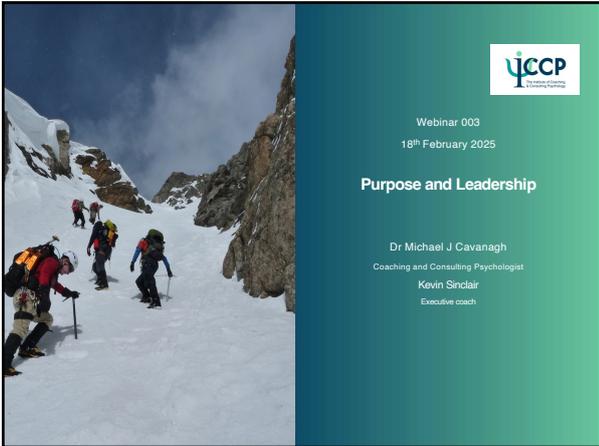


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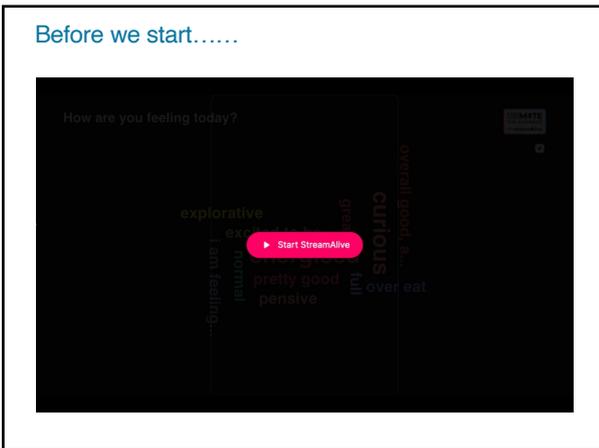
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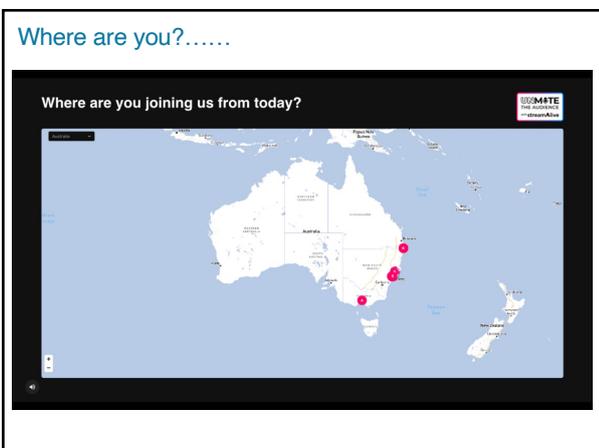
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What does "purpose" even mean?.....



breakout rooms

How is the word "purpose" used in organisations?

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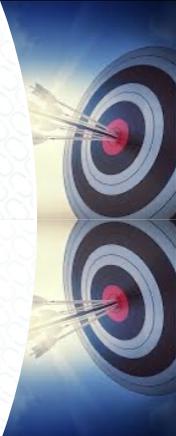
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What is "purpose"?

We usually talk about a team's purpose in the sense of a single, abstract mission statement or team-vision exercise



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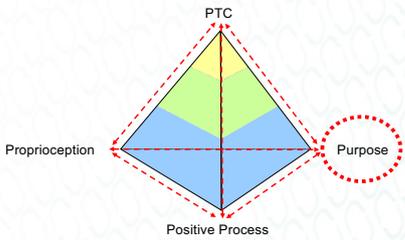
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FFM<sup>®</sup> factors are mutually informing and evolving



Proprioception PTC Purpose Positive Process

(Cavanagh, 2016)

