



EMPOWERING PEOPLE TO DO MORE, BE GREAT, LOVE
WORK & REALISE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

 **OPTIMISM**

 **FOCUS**

 **CREATIVITY**

 **ACTION**

 **PURPOSE**

 **ENERGY**

The **Optimism** Advantage

The happy secret to performance, productivity and success

by Stuart Baldwin

OPTIMISM ID

It's not the events that happen to us that define our happiness and success, but how we interpret them.

The OPTIMISM power teaches 2, key mind-sets to make the most of this fundamental truth. Firstly, ACCEPT - the ability to accept 'it is what it is', to understand that there's nothing we can do about the things we cannot control or to change events of the past, and that worrying about them will simply make us less effective. And secondly, SHIFT the

ability to shift our thinking about these events – to stop worrying and focus on what we want.

When we do this, the results are staggering. Optimists live **20%** longer. Are **31%** more productive. Are **3** times more creative and **10** times more engaged at work.

And companies with an optimistic outlook? More successful in every metric that matters.

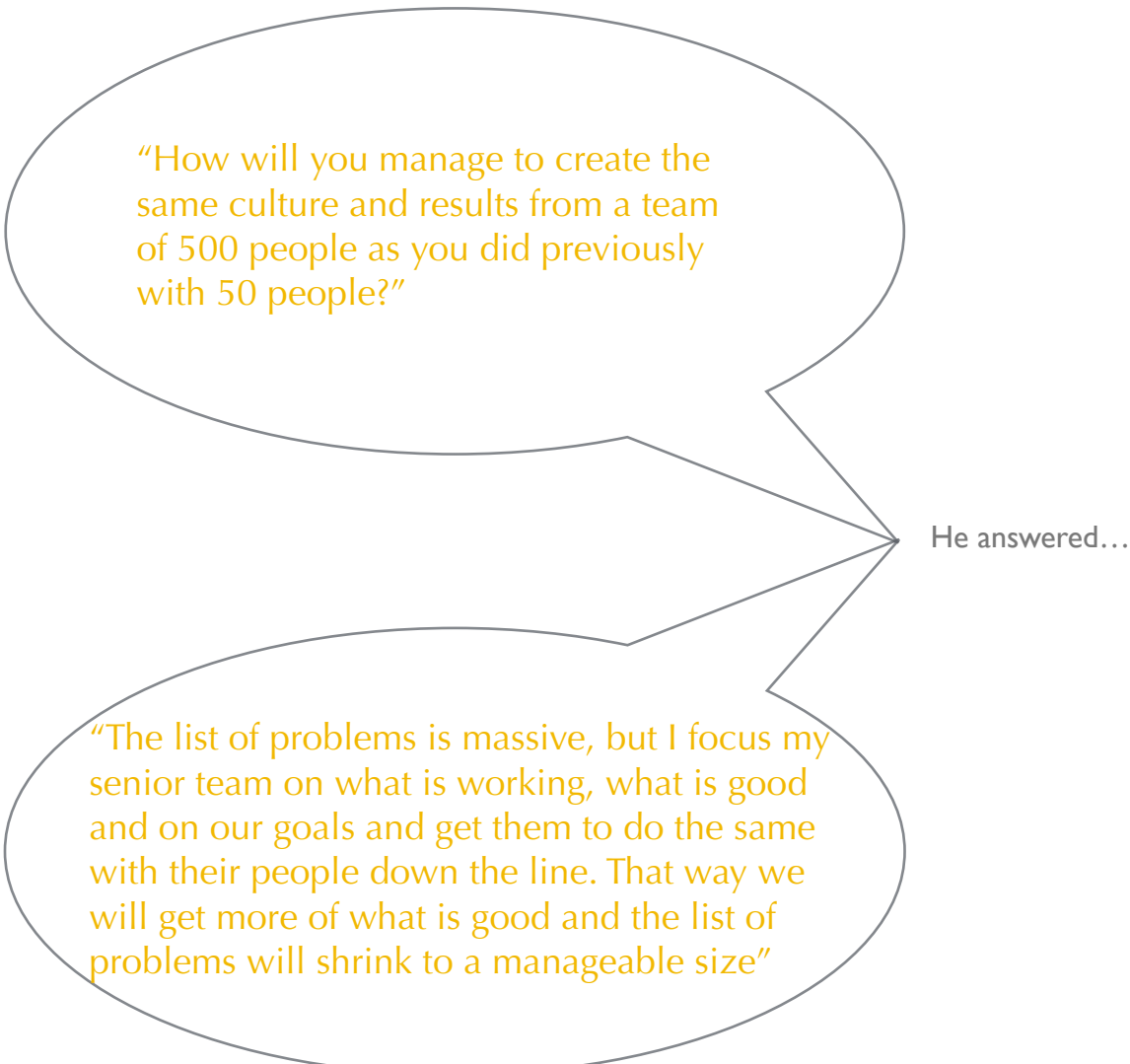
In 2010 a client of mine was changing jobs, he had been incredibly successful leading 50 people, and now the organisation was giving him an entire division with 500 people.

