

SHINE THE LIGHT ON

# GRATITUDE

Understanding the Changing Dynamics in our Workplaces, and how Gratitude can Positively Impact Your Workplace.

G R A T I T U D E

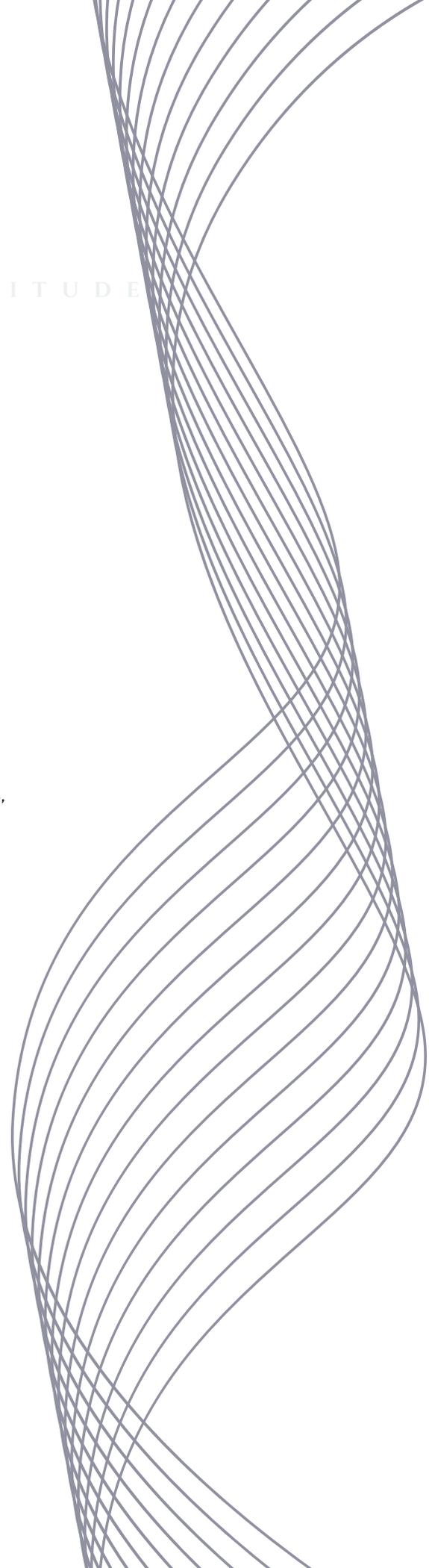
I N A M O D E R N

W O R K P L A C E

The dynamic of our modern-day society has changed drastically in the past few decades. Technology, changing demographics, adaptation to globalization, and social media are some of the areas that we witness a disruption in processes. We observe an increased proportion of mental health challenges arise in our society, specifically in the increased prevalence of depression, stress, anxiety, burnout, and trauma. A rise of millennials has fuelled a changing dynamic in many aspects of a workplace's corporate culture: employee engagement, turnover, and mental health concerns, to name a few.

Governments and organizations are spending thousands of dollars to try to understand the perspectives, motivations, values, and triggers of the millennial generation for a wide range of facets of life. Moreover, organizations are attempting to align their values and pillars of their organization to their corporate culture. They are striving to provide a positive and engaging environment for employees, while maintaining the productivity and growth at the organization level. Infusing the culture with aspects of gratitude is one tool for success as we move into the future.

Choose Gratitude strives to provide organizations with insight about gratitude, to foster engagement at various levels of an organization. The following analysis consolidates secondary research from the field of positive psychology, and provides you with an in-depth understanding of gratitude, and its breadth of evidence of its efficacy to enhance our personal/professional lives.



As the generations progressed, people progressed from worrying about food and shelter (those that lived through the Great Depression), to focusing on success and prestige (Baby Boomers), as they saw a lot of economic prosperity<sup>17</sup>.

Millennials have experienced a secure lifestyle, and along with messages such as 'anything is possible'<sup>17</sup>, now strive to achieve their highest potential, and attain values associated with the self-actualization apex of Maslow's hierarchy of needs.

