

The Definitive Guide to Peer Coaching

The future of learning,
change-management,
and well-being.



IMPERATIVE

**Meaningful
conversation
is how we
learn, adapt,
connect, and
become fulfilled
at work.**

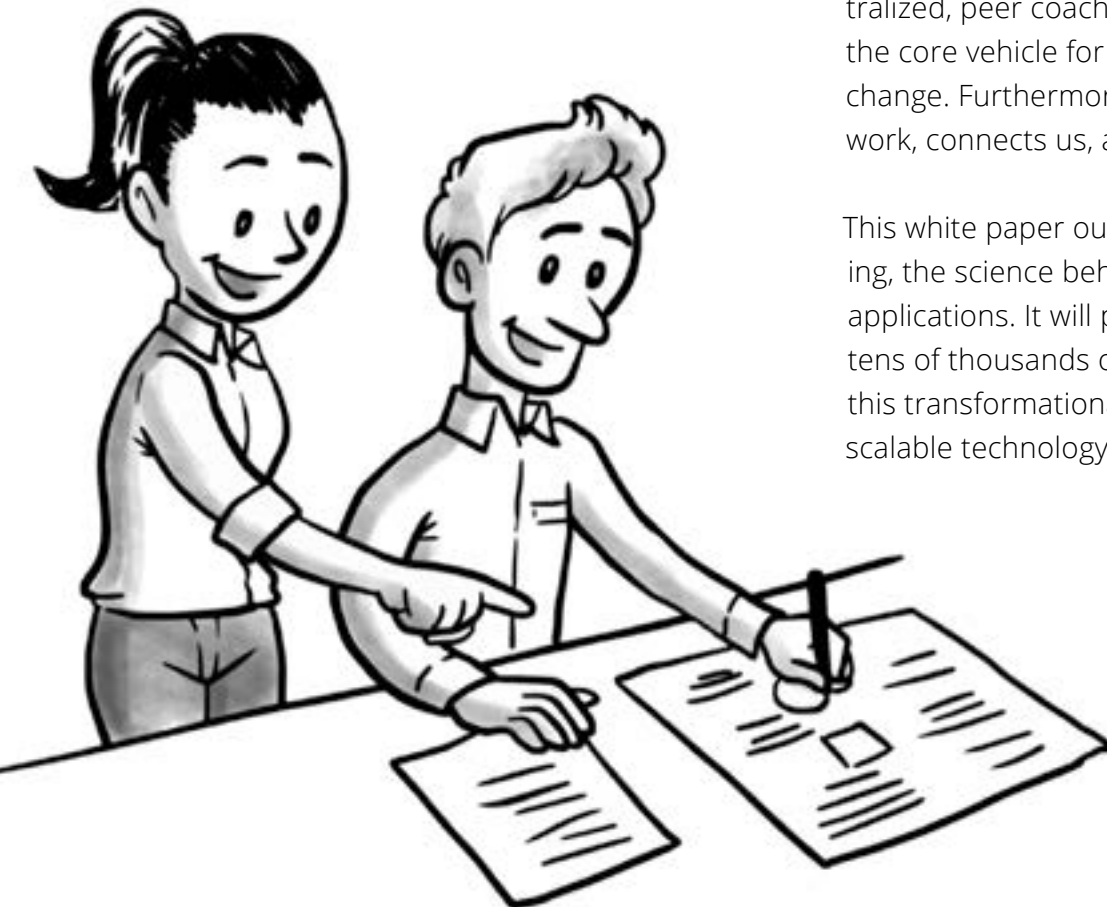
IMPERATIVE

The Case for Peer Coaching

Peer coaching is a process of reflection between two people without an implied authority of expertise. It enables people to process their experiences, increase self-awareness, make more intentional decisions, develop interpersonal skills, explore new ideas, and process change. Unlike traditional coaching, peer coaching builds connections and trust between employees.

Peer coaching is emerging as perhaps the most effective way to support transformational learning. In the new world of work where change is accelerating and organizations are increasingly decentralized, peer coaching also has the potential to be the core vehicle for disseminating and managing change. Furthermore, peer coaching humanizes work, connects us, and drives employee fulfillment.

This white paper outlines the case for peer coaching, the science behind it, and its many powerful applications. It will present how organizations with tens of thousands of employees can implement this transformational program using Imperative's scalable technology.



Peer Coaching vs. Mentoring

Peer coaching is fundamentally different from mentoring. Mentoring is built on external knowledge transfer; someone has knowledge to impart to someone else. Peer coaching is based on **process rather than knowledge**. The value comes from going through a process with another human being and focuses on validating and activating knowledge about yourself.

Peer coaching enables everyone in an organization to engage in **social learning**—it removes the complexities of mentoring and doesn't reinforce hierarchy and dependence on senior employees. This type of coaching does not require screening for knowledge and mentoring skills nor is it limited by a scarcity of people with specific knowledge or experience.

Peer vs. Traditional Coaching

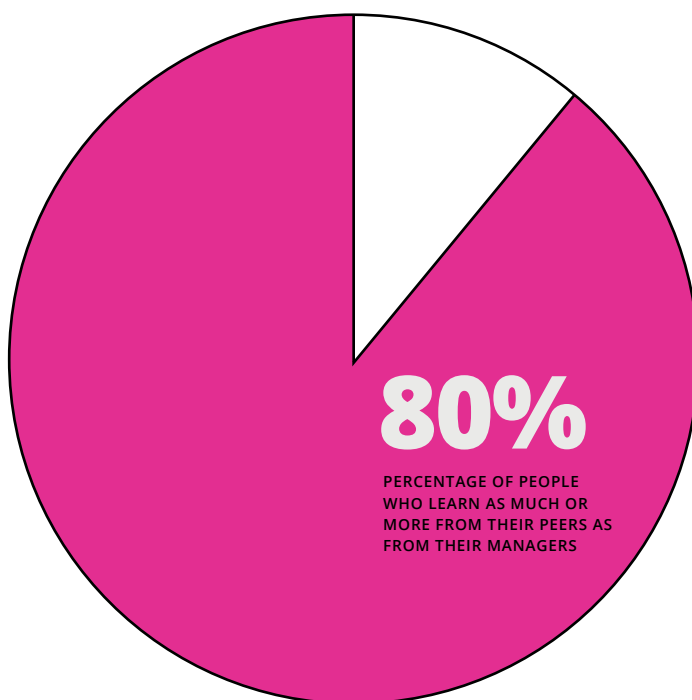
Peer coaching, like traditional coaching by professionals, enables people to process their experiences, increase self-awareness, make more intentional decisions, develop interpersonal skills, explore new ideas, and process change. It also produces similar results as traditional coaching. We have found that 90% of employees using **Imperative's Peer Coaching Platform** said that it positively changed the way they work; 92% said it **positively impacted the way they see themselves, their job and their career**; 88% said participating in more peer coaching would increase their fulfillment at work.

