

00:00 Martin Schneider: Career Minded is sponsored by CareerMinds, a leading provider of virtual outplacement and career transition services. You can learn more about CareerMinds at careerminds.com.

[music]

00:14 MS: Welcome to Career Minded, the show that explores the human side of human resources. I'm your host, Martin Schneider. Each episode, we'll talk to HR professionals and thought leaders about the personal aspects of what they do and why they do it. All the while discovering what drives the people that drive the people that drive businesses today. Let's get started.

00:40 MS: Like most people I spend a lot of free time scrolling through LinkedIn articles, and thumbing through the self-improvement section at Barnes and Noble. Okay, maybe most people don't do that and maybe it's just me. The point is, if you do spend enough time looking at this kind of content you may notice that certain words or phrases pop-up a lot, especially in the HR world. Sometimes they appear in every article on the internet for about six months and then they go away. I'm talking about buzzwords like self-care, purpose-driven, work-life balance, and my personal favorite, wellness. Just a vague sense of wellness. Now these phrases aren't necessarily good or bad on their own, but they are extremely driven by trends. They can be aspirational and inspirational, which is great, but they're also vague enough so that they can be applied to essentially any basic platitude and used to sell calendars.

01:33 MS: The reason that these words and these phrases, and these buzz words and these trendy ideas work so well in these articles, in this content, is that they represent things that people are often seeking usually to ease some sort of personal dissatisfaction. Now, this makes perfect sense, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, tells us that once a person has all of their basic physical needs met the next and possibly final stage is to seek self-actualization. In other words, to become more fulfilled with their existence. We'll get back to that word, fulfilled later. Now, if these terms appeal to you, if you're seeing them in books, and there're articles and that makes you look further, that's probably because you're seeking to change something in your life. Example, recently, the popular weight loss company Weight Watchers re-branded themselves as simply WW to strongly imply that one of the Ws stood for the buzz word wellness. This is an example of how companies and organizations take these terms, which in and of themselves are neither good nor bad, and market them to people searching for change in their lives. After all. You don't go to Weight Watchers. I'm sorry, excuse me.

02:46 MS: You don't go to WW if you're perfectly satisfied with your body. And you don't read articles on work-life balance, if you feel that your balance is fine, and if you're listening to a podcast sponsored by a retirement services company, maybe you're considering making a transition into retirement. If you're an HR manager or you work in the employee experience sector, you might see your employees looking into these buzz words, maybe using them in conversation, maybe asking you about some of them. This should be a clue that they are seeking some sort of change. That whatever level of actualization they seek, they're not getting it from your organization and maybe

you should look into why that is. That might mean it's time for a survey or some one-on-one's to gauge employee satisfaction or maybe it's time to look into retirement and out-placement transition plans for team members who may want to seek their self-actualization elsewhere. Let's get back to that word fulfillment that I mentioned earlier. I think the primary reason to be skeptical of articles and programs and books that use these buzz words is that oftentimes they're only selling you one piece of the puzzle, their advice only gives you just enough actualization to buy the next book, to pay for the next meeting, to click the next link.

04:04 MS: There's no inclusive system, there's nothing that focuses on all parts of the person or the organization seeking fulfillment. That's why I like the work that's been done by today's guest. Bill Schiemann is here to talk about his new book, *Fulfilled! Critical Choices: Work, Home Life*. It's an approach to developing a high level of personal fulfillment and satisfaction on multiple aspects. Not just one or two. This is a book about taking multiple steps to improve fulfillment all around. But the reason that I really like it is that, like me, Bill's an organizational development nerd. He's the CEO of Metrus Group, a talent management consulting firm, specializing in helping organizations build stronger and better cultures for their employees. So this book isn't just a self-improvement book. It's also designed for organizations who want to improve their employee satisfaction levels and strengthen their cultures. I'll let Bill explain more himself, but pay close attention to the early question, where I ask him what makes *Fulfilled* different than some of the other books and programs on the market. I think you'll really like the answer. Here's Bill.