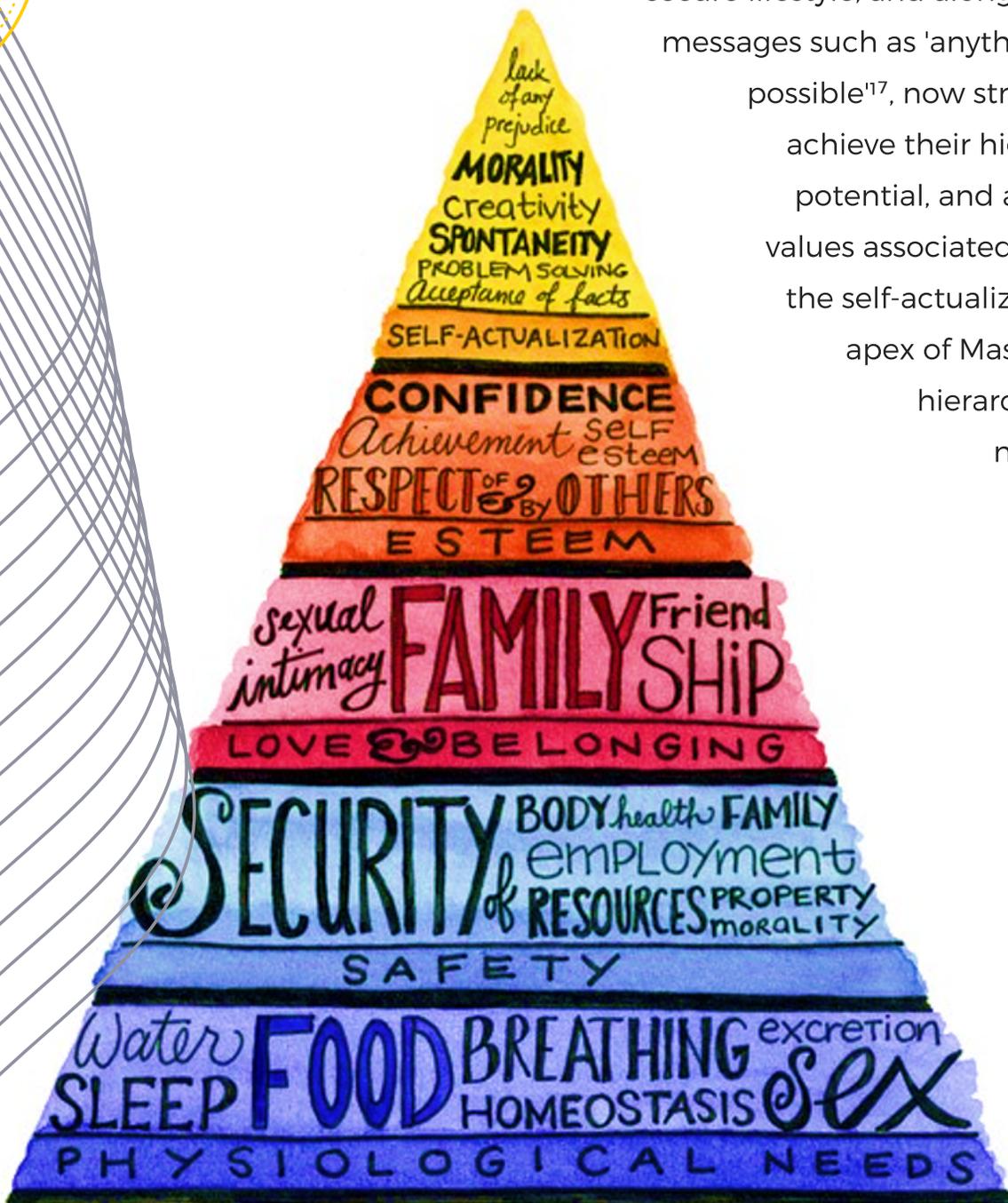
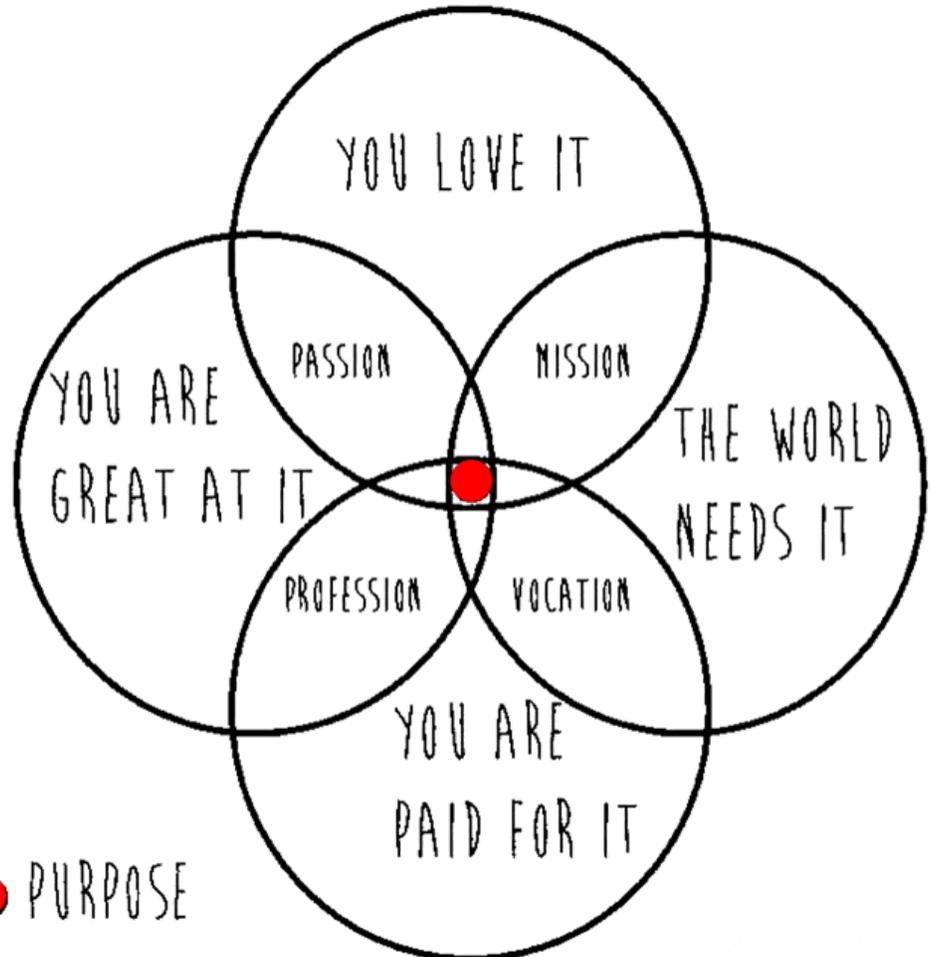