Traditional coaching can play a critical role in organizations. Unlike peer coaching, professional coaches are needed for urgent problem-solving and sensitive topics that require the skills of a professional coach.

Peer coaching is an ideal solution for programmatic and proactive coaching needs and for building a culture of peer support. It is best integrated with existing learning programs, change management, and culture efforts. Because there are no professional coaches involved, it is **highly scalable and makes coaching far more accessible**.

Developed For How We Learn Best

While the assumption about how people learn at work tends to be hierarchical, we found that 80% of people learn as much or more from their peers vs. their managers.¹ Traditional learning focuses on managers and content experts as the primary source of employee learning.



¹Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

	CHILD LEARNING	ADULT LEARNING	PEER COACHING
Identity	Tied to Family	Self-Concept	Develops and Builds off Self-Concept
Life Experience	Minimal to Draw From	Core Source of Insights and Knowledge	Uses Personal Insight as Basis for Learning
Relevance	Conceptual	Applied	Focuses on Solving Tangible Problems
Motivation	Externalized Required by School	Internalized Want to Solve	Allows Learning to be More Self-Directed

Source: Wired to Grow²

Pioneered by the US Army

In 2011, the United States Army formally launched a new learning model that they developed over the previous decade. The **traditional “school” based model wasn’t developing soldiers and leaders who could be effective in a new era** of volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA). This required a lot more than just knowledge transfer. At the heart of the new model was peer learning which they found was the “hub of experiential learning.” They found in their studies that this new model of learning “appears ideal for adult learning.” They have successfully deployed the model to blend together self-development, understanding of the Army, and operational experience.³

Core to Adult Learning

The effectiveness of peer coaching as a transformative learning model is largely due to its alignment with how we learn as adults. We tend to instinctively design adult learning based on what we experienced in school as children, but adult learning differs in four very important ways: Identity, Life Experience, Relevance, and Motivation.²

Critical to Success

Peer coaching is already informally practiced in the workplace. 62% of people report “regularly engaging in conversations about their development and careers with their peers.”⁴ Even in organic peer coaching relationships, people report greater success in their careers than their colleagues who don’t do it.

- 66% report being top performers
- Twice more likely to stay at their company for 5+ years
- 88% know what fulfills them
- 64% have meaningful relationships at work
- 84% have a Purpose Mindset
- 64% feel safe taking risks at work⁵

Untapped Resource

Tremendous opportunity exists to expand the use of peers as learning partners. Study after study has shown that people “routinely underestimate others’ willingness and ability to help.”⁶ In reality, 90% of employees reported they would happily coach a colleague if asked.⁷ Employers have an opportunity to provide the tools necessary to scale peer learning and all the positive results that come with it.

² Andreatta, B. (2019.) Wired to Grow. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.

³ Adkinson, D. F. (August 2011) Peer-to-Peer learning and the Army Learning Model.

Retrieved on November 4, 2019, from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a562855.pdf>.

⁴ Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

⁵ Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

⁶ Baker, W (2020) All You Have to Do Is Ask. New York City, New York. Penguin Random House.

⁷ Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

"The VUCA environment demands peer coaching as it is one of the best ways to adapt to the incredible demands of VUCA. Peer coaching supports the four adaptive responses: vision, understanding, clarity, and agility."⁸

The Science of Peer Coaching

The Science of Peer Coaching for Learning

While we are wired to learn, we are overwhelmed with information in our work and lives.

To truly retain information we need to understand how the brain works and what practices support memory.

Being in the right setting and mindset is perhaps the most vital part of learning. To put it simply, trust makes us open to learn and “fear destroys the capacity to learn.”⁹ This is part of the reason we tend to learn more from our peers than managers or authority figures.

The way information is recorded in our brain impacts our memory. Several approaches to learning content have proven to be effective.

Verbalization

We are much more likely to remember information if we verbalize it. A 2017 study published in *Memory*¹⁰ found that verbalization is the most effective way to recall new information.

By processing new ideas and information out loud, peer coaching increases the odds that learned information will be retained long-term.

Reflection

When we are able to anchor information to existing experiences, it makes it easier to store the information for retrieval later. Researchers have found that “nothing is more powerful than tying learning to the schema of personal experience, with its rich episodic memory and bundle of sensory data.”¹¹



9 Page, L., Rock, D. (2009) Coaching with the Brain in Mind. Hoboken, New Jersey. John Wiley & Sons Inc.
10 Forrin, N. D., & Macleod, C. M. (2018). This time it's personal: The memory benefit of hearing oneself. *Memory*, 26(4), 574-579. doi:10.1080/09658211.2017.1383434

11 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.

“When people learn together, it can amplify their progress because they build on each other’s insights and experiences.”¹⁴

Insights

An insight is one of those “a-ha” moments that we have that changes or expands our beliefs. It is new information that causes us to break a previous line of thinking and replace it with a new one. It goes well beyond just recording information. It changes the frame. “Insight is powerful because once it happens it cannot be undone—that moment of learning cannot be lost.”¹²

Stories

Human beings learn through stories. “Our brain is especially built for story because it was critical for our species’ survival. We had to be able to listen to and learn from each other. So, our biology developed an interesting pattern: when we hear a story, we get hooked by the intrigue of not knowing what happens next. And when a story is told, we get a neurochemical reward in the form of dopamine that keeps us listening for the lesson that will help us.”¹³

Guided peer coaching conversations encourage storytelling, requiring individuals to think back to specific times, and verbalize the experience to their partner. This increases memory and learning, further amplifying the positive outcome of the conversations. The casual and relatable nature of the conversations fosters psychological safety and connection, breaking down fears around sharing and exploration.



¹² Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.

¹³ Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.

¹⁴ Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.

70%

Learn from on-the-job experiences

20% Learn from other people

10% Learn from courses

Experiential and Relational Learning

Talent development organizations have known for decades that experiential and relational learning is more effective for learning soft skills than classroom or online learning. These types of learning take an idea out of the abstract and use it in the real world; this is the start of behavioral change.

