



Wake Up Happy with Arthur Woods

HOST

Kym Yancey

SPEAKER

Arthur Woods

PRESENTATION

Kym

We're really going to be talking about purposeful work with Arthur Woods, an expert in this category. This is really going to be just fascinating, and I want to encourage you to if you're online or you're able to join our chat feel free to plug in there and send us in questions, that kind of thing, because we want you to be involved with this. Also, I want you to know that at any time I love hearing comments and feedback on how Wake up Happy is impacting you, so you can email me at wakeuphappy@livehappy.com. Alright, that's wakeuphappy@livehappy.com.

With that, let's get right into our special guest this morning, his name is Arthur Woods. He is an entrepreneur, speaker and writer on the future of

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work. He is the co-founder and COO of Imperative, the first professional platform to help people manage a fulfilling career.

Now, Arthur's deep expertise engaging the millennial generation has enabled him to lead both the conversation and innovation around the next generation of work. His efforts have been featured in *Forbes*, *Fast Company*, *Huffington Post*, *Washington Post* and in ABC 7's *Washington Business Tonight*.

With that, Arthur, I want to welcome you to Wake up Happy. Great to have you a part of our program this morning.

Arthur Hey, thanks, Kym. I appreciate it. It's good to be here.

Kym Arthur, let's get right into purposeful work. We were chatting earlier about the fact that especially so many young people will talk about, I'm looking for a job, I'm just looking for a paycheck but there's no— purposeful work I know, in ours circles around happiness, this is a huge thing understanding purpose and meaning. But I want to really have you just clarify, from your standpoint and your research, purposeful work; how that has become the main focus of the work that you do in helping people.

Arthur

Absolutely, Kym. That's a great question. I think a quick throwback and if we go back to the origin of work, work really used to be about everyone being a craftsman. Each person had a very specific role in the community, often had a different function than anyone else in the community, and work was their life and their craft was their livelihood. I think they got purpose from serving that vital role in the community whether they were blacksmiths, whether they were wood carvers, etc. I think work, in many ways, has evolved so much through efficiency, through information, through scale that we, in many ways dehumanize work, and we've started to focus way more on what we're producing instead of the experience that people have in their day-to-day jobs.

In light of us having so many virtual means through which we connect now, but not actually creating many, many channels through which people can form authentic connection. Work is becoming the primary mode through which I think people really want to experience something greater, and I think this is really why you're starting to see people prioritize purpose over a paycheck and over a promotion. They're really looking at what experience they're having, what impact are they making.

For us, we've seen relationships, impact and growth is the three prongs of purpose. If I have a deep sense of community, if I'm creating value and an impact every day and I'm getting out of my comfort zone and growing

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every day I have a sense of purpose. I think more and more, especially as the millennial generation is becoming the majority of the workforce for the next ten years, we're going to see purpose as the primary incentive that's fueling that generation.

Kym

Yes. I will say, when I think about my own life and I wonder with all of our listeners here this morning; when you think about the things where you've really succeeded or the things that really filled you up emotionally, I bet they were tied to purpose, a bigger purpose and a bigger meaning than a paycheck. Are you finding in your work with your company—in fact, this might be a good place for you just to describe what your team does at Imperative around purposeful work.

Arthur

Absolutely. Imperative is the first professional platform designed to help people maximize purpose in their work every day. We partner with forward-thinking organizations that want to empower their people. We've created the very first diagnostic that helps you find your drivers of purpose. We've had about 31,000 people go on to get their purpose drivers. This looks at the scale at which you work, the way you look at work and the approach that you take to solving problems that you fulfill every day.

What we've found in our research is that people often tell myths about purpose, one of which is, the only way that I will experience purpose is if I find a philanthropic cause, and [indiscernible] and causes we find are very fleeting, but the way that we intrinsically experience fulfillment is actually consistent throughout our changing functions and changing jobs and changing passions. This driver is diagnostically created to help you identify what those intrinsic drivers really are.

We've started to build out an assessment that actually helps organizations understand the state of purpose in their organization. One of the things that's assessing is this archetype that we've really been researching around a purpose-driven professional; one who consistently is prioritizing purpose above a paycheck and a promotion, and looks at work, the primary function of work, as creating value for myself and other people, not just paying myself to afford the life that I want outside of work or reaching the top of the ladder.