[music]

05:31 MS: Thank you for listening to *Career Minds*, my guest today is Bill Schiemann, he is the founder and CEO of Metrus Group, which is a talent and Engagement firm. He is also the author of seven books, the most recent of which is in stores and on Amazon now. It is called, *Fulfilled! Critical Choices: Work, Home, Life*. And in this book Bill gives us frameworks and tools to live I guess a more fulfilled and happier life in all three aspects of our existence. Bill, thanks for being on the show today.

06:01 Bill Schiemann: Thank you Marty. Glad to be here.

06:03 MS: So before we launch into it, give us a little bit of back story here, tell us about the book, tell us about your work with the Metrus Group and tell me what was it that made you want to write this book?

06:14 BS: I think the primary impetus to writing this book was to help people become more fulfilled in their lives and for organizations to be able to be more productive. And we see that in the work we've been doing at the Metrus Institute by helping people become more fulfilled and to understand what drives fulfillment in people's lives.

06:37 MS: Okay, so about that word fulfillment that you've said several times. In your own words, how do you describe fulfillment and how did you decide on the factors of life that you chose to focus on in this book to help people determine how fulfilled they are with their existence?

06:53 BS: Just as a backdrop to that, a lot of this work is based on our research, but also others and some pretty extensive in-depth interviews with people. And fulfillment which was described by people in a lot of different words, but ultimately it was achieving their vision, their dreams, being all they can be. And I think coming with that is a sense of having a sense of inner peace and happiness, not only as my future dream but the way I live life day-in and day-out.

07:28 MS: By the way, I took the assessment, the quiz in your book, and I found out I was about 80% fulfilled, which I feel is probably pretty accurate. Walked away from that going, "Yeah, that's pretty close, that's pretty good."

07:40 BS: Yeah.

07:40 MS: And in the book, there is kind of a focus on numbers. You compare achieving fulfillment to a probability game. You talk about it like it's playing the numbers. Can you expound on that in any way? A little bit?

07:51 BS: Yeah, 'cause I think there's sort of no certainty that there's a formula and if I do exactly A, B, C, it's gonna be a magic bullet to fulfillment. I think the earlier work that's been done in happiness suggests that even regardless of backgrounds, from impoverished backgrounds to enabled backgrounds, people can control 60 to 80% of their happiness. And I think with fulfillment we've seen that as well. And fulfillment we see is the longer term, happiness is sort of the day-to-day, fulfillment is a longer-term sense of accomplishment, peace, that inner sense of peace and living my vision. And that can be controlled, but you can't control everything. There are things that are thrown at you, jobs that you may be thrust into that aren't a good fit. There's illnesses that occur, there's relationships that don't work out. So there's things that are there, but when we talk about probability it's, what are things you can do that will give yourself the best chance of having fulfillment along the way.

08:57 MS: I'm glad you mentioned the whole no magic bullet thing because the next question I was gonna ask is; there are a lot of products, a lot of books on the market that claim that they'll give me a more successful life, a better existence if I can get into this sort of habit, do this every day, etcetera. In your opinion, what is it that sets Fulfilled apart from all the other programs and products and books that I could be purchasing that are on the market?

09:24 BS: Yeah, I'll start with a story. Earlier in my life, my wife and I enjoyed cooking and we had signed up for a cooking class with one of the fellows who was a master chef in our, in our region, and went on to be on the cover of Gourmet Magazine. When we got into the class he started out by saying, "For those of you who came here thinking you're gonna get a recipe you're gonna go away disappointed. I'm not gonna give you any recipes and formulas. I'm gonna teach you the underlying fundamentals of cooking, things about emulsion theory or how protein is cooked and changes. You can be given any set of ingredients then in the future and know how to prepare something." And that's sort of what we're doing with the book here, with Fulfillment. We're looking back to the fundamental ingredients. Then once you know the ingredients, no matter what your situation or your timing or your age, you can put them together in a way that's unique for you.

10:22 MS: You really love that chef analogy do you, you do it a couple of times in the book.