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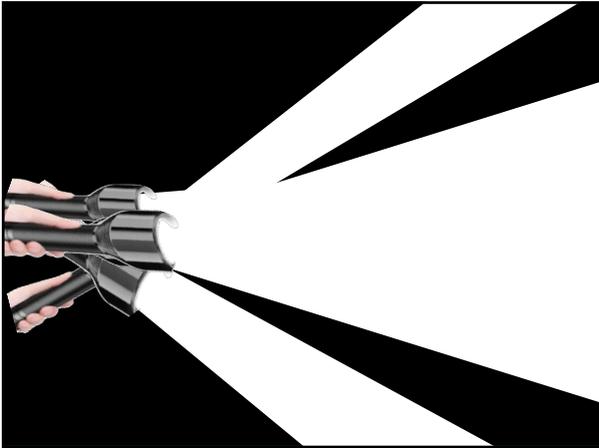
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A perspective on "purpose"?

"The pattern of commitments that give meaning to activity. Rather than a clear end state, purpose can be thought of as the set of criteria by which one judges, in hindsight, the degree to which something of value has been achieved."

It involves both goals and processes

(Cavanagh, 2016)

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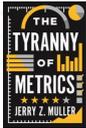
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What is "purpose"?

- Traditional, diagnostic approaches usually conflate purpose with team goals and track success in meeting purpose by comparing current performance to ideals, benchmarks, or best practices
- This comparative understanding of purpose can be distracting or even harmful – for example "The Tyranny of Metrics" (Muller, 2018)

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### Dialogue and “generative purpose”

Instead, teams should engage in dialogue that allows them to see and speak their own experience of purpose and effectiveness in meeting it

	Debate	Discussion	Dialogue
Relationship Building	Disregard relationships	Retain relationships	Build relationships
Storytelling	Stories are used to defend an opinion	Stories are used to achieve preset goals	Stories are used to explore thoughts and feelings
Question Asking	Questions interrogate and challenge the other person's view	Questions assume that there is a "right" or "wrong" answer	Questions aim to clarify and deepen one's understanding
Listening	Listen with the view of countering	Listening for places of disagreement	Listening without judgement and with the view to understand

(Quagliata, 2021)

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### Purpose and Generative Change

- Generative Change is an approach to personal and organisational transformation focused on creating entirely new possibilities, rather than merely solving problems or fixing existing issues
- It does not primarily result from goal-setting or problem-solving, but from shifts in meaning-making that generate new possibilities for coordinated action - PTC

(Bratt, 2020)



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### Dialogue and purpose

- This approach does not impose a purpose from outside (e.g., a scorecard or a generic mission) but supports the team author its own narrative about what matters most and how effectiveness should be understood in the here and now
- This becomes the team's lived purpose — something they own and enact together.

(Bushe, 2016)



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**Dialogue, purpose and leadership**

**Goals / Targets**

- Specific, measurable outcomes
- Time-bound
- Often imposed or cascaded
- Designed to reduce variance and drive execution
- Located in the future state of performance

**They answer:**

- "What must we achieve?"
- They organise behaviour around control and alignment.

**Generative Purpose**

- A compelling image of possibility
- Emotionally engaging
- Identity-shaping
- Emerges through dialogue
- Reorganises meaning and attention

**It answers:**

- "Who are we becoming?"
- "What are we here to create?"

Purpose organises behaviour around identity and meaning, not compliance.

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**Mission Statements and Purpose**

**Characteristics of Mission Statements**

1. Created by senior leaders
2. Shared with lower levels
3. Typically abstract and unchanging
4. Often disconnected from daily language
5. Serve as formal declarations
6. Will fail to create change if not altering conversations

**Generative Purpose**

Purpose becomes powerful only when it:

- Shows up in daily language
- Shifts how people interpret events
- Changes what conversations are about
- Alters decision-making without constant oversight
- It is not what is written on the wall. It is what people use to interpret reality.