This guy was famous for really getting the best out of people and for creating amazing cultures; he has the personal touch. He was, however, now going into a business that had many urgent problems.

In this kind of high-pressure situation the approach of many leaders would be to hassle their people with problems and demands, ramping up everyone's anxiety level, triggering the

part of their brain that deals with threats, creating a fight or flight response and preventing use of the prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain responsible for effective problem solving).

So I asked him...



"How will you manage to create the same culture and results from a team of 500 people as you did previously with 50 people?"

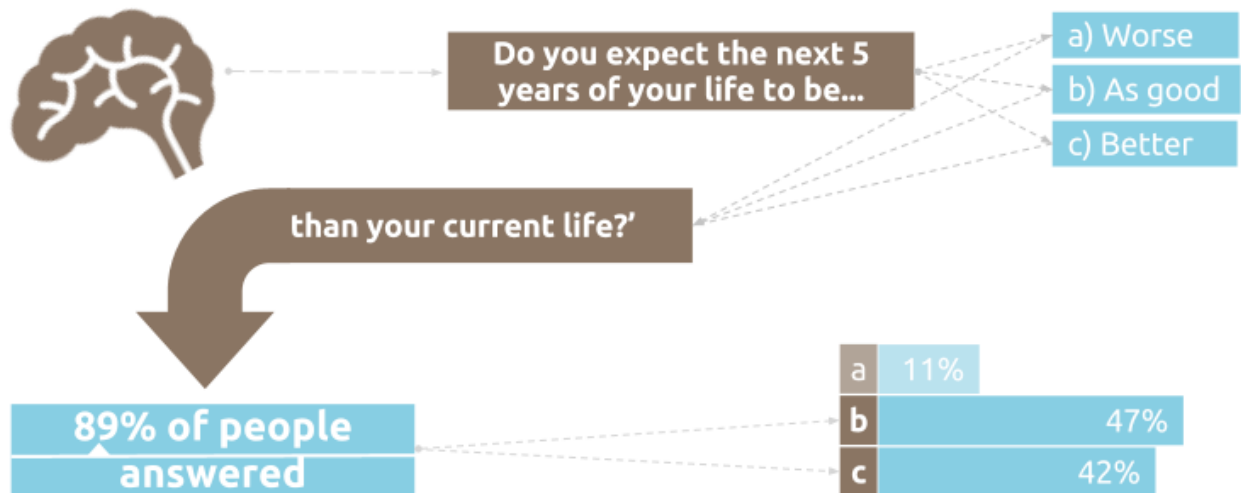
He answered...

"The list of problems is massive, but I focus my senior team on what is working, what is good and on our goals and get them to do the same with their people down the line. That way we will get more of what is good and the list of problems will shrink to a manageable size"

The result should not be a surprise, performance increased and the team went from around the lowest to the highest engagement scores in the company in 18 months. People perform at their best when they are focused optimistically on constructive goals, not fears and failures.