10:25 BS: I do. I do.

10:26 MS: And it's a good analogy, it really makes it clear that if you have these steps, if you have the right tools, it's still up to you, the chef. To make, to maximize that potential.

10:39 BS: I think Marty the other place I saw this played out is in work we were doing with restaurants. And you see these really good managers could get essentially the same thing as the chef, they were getting a bag of employees. And the bag of employees, and it's an industry with a lot of turn over, but almost anywhere you go in the country, they've got people who have... Going to school people with elder care, people with child care, those who are working as a final retirement job, those it's their first job. And yet, those great managers could put together that team in a unique way to serve the guests coming in and get really high scores. And they weren't given a magic formula, they didn't scour the market to only hire the best, they took the people they had and they made them the best. And I think that's really the key.

11:28 MS: That's a key point there. So let's actually talk a little bit about some of the work that you've done with restaurants and with other organizations. Tell me about people equity/the ACE, the ACE framework which you refer to a couple of times in your work, with Metrus, and in this book. What is ACE? Why is it important?

11:46 BS: Sure, we came on the concept of people equity, which is abbreviated ACE for Alignment Capabilities and Engagement and I'll explain that in a minute. As a result of looking for what is it about the workforce and people that if we knew it, it would enable us to both predict, but also to manage the workforce, to the highest performance, the highest productivity levels, low turn over, high satisfaction among customers, high quality. And as we began to scour the literature, began to do work at the Metrus Institute, we found that these three factors, when we had them, we could predict typically over 90% of performance for an organization and they would often be in the top quartile performance. And so the three factors are Alignment, so Alignment is the degree to which the individual is in sync with the organization, and that means understanding the goals, the values. Is simpatico with the values between their own personal values and that of the organization and the extent to which they're rowing in the same direction. And the Capabilities dimension has competencies, but also their talent, their information, their resources needed to delight the customer.

13:03 BS: So that's the C dimension of ACE. And then the E-dimension is Engagement extent to which people are willing to put in discretionary effort on behalf of the organization. So those three factors when combined, when those are high, organizations tend to hit it out of the ball park, or the unit, or the team.

13:22 MS: That's one thing I really enjoyed about this book is and the articles that you've written as well. Is that there's a focus on the individual, but also on cohesive organizations as well. I'm an OD guy myself, I love organizational development and talking about that. So you talk about what are some strategies that organizations can use to increase and maintain high ACE or people equity levels in their employees.

13:50 BS: A big part, if you think about Alignment is number one, are we selecting people who have the ability to be aligned with what we're doing? They have common values, they believe in our vision direction, but also when they're in the organization, do we set up our performance management systems to be really aligned with the organization. Do people understand the goals of the organization? Do they understand how they fit into the overall picture and what they do for their team, their department? Is it making a difference? So it's part of people really identifying with that and feeling that, they're rowing in the same direction, right? On the Capability side, I think the biggest drivers are training and development work, and helping people continuously learn. That's a really critical element. So when I go into an organization and people say, "Well yeah, we have a training program in theory, but I never get time to really take off to do it. I can't go to the courses and I'm overloaded, and I haven't had done anything for six years." The reality is they're becoming obsolescent slowly over time. And then on the Engagement side, I think it's giving people a lot of the freedoms they need to be empowered, to take control, to do things to have a feeling that I'm in control of outcomes and I'm proud of those outcomes and enabling them to do that. So a lot of self-Engagement, I think is important here.

15:11 MS: How do you measure those things? A lot of what you just mentioned in terms of Alignment and understanding, those seem like pretty subjective factors. How do you as an organization go in and measure and set a number or something tangible to these abstract ideas?