This purpose-driven professional, we've done a study already at University of Michigan and found two thirds of the student body prioritize purpose above a paycheck and a promotion. You can imagine as we think about the millennial generation entering the workforce there's a vastly great need for a new set of resources. Most of our professional development resources to date have been really designed around a career-oriented

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approach so this calling-oriented approach or this purpose-driven approach is really what's needed. Imperative is a company focused on the resources and strategies that help us get to a more purpose-driven workforce.

Kym Wow. Can you tell me, a person, what the difference would be if you were to look at two individuals and one who's there showing up with a purpose-driven philosophy and another person who's there for the paycheck in the same department. What makes you see as differences in how they approach their work?

Arthur Absolutely. The first thing is we find across the board that your purpose-driven professionals, if you want to call them calling-oriented or purpose-driven, are your top performers; they're also your lowest performers. We're finding that the people that believe work—the primary function of work is to create a purpose, and the work that I am doing right now is purposeful. They are your top performers, they're your rock stars, and across the board they have higher competencies; they're your stronger brand ambassadors; they're the people that are really the givers, not the takers, if you've read Adam Grant's work around give and take. They're really the members of society we want to have, the real leaders of companies.

We tend to find that the job and career-oriented people who are prioritizing a paycheck and a promotion respectably are more your middle performers, if we just purely looked at it on a performance scale, that's really where we see it breaking down.

Now, I think the question was, how do we see them showing up to work differently? I think the main thing is that people are going the extra mile when they believe the primary function of work it to create purpose and the existing job that they have is somewhat of a calling. These are these crazy, amazing stories that you hear of hospital janitors, and this is one that we reference a lot; hospital janitors that you really could just look at their jobs and say this is a fairly simple job, nothing too groundbreaking here, they just clean up the floors. But hospital janitors that come to the hospital every day and they don't say they clean up floors but they say they're here to create a safe patient experience.

What they do is they go above and beyond not only cleaning up the floors, but bringing humor to the patient experience, changing paintings around so that patients aren't looking at the same paintings every day and actually serving as translators between doctors and patients who don't speak the same languages. That's not written in a hospital janitor's job description, but those are examples of really going above and beyond because this is much more than just a paycheck, this job is a

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calling. I think we really see the purpose-driven professionals that have an alignment to their existing jobs as your real rock stars in a company.

Kym That is so intriguing, and I picture that. I think about the people that I work around, and those that really feel a connection to the purpose and the higher calling; how they approach it. It's almost like in any organization you know who those people are because of the way they show up, the way they interact. It's very, very fascinating.

Is this new language for people? Talk to me about it. You've been doing this, but your company is—how old is Imperative?

Arthur We're now two years old.

Kym Okay, three years old. Was there a tipping point, was there something with what you were doing that you said, we're going to move into this work? Did you see some kind of tsunami moving towards purpose and meaning, how people didn't understand it and didn't know how to plug into it? Tell us how you got to this point.

Arthur Absolutely. I had a very circuitous route. I was a serial entrepreneur in college working at socially conscious ventures. Started a nonprofit that trains college freshmen to launch their own socially conscious companies

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and then I actually had a massive fear of failure and I moved to San Francisco to get a job at Google, and started very much as a cog in the wheel, if you will, at Google. And finally [indiscernible] a more creative [indiscernible] job.

Largely what I realized as I was going through spurts of disengagement and a lack of fulfillment at Google I realized, here you have a company that does a tremendous job, to the best of their abilities, to do every extrinsic benefit you can image; free lunches, bikes, educational perks, you name it, creative desks, all things. But what I was yearning for more than anything was creative agency, it was a sense of real impact that I wasn't just a bricklayer, that I was doing something much greater than myself.

What I realized, it's really hard to broker these intrinsic benefits. It's complex, it's hard to measure, it's hard for companies to create resources that are scalable around that. What we realized in this process, and I think that's what Aaron Hurst, who was really the guy behind the pro bono service phase and started the Taproot Foundation. Aaron realized that everyone in Taproot that was doing this pro bono work said that pro bono was the most fulfilling part of their jobs.

When Aaron and I teamed up, I came from Google realizing the millennial generation is demanding something much greater than these perks and benefits be fulfilled every day. Aaron realized that we need to start making all work like pro bono work because it's the volunteer pro bono work on the side that is actually the most fulfilling to most professionals.