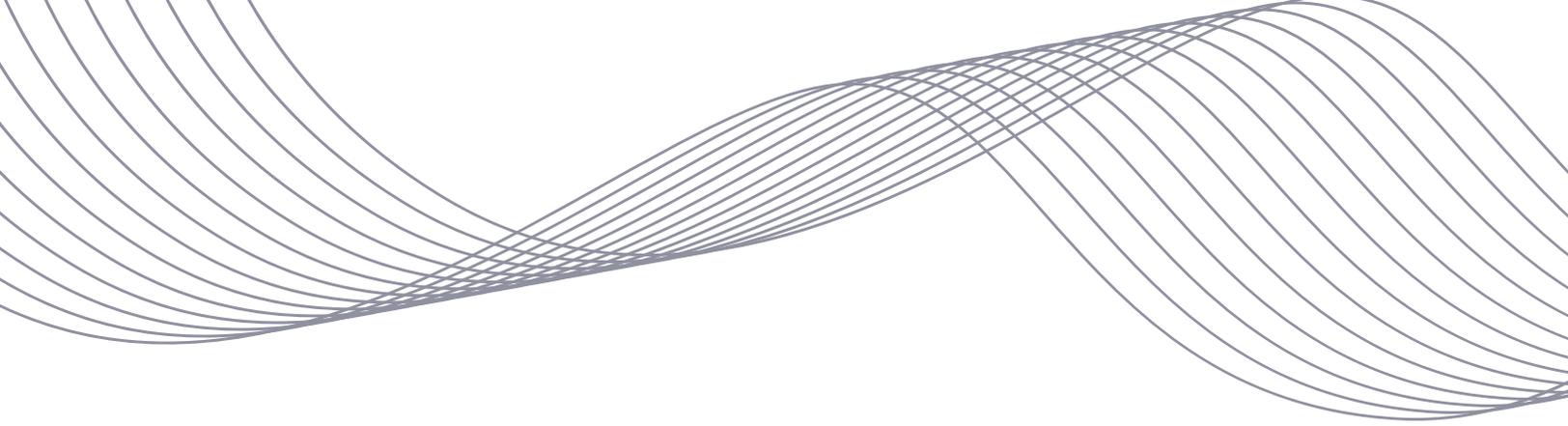