15:29 BS: Sure for the ACE concept for Alignment, Capability and Engagement, there are questions you can ask to get a sense and a score, which we do all the time on employee surveys for example, of what someone would score from zero to 100 on Alignment, on Capabilities, on Engagement and come up with an overall score. And those are the ones that are very predictive of both personal outcomes, like will they stay with the organization, as well as the organizational outcomes, like high customer satisfaction. The drivers of those that we talked about are really activities or creating an environment in which people can thrive. So you can measure... I'll give you the example I like... And that is when I go in and ask an HR organization often, how they measure the effectiveness of the performance appraisal system? I get answers like, "Well 93% of people complete it." And that's not saying anything about the efficacy of it, it's just saying that people go through some tasks. We have no idea whether it's doing anything. On the employee surveys on the other hand, we ask questions about whether your last review or appraisal discussion has helped you improve your performance. And when you get only 20% of people saying yes, then there is a problem. 'Cause they're going through motions that aren't enabling them to either improve performance or grow their competencies.

16:43 MS: This framework, the people equities ACE framework that you've developed, how does that account for shifts in generational priorities or changes over time and what individuals value or anything like that, or just... Well, to be trite, and cliché, really the difference between, let's say, baby boomers and millennials in the workplace?

17:07 BS: Sure, yeah, yeah. Marty, I think it's a good question. I'll debunk some of the generational issues right now, because if we look at millennials versus Ys, versus Baby Boomers, we find very few differences on Alignment, Capabilities and Engagement. They are fundamentally very much the same. Where you get the variances, is within generation. And think about it, people you know,

not everyone's an extrovert, not everyone's an introvert. There's a lot of variance out here, some people are risk takers, others are not risk takers. So when we begin to label people in those categories, it doesn't do anyone any good because it begins to stereotype people. The reality is, you have variants and you might go into even a unit or a department and find there are people highly engaged or some disengaged and there's something that have great Capabilities, some that have low. I think part of the challenge as a manager, going back to my restaurant example is, so how do I move the game up? How do I help the misaligned people get more aligned?

18:06 BS: Maybe some of them are not capable of being aligned, maybe some of them fundamentally don't agree with our values or they're not on board with the goals. Maybe this is the wrong place for them. There's others who may not get it because they didn't ever really had a good explanation of our goals and how it fits in and why I have to get on the French frier, and I have to do this in two minutes and 30 seconds, why is that important? And if somebody doesn't explain that to you, it's not always obvious.

18:35 MS: It's funny that you mentioned that. I just had a flashback to my days in college working retail and not understanding why some of the grunt work that I did as a floor employee was important. It wasn't until I was a department manager and I was actually zoning thing or doing these price checks that I realized. Oh, it's so much easier if someone else has done this before me, and it makes my job easier. I did not understand why I was doing that task, and therefore I hated doing that task and complained about it. I was not engaged as I think most retail employees are when you walk into your big box stores.

19:10 BS: Yeah.

19:11 MS: That's something I can definitely relate to. I actually wanna shift into the idea of employee Engagement. You make a statement in the E-part, the Engagement section of this book that had me raise my eyebrows a little bit. I feel like I agree with it mostly, but you state that Engagement is not the responsibility of your work situation partner, spouse, parents, teacher, etcetera. And I understand that an individual is responsible for their Engagement. But my question is how do balances of power factor into responsibility levels of this? If an employer or a teacher or parent has authority or power over an individual, what obligation do they have regarding helping that individual achieve a level of fulfillment, if great power has a great responsibility is the question I'm asking here.

19:58 BS: Yeah, yeah, and I think it's a collective thing. One, you control that 60%-80% of your own Engagement fulfillment, but there's another part that's influenced by people around you, by the environment, so some of it you do to yourself. Put myself into an environment. I worked in school, I was taking out a second job to make money, and I was a key punch operator [20:19] key punches are anymore? Those days when we actually had key punch cards that actually were the beginning of Software coding.

20:26 MS: We've seen museums.