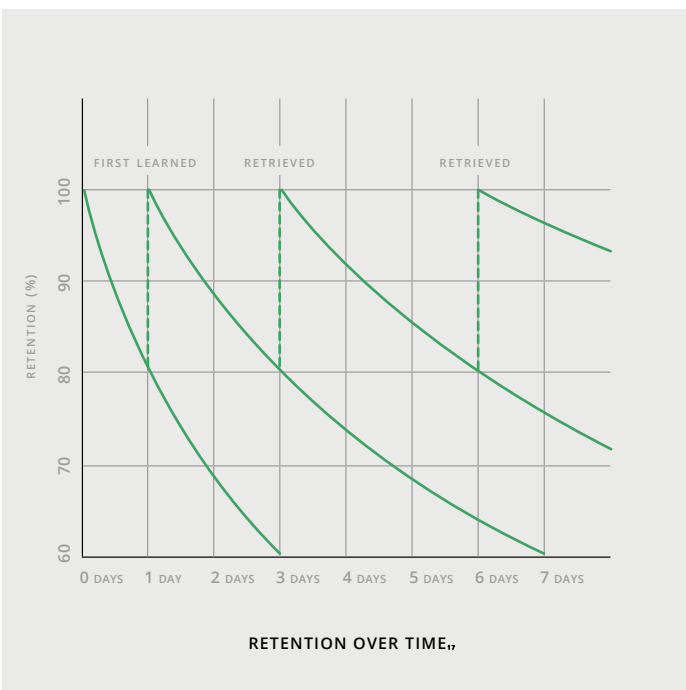
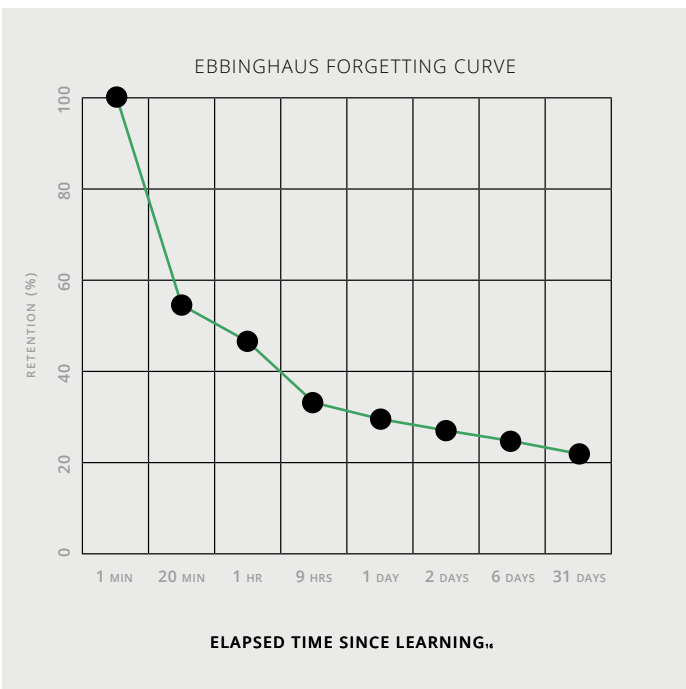
Only 10% of learning comes from courses. The other 90% is from other people and on the job experiential learning.¹⁵ Our colleagues are key to learning and development. Peer coaching conversations support employees in actively working on power skills necessary for success and growth. Each coaching conversation combines experiential and relational learning to accomplish this.

The storage of new information needs to be revisited regularly to ensure it's retained. The Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve shows how we retain new information as hours and days pass.¹⁶

To address the forgetting curve, we need to revisit the information consistently over a period of time. The research shows that if you can revisit it regularly between nights of good sleep you can begin to store it effectively.¹⁷

Not only do coaching conversations re-visit newly learned information, but they encourage reflection and personal sharing. This aligns learning with personal experience, tying memories to other sensory information, and triggering other memories.

15 Eichinger, B., & Lombardo, M. (n.d.). The 70-20-10 Rule for Leadership Development. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/70-20-10-rule/>
16 Andreatta, B. (2019.) Wired to Grow. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
17 Andreatta, B. (2019.) Wired to Grow. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.



The Science of Peer Coaching for Connection

“If there is one thing I know for sure, it’s that we are wired for connection.”

—DR. BRENÉ BROWN

“People’s sense of thriving in their work, willingness to stay in a given organization and even physical health are all dramatically impacted by the quality—not quantity—of the relationships in their network.”¹⁹

Peer coaching has a unique systemic ability to build relationships across an organization. Unlike transactional interactions, peer coaching puts colleagues into a conversation where they are focused on listening and supporting someone’s success. It psychologically frames a colleague as an ally and builds a foundation for a long-term trust and support.

Success in the workplace, it turns out, is largely based on the quality of our relationships. They impact our ability to learn, collaborate, and be productive. Relationships at work are core to our well-being and our fulfillment in life. In fact only 1% of people who lack meaningful relationships at work report being fulfilled in life.¹⁸

Relationships are more important today than even ten years ago. As companies look to increase their agility, they are moving away from hierarchical and command-and-control models and moving to new dynamic team based models that require strong relationships.

Yet only 49% of people report having meaningful relationships at work.²⁰ Social media, by many reports, is actually making us more isolated. Fewer people have real, face-to-face conversations and make time to truly connect with other people.

¹⁸ Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

¹⁹ Cross, R., Garau, R. The Invisible Network Strategies of Successful People. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://connectedcommons.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/the-invisible-network-strategies-of-successful-people.pdf>

²⁰ 2015 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2015.