Optimism Drives Performance

In 2009 Gallop polled 150,000 adults in virtually every country in the world and asked them the following question:



Most people are essentially optimistic, scientists believe it's a survival skill programmed in to our reptilian brain from our cave man past; we needed to be able to deal with problems in a constructive way otherwise we would have become extinct.

with dopamine, a chemical that lights up the learning centres of our brain. We have wide access to our subconscious mind which we need in order to have ideas and invent solutions and we sparkle; connecting with and influencing other people.

Optimism is a massive driver of performance. When in a positive state our brains are flooded

In 1985 Dr. Martin Seligman found that

Sales people at the Met Life company who scored above average for Optimism sold 37% more insurance than those who scored below.

He tested 500 first year students at the University of Pennsylvania and found that their optimism test scores were a better predictor of actual future grades, than looking at any of their past exam results.

An experiment at Yale University in 1998 had an actor planted in groups of professional people given a business task. In four different groups the actor behaved either optimistically, relaxed, depressed or hostile. The actor was able to infect the group with his emotion, in the group where he was optimistic the task was completed better, quicker and more accurately.

Even in a highly technical IT firm the SEI emotional intelligence assessment showed optimism was responsible for 18% of a person's job performance.

What drives Optimism?

OPTIMISM

It's not the **events** that happen to us that **defines** our happiness and success. but how we **interpret** them. The **stories** we tell ourselves.

Stuart Baldwin

Developing Optimism in Yourself

The practical skills that drive optimism I like to think of as 'constructive thinking', our ability to think in a way that helps us rather than hurts us.

Easy to say, but hard to do in the moment. Watch your own thoughts and notice how often your thinking is 'that's a nightmare', 'they're idiots', 'this is frustrating me' or 'I can't do this'.

Constructive thinking is a mindset:

Firstly the ability to accept 'it is what it is'; to understand there's nothing we can do about things we can't control or to change events of the past, and that worrying or getting frustrated about them will simply make us less effective.

And secondly, the ability to manage the stories in our heads. To shift our thinking about these events. To stop worrying and focus on what we want, on outcomes and solutions rather than problems, blame or negativity. When we do, we start to take constructive actions (no matter how small) with the belief our actions will make a difference.

In the Live BIG practice, this is the Tool we call 'SHIFT'. If you want to play with and practice this SHIFT Tool:

1. Make a list of any current work or life problems no matter how small
2. Then think: Looking at each problem can I say, 'it is what it is'. If the problem is out of your control, in your control, or brings unhelpful feelings, it's probably a good idea to let go of focusing on what's wrong.
3. Then ask yourself: 'What do I want?' Specifically what you want to think, feel, achieve or do around each problem. Re-write them as positively focused thoughts, feelings, outcomes or actions.
4. Then throw away the list of problems.

Doing this on paper helps you to practice the SHIFT thinking. Ultimately, the aim is to do this in your head every time a challenge or problem comes up, not to dwell on it, but to accept it is what it is, ask 'what do I want?' And focus on that instead



If you want to develop more optimism the single most important thing is awareness. Start noticing how you are thinking and talking moment by moment, become highly aware of your thought and speech patterns observing when they are helpful and when they are harmful. This will naturally lead you to ask the

question, ‘what do I want?’ and enable you to make a choice in that moment about how you want to feel and what you can do. Shifting your thinking repeatedly over time creates new neural pathways, a new habit of optimism, enabling you to be resilient, positive in the face of problems, and confident, energised and happy.

So remember, **OPTIMISM** is about 2, key mind-sets:

ACCEPT - Firstly, the ability to accept ‘it is what it is’; to understand that there’s nothing we can do about the things we can’t control or to change events of the past, and that worrying about them will simply make us less effective.

SHIFT - Secondly, the ability to shift our thinking about these events. Manage the stories in our heads and focus on what we want, on outcomes and solutions rather than problems, blame or negativity.



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