20:27 BS: You've seen museums exactly. That's Smithsonian IT museum. [chuckle] So I had this

job and I really I hated the hours, it was an overnight shift. I didn't like the task, it was really the wrong place for me, I was doing it just to make the money and I think I lasted before getting fired about six weeks. And it was pretty clear that I had put myself into the situation by taking that job as opposed to another job I did, which was being a cub reporter. I still had to go out at night and cover planning board meetings and things like that, but it was enjoyable, I got a kick out of it, it was something that tied to my passion and I did writing, so it was just wonderful difference. And that was all within the same year. So, I think the environment around you, is partly what you select and then when you're in it if you need bosses that are supportive or you need parents in your example, that are supportive, 'cause if everybody around you is not on your team, they're not supportive, they don't help. This can be hard for you to continue to be engaged when none of the things that you desire, or you're trying to work on, there's always somebody thwarting it at every step.

21:37 MS: Yeah, that makes perfect sense. You talk a lot about lighthouse goals. What is a lighthouse goal, and how is it different than a life goal?

21:46 BS: And one of the things we discovered is that, number one people talk often about life goals or a vision, but as you press them on it, it's often a little bit fuzzy. Oh, I sort want... Outside of, "I wanna retire someday." It's kind of fuzzy what's that gonna look like. Or what, when you say success in your career, what is that? You'll have some people are very clear about it. Such as Don Thomas, who was an astronaut who says, "At age six, I knew I wanted to be an astronaut." Right Until age 39, they actually go up into space and make it after three setbacks and turn downs from NASA. So he had really a lot of clarity. But a lot of people don't. And so I think the lighthouse goals are things that you set up on route to the end goal, to help you get there. So if you have an idea you wanna be a judge or you wanna be an astronaut, what would be some of the lighthouse goals on the way there? And lighthouse goals we call because the ship's captain sailing back in with the Phoenicians right? Saw a lighthouse as that was a way to find your way along the coast and get into a safe harbor.

22:57 BS: It was not the goal was to hit the lighthouse, but it helped you guide your steps along the way to getting there. And that's what we see a lighthouse as being. So if you wanna be a judge working for a great law firm is probably a good lighthouse goal or interning for a particularly strong justice along the way is probably gonna be an important credential to getting there. If you're an astronaut, it's maybe an engineering degree and then it's working in a relationship to aerospace that might help you.

23:26 MS: Bill Schiemann author of *Fulfilled! Critical Choices: Work, Home, Life*, available in bookstores and on Amazon. Now Bill if someone's trying to get ahold of you, where can they reach you?

23:34 BS: You can reach me email at wschiemann@metrus.com or on our Facebook page at [Fulfilled.CriticalChoices](#).

23:49 MS: And if one of our listeners is interested in the Metrus Group, what can the Metrus Group do for them and their organization?

23:54 BS: Could be doing measurement of Engagement fulfillment. We also conduct workshops one day, day-and-a-half programs on fulfillment, and how to get your workforce to become more fulfilled, but also for you, how to help your managers build the skills to guide and coach and mentor employees toward fulfillment. And I think the third thing I had mentioned, is our self-assessment. We have a self-assessment that people can take on fulfillment. It's pretty cool, it's 50 questions and you actually get scores back, on 12 different dimensions that may be underlying your fulfillment. So it shows where you could really target some efforts.

24:35 MS: And Bill before we let you go, would you like to give me an intro to my next guest who will be in our next episode.

24:41 BS: Absolutely, you're gonna be talking, I think, to Marisa Harris who's a life coach and former VP of HR for CIT, and Marisa is the lead story in my book, and someone who was really inspiration to me in doing the work and thinking about people in this way more holistically, and I think she's got a very fascinating story.

[music]

25:04 MS: Okay, Bill Schiemann thank you for coming on the show, thanks for being here.

25:08 BS: Glad to be here. Thank you, Marty.

25:10 MS: And thanks to all of you out there for listening, to our first episode of Career-Minded, brought you by Careerminds. If you like what you heard, be sure to subscribe on iTunes, or the podcast of your choice and make sure you never miss an episode, of Career Minded and be sure to share it with your friends, especially your colleagues and your LinkedIn Network. Once again, I'm your host, Martin Schneider, and we'll see you on the next episode.