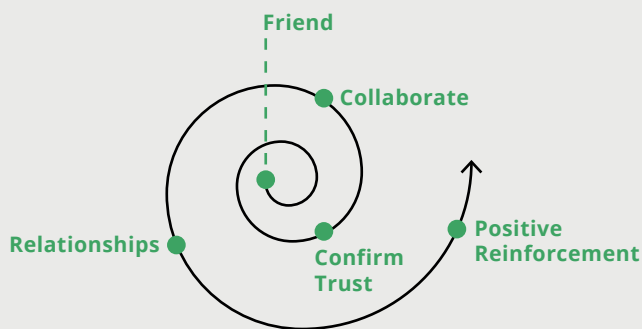
The World Health Organization uses social support as a predictor of stress, cardiovascular disease, and productivity.²¹

-DAVID ROCK AND AL H. RINGLEB

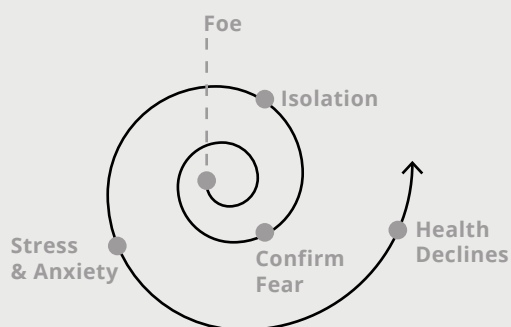
21 Rock, D., Ringleb, A. (2013) Handbook of Neuroleadership. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

“From our earliest days of life, our connections to others provide a source of feeling seen, safe, and secure.”²³

Positive Fly Wheel



Negative Fly Wheel



Workers spend almost 50% of each day on digital-only communication, and more than half feel lonely as a result.²²

Unlike many species, humans are wired to need connection to survive. We are extremely ill-equipped to live without the support of other people. Our early survival also meant keeping competing tribes away from our resources and vulnerable newborns. Over time, we developed an ability to bond with those we trust and to quickly detect enemies.

Our brains create positive and negative relationship flywheels, whether we categorize someone as an ally or a threat. The more positive relationships we have, the easier it is to build more, and vice versa.

This is how our brain works. When we are able to trust and bond with people it produces oxytocin. It serves us a reward: it feels good and motivates more of the same behavior. When we don't, our brain does the opposite: it creates fight or flight impulses.

If you have a team of people who don't trust each other it is biologically toxic. "Lonely individuals experience higher levels of perceived stress, react more negatively to stress, and benefit less from social interactions."²⁴

The fact that half of the workforce lacks meaningful relationships at work can be easily connected to Gallup's finding that 79% of Americans feel stressed every day and that it is the number one complaint of American workers.²⁵

²² 11 WorkplaceTrends. (2018, November 13). The Work Connectivity Study. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://workplacetrends.com/the-work-connectivity-study/>

²³ Rock, D., Ringleb, A. (2013) Handbook of Neuroleadership. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

²⁴ Cacioppo, J., Cacioppo S. (2014) Social Relationships and Health: The Toxic Effects of Perceived Social Isolation. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4021390/>

²⁵ Saad, L. (2017) "8 in 10 Americans Afflicted by Stress." Retrieved November 2019 from <http://news.gallup.com/poll/224336/eight-americas-afflicted-stress.aspx>

Science of Social Reinforcement

Social reinforcement includes simple human expressions of support and affirmation such as smiles, acceptance, praise, and attention from other people. Neuroscience has demonstrated that when we get positive social responses from others there are increased odds that we will alter our behavior. When peer coaches can see one another, show they understand, and validate one another, they reinforce the value of their partner and what they are saying. After a period of time, **simply seeing a peer coaching partner or even thinking of them will trigger the recall of the information learned and the desire to follow through.** It is a “built-in reactivation and retrieval of the material.”³⁰

If an organization is able to rotate peer coaching pairs, with employees coaching different peers over time, it creates an environment where this social reinforcement trigger expands as individuals interact with various colleagues in their regular course of work.

“Trust becomes a bonding agent that eases team dynamics, promotes team cohesion, and facilitates getting things done.”²⁸

Incivility at Work

Christine Porath reveals that over the past two decades, there has been a 50 percent increase of incivility at work.²⁶ Of those who experienced uncivil behavior at work:

- 48% reduced how hard they work
- 47% spent less time at work
- 66% saw a decline in their performance
- 78% felt less committed to the organization²⁷

Companies that build caring and high-trust environments are more successful. Great Places to Work found that they are 44% more likely to have above average revenue growth. Their research also found that employees value caring and belonging more than the company’s strategy, innovation, and management’s leadership competency.

Peer coaching creates the space and conditions to build trust between people. According to Dr. Britt Andreatta, a great conversation can produce high levels of oxytocin, much like during physical intimacy. “When you interconnect your thoughts, emotions, and goals with other people you release oxytocin, a pleasurable chemical.”²⁹

Peer coaching provides a safe way for people to engage and, if designed well, can create a strong sense of sustained connection. It can accelerate the positive relationship flywheel. As people participate in coaching with more and more colleagues across the organization, a culture of belonging and caring emerges.

26 Porath, C. (2017) “Why We Need to Kick Incivility Out of the Office,” Retrieved November 2019 from <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/civility-at-work/>.

27 Porath, C., Pearson, C. (2013) “The Price of Incivility,” Harvard Business Review Retrieved November 2019 from <https://hbr.org/2013/01/the-price-of-incivility>.

28 Murphy, S. (2019) Work Tribes: The Surprising Secret to Breakthrough Performance, Astonishing Results, and Keeping Teams Together. HarperCollins Publishing

29 Rock, D. (2009) Your Brain at Work. HarperBusiness.

30 Andreatta, B. (2019.) Wired to Grow. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.

Applications for Peer Coaching

The multi-dimensional value of peer coaching

The value of peer coaching is multi-dimensional. Its social, experiential, and psychological nature makes it uniquely positioned to address many of the most pressing needs of the modern workplace. In the following sections we outline how peer coaching directly impacts each of these areas:

Individual Development

- Self-Awareness & Advocacy
- Accountability
- Well-being
- Network Development

Organizational Development

- Social Learning
- Performance Management
- Manager & Leader Development
- Team Building
- New Employee Onboarding
- Employee Retention
- Change Management

Organizational Culture

- Purpose, Mission, & Values Adoption
- Empathy, Inclusion, & Belonging



Individual Development

Self-Awareness & Advocacy

At the root of everything from learning to relationships to career development is self-awareness and self-advocacy. Employees who lack self-awareness about what fulfills them are unlikely to be fulfilled at work. In fact, only 17% of people who report not knowing what fulfills them also report being fulfilled.³¹ If you don't know who you are and what you want, how can you advocate for yourself?

88% of people who reported engaging in peer coaching also shared that they are aware of what fulfills them.³²

People who advocate for themselves are much more likely to have their needs met. This should not be shocking, but the implications of this at work may be slightly surprising. Those who advocate for themselves are more likely to be considered for new opportunities and seen as having leadership potential. For many people, this can be difficult and feel uncomfortable.³³ Peer coaching provides employees with the opportunity to practice talking about themselves, their needs, and what makes them feel valuable in both a safe and affirming environment. It develops the confidence employees need to speak up for themselves in an authentic way.

