol use disorder. She's also found that loneliness and social isolation are twice as harmful to physical and mental health as obesity.

To feel **UNDERSTOOD**

- A study by social psychologists in 2008 (Lun et al) showed that people reported greater life satisfaction and fewer physical symptoms on days in which they felt more **understood** by others. They found that individuals who tend to see themselves in relations to others (i.e., women or those scored high on interdependent self-construal measure) showed a stronger association between daily felt understanding and daily life satisfaction or physical symptoms.
- Other research shows that happy people tend to have high quality social relationships (Diener & Seligman, 2002).
- Perceiving close others to be responsive and **understanding** of a stressful experience (such as returning to work or being on sick leave) mitigates its negative impact on one's health and subjective well-being (Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 1997).

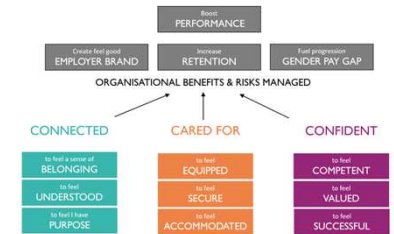
To feel I have **PURPOSE**

N.B. Often used interchangeably, we chose to use the word **purpose** over **meaning** in the 9 Needs of Leave framework in for its action-orientated quality.

- In a 2010 review Dr Brent Rosso and colleagues noted that finding **meaning** in one's work has been shown to increase motivation, engagement, empowerment, career development, job satisfaction, individual performance and personal fulfilment, and to decrease absenteeism and stress.
- Psychologist Michael Steger developed the Work and Meaning Inventory and in his 2012 paper found meaningful work to predict job satisfaction. Meaningful work was also correlated with life satisfaction and less depression. Steger has commented on the use of strengths to be able to shine and make an impact as being a 'huge part' of meaningful work.

CARED FOR Psychological Underpinnings

The opposite of a culture of companionate love is not an abusive working environment, it's just not caring. Our research shows where there is companionate love there is better employee engagement and less employee withdrawal: less burnout and less absenteeism. Sigal Barsade, Wharton Business School professor.



To feel EQUIPPED

- Evangelia Demerouti, Arnold Baker and colleagues developed the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model in 2001. The model states that when job demands are high and job resources/positives are low, stress and burnout increase. Conversely, a high number of job positives can offset the effects of high job demands. Job demands are those physical, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and/or psychological effort and are, therefore, associated with physiological and/or psychological costs. Job resources are those physical, social or organizational aspects of the job that (a) are functional in achieving work-related goals, (b) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological costs, and (c) stimulate personal growth and development.
- In 2007 they extended the theory to recognise the significance of 'personal resources' (self-efficacy, self-esteem and optimism) after a study of 714 Dutch employees showed that the supply of job resources activates employees' self-efficacy, self-esteem, and optimism and makes them feel more capable of controlling their work environment.
- The Job Characteristics Model of motivation that was developed by Richard Hackman and Greg Oldham (1975) describes five main factors: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, and feedback. Our work with returning employees has shown us that feedback is a key resource needed to fuel a return to their pre-leave performance or better.

To feel SECURE

- Psychologist William Kahn (1990) was one of the first researchers to identify the concept of employee engagement. He found that people can not only bring varying levels of themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally to their work, but that those levels affected their experiences of work and therefore their performance. His research related three psychological conditions (**feeling safe**, meaningfulness and having the right energy and resources) to the three dimensions of engagement.
- In 1999, Amy Edmonson published a study of 51 work teams, finding that team psychological safety – where people feel safe to take interpersonal risks – is correlated with learning behaviours and performance. When a team member goes on or returns from leave it affects the whole team system; particularly the person taking leave and the covering colleague(s) whose sense of security may be threatened by the change.
- The 'C' in neuroscientist David Rock's SCARF model is CERTAINTY. Our brains are hard-wired to crave certainty, being the pattern-recognition machines they are. Certainty breeds a sense of security.

To feel ACCOMMODATED

- If there's one word that comes up more than any other in the research that underpins the Needs of Leave framework, it's **autonomy**. It appears in the Job Demands-Resources model; Self-Determination theory; the Jobs Characteristic Model; David Rock's SCARF model of engagement. Autonomy means feeling psychologically free, having choice and the ability to make decisions. **Accommodation** of flexible working requests and allowing employees as much freedom as possible to choose how, where and when they work is a key driver of employee engagement after a period of leave and beyond.
- Beyond flexibility, **accommodation** is about a considering other specific needs or reasonable adjustments an employee asks for, such as a place to breastfeed or a place to rest.

