

Q¹²® ELEMENT: Q08

The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important.

Employees want to believe in what their employers do. This element measures how much an individual identifies with his or her company's mission and purpose. "The connection I feel between my personal mission and this company makes me want to do more" typifies the view of individuals who score this element highly. Excellent performance occurs when people are deeply attached to a sense of purpose in their lives. This element focuses on maximizing individual and group contributions by appealing to employees' larger sense of purpose and mission.

The Eighth Element of Great Managing is captured by the statement, "The mission or purpose of my company makes me feel my job is important." As with the rest of the 12 Elements, the degree to which a team agrees with this statement is predictive of its performance on a wide array of measures. For instance, business units in the top quartile of Gallup's engagement database on this element average from 5 to 15 percent higher profitability than bottom-quartile units. Mission-driven workgroups suffer 30 to 50 percent fewer accidents, and have 15 to 30 percent lower turnover. Employees who feel connected to the mission of their company are also more likely to report that humor or laughter plays a positive role in their productivity.

The strange thing about the Eighth Element is how extraneous it is to the job itself and the employee's material well-being. The absence of many of the other elements — job clarity, the proper equipment, a match with one's talents, consistent feedback — become real obstacles to actual production. It's easy to see why they are required to get the job done. The same cannot be said for the Eighth Element, which is strictly an emotional need, and a higher-level one at that, as if the employee can't energize himself to do all he could without knowing how his job fits into the grand scheme of things.

The data say that's just what happens. If a job were just a job, it really wouldn't matter where someone worked. A good paycheck, decent benefits, reasonable hours and comfortable

working conditions would be enough. The job would serve its function of putting food on the table and money in the kids' college accounts. But a uniquely human twist occurs after the basic needs are fulfilled. The employee searches for meaning in her vocation. For reasons that transcend the physical needs fulfilled by earning a living, she looks for her contribution to a higher purpose. Something within her looks for something in which to believe.

The data do not indicate that every employee wants his or her job to be filled with cosmic interactions. For many, it will be enough knowing their work helped the company make a better batch of cattle feed, deliver millions of packages on time, or sell a new line of clothing. However, having large proportions of employees who are there just to draw a paycheck and who don't care about the larger purpose of the business can be a tremendous drag on retention, customer attitudes, safety, productivity, and — ultimately — profitability.

For instance, business units in the top quartile of Gallup's engagement database on this element average from 5 to 15 percent higher profitability than bottom-quartile units.

This summary is a revised excerpt on this Q¹² element from 12: *The Elements of Great Managing*.