“Self-awareness is perhaps the most important deep learning element, as it provides the foundation for sustained behavioral change.”³⁴

Accountability

ASTD found that you have a 65% chance of completing a goal if you make a commitment to someone. This probability rises to 95% if you have a specific accountability appointment.³⁵ Despite best intentions, many people never finish the online learning courses they begin. With peer coaching conversations, employees make commitments to one another to complete the process together; they understand that their colleague is dependent on them, and vice versa.

Well-being

Peer coaching helps build relationships and self-care that reduces stress, depression, and anxiety. It provides the social support people need to cope with change and challenges at work. But it also lets us help others, which helps us feel good.³⁶ This can directly impact healthcare costs and absenteeism, and boost resilience. It also lets us practice generosity by serving someone else. This has a ripple effect on the lives of employees as it is nearly impossible to be fulfilled in life if you aren't fulfilled at work.

31 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

32 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

33 Kay, K., & Shipman, C. (2014, May). The Confidence Gap. The Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>

34 Parker, Polly, et al. Peer Coaching at Work Principles and Practices. Stanford Business Books, an Imprint of Stanford University Press, 2018.

35 Phillips, P. P. (2010). ASTD handbook for measuring and evaluating training. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training & Development.

36 Allen S. (2018, May). "The Science of Generosity." Retrieved November 2019 from https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Generosity-FINAL.pdf

“The ability to generate energy or enthusiasm in networks is the largest predictor of a high performer we have seen over 20 years of research. It is also tightly tied to where innovations emerge and change takes hold in organizations.”³⁷

37 Cross, R., Garau, R. The Invisible Network Strategies of Successful People. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://connectedcommons.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/the-invisible-network-strategies-of-successful-people.pdf>

Individual Development

(continued)

68% of people see fulfillment primarily as their responsibility.³⁸

“Innovation requires both reaching across fields and, often, acquiring more than a surface-level understanding of those fields.”

–DR. CAROL DWECK

Network Development

Peer coaching builds a self-advocacy capacity in employees while also converting peers into champions for others. Once a peer understands the needs and abilities of a colleague, they are more likely to bring them (or recommend them for) opportunities that align with their interests and abilities.

In a peer coaching program that matches employees with multiple peers from different parts of an organization over time, employees can grow their internal network in a big way. Suddenly, employees from engineering are connected with their peers in sales, leading to new open communication pathways between departments. Employees are exposed to potential career paths and opportunities inside the organization that they might not have otherwise known about.



38 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019

Social Learning

Peer coaching is a transformational model for corporate learning programs. It can be leveraged to increase the effectiveness of traditional learning and used as the core of power skill (formerly known as soft skill) development programs.

For existing learning models, peer coaching is an effective way for people to reinforce and apply new learning, ensuring it didn't go in one ear and out the other. Articles, classrooms or e-learning courses can serve as the initial exposure and priming, while true learning happens in the peer coaching conversations and application.

“When schools and work-places intentionally anchor learning moments to peers, it causes constant reactivation of the material.”³⁹

Peer coaching is uniquely powerful for developing the intrapersonal and interpersonal skills necessary to thrive in a modern workforce. These skills are very difficult to learn in classroom settings as they are anchored in reflection and need practice and application to stick.

Why does peer coaching have such a unique ability to develop these critical abilities? Because peer coaching is deep learning. “By deep we mean whole-person learning - learning that goes to the core of who a person is. Whole-person learning incorporates thoughts, feelings, observations, val-

ues, and inherent assumptions. Deep learning involves reflecting on those deeply held attributes and values, self-image, self-esteem, and self-identity that influence ways people behave to preserve a sense of self. A deep learning process can feel risky and difficult and is likely to extend beyond a usual comfort zone. Importantly, it also has the potential to lead to significant personal change.”⁴⁰

Perhaps most importantly, peer coaching integrates learning into the flow of work and the social fabric of a company. This creates a learning culture, one of the characteristics of successful and agile employers. Peer coaching turns every colleague into part of an employee's learning team and make learning truly integrated.

Power Skills Built with Peer Coaching

**Communication • Collaboration • Innovation
Creativity • Critical Thinking • Adaptability
Resilience • Mindset • Agility**

39 Andreatta, B. (2019.) Wired to Grow. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
40 Parker, Polly, et al. (2018) Peer Coaching at Work Principles and Practices. Stanford Business Books, an Imprint of Stanford University Press.

Organizational Development

(continued)

Performance Management

Traditional performance management models put people into a state of fear which makes them resistant to learn and change. Peer coaching offers an additional or alternative approach to helping employees grow and improve their performance.

“Bringing people back to their own insights is a fast way of getting people back on track.”

–DR. DAVID ROCK

Peer coaching frames growth as support rather than a threat. It also focuses on reflection and personal ownership. This increases ownership and anchors change on intrinsic vs. extrinsic motivation.

Manager & Leader Development

Over the last decade, coaching skills have been identified as critical to successful managers and leaders. Companies are increasingly investing in programs to teach these skills. Peer coaching early in a career can develop these skills and accelerate readiness for management positions.

Being a manager or leader, especially when someone is new in the role, can be incredibly challenging and stressful to navigate. Peer coaching between managers provides the support needed that might not be possible from other people (i.e. HR or their manager).

“Leadership development coaching is based on a mindset for learning that is fundamental to the development of effective leadership. Coaching works by leveraging relationships and conversations to elicit a variety of mental processes in those who are coached, such as exploring alternatives, persisting with problem solving, initiating solution seeking, and collaboration across boundaries.”⁴¹

41 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.

Organizational Development

(continued)

Team Building

Over the past 20 years, collaborative work has increased by 50%.⁴² Work gets done in teams. Team function and dysfunction is what defines success and failure for organizations. Psychological safety has been found to be the foundation for high performing teams.⁴³ Peer coaching supports all five of the traits of an effective team or working group. It can also be used functionally during the course of a project from goal setting, to idea generation, to problem solving, to running a post-mortem.

- 1 Psychological Safety**
Team members feel safe to take risks and are vulnerable in front of each other.
- 2 Dependability**
Team members get things done on time and meet high bar of excellence.
- 3 Structure & Clarity**
Team members have clear roles, plans, and goals.
- 4 Meaning**
Work is personally important to team members.
- 5 Impact**
Team members think their work matters and creates change.⁴⁴

New Employee Onboarding

When new employees are connected to peers in a quick and meaningful way, it helps them feel psycho-

logical safety. It creates bonds that help them feel a sense of belonging, making them more likely to stay at the company and thrive.