When we teamed up we realized it was not just about a [indiscernible] organizations to deliver these types of resources, but really empowering the individual; empowering the individual to uncover what really drives purpose for them and have the sense of agency and empowerment to act on it. We created a process we coined as job tailoring and that is tailoring aspects of your existing work, whether you're a hospital janitor or you're in a creative agency, and making your work more of a calling by really being constructive and taking action. Job tailoring was really done by those hospital janitors that were reframing their job and they were changing their approach to the tasks and responsibilities every day. If it's possible for a hospital janitor, we really believe it's possible for anyone, and it's a partnership between the employee and the company.

Ideally, if the company is empowered to create a more purposeful environment for people, and people are empowered individually

[indiscernible] action, I think we really start to see a seismic shift in the workforce.

Kym I have a couple questions that have come in here. "How do companies engage and recognize purpose-driven work performance?"

Arthur That's a great question. One barometer for us is to measure the extent to which people are experiencing relationships, impact and growth; deep relationships, a sense of impact and growth every day. You can really just ask your people, on a scale of one to ten from relationships, impact and growth, how are you doing? That's an interesting barometer that we find, actually, could go right on top of a manager one-on-one or a performance review.

I think another aspect for us to assess the extent to which people are already proactively job tailoring and the extent to which people are reporting a sense of alignment to their team; to their company; to their industry and their profession. You could see work as needing to be a calling, and the primary function of work being to create value, but if you don't realize that at your existing company then you're still stuck.

We tend to find that their aid [ph] is a hardwired view that people have toward work, and it's a story we really tell that largely is inherited from our

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of work for them is to create value. One question is, why are you coming to work; why are you really here? If people say, well, it's really about this exciting thing that I do outside of my job every day or you know, I'm really excited to climb the ladder to get to the top, I'm very ambitious. Those are the types of answers that don't really point toward a purpose-driven professional whose primary goal is to be fulfilled.

The types of people that we're speaking to are the people that say, this job is really my craft. I see the work that I do every day as really an expression of who I am. I believe the work that I do is to help other people, is to change society, it's to serve organizations. We tend to find that people—you can already start to read between the lines how people answer that question.

In general, in terms of a résumé, I think we have a real opportunity to start pushing for a more human-centered expression of who we are. Many professional platforms out there have built this up to be the polished billboard; only list your achievements, only show signs of strength. I think there's a chance to really humanize and create more authenticity around the way that we express ourselves. I think in a lot of ways it's sense of vulnerability.

We're actually really encouraging people on the platform Imperative.com you can get a purpose statement, and it really tells a quick little couple lines of the scale at which you work; how you solve problems; who you serve. We've started to work up some aspects of the environment where you thrive the most, aspects of your personality. List those on your résumés, you're North Star, your mission statement; it says a lot of who you are. Also, I think the people that are screening, starting to really screen for purpose-oriented professionals, it shows right away that this is something that's a priority for you.

I think it's a two-way street; employers asking the right questions to really probe for this, but also you proactively, as an employee applying to this job, expressing that purpose is what matters to you more than anything. The primary function you see is creating impact in this role. Those are the types of employees I think that are really going to shine, especially with organizations that are evolving who they're trying to attract.

Kym

Why do you think so many employees are unhappy? Gallup's done studies on this. They were saying that it was like 1% of employees say they love their jobs, love. What are your thoughts about that? What's happening, what awakening needs to take place in your mind for companies and employees to align so that there's more fulfillment and meaning in what they do?

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Arthur Yes. Yes, it's a great question, Kym, and I think it's on a number of fronts, the first of which is, companies have to start waking up to the fact that (A) their employees are their greatest resources. For the last 100 years, in so many ways plus, we've—companies have been treated as these permanent institutions that are bigger than any individual. My partner Aaron came out with a book last year called *The Purpose Economy*, and one of the points he made was that the average Fortune 500 company does not outlive the life of a human being. The average lifespan of a Fortune 500 company is about 50 years, which does not outlive the average human life.

Kym Yes.

Arthur Yet we treat organizations as these permanent institutions. Institutions, these institutions themselves treat employees as permanent fixtures. Reid Hoffman in his book *The Alliance* writes about the tour of duty and how we really need to start reframing the relationship between companies and their employees as more of a partnership in an alliance; that employees are not permanent fixtures, they instead are on a tour of duty and while they're here they need to be rotated to aligned opportunities that empower them and that really accentuate their

greatest qualities. That's really much more of the partnership model that has to be realized between employers and employees.

