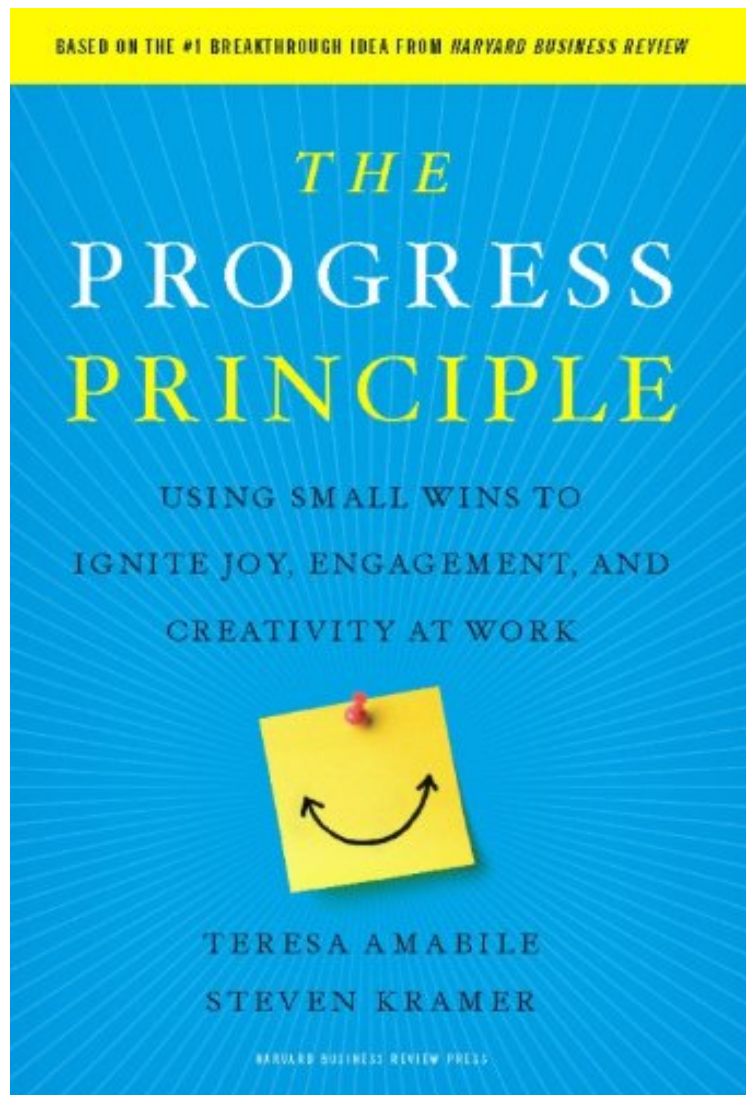


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## The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work

*Teresa Amabile, Steven Kramer*  
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**Teresa Amabile, Steven Kramer : The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Progress Principle: Using Small Wins to Ignite Joy, Engagement, and Creativity at Work:

120 of 125 people found the following review helpful. A Masterpiece  
By Robert I. Sutton  
I read an advance copy of The Progress Principle several months back, and I just went back and read the book again. I am even more impressed this time than the last. Four things struck me in particular:  
1. While most management books are based on anecdotes,

the biased recollections of some famous executives, or on research that is presented as rigorous (but are not... Good to Great is a perfect example), the Progress Principle is based on the most rigorous field study ever done of creative work. And it draws on other rigorous work as well. As a result, the overall advice about the importance of small wins may be known to many people, but once you start digging into the smaller bits of advice about how to keep work moving along, the evidence behind those is very strong. In my view, the Progress Principle is the best example of an evidence-based management book I have ever seen.<sup>2</sup> The authors didn't drown in their rigor and the details of their work. They worked absurdly hard to write a book that is quite engaging to read and chock full with one implication after another about what you can do right now to do more effective work and to motivate it in the people around you.<sup>3</sup> Finally, the main point of this book may seem obvious to some readers, but if you listen to most management gurus and fancy consulting firms, the approach that the authors suggest is actually radically different. The broad sweep of strategy and radical change and big hairy goals is where much of modern management advice focuses, yet the finding from this book that it is relentless attention to the little things and the seemingly trivial moments in organizational life that real makes for greatness is not something that most leaders and their advisers get, yet it is the hallmark of our most creative companies like Pixar, Apple, Google, IDEO and the like. The implication of The Progress Principle, for example, that management training should focus on how to deal with the little interactions and smallest decisions -- and that is what makes for great leaders and organizations -- would, if taken seriously, mean completely revamping the way that management is taught throughout the world. This book isn't a bag of breathless hype, it doesn't make grand and shocking claims, and it doesn't promise instant results. But it is fun and easy to read, it is as strongly grounded in evidence as any business book ever written, and it is relentlessly useful because it points to little things that managers, team members, and everyone else can do day after day to spark creativity and well-being. And it shows how those little things add-up to big victories in the end. I believe it is one of the most important business books ever written. In the name of full disclosure, I am friends with the authors and did endorse the book. But I am friends with a lot of authors, but when they write bad books, I decline endorsement requests, and as I did very recently, let them know that I think their books aren't very good. Yes, I am biased, but I believe that this book deserves to be a #1 bestseller.<sup>13</sup> of 13 people found the following review helpful. I was a member of the 95% who didn't know the #1 employee motivator...By D. Kanigan