Employee Retention

According to a 2018 study WorkplaceTrends, 60% of people would be more inclined to stay with their company longer if they had more friends. This was especially true for younger employees: Gen Z (74%) and Millennials (69%) would be more inclined to stay with their company longer if they had more friends. This trend holds true with men (57%) and introverts (63%).⁴⁵

“When help-seeking and giving are the norm in a company, employee productivity is higher and turnover lower.”⁴⁶

One of the leading indicators of success and retention, according to Gallup, is having a “best friend” at work.⁴⁷ A “best friend” is someone who is trusted, can be confided in, and has our back. Peer coaching quickly creates bonds between colleagues that begin to build these types of relationships.

42 Cross, R., Rebele, R., Grant, A. (January-February 2016). “Collaborative Overload.” Harvard Business Review. Retrieved on November 2019 from <https://hbr.org/2016/01/collaborative-overload>.

43 Rozovsky, J. (November 2015). Retrieved on November 2019 from <https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/five-keys-to-a-successful-google-team/>

44 Rozovsky, J. (November 2015). “Five Keys to a Successful Google Team.” Retrieved on November 2019 from <https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/five-keys-to-a-successful-google-team/>

45 WorkplaceTrends. (2018, November 13). The Work Connectivity Study. Retrieved from <https://workplacetrends.com/the-work-connectivity-study/>

46 Sun, L., Aryee, S., Law, S. (2007) “High-Performance Human Resources Practices, Citizenship Behavior, and Organizational Performance: A Relational Perspective Source,” The Academy of Management Journal 50, no. 3(2007): 558-77

47 Mann, A. (2018, January 15). Why We Need Best Friends at Work. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236213/why-need-best-friendswork.aspx>

Organizational Development

(continued)

Change Management

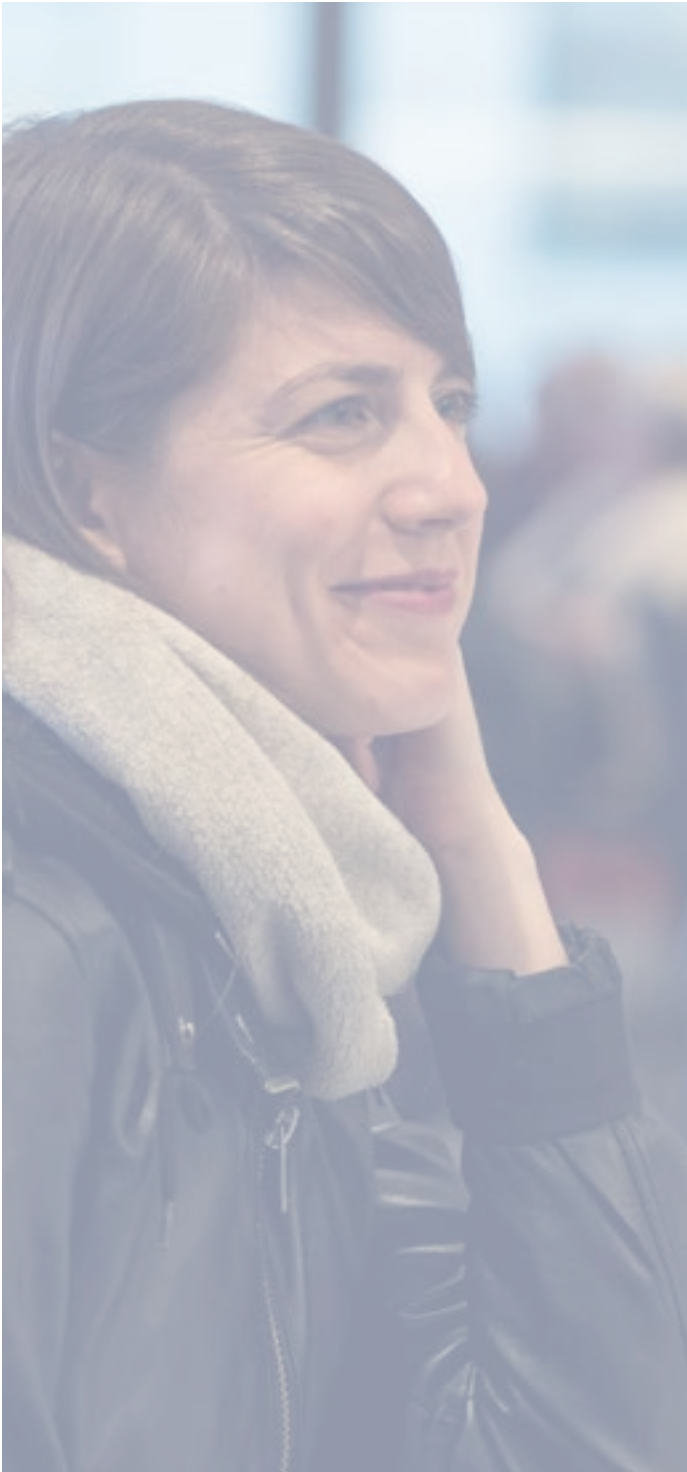
Change is accelerating. Companies struggle to ensure employees not only understand changes, but can own them and drive them forward. Change is often met with fear and distrust - it is misunderstood and seen as a threat.

“Organizations themselves can never be truly agile unless people who work within the organization are agile—and more importantly emotionally agile.”

—SUSAN DAVID,
HARVARD MEDICAL SCHOOL

Giving employees peer support to digest and own major changes addresses their social and emotional needs. It creates openness to change, accelerates adoption, and engages employees as active participants in the change.

Companies, and teams within them, need new ways to distribute information in collaborative, effective ways. Peer coaching builds skills and alliances through direct communication, and empowers teams to share information with others in organizations that are not designed to operate through command and control.



Organizational Culture

Purpose, Mission, & Values Adoption

Gallup analytics found that only 23% of employees strongly agree that they can apply their corporate values and just 27% even believe in them (Gallup).⁴⁸ Corporate values, missions, and purposes only become meaningful to employees when they are able to connect them to their identity and experience. Peer coaching provides a platform for employees to socially reinforce your company's mission, purpose, and values. If employees talk about what it authentically means to them and how it shows up in their lives and work, they become owned values.

Empathy, Inclusion, & Belonging

More than skills or talent, psychological safety has been found to be the foundation of high performing teams. When people feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of negative consequences, it brings out the best in them. Peer coaching develops psychological safety by building empathy skills and removing fear from colleague relationships. It helps establish commonalities between people and reinforce a sense of belonging. This creates a work environment where people thrive regardless of their background. Peer coaching is also effectively used to support employee resource groups (ERGs) to help build connections and support within under-represented groups in the organization.