CONFIDENT Psychological Underpinnings

To feel **COMPETENT**

This is about a person stepping back into work believing they can do their job or feeling 'self-efficacious'. Self-efficacy is often reduced in employees at the point they return compared to before they went on leave. Managers might think their team member has just 'pressed pause' and will pick up where they left off but the reality is that months spent not doing their job appears to degrade self-efficacy. Why is self efficacy important?

- A person's Core Self Evaluations (CSEs) have been found to predict job satisfaction and performance. Developed by Judge, Locke & Durham (1997), Core Self-Evaluations (CSE) are personal judgments based on four key factors: 1) **Self-esteem**: our overall sense of worth; 2) **Generalized self-efficacy**: our belief in our capabilities across a variety of situations; 3) **Neuroticism**: how well we handle negative emotions such as anxiety and anger and 4) **Locus of control**: the extent to which we feel that our own actions influence the results we achieve.
- *Why is there a relationship between core self-evaluations and job performance? Judge, Erez, and Bono (1998) argue that individuals with high core self-evaluations are more motivated to perform their jobs. Since motivation is a major determinant of job performance, it makes sense that individuals with positive self-views will perform most jobs better, due to increased confidence in their abilities. Why would individuals undertake a task at all if they saw themselves as incapable or unworthy of success? Similarly, why set challenging goals if one believes oneself to be incompetent and why persist in the face of obstacles if one believes that success is beyond one's grasp? Indeed, Erez and Judge (2001)—in both laboratory and field studies—found that core self-evaluations were linked to motivation and that motivation mediated much of the relationship between core self evaluations and job performance. (Bono & Judge, 2003).*

To feel **VALUED**

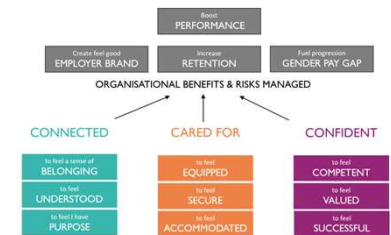
This is about a returning employee feeling they matter and are wanted. It's about their perceptions of how others see them. Returning employees often worry about whether the person covering their role has done a better job than them. Where there hasn't been a specific person covering their role but an absorption of their responsibilities by other team members, the fear becomes that they are no longer needed.

- Neuroscience-based SCARF model (David Rock, 2008) of engagement focuses on the social aspects of motivation where the S stands for STATUS. Status is about the relative, perceived social importance of members of the group. Everyone wants to feel important. If we don't feel that we have some level of status, then we tend to feel less valued and less secure in our place in the group.
- Decades of empirical work on the emotion patterns predictive of marital success and failure, John Gottman's work famously shows that successful marriages are characterised by ratios of about 5:1 positive : negative interactions (whereas marriages on cascades toward dissolution have ratios of about 1:1). Whilst not a study of line manager – direct report relations, our coaching experience indicates the importance of returning employees experiencing plentiful positive 'strokes' from their manager.

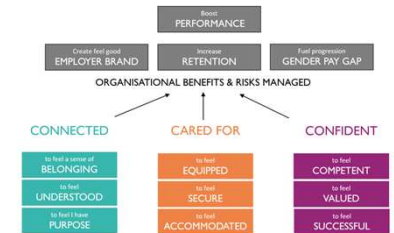
To feel **SUCCESSFUL**

Success in the widest sense is about a returning employee feeling they are flourishing. That is 'feeling good and doing good' (Frederickson, 2009). In a narrower, work context success is about an employee feeling good by having a sense of accomplishment day by day.

- The research behind the 'Broaden and Build' theory of positive emotions developed by Barbara Frederickson shows us positive emotions forecast and produce growth in personal resources such as **competence, meaning, optimism, resilience, self-acceptance, positive relationships and physical health** (e.g. Fredrickson et al., 2008 & Kok et al., 2013).
- A Harvard study of 238 employees across 7 organisation and analysis of 12,000 diary entries to understand what happened on employees' 'best' and 'worst' days at work found that the most common event triggering a 'best day' was any progress in the work by the individual or the team. The most common event triggering a "worst day" was a setback. Amabile & Kramer, describe this as the *Progress Principle* (2011).



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