



Unlocking Purpose and Balance

Flourishing in Today's Work Landscape

April 9, 2025 | 10:10 a.m. CST

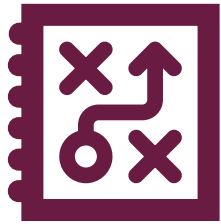
Illinois CUPA-HR Annual Conference
Champaign, IL

presented by:

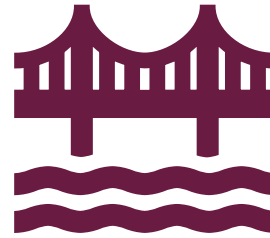
Jake Lathrop

Assistant Director of Talent & Strategic Partnerships
Michigan State University
CUPA-HR Midwest Region Board of Directors, Past-Chair

Learning Objectives



Analyze key factors driving workplace complexity & identify personal challenges impacting your success.



Harness the power of purpose:
Building bridges between personal and organizational mission.



Develop a customized plan to improve work-life balance while maintaining high performance standards.



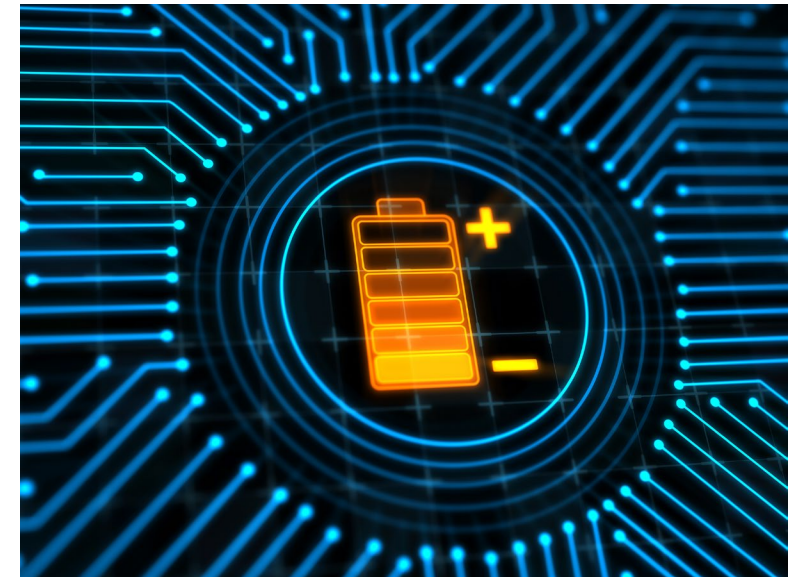
Have You
Met My
Friend ...

An Era of Unprecedented Challenges

- Climate crisis
- COVID pandemic
- Mental health crisis
- Globalization
- Geopolitical impacts
- Advancing technology
- Demographic shifts: workers who were “born digital”
- Shifting individual priorities
- Excessive inflation
- Shrinking labor force
- Potential economic recession
- Enhanced civil discourse

Coupled with Behavioral Changes

- Constant connectivity
- Demand for immediate gratification
- Excessively limited attention span
- Embraced isolationism



An Era of Unprecedented Challenges

Not to mention...

- Dual-working households
- Child/Elder/Dependent Care
- Being a parent, friend, sibling, child, member of society ...



A night sky filled with stars, with a prominent bright star in the upper center. The sky transitions from a deep blue at the top to a dark orange glow near the horizon, suggesting a sunset or sunrise. Below the horizon, the dark silhouettes of mountain ranges are visible, with some distant lights scattered across the landscape.