Part of it is, companies identifying that their people are their greatest resources and next realizing it's a partnership with these people. I think for employees it's starting to realize that your fulfillment is not binary. I get so many people that either say they love their job or they're looking for a new job, it's so binary. I'm either happy or I'm job searching. There's this massive grey area in the middle.

We could pick any analogy, whether it's marriage or any other type of relationship and we all know that everything takes work so I think employment also takes work. We tend to find the trend in fulfillment, it dips down massively about three years in to any person's job. The first year is always the honeymoon period and then it dips down. I think it's really aligned with what we see [indiscernible] people are jumping ship about one to three years into their job. I think that part of that is realizing that if I'm here at my company and the organizational value is aligned I generally have the support of my manager, and I'm doing work that fits the type of work that is best for me, I'm in the right role.

If I'm unfulfilled there is room for me to act on what I know about myself to make my job more fulfilling. I think often times we just jump to finding

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greener grass. We always say the grass isn't greener on the other side, but it's greenest where you water it. We have to start empowering our people to water their grass.

It's not to say that we shouldn't encourage people to find new opportunities because naturally we will, but I think too often we dump our [indiscernible] and we try to find a new one. When it comes to employment we have to really empower people to make the grass that they're standing on more green, not only to find new green grass.

Kym

Great, great insight. As you were talking I was thinking of the fact that you have 50% of marriages that fall apart, and they profess their love to God and state, so these are marriages now. They say that the number one cause of divorce is lack of clear communication and finding out stuff comes out, but communicating. At the end of the day there's a communication breakdown. If you take that knowing that just in our human relationships where we want the best for each other—now let's apply that to our career in life.

There are some tough questions, and I'd like for you to share them. One of them that you already shared with us was the notion of why are you coming to work. I love that question. What are some other things that

we can ask ourselves as we look at what's going on with us as relates to our career and the work that we do?

One of them is, why are you coming to work? What are some other questions that we should be asking ourselves so that we can get to greater fulfillment and happiness, and bring more awareness to our life?

Arthur Absolutely. Well, I think certainly the common three questions we encourage everyone to ask are: What is the depth of my relationship to my community here, and how do I fill stronger community and how do I deepen my relationship; how do I give more, and create a balance between how I'm benefitting and how I'm giving to a relationship [ph].

Kym That's huge. That's huge because you put that on community. The minute you said community; my, gosh, I'm aware of how many of us don't know our neighbors. Everybody's waiting for somebody to be first, Arthur. Everybody's waiting for—I want you to ring my doorbell first instead of you ringing their doorbell.

Arthur That's right.

Kym Yes.

Arthur That's exactly right. Living in New York I can fully attest to that.

Kym Right. Right.

Arthur Right. We've lost our sense of community. There's this huge study that comes out every year around loneliness. Despite the infinite opportunities virtually we now have the ability to be able to connect to people.

Loneliness is at all-time high, so it says a lot about community. I might be following somebody, be friends with them on Facebook, but am I really deeply connected to them? I think in many ways the reason that we're yearning for work to be more fulfilling is that we've lost a sense of community outside of work. Your relationship with community, that's a massive question that we really encourage people to think about.

The second piece is, what is the impact that I'm making right now? Why is my work valuable? If I were to disappear from this organization what would be missing? How can I amplify that impact and really scale what I'm doing so that it is creating more value? I think these questions around impact are so important.

Finally, how do I get out of my comfort zone? How do I grow? How do I [indiscernible] not overdoing this and getting into my panic zone. We talked about the growing zone and your growth zone is the sweet spot between your complacency and your panic. How do I maximize my time in that state of flow and growing zone?

Often times we find—this is another great example of where you get stuck in that two-year role, look for a new job. Well, how can I make the existing job more of a growth opportunity? How can I start to really push myself, try new things, master things, potentially seek out mentorship or become a mentor; really great opportunities to grow.

We tend to find that, again, these are all the deep experiences we have that lead to purpose and lead to fulfillment, and yet nine times out of ten when I ask someone what gives you purpose in your work, it points to one of these three: I have a sense of impact, I have deep relationships and I'm growing. It's a great common three-prong test, [indiscernible] test for how you experience fulfillment every day.