48 Dvorak, N., Nelson, B., (September 2016) "Few Employees Believe in Their Company's Values." Gallup Business Journal. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/195491/few-employees-believe-company-values.aspx>

Imperative's Peer Coaching Platform

Everything You Need to Transform Culture

Imperative's Impact

90%

of employees using Imperative said that peer coaching positively changed the way they work

92%

said it positively impacted the way they see themselves, job and career

88%

said doing more would increase their fulfillment at work

92%

of users reported they would like to continue doing peer coaching at work

Imperative has developed a purpose profiling technology that enables our platform to effectively match employees around the globe based on their profiles. The coaching is done via video with an overlaid structured facilitation guide that is dynamically generated for each set of partners using the platform's purpose personalization engine.

This makes it possible for employees to be effective coaches with no training. Companies can deploy the platform at scale with minimal administrative time and keep real-time track of use and learning outcome measures.

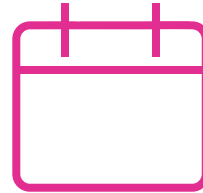
Imperative's Peer Coaching Platform serves ten times as many employees for the same cost as traditional coaching solutions. Companies can scale the solution with similar results while maintaining cost by removing the need for hourly-paid professional coaches. Today, companies launch Imperative to support existing talent and culture programs, from new employee onboarding, to manager training, to diversity and inclusion, to career development, to change management. Companies are able to customize the platform to align with their culture, values, and priorities. Employers gain access to a library of peer coaching conversation modules on a range of topics including collaboration, innovation, storytelling and personal purpose discovery.

How It Works



1.

Purpose
Profile



2.

Dynamic
Matching



3.

Scripted
Video
Conversations



4.

Measured
Outcomes



5.

Cultural
Transformation



1.

Purpose Profile



“Imperative is the foremost expert on the science of purpose at work.”

—SHANNON SCHUYLER,
CHIEF PURPOSE OFFICER, PWC

Each employee creates a Purpose Profile that surfaces and defines their intrinsic motivations and who they are at their best. This enables individuals to begin the peer coaching experience with the right mindset (a Purpose Mindset). It’s what makes scalable peer coaching possible without any training.

When people are anchored to their purpose it changes the way they think and interact with other people. It triggers us to enter a conversation with a trust default, seeing someone as a friend rather than a foe. “Trust and purpose mutually reinforce each other, providing a mechanism for extended oxytocin release.”⁴⁹

“While threats may drain energy, other things can enhance it: a strong sense of personal purpose, close relationships with others, and a regular mindfulness practice may help people perform better, or mitigate some of the threats’ impacts.”⁵⁰

The Purpose Profile creates the psychological safety foundation for a peer coaching conversation. It also provides the insights needed for the platform to match a peer, and design an appropriate conversation for the pair.

49 Banks, A., Hirschman, L., (2016) Wired To Connect: The Surprising Link Between Brain Science and Strong, Healthy Relationships. TarcherPerigee

50 Banks, A., Hirschman, L., (2016) Wired To Connect: The Surprising Link Between Brain Science and Strong, Healthy Relationships. TarcherPerigee

2.

Dynamic Matching



As organizations deploy coaching conversations throughout the year, Imperative makes it easy: with the push of a button, thousands of employees can be intelligently matched for one or more conversations.

Over the course of a year, an employee will be matched with different peers depending on the topic of the conversation. With each set of conversations, the algorithm matches employees with the ideal partner. It improves over time based on measured outcomes. This ensures scalability and reduces the risk of low quality matches.

3.

Scripted Video Conversations



Architecture of Peer Coaching Conversation

Pre-Work

Peers review articles and videos about the coaching session topic that prime each person.

Conversation Guides

Guided questions and tips help each person process the topic through personal reflection, which generates insights and awareness.

Action

Each person commits to one action they will take based on the conversation.

Employees need no training or experience to engage in transformational peer conversations. Imperative dynamically generates the content for each peer coaching conversation based on the latest research on adult learning and social interaction.

Each conversation has four rounds of questions. One person asks a question, and then captures summary notes based on what is shared by their partner. Peers then switch roles and similar questions are asked. This process is repeated until all the questions are answered.

The back and forth model of asking and answering questions helps incorporate insights from their peers into their subsequent answers. More importantly, this model of responsiveness quickly builds trust and intimacy between two people. It was inspired by a study where researchers were able to get two strangers to fall in love in under an hour using this kind of back and forth.⁵¹

To make conversations more effective, the platform uses adaptive learning. The coaching prompts include content pulled from each person's Purpose Profile that are relevant to each topic. This brings people back to the Purpose Mindset needed for psychological safety, while providing them with concrete examples to help focus their reflection.

51 Jones, Daniel (2015) "The 36 Questions That Lead to Love." New York Times. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/fashion/no-37-big-wedding-or-small.html>.

3.

Scripted Video Conversations

(continued)



To maintain a positive and constructive conversation, the coaching prompts are all designed based on the model of appreciative inquiry.

This focuses people on abundance and hope vs. scarcity and fear.

All conversations end with each peer asking the other to pledge one action for the next week based on their insights and the goals of the conversation. This quickly moves people to integrate their learning into their work and see progress. Actual behavior change depends on this final step in the learning cycle.

Employers gain access to a library of peer coaching conversation modules on a range of topics including collaboration, innovation, storytelling and personal purpose discovery.

Or, our team can create and deploy custom conversations to align with your learning and change management programs. For example, employers can engage their employees in conversations that empower them to own the organization's values.

Peers from the other side of the office or the other side of the world conduct their conversations face-to-face over integrated video. Seeing each other's faces is important for effective coaching as it increases our sense of connection and makes it easier to read queues from body language.

4.

Measured Outcomes



At the end of conversations, each person records their reflections, pledged actions, and measures the outcomes.

The program administrator can access the information to gauge program success.

5.

Cultural Transformation



As more and more conversations take place throughout the organization, real change happens. Employees have an increased self-awareness of what purpose & fulfillment means to them, as well as the tools and guidance to support one another. Colleagues become advocates - and support each other in ways that otherwise would not be possible.

