

LEADERSHIP > CAREERS

Mattering: It's Good For Business And For Every Relationship

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Let's explore

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something that seems to be getting more attention every day: the issue of “mattering.”

For most of us, to matter means to be noticed, to be cared for, to be important to others.

There's no doubt that a person's feeling that they matter is directly tied to their ability to thrive.

Dr. Zach Mercurio understands this better than most.

He's author of *The Power of Mattering: How Leaders Can Create a*



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Culture of Significance.

As a
psychologist
and
researcher,
Mercurio
explores one of
the most
overlooked
forces in
leadership and
culture—the
human need to
feel seen,
heard, and
valued. His
groundbreaking
work reveals
how a hidden
epidemic of
insignificance
is quietly
eroding
engagement,
trust, and
performance in
organizations,
and what
leaders can do
to reverse it.

Drawing from the emerging science of mattering and his experience with hundreds of teams, Mercurio introduces a practical framework for creating cultures of significance.

Whether you're a seasoned executive, a new manager, or you simply want to be more effective in your personal relationships, this man's insights are well worth your attention.

Mercurio says mattering is

different from
self-worth or
self-esteem
because it's a
reflection of
appraisals of
us by other
humans.


“Self-worth is
my own belief
in my worth,”
Mercurio says.


“But to have
that belief
sustained, I
must see
evidence of my
significance in
my
environment.

Mattering is a
survival
instinct. It's a
basic need. It's
the experience
of feeling
significant to
those around
us that comes
from feeling
valued and
adding value.”

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Mercurio says our society is experiencing a mattering deficit. This is reflected in studies that show 30% of employees say they feel “invisible” at work and 80% of workers feel lonely.

“But loneliness is not an outcome of being alone,” Mercurio says. “It’s an outcome of feeling insignificant to

those around
you.”



What's
the
impact
on

Dr. Zach

Mercurio

organizations?

“When people
have low
quality
interpersonal
relationships,
they withdraw,
they ‘quiet
quit,’ and
that’s not good
for anyone,”

Mercurio says.

“We see people
withholding
information,
not speaking
up with ideas,
showing
diminished
energy on
projects. These
are all signals
of withdrawal
that can evolve
into

complaining,
blaming, and
gossiping. A lot
of toxic
behaviors are
actually the
language of the
unheard and
unseen. It's
people
clamoring to
have their
voices heard
and their ideas
and hard-
earned
expertise
matter.”



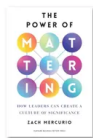
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Disengagement
is of course a
symptom of
not mattering.
“For the past
20 years,
Gallup has
been telling us
how
disengaged

we've been,
and last year it
was the lowest
it's been in a
decade,"
Mercurio says.
"This is despite
well-being
programs,
DEO
programs, and
despite
employee
engagement
becoming a
billion-dollar
industry. Only
four in ten
people say
someone at
work cares
about them as
a person, and
just 30% say
someone at
work invests in
and sees their
uniqueness.
This is not a
disengagement
crisis, it's a
mattering

deficit.”

Some people seek significance through achievement, Mercurio says, but this pursuit of being impressive is ultimately unfulfilling.



“Achievements come and go,” he says. “This happened to a lot of people in the pandemic. They tied their identity to what they were doing in their job and when that went away so did their sense of self.

Any time you tie your identify or your worth to something, it will disappoint you because it's transient.

However, when you build relationships in which you can see how you matter to other people, you can see how you're adding value.

The opportunity to add value never goes away. You may not be able to accomplish the things on your to-do list today, but you will always have the opportunity to contribute to

another
human being
in simple
interactions.”

Mercurio cites
studies
showing that
“people who
have more
compassionate
and more
contribution-
centered goals
see how they
matter to
others and are
happier,
healthier, and
less anxious.”

He tells the
story of his
102-year-old
grandfather
who has sent
him birthday
cards every
year since he
was a young
boy. He would
include a small
amount of

cash. But the most memorable part was his handwritten note: “How do you improve the moment you’re in?” In other words, would the growing boy choose to generate more energy and caring in daily moments or would he choose to extract from them?

Mercurio says one of the strongest predictors of people’s feeling that they matter is adding value to other people.

Mattering

clearly matters
—in terms of
the prosperity
of
organizations
and in terms of
the personal
relationships
that bring joy
to life.

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