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The Team Morale Lifecycle: From Bad to Good

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Student Research Symposium

The Team Morale Lifecycle: From Bad to Good

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Abstract

Building and maintaining high levels of morale is key to the performance of a successful organization. The purpose of this paper is to explore the lifecycle of morale for employees and team members. We examined the question of how to take their morale from bad, to good to continuing excellence. Though much research has been performed on each of these topics in isolation, we found no research that covered the entire morale lifecycle in a holistic way. To explore the morale lifecycle, we performed a review of academic and professional literature, focusing on identifying the signs, effects and causes of bad morale, techniques for curing morale once it has gone bad, and methods of building and maintaining morale. The signs of bad morale are myriad and can have a widespread negative effect on an entire organization. Curing bad morale requires a focused effort that involves the application of specific management techniques. Building and maintaining morale requires a continuation of the methods used for the cure of bad morale as well as continual application of several principles, which include management techniques, team building, and specific hiring practices. We found that bad morale can be rebuilt after identifying, understanding, and properly addressing issues that caused a failure cascade, and that specific techniques can be used to build and maintain morale levels over time.

Keywords: teams, team building, morale, low morale, morale lifecycle, morale improvement, management, communication



- Causes
- Effects
- Solutions
- Preventions

Results

EMPLOYEES WHOSE MANAGERS ARE OPEN AND APPROACHABLE ARE MORE ENGAGED

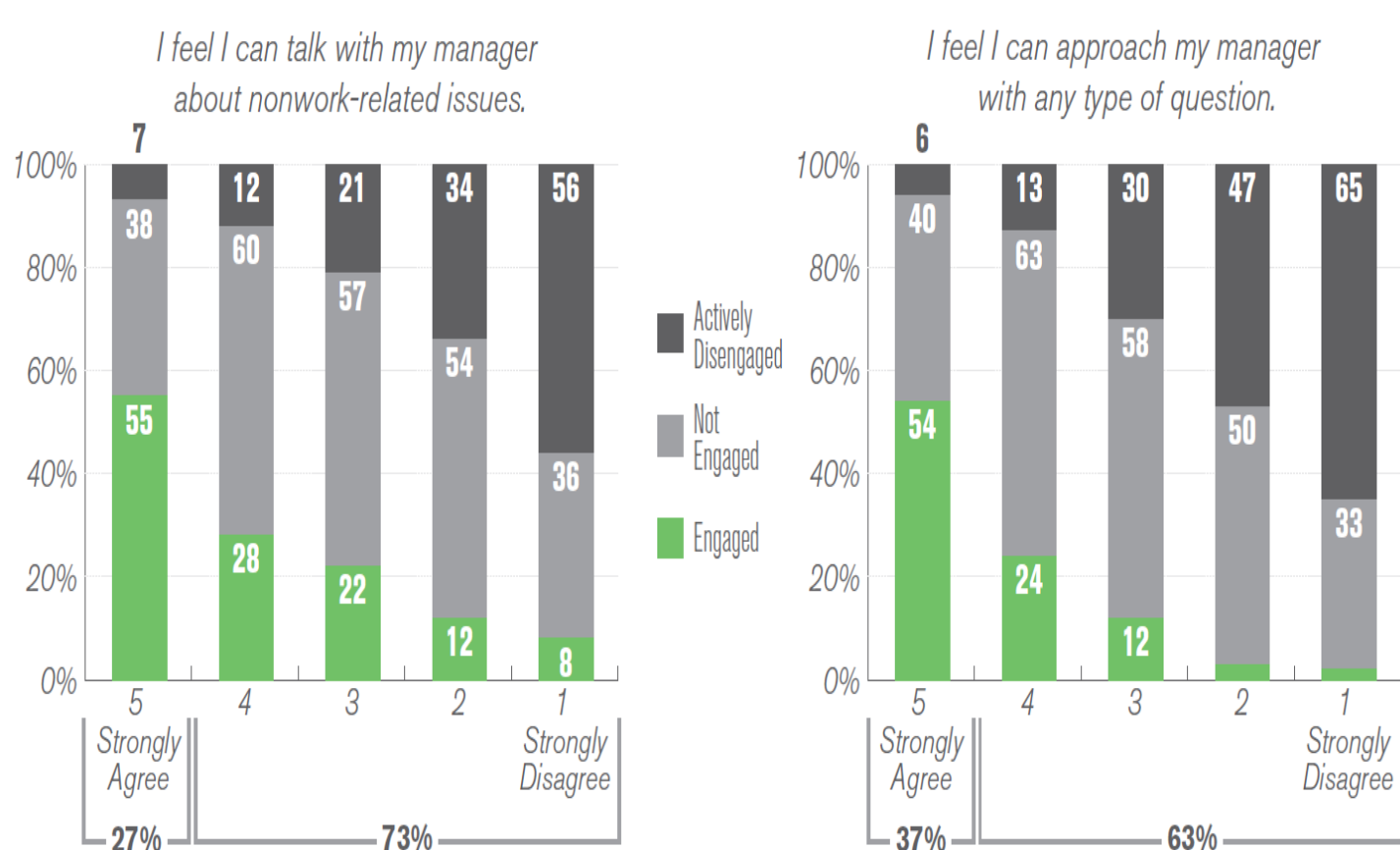


Figure 1: Employees Whose Managers Are Open and Approachable Are More Engaged. From Gallup. (2015, p. 19)