Image Source: <https://i1.kknews.cc/large/2a3000ab9f0fb000678>

Today, in order to thrive at a job/career, there is a higher expectation for fulfilment of one's purpose. Having grown up in a world of abundance, in a more-than-comfortable environment with all their basic needs met, millennials' baseline of success is much higher than previous generations<sup>17</sup>; Millennials want colleagues they have good rapport with, a good work-life balance, AND a sense of fulfillment in their career. The illustration below shows a venn diagram of a definition of a purpose driven career - one that is relevant to many today. This extends to other generations, and we see a shift of people returning to further education at all ages, to pursue a range of their dreams and aspirations.





Cal Newport's analysis in the Harvard Business Review (into key phrases used in the English language) indicates that the prevalence of the phrase "follow your passion" and "a fulfilling career" has drastically increased, while the prevalence of having "a secure career" has declined<sup>10</sup>.

Millennials want to challenge the traditional notion of working to pay a mortgage, being tied down to debt, and risking freedom (or potential for it). Millennials also challenge the traditional organizational structure - the hierarchal structure - and the notion that you have to 'pay your dues'<sup>17</sup>.

The drive for meaning, in addition to good salary, and benefits, is inherent in millennials<sup>19</sup>. Having a strong brand, and identity naturally attracts millennials<sup>19</sup>. Offering flexibility, innovation and centering the focus around employees, as opposed to a more traditional hierarchy within an organization, is what is attracting millennials<sup>19</sup>. Transparency and opening the locus of control will be a key component to success in the modern workplace<sup>19</sup>.



Flexibility | Innovation | Transparency | Purpose

# WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY ABOUT GRATITUDE?

The John Templeton Foundation commissioned research to explore perceptions of gratitude in America and found that:

- 93 percent of those polled agreed that grateful bosses were more likely to be successful<sup>6</sup>
- A majority reported that hearing “thank you” at work made them feel good and motivated<sup>6</sup>
- Almost all respondents reported that saying “thank you” to colleagues “makes me feel happier and more fulfilled”—but on a given day, only 10 percent acted on that impulse<sup>6</sup>

There is a disconnect between what people perceive about gratitude, and what is actually occurring in a company or organization, as they also found that:

- People are less likely to feel or express gratitude at work than anywhere else (39%)<sup>6</sup>
- 60 percent said they “either never express gratitude at work or do so perhaps once a year”<sup>6</sup>
- 29 percent never thank a co-worker and 35% of employees never thank their boss<sup>6</sup>