Purpose – Our North Star

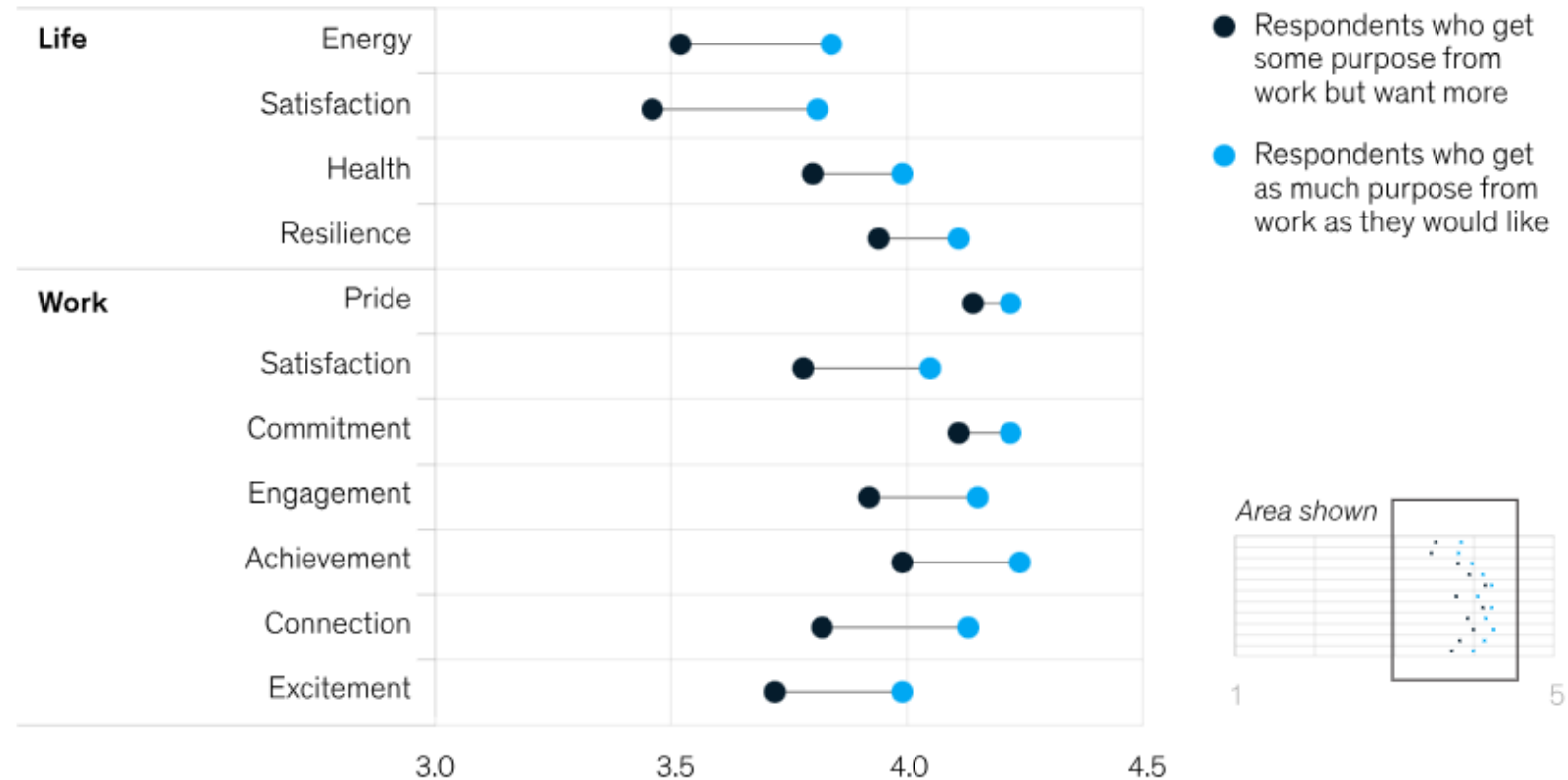
Purpose Matters

- According to [McKinsey research](#), 70% of employees said that their sense of purpose is defined by their work.
- Per [Gallup](#), improving the connection between employees' jobs and the mission or purpose of their organization can lead to a 32% reduction in turnover and a 15% improvement in productivity.
- Research by the [University of Sussex](#) found when leaders demonstrated clear purpose—vision, commitment to stakeholders and strong morals—their people were happier and more productive.

Purpose Matters

Employees who get the purpose they want from work report better outcomes at work—and in life—than their less-satisfied peers.

Purpose in day-to-day work,¹ score (5 = high, 1 = low)





People want to know their work matters and that their employer makes a difference in the world.



Our lives often come down to an infinite quest of finding purpose ... let's rediscover yours.

Rediscovering Your Purpose



What makes you want to come to work every day?



Why do you work in Human Resources?



Why do you have the job/role that you do?



Why do you work at the organization you're at?