About the Author

Aaron Hurst is the foremost expert on the science of purpose at work and in 2014 brought global awareness to the rise of the fourth economic era in history, the Purpose Economy. He is the CEO and Co-Founder of Imperative, the technology platform for leaders in the new economy. Previously, as the founder of the Taproot Foundation, Aaron catalyzed the \$15 billion pro bono service market. He is a third generation graduate of the University of Michigan.

Imperative is the first fully automated peer coaching technology platform. The video-based peer coaching experience enables every employee to be an effective coach with no training through a dynamic and structured online environment. Imperative makes the benefits of coaching accessible to ten times as many employees for the same cost as traditional coaching. The platform is being deployed by leading employers to address the needs of the new workforce and boost employee retention, development, productivity, and fulfillment.

Learn more about Peer Coaching on Imperative by emailing [**hello@imperative.com**](mailto:hello@imperative.com).

IMPERATIVE

- 1 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 2 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 3 Adkinson, D. F. (August 2011) Peer-to-Peer learning and the Army Learning Model. Retrieved on November 4, 2019, from <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a562855.pdf>.
- 4 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 5 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 6 Baker, W (2020) *All You Have to Do Is Ask*. New York City, New York. Penguin Random House.
- 7 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 8 Fig. 2. Parker, P. (2018) *Peer Coaching at Work Principles and Practices*. Stanford, CA. Stanford Business Books, an Imprint of Stanford University Press.
- 9 Page, L., Rock, D. (2009) *Coaching with the Brain in Mind*. Hoboken, New Jersey. John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- 10 Forrin, N. D., & Macleod, C. M. (2018). This time it's personal: The memory benefit of hearing oneself. *Memory*, 26(4), 574-579. doi:10.1080/09658211.2017.1383434
- 11 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 12 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 13 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 14 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 15 Eichinger, B., & Lombardo, M. (n.d.). The 70-20-10 Rule for Leadership Development. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.ccl.org/articles/leading-effectively-articles/70-20-10-rule/>
- 16 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 17 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 18 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 19 Cross, R., Garau, R. The Invisible Network Strategies of Successful People. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://connectedcommons.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/the-invisible-net-work-strategies-of-successful-people.pdf>
- 20 2015 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2015.
- 21 Rock, D., Ringleb, A. (2013) *Handbook of Neuroleadership*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- 22 11 WorkplaceTrends. (2018, November 13). The Work Connectivity Study. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://workplacetrends.com/the-work-connectivity-study/>
- 23 Rock, D., Ringleb, A. (2013) *Handbook of Neuroleadership*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- 24 Cacioppo, J., Cacioppo S. (2014) *Social Relationships and Health: The Toxic Effects of Perceived Social Isolation*. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4021390/>
- 25 Saad, L. (2017) "8 in 10 Americans Afflicted by Stress." Retrieved November 2019 from <http://news.gallup.com/poll/224336/eight-americas-afflicted-stress.aspx>
- 26 Porath, C. (2017) "Why We Need to Kick Incivility Out of the Office," Retrieved November 2019 from <http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/civility-at-work/>.
- 27 Porath, C., Pearson, C. (2013) "The Price of Incivility," *Harvard Business Review* Retrieved November 2019 from <https://hbr.org/2013/01/the-price-of-incivility>.
- 28 Murphy, S. (2019) *Work Tribes: The Surprising Secret to Breakthrough Performance, Astonishing Results, and Keeping Teams Together*. HarperCollins Publishing
- 29 Rock, D. (2009) *Your Brain at Work*. HarperBusiness.
- 30 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 31 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 32 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 33 Kay, K., & Shipman, C. (2014, May). The Confidence Gap. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2014/05/the-confidence-gap/359815/>
- 34 Parker, Polly, et al. *Peer Coaching at Work Principles and Practices*. Stanford Business Books, an Imprint of Stanford University Press, 2018.
- 35 Phillips, P. P. (2010). *ASTD handbook for measuring and evaluating training*. Alexandria, VA: American Society for Training & Development.
- 36 Allen S. (2018, May). "The Science of Generosity." Retrieved November 2019 from https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC-JTF_White_Paper-Generosity-FINAL.pdf
- 37 Cross, R., Garau, R. The Invisible Network Strategies of Successful People. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://connectedcommons.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/the-invisible-net-work-strategies-of-successful-people.pdf>
- 38 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019
- 39 Andreatta, B. (2019.) *Wired to Grow*. Santa Barbara, CA. 7th Mind Publishing.
- 40 Parker, Polly, et al. (2018) *Peer Coaching at Work Principles and Practices*. Stanford Business Books, an Imprint of Stanford University Press.
- 41 Hurst, A., Resch, N. (March 2019). 2019 Workforce Purpose Index. Imperative, 2019.
- 42 Cross, R., Rebele, R., Grant, A. (January-February 2016), "Collaborative Overload." *Harvard Business Review*. Retrieved on November 2019 from <https://hbr.org/2016/01/collaborative-overload>.
- 43 Rozovsky, J. (November 2015). Retrieved on November 2019 from <https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/five-keys-to-a-successful-google-team/>
- 44 Rozovsky, J. (November 2015). "Five Keys to a Successful Google Team." Retrieved on November 2019 from <https://rework.withgoogle.com/blog/five-keys-to-a-successful-google-team/>
- 45 WorkplaceTrends. (2018, November 13). The Work Connectivity Study. Retrieved from <https://workplacetrends.com/the-work-connectivity-study/>
- 46 Sun, L., Aryee, S., Law, S. (2007) "High-Performance Human Resources Practices, Citizenship Behavior, and Organizational Performance: A Relational Perspective Source," *The Academy of Management Journal* 50, no. 3(2007): 558-77)
- 47 Mann, A. (2018, January 15). Why We Need Best Friends at Work. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.gallup.com/workplace/236213/why-need-best-friendswork.aspx>
- 48 Dvorak, N., Nelson, B., (September 2016) "Few Employees Believe in Their Company's Values." *Gallup Business Journal*. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://news.gallup.com/businessjournal/195491/few-employees-believe-company-values.aspx>
- 49 Banks, A., Hirschman, L., (2016) *Wired To Connect: The Surprising Link Between Brain Science and Strong, Healthy Relationships*. TarcherPerigee
- 50 Banks, A., Hirschman, L., (2016) *Wired To Connect: The Surprising Link Between Brain Science and Strong, Healthy Relationships*. TarcherPerigee
- 51 Jones, Daniel (2015) "The 36 Questions That Lead to Love." *New York Times*. Retrieved November 2019 from <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/01/11/fashion/no-37-big-wedding-or-small.html>.