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**Generative purpose**

- Goals operate at the behavioural level.
- Purpose operates at the identity level.
- You can hit targets without changing who you are. You cannot embody generative purpose without changing who you are.
- This is why generative purpose produces:
  - Energy
  - Coherence
  - Reduced need for control
  - Emergent alignment

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**Dialogue and generative purpose**

- Teams and their leaders discover their unique path forward in context, not by applying an external model, but by surfacing their own stories and priorities
- This enables the team to identify, articulate, and live into its own narrative of what effectiveness means in its context, rather than applying pre-determined purposes or benchmarks

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**Dialogue, purpose and leadership**

- Therefore, purpose is not something a leader announces and then aligns people to
- It is socially constructed through interaction i.e. It is something that is co-authored in dialogue and becomes real through the stories a team is telling about what matters and how they work.
- For a leader, this involves shifting from defining purpose to hosting the conversations in which purpose emerges
- If a purpose statement does not shift everyday language and interaction patterns, it is not generative — it is decorative

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**Shift From “Declaring Purpose” to “Discovering What Matters”**

**Traditional move**  
“Here is our purpose. Let’s align to it.”

**Dialogic move:**  
“What do we most care about in the work we are doing right now? What makes this work worth doing?”

**Practical Application**  
At the start of a quarter, project, or strategy cycle, instead of presenting a polished purpose statement, invite the team into inquiry:

- When have we felt most effective as a team?
- What impact are we proud of?
- What conversations created momentum?
- Where are we currently stuck - and what feels important about that?

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**Scenario**

A mid-sized health services organisation is struggling with:

- Staff burnout
- Silos between clinical and admin teams
- Increasing regulatory pressure
- Declining patient satisfaction

The executive team responds in the typical way:

- New KPIs
- Efficiency targets
- A refreshed mission statement

Nothing shifts: Conversations remain defensive. Energy remains low, silos persist.



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**The Leader Shifts the Question**

Instead of asking:

"How do we hit our targets?"

They convene cross-functional groups and asks:

- "When are we at our best here?"
- "What kind of care are we most proud of?"
- "If we were truly living our values, what would patients experience differently?"
- "What is the contribution only we can make?"
- What is the world calling for from us?

These are not performance questions. They are identity and meaning questions.



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**New Language Emerges**

Across multiple conversations, a phrase keeps appearing:

"Restoring dignity in vulnerable moments."

This was not in the mission statement. It was not proposed by leadership. It emerged from stories of practice

The leader notices it — and amplifies it:

"I'm hearing something powerful - restoring dignity in vulnerable moments - does that resonate?"

Energy rises in the room



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**The leader as a scaffold**

The leader does **NOT** turn it into a slogan immediately – they continue to scaffold the dialogue

They ask:

- “If this were our organising idea, what would change?”
- “Where are we already doing this?”
- “Where are we undermining it?”
- “What small experiments would move us closer?”



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**Purpose Begins to Function as an Attractor**

Now something shifts:

- Nurses question a discharge process
- Admin staff redesign intake forms
- A finance manager asks how budgeting reflects dignity
- A physician reframes how he handles difficult conversations.



No new KPI was issued, but behaviour begins to reorganise

**This is generative attraction**

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**What happened?**

The leader:

- Created space for dialogue
- Surfaced lived experience.
- Amplified emerging meaning.
- Allowed identity to shift.
- Invited distributed experimentation.



Purpose became:

- Identity-defining
- Emotionally compelling
- Conversationally embedded
- Self-reinforcing

It began organising micro-decisions without central control.

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**Scenario: A School Leadership Team**

Staff at a primary school are feeling stretched:

- Increasing admin demands
- Behaviour challenges in classrooms
- Parents complaining
- Teachers feeling isolated and disillusioned
- The student grade average is dropping
- Some teachers are openly talking about moving on

What would you do?



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feedback do you have for us?



really enjoyed...  
very useful...  
great generative  
belonging  
identity shift  
expansive  
perspective...  
i think that...  
reflective at...  
useful  
yes  
very thought...  
excellent sessio...  
yes, some practi...  
with the resourc...  
i'd love to...  
wanted more...  
thanks everyone  
正在回覆 "i think..."

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