...continued

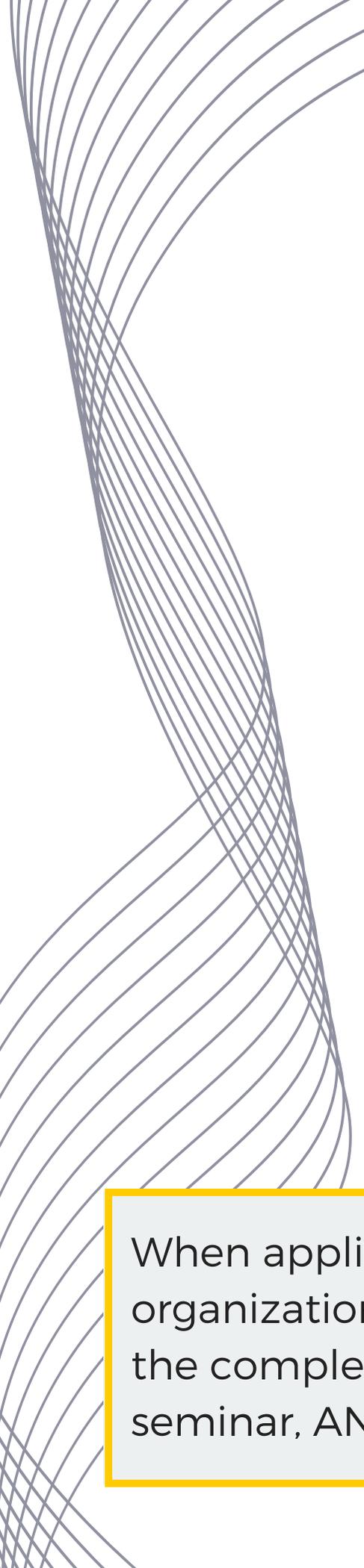
This is reflected across many different research studies:

- The McKinsey Global survey found the 67% of employees are motivated by praise from their manager<sup>16</sup>.
- Globoforce Mood Tracker found that 78% of people would work harder at their jobs if they were recognized<sup>16</sup>.
- Gallup recognized that 65% of working Americans claim they receive no praise or recognition on the job<sup>16</sup>.



What repercussion is this having on the organization? It impacts engagement on many levels.

- 60% of people who do not feel appreciated are looking for a job<sup>16</sup>.
- 80% of people who do feel appreciated are staying put<sup>16</sup>.



Lea Waters, an organizational psychologist and leader in the field of positive psychology, conducted research within the educational and finance sector, and she found that gratitude (from both within an individual and from an organization) predicts about one-quarter (24%) of job satisfaction<sup>18</sup>.

Waters and her colleagues examined gratitude's role in executives' roles and the positive impact involved broadening their perspective, as well as a form of catharsis and a safe acceptance of vulnerability<sup>18</sup>. When applied across all levels in an organization, positive effects were seen not just after the completion of a 1-day workshop/seminar, but four months later as well<sup>18</sup>. This highlights to impact and importance gratitude can have in a company/organization<sup>1</sup>.

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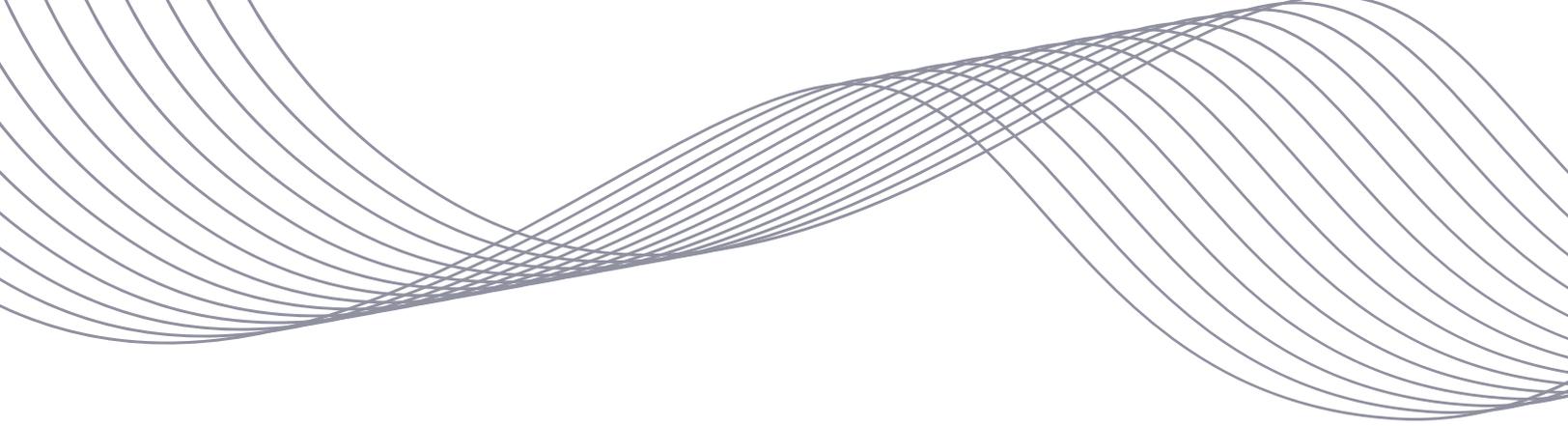