Your Team's Purpose

HOMEWORK

- What is your team's purpose? Why does your function exist within the organization?
- Discuss this with your team, and how your team supports your college/university, how they connect to the mission, how their work makes someone's life better or someone's job easier.
- Create a purpose document – and revisit it regularly!



Connecting Your Purpose

Reflect on where you see meaningful connections between your purpose and the work you do daily. Consider how your specific contributions support not just your team, but the broader organizational mission. What aspects of your role energize you and give you a sense that your work matters?



Reinforcing Your Purpose

- What are ways that you can regularly reinforce your purpose and hold yourself accountable in your pursuit of it?



Balance Drives Success

The Importance of Balance

- Per [Harvard](#), recent studies have found that people who work more than 55 hours every week are 1.66 times more likely to get depression and 1.74 times more likely to suffer from anxiety.
- Per [Korn Ferry](#), four out of five employees in a new global workplace well-being survey say they are not thriving at work. More than half of those surveyed say they are struggling with stress, aren't happy with their jobs, and don't feel their work has purpose.
- According to the [WHO](#), an estimated 12 billion working days are lost every year globally to depression and anxiety at a cost of US\$ 1 trillion per year in lost productivity.

Finding Joy

Simple pleasures in your daily life

- What are 3 or more small, everyday moments that bring you genuine joy? Perhaps it's a peaceful walk in nature, laughing at your favorite show, or catching up with a friend over drinks. Which little joys brighten your days?

Special Experiences in life

- Now list 3 or more special experiences that bring you genuine joy - think concerts by your favorite artists, travel adventures to places you've always wanted to visit, or treating yourself to something you've been eyeing for a while. What are the meaningful indulgences that light you up?





Finding Joy

- Prioritize time **each day** for the simple pleasures that energize you. These moments of personal happiness aren't luxuries, but essential parts of your wellbeing.
- As for those special experiences that bring deeper fulfillment, aim to **incorporate one every few months** in whatever way feels meaningful and sustainable for your life.

Scale Tippers

Take 5 minutes to identify workplace factors that:

- **Drain your productivity:** What processes, tasks, or interactions consistently slow you down or create unnecessary steps?
- **Impact your wellbeing:** Which aspects of your work environment or responsibilities create additional stress that follows you beyond working hours?
- **Challenge your boundaries:** What regularly interferes with your ability to disconnect and maintain healthy work-life integration?
- **Prevent your best work:** Which obstacles keep you from delivering the quality and impact you know you're capable of?

Scale Tippers

Collaborate and Resolve

- At your tables, share your lists of scale tippers and discuss ideas to minimize and/or eliminate them.

BALANCE RESTORATION PROJECT

A top-down view of several hands of various skin tones, each holding a small green seedling with dark soil. The hands are arranged in a circle, creating a sense of unity and collective effort. The background is dark, making the hands and plants stand out.

Balance Restoration

Group Report Outs



Balance Restoration

Write down as many scale
tippers and balance
restorations that resonate with
you.



Happiness Thieves

HOMEWORK

- Take time to reflect on factors in your **personal life** that are stealing your ability to find joy.
- Brainstorm practical steps you can take to address each challenge and reclaim your happiness.

Reinforcing Your Joy

Identify Your Happiness Advocates

Choose two supportive individuals who can help you stay committed to prioritizing happiness:

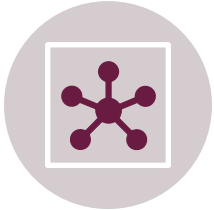
1. A trusted person from your **personal life** who understands your values and will gently remind you to make time for what truly matters.
2. A **respected colleague** who can both celebrate your workplace wins and help you maintain perspective when challenges arise.



Takeaways



Your Purpose



Purpose Alignment



Reinforcing Your Purpose



Items That Bring You Joy



Scale Tippers and Balance Restorations



Happiness Advocates

Extra Credit: Prepare a presentation for yourself



A photograph taken from inside a dark cave, looking out through a jagged opening. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright starburst effect and casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. The landscape outside consists of layered mountain ranges and a body of water in the distance. A small figure of a person stands on a rocky outcrop in the foreground, looking out over the vista. The overall mood is one of awe and inspiration.

Don't just exist ... LIVE!



THANK YOU!!



Jake Lathrop

Assistant Director, Talent & Strategic
Partnerships at Michigan State University