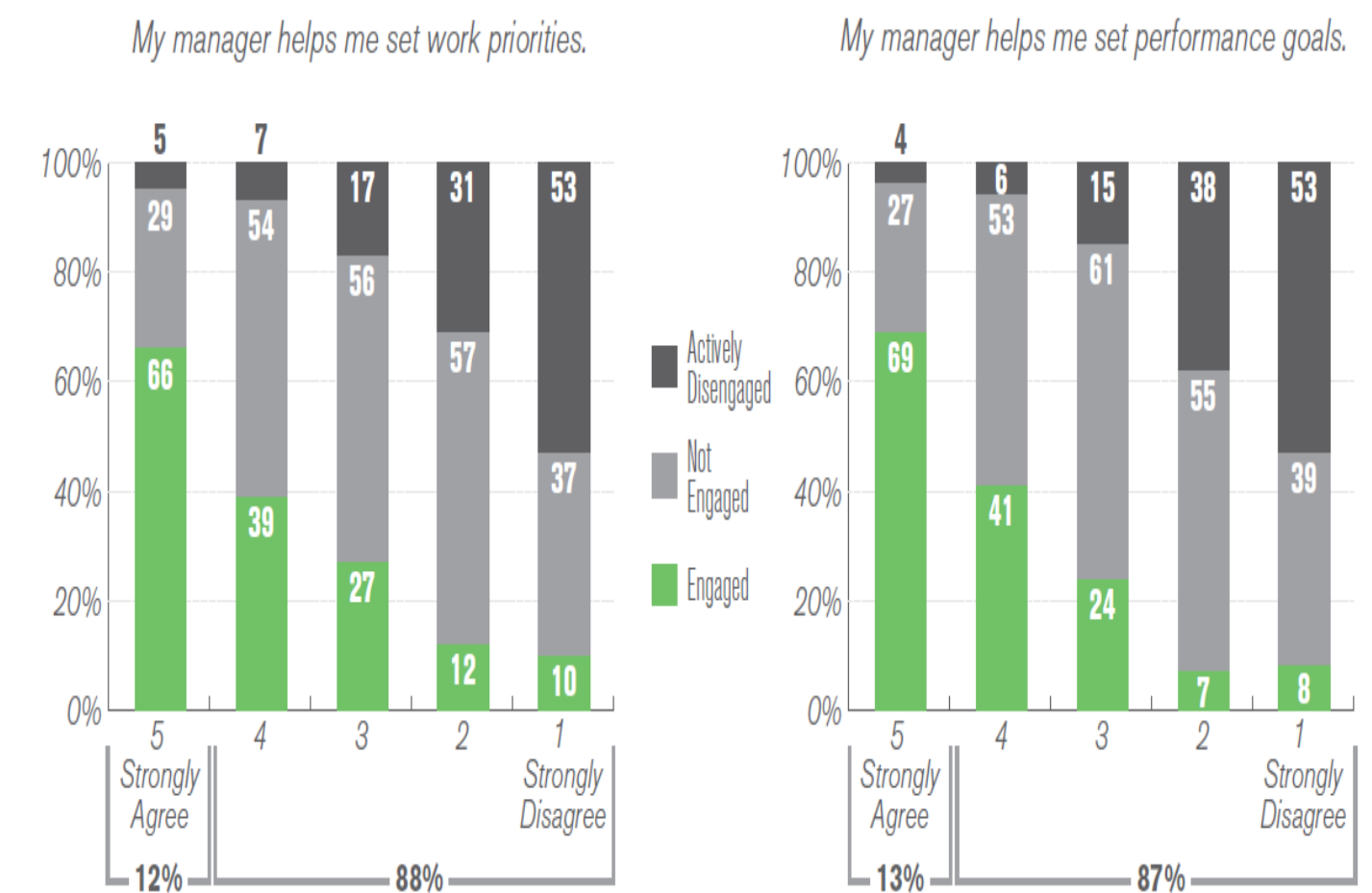


Figure 2: Employees Whose Managers Help Them Set Work Priorities and Goals Are More Engaged. From Gallup. (2015, p. 20)

