

# THE ENGAGEMENT POCKETBOOK

Douglas Miller

*Drawings by Phil Hailstone*

"Bursting with sparkling insights, tips and techniques that can have an immediate impact on you and your workplace. Douglas Miller has gathered together a treasure trove of practical ideas that will equip managers with the tools to engage and energise their people."

**Dr Christian J. van Nieuwerburgh, Associate Professor, Leadership, Organisations and Behaviour, Henley Business School**

"Describes in simple terms the key principles all managers should have in mind to gain additional team and individual performance without sophisticated incentive mechanisms or PhDs in cognitive behaviour. The author's ideas are useful pragmatic reminders of what management is all about: doing everything we can to ensure our employees remain energised by what we ask them to do, and ultimately developing them and our businesses."

**Pierre Lebleu, Head of Human Resources, International IDEA**

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# INTRODUCTION

## INTRODUCTION

# THE JOY OF CONNECTION



In work, as in life, there are few more joyous feelings than being immersed in what you are doing. Productive, unstressed, fulfilled, timeless, stimulated and energised are just some of the things we feel when this connection occurs. You've probably had it at times in your own life. It's worth taking a few moments, before you read on, to think about when that feeling has occurred for you and why it was so. The reasons why this happened to you are likely to be broadly similar for other people too.

There are some simple but highly effective core principles you can apply that can have a really substantial impact on the level of engagement in your team. The purpose of this Pocketbook is to bring these core principles together in the form of the memorable acronym SPARC and to show you how, as a manager, you can practically apply these principles, with huge benefits for your team, department and your organisation.

## INTRODUCTION

# FIVE REASONS FOR ENGAGEMENT



1. **Productivity** – if you have a team of engaged people they are likely to be much more productive too. And the quality of work goes up.
2. **Humanity** – it's fundamentally wrong that in this short life we should feel anything other than immersed in what we do whenever possible.
3. **Creativity** – any organisation dies without ideas. There's a good chance that your most engaged people are the most curious (think of those 'who, what, why, where, when, how' questions that the curious ask). Creativity is the outcome of curiosity.
4. **Legitimacy** – your legitimacy as a manager is so important. You lose it if your personal style prevents people performing at their best (which is what engagement helps them to do).
5. **Practicality** – engagement works. It delivers results.

Productivity

Humanity

Creativity

Legitimacy

Practicality

## INTRODUCTION

# ENGAGEMENT & IMMERSION



True engagement leads to absolute psychological immersion in whatever it is you are doing.

That immersion may be physical, cognitive (thought) or emotional – or all three – but it comes from a psychological attachment to the task being performed.

There isn't a leader, manager or co-ordinator anywhere who would deny that true engagement/immersion is what they seek from those from whom they want the best performance. And, as individuals, it is what we want for ourselves.

**But, engagement is also about something much bigger than the level of immersion in one task, however powerful, productive and seductive that state can be.**



## INTRODUCTION

# TRUE ENGAGEMENT & IMMERSION



- Imagine what a workplace would be like – what your own team would be like – if this true psychological immersion was a permanent state of individual and collective ‘being’
- The ideal is that this immersion should be a continual living experience rather than a succession of task-based one-offs
- Realists, however, will say that in the context of work a succession of immersive experiences are as much as we can hope for

So, decide what you want from your team. In many organisations even occasional immersive experiences are a significant improvement on what many people experience now. What's realistic, and what might you be able to achieve if you focus, above all, on bringing about an increase in engagement?

## INTRODUCTION



### THE SPARC – WHO BENEFITS?

The main focus of this Pocketbook is to give front-line, junior and middle managers practical tools they can use on a day-to-day basis to secure better job engagement. These tools are grouped into five principles contained within the acronym SPARC, which are outlined on page 13 and then developed throughout the book.

Others who have an interest in helping managers secure better job engagement will also benefit. These include:

- HR managers, officers and business partners looking for guidance to help them develop better managers
- Trainers preparing courses on leadership, motivation and job engagement
- Business coaches and mentors helping leader/ managers to manage more personally and to develop action plans based around the five SPARC elements

The highly personalised nature of the SPARC will also help any of those working with the fabled Generation Y and the Millennials, who are generally more selective about where they apply their best efforts.





# INTRODUCING THE SPARC

# INTRODUCING THE SPARC BACKGROUND



As a manager you want people to perform at their best. To do this you need to act on the factors shown by research to be the driving force behind true job engagement. Those factors coalesce in the SPARC acronym. So what is the SPARC?

- The SPARC is a memorable acronym that concentrates specifically on the five principles that provide the route to true engagement
- You can think of these principles as the route to a more emotional connection with what someone does but...
- ...using the word 'emotional' should not make the SPARC sound soft and non-specific because of its connection with deeper feelings. It's a practical tool for managers
- The SPARC is universal – but the way the five principles play out are deeply personal

## INTRODUCING THE SPARC

## THE FIVE UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLES



So, what does the acronym stand for?

**S** **Self-determined:** the level of control I have over how, when, where and with whom I do what I am doing – I am *liberated*

**P** **Purposeful:** how much I need to know why I am doing what I am doing – it's *clear* to me why I am doing this

**A** **Authentic:** how regularly what I am doing allows me to be the real 'me' – I have a means of *self-expression*

**R** **Rewarding:** how much I am satisfied spiritually, emotionally and financially – I can answer the '*what's in it for me?*' question

**C** **Challenging:** the degree to which I need continually evolving development and growth – I am *learning*

## About the Author

### Douglas Miller

Douglas is a trainer, team retreat facilitator and author who has worked in 30 countries across four continents over the last decade.

He is the author of nine books including two other Pocketbooks: *Nurturing Innovation* and *Positive Mental Attitude*. His book *The Luck Habit*, has been published in fourteen languages.

As a trainer he works extensively for United Nations agencies, especially UNICEF, and for the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Douglas is also a prominent trainer in the European finance sector especially for The European Central Bank and The European Investment Bank. His special subjects include leadership, teamworking/ building, communication, problem solving and positive psychology. He is a qualified coach.



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