## Consider This...

Even for individuals making upwards of \$150k a year, almost 40% reported 'no, not grateful for my job'<sup>5</sup>. Besides trying to dig deeper to figure out what exactly these people do, or why they wouldn't feel grateful to make that much money, we can easily see that a change in perception, incorporating gratitude consciously in areas of their life can make a big difference. It serves as a reminder of what we DO have, in a world that is so quick to point out everything we DON'T have.

Let's understand some of the irrational beliefs that are stopping employees and managers from expressing gratitude in a workplace setting<sup>57</sup>:

1. Compensation (the paycheque) is gratitude enough for doing their job.
  2. Fear of loss of credibility, authority and power if they express gratitude to employees, or other colleagues.
  3. People are only expressing gratitude to 'kiss ass' - they don't actually (authentically) feel grateful.
  4. Gratitude won't make a big difference, so why invest time or money in it?
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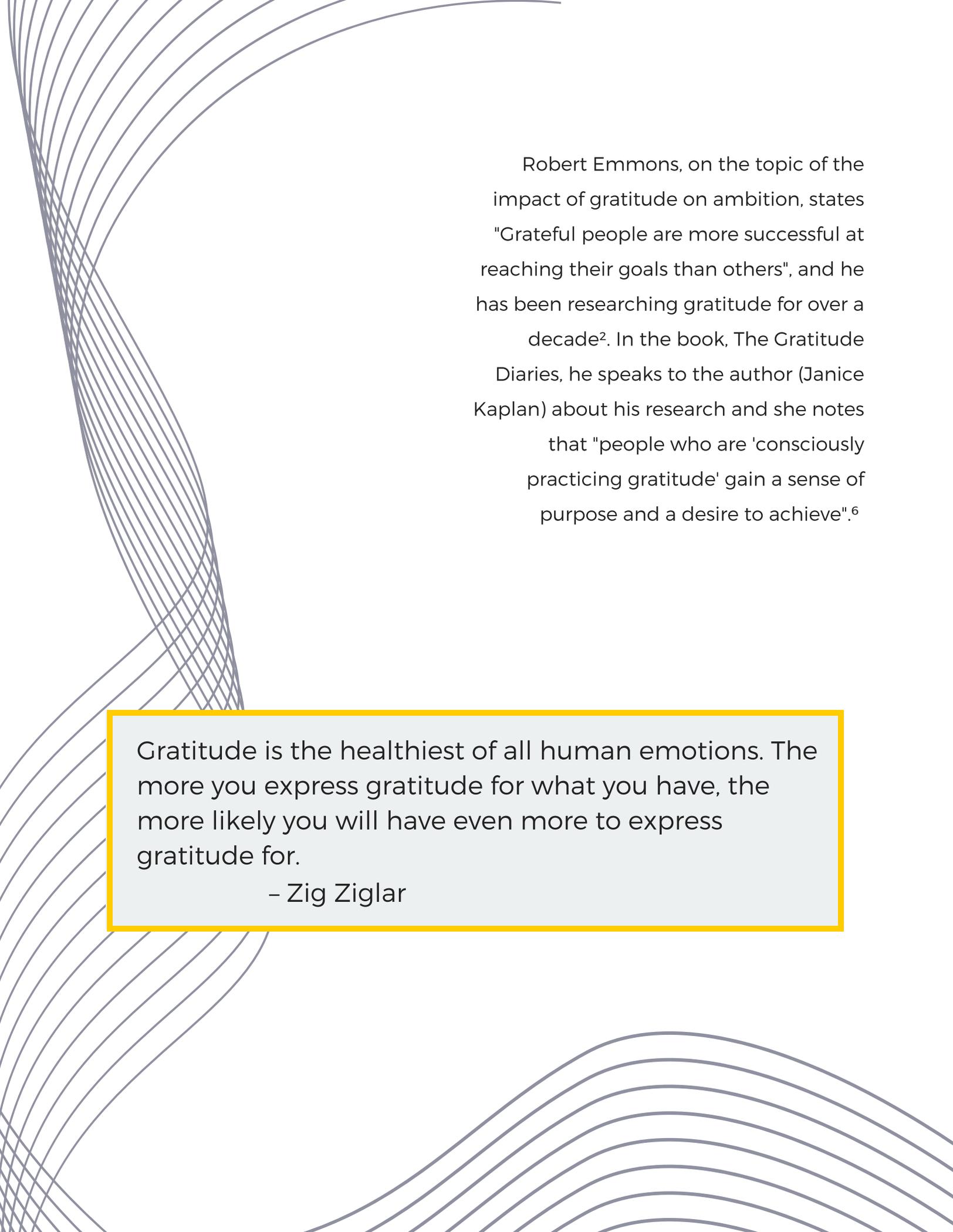