Kym

You got me smiling cheek to cheek. Well, no, because the formula that you just outlined you can apply not only to your career, but in every stage of your relationship, with your son or daughter. You can ask your same things; how do I think out of the box, how do I create more impact here,

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how do I create deeper relationships here. I love these, but this is totally an awakening for all of us.

Are we afraid? As people, do you think that so many of us are just afraid to go there, to allow ourselves to think deeply about what we really want? Then the courage you have to have to act on it.

Arthur

Absolutely. No, that's exactly right. That's exactly right. I think that's really what we need to lead [ph] with is that we are in much more control of our well-being and our purpose than we give ourselves credit. Often times, and this was my [indiscernible] when I first go to Google; I really played the victim card. I said, I'm in the passenger seat; I'm the victim; I'm unfulfilled and it's Google's fault.

My main realization, just like college, is that your company, wherever you are, whether that's a startup with one or a startup in a company with 100,000, you're in control of your well-being and it really starts with a sense of self-awareness but also just this real sense of agency. You can act on what you know drives you. That is hopefully in great partnership with your employer because purpose can be amplified if it's really supported by your organization.

In many cases, and especially in the cases of the hospital janitors, they brought purpose to their work even without their employers knowing. We have so much more control than we often give ourselves credit, and that's really, I think, what everyone needs to lead with is that I am in control of what gives me purpose and I'm in control of how I can realize that in my day-to-day work.

Kym Yes, that is so, so on point. I am in control of my well-being. That's the whole notion—the whole thing around choose happiness, that it is a choice. Again, you just can't sit there. They say that even when you're on the right track you're going to get run over if you're just sitting still. You've got to move, right?

Arthur That's right. That's absolutely right.

Kym You've got to engage something. Alright, listen, as we wrap up here, and we're all about happiness, give us—for today, if there's a charge you can give everybody that's listening around the—really, around the world listening to Wake up Happy this morning, what would your charge be? You've already said just wonderful things, but I'm asking you to summarize an ending statement around today; I want you to what? What would your charge be?

Arthur

Yes. Great question, and I want to just note that I love what you're doing with *Live Happy*. Happiness, I think—purpose intersects with happiness in such a great way. Our very early work was looking at the framework around University of Pennsylvania's study of well-being where meaning was such a pinnacle part of happiness in their PERMA score, that five part PERMA score.

I think well-being and happiness intersects in such a great way and it's so foundational. I think the major call to action is, ask yourself why do I come to work every day, and then ask yourself to what extent do I have deep a relationship, a sense of impact, am I growing. If the reason that you come to work today is not aligned with the work that you're doing, what can change; what can I job tailor? If my relationships, impact, and growth are not all at a ten, what can I do to bring them up? We tend to find that there's one area where you typically ask yourself this question, and there's a great opportunity for improvement. How can I start taking a micro step today to bring greater purpose in one of those areas, if not all three?

We have complete control of that. It doesn't have to be a massive step, it can be a baby step and, in fact, you can tend to find that it's the tiny habits that get us flexing our purpose muscles. This is just like the gym,

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we have to assess and manage this every single day otherwise we do burn out, we do become complacent.

Kym Yes. Arthur, you are so good. Thank you, thank you so—no, I mean really, really. No, it's just—

Arthur Great questions. No, I really—it's great to talk to you about this.

Kym We could do a whole workshop with you—you and Aaron, you and your partner.

Arthur Let's do it.

Kym A whole workshop around this like go into this deep—it's all about transformation. It's an opportunity. You're waking us up. I love it. Listen, your website, again, tell everyone is Imperative.com?

Arthur Imperative.com, and you can get your purpose driver that's 30 questions and you'll get a mini report of your purpose drivers. We're continuing to build out more resources. We partner with companies to help them access the state of purpose and empower their people. I'm at Twitter at @arthurwoods. We're excited to continue the journey and to have

purposeful people along the way, including *Live Happy*. You guys are doing such great work.

Kym Well, thank you, thank you. We love the work that you're doing, and your contribution to what we're trying to do. Working together works, Arthur. Working together words.

Arthur It works.

Kym Alright, everybody, listen—

Arthur So true.

Kym —have a fantastic day. Hey, let's let Arthur Woods know how special he is. I know I'm seeing all kind of Twitter stuff happening. As I always say at the end of the broadcasts, one thing for sure; keep smiling, it works. Believe me. Keep smiling. Until tomorrow. Bye, bye for now.