EMPLOYEES WHOSE MANAGERS FOCUS ON THEIR STRENGTHS ARE MORE ENGAGED

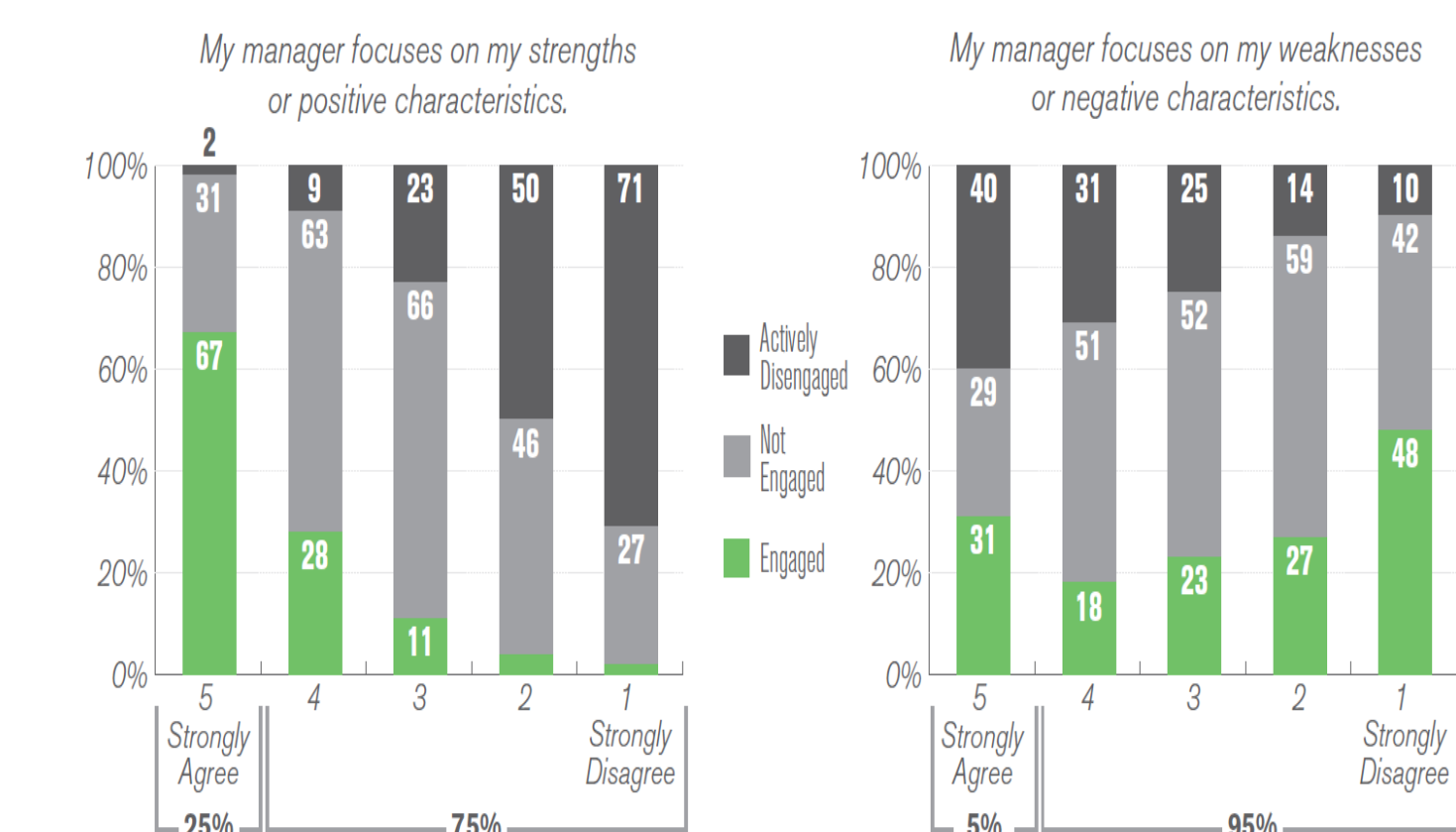


Figure 3: Employees Whose Managers Focus on Their Strengths Are More Engaged. From Gallup. (2015, p. 21)

Table 1 Summary statistics of the treatment TAQ subscales

		Leadership	Trust& Respect	Reward& Recognition	Customer Focus	Decision Making	Team Work	Total
	N	180	180	180	180	180	180	
T1	X	17.47	21.62	16.70	18.83	17.93	19.20	111.75
	S	2.80343	2.53087	2.36100	3.08628	2.92284	3.02946	
T2	X	25.21	27.78	26.23	23.87	26.23	30.86	
	S	1.87216	1.66648	2.35372	1.67265	2.35372	2.15884	155.11
T2-T1	Mean of Diff	7.74	6.16	9.53	5.04	8.30	11.66	43.36

Figure 5: Summary of TAQ Outcomes Before (T1) and After (T2) Team Building Exercises. From N. Sarason, S. Khandelwal. (2015, p. 9)

Table 3 Summary statistics of the Control TAQ subscales

		Leadership	Trust & Respect	Reward & Recognition	Customer Focus	Decision Making	Team Work
	n	120	120	120	120	120	120
T1	X	16.5500	21.7667	17.0667	18.1500	17.2167	18.0083
	S	3.31498	1.99156	1.87103	2.08301	2.18790	2.62021
T2	x	16.5667	21.7583	17.0583	18.2500	17.0250	18.3167
	s	3.34245	2.01145	1.88641	2.09301	2.81929	2.71909
T2-T1	Mean of Diff	.0167	.00833	-.0084	.1000	.1917	.3064

Figure 6: Summary of TAQ Outcomes Without Team Building Exercises (control group). From N. Sarason, S. Khandelwal. (2015, p. 9)

Methods and Materials

In order to create a suitable reference guide for managing the lifecycle of morale, our team conducted a thorough investigation into academic and business literature. From this research we noted several significant areas where the literature was focused. The literature review section below begins with identifying the existence of bad morale and the potential things that could cause it. We then follow it to its natural product, the effects of bad morale. Many studies in this area indicated the effects poor morale in cross functional teams can have on the team's performance [6]. The third step, curing bad morale, had less research but largely revolved around conflict management. Finally the last step of the lifecycle is preventing bad morale and maintaining good morale.

Conclusions

The intent of this research project was to review academic and professional literature to map the lifecycle of morale in the workplace from identifying signs of poor morale, through a morale failure cascade, into recovery, and maintaining good morale in the future. The importance of actively managing morale in the workplace cannot be understated. Issues of morale can lead to a cascade of failures that undermine an organization's ability to perform its basic tasks, and can lead to failed projects and outright loss of business. The literature shows that team trust and cohesion can be rebuilt after identifying, understanding, and properly addressing issues that caused a morale failure cascade. This research can serve as a reference and solutions guide for managers navigating issues of morale in the workplace.

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