Well-being in the workplace has a huge impact on happiness and job satisfaction<sup>11</sup>. Expressing gratitude for colleagues drastically improves the level of connection felt between each other, and improves, strengthens and deepens relationships to peers<sup>11</sup>. When a boss or manager is perceived to be authentically grateful (authentic and real being a make-or-break factor here), employees are much more productive, and more likely to go out of their way to help that person.

Research at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, found that even a pep-talk expressing gratitude, from a Director of Annual Giving, resulted in 50% more fundraising in the team that received the pep-talk, in comparison to another randomly assigned second team<sup>15</sup>. In addition to this, results from a combination of four studies done by Adam Grant & Francesca Gino found that "a 'thank you' from a supervisor gave people a strong sense of both self-worth and self-efficacy<sup>3</sup>, and that the expression of gratitude has a spillover effect - individuals become more trusting with each other, and more likely to help each other out<sup>3</sup>."



"A 'thank-you' from a supervisor gave people a strong sense of both self-worth and self-efficacy"



Robert Emmons, on the topic of the impact of gratitude on ambition, states "Grateful people are more successful at reaching their goals than others", and he has been researching gratitude for over a decade<sup>2</sup>. In the book, *The Gratitude Diaries*, he speaks to the author (Janice Kaplan) about his research and she notes that "people who are 'consciously practicing gratitude' gain a sense of purpose and a desire to achieve".<sup>6</sup>

Gratitude is the healthiest of all human emotions. The more you express gratitude for what you have, the more likely you will have even more to express gratitude for.

- Zig Ziglar

S O

N O W

W H A T ?

So based on the research, what are some of the ways YOU can start fostering an attitude of gratitude for your company or organization<sup>14</sup>?

1. Build gratitude into your DNA - start with your leaders,
2. Emphasize quality, not quantity and consider the preferences of the recipient,
3. Foster the environment to build relationships, encouraging camaraderie and collegiality,
4. Cultivate flexibility & fluidity into the organization; involve employees, and
5. Practice a gratitude mindset as a way of life, allowing for authenticity in the gratitude you extend to those around you, and yourself.

Contact Diviya Lewis to learn more about the evidence-based presentations, workshops, and communications/resilience training, provided by Choose Gratitude.



Diviya Lewis  
Founder, Choose  
Gratitude

Diviya Lewis is currently pursuing her Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology, and aspires to be a professional Psychotherapist, supporting individuals on their journey, and is an advocate for the prevention of depression, anxiety and stress through the practice of gratitude. She will be completing her practicum at York University in September 2017 as a Mental Health Counsellor. Additionally, she will be working with a team at Ryerson University to implement a positive psychology and resilience training program to various groups of students at the educational institution, incorporating gratitude, mindfulness, optimism, and learning strategies.

She is a Certified LIFO(R) Facilitator – a strengths-based behavioural assessment and workshop – helping individuals, couples and teams within organizations discover their strengths, increase their awareness of their partners/teams, strengthen communication and productivity, and flourish in their personal and professional lives.

She currently does workshops, and corporate presentations to bring these aspects into our workplace. She is currently completing Phase II of Project Gratitude, which is a web series examining gratitude's role in bridging the gap between a scarcity mindset and one of abundance.

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