The authors surveyed 100's of managers around the world and asked what motivated employees. They were startled to find that 95% of these leaders fundamentally misunderstood the most important source of employee motivation. It's not about getting the right people on the bus. Or about higher incentives. Or about athletic facilities and free child care. Their research has found that the best way to motivate people is by facilitating progress, even small wins. Yet managers surveyed, had ranked "supporting progress" as dead last as a work motivator. The authors conducted a rigorous analysis of nearly 12,000 daily diary entries provided by 200+ employees in 7 companies. They found that the best managers create a high quality of "inner work life" for their employees. Inner work life is about favorable and unfavorable perceptions employees have about their managers, the organization, the team, the work and even oneself. A positive inner work life determines whether the employee has the motivation to their best work - it determines their attention to tasks, the level of their engagement and their intention to deliver their best work. The authors found that there are 3 types of events that are particularly important in creating a positive inner work life: 1) Progress in meaningful work (e.g. small wins, breakthroughs, forward movement, goal completion), 2) Catalysts that directly help work (setting clear goals, allowing autonomy, providing resources, providing sufficient time, helping with the work, learning from problems and successes, allows ideas to flow), 3) Nourishers/interpersonal events (e.g. respect, encouragement, emotional support, affiliation/bonds of mutual trust appreciation) that uplift people doing the work. Research found that #1, progress in meaningful work, was the most important event in creating a positive inner work life. People's inner work lives seemed to lift or drag depending on whether or not their projects moved forward, even by small increments. Small wins often had a surprisingly strong positive effect, and small losses a surprisingly negative one. So, small actions to try to reduce daily hassles can make a big difference for inner work life and for overall performance. It's also important to note that small losses or setbacks were found to overwhelm small wins. Small everyday hassles hold more sway than small everyday supporting activities. Be sure that you are not the source of the obstacles. Negative team leader behaviors affect inner work life more broadly than positive team leader behaviors. And employees recall more negative team leader actions than positive events and do so more intensely and in more detail. Chapter 8 includes a Daily Progress Checklist which is worth the price of the book. A self assessment asking questions on Catalysts/Inhibitors, Nourishers/Toxins, the state of the Inner Work lives of your team and Action steps. e.g., Did the team have clear short term and long term goals for meaningful work or was there confusion? Did I give help when they needed it or did I fail to provide help? Did I show respect to team recognizing their contributions to progress or did I disrespect any team members? Did I encourage team members who have difficult challenges or discourage a member of the team in any way?) Bottom line, to harness the powerful force of the quality of your employees' inner work lives, you must ensure that consistent forward movement in meaningful work is a regular occurrence in your employees' work lives, despite the inevitable setbacks. The book was laborious to wade through but it has important findings, conclusions and recommendations which merit it being required reading for managers at all levels. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Good recommended book. Get it and read it,

especially if you manage other employees. By E.A. One of the best books of its kind, the progress principle discusses the importance of intrinsic motivation for employees, and specifically the feel of progress at work, that is more important than extrinsic rewards such as salary - over time. Here the manager has a lot of responsibility and following a simple set of guidelines, any manager can get his employees to be much more satisfied, and also productive (!) at work, so it's a win-win. Very much recommended.

What really sets the best managers above the rest? It's their power to build a cadre of employees who have great inner work lives consistently positive emotions; strong motivation; and favorable perceptions of the organization, their work, and their colleagues. The worst managers undermine inner work life, often unwittingly. As Teresa Amabile and Steven Kramer explain in *The Progress Principle*, seemingly mundane workday events can make or break employees' inner work lives. But it's forward momentum in meaningful work progress that creates the best inner work lives. Through rigorous analysis of nearly 12,000 diary entries provided by 238 employees in 7 companies, the authors explain how managers can foster progress and enhance inner work life every day. The book shows how to remove obstacles to progress, including meaningless tasks and toxic relationships. It also explains how to activate two forces that enable progress: (1) catalyst events that directly facilitate project work, such as clear goals and autonomy and (2) nourishers interpersonal events that uplift workers, including encouragement and demonstrations of respect and collegiality. Brimming with honest examples from the companies studied, *The Progress Principle* equips aspiring and seasoned leaders alike with the insights they need to maximize their people's performance.