



the G-spot

It *is* important.... Isn't it?

Many years ago... so long ago in fact, Simon Sinek was probably still running around in shorts... I remember watching a film called Enigma – a depiction of the WW2 codebreakers in Bletchley Park. As a film, it was enjoyable but not particularly memorable. However, one scene stayed with me through the years. Anne-Marie Duff (in her feature film debut) played a code interceptor based in a rural outpost somewhere. Her team's role was to listen to codes from Germany and log them – without knowing at all what those codes actually meant. Their team was visited by the film's hero Dougray Scott (Thomas in the film).

Just as he is about to leave, Anne-Marie (or rather Kay in the film) stands up in front of the rest of her team and asks, *"I don't mean to bother you sir, but it is important, isn't it?.... No one ever tells us...."* She goes onto say... *"This is our only war – in here, you see. Beep beep, bloody beep... It's just nonsense, nonsense, nonsense."* Thomas says *"Yes, we are making sense of it and yes, it is important."* Kay grins with relief and resumes her task with renewed gusto.

It made me think, so many teams must feel like this – wondering whether what they do makes any difference at all. These days many organisations talk about their 'why' – but too few make this relatable to the individual. It still becomes a corporate endeavour with colleagues feeling little or no emotional attachment to it. And yet, it makes a huge amount of difference.

Adam Grant has a wonderful piece of research insight to illustrate this. This piece of pre-Covid research examined different ways of encouraging employees in a hospital to wash their hands. Researchers put different signs by different sinks in randomly selected places in a hospital. One sign said, "Hand hygiene prevents you from catching diseases." The other said, "Hand hygiene prevents patients from catching diseases." Soap usage increased by nearly 20% in the latter case and was unchanged in the first example.

What does this tell us? We, (particularly if we are in service-related roles) want to feel that what we do is important, and that others benefit from our efforts. It gives us drive and focus. So often, we talk about the WIFM factor – ‘what’s in it for me’. But I think that really misses the point. We actually don’t want to know ‘what’s in it for me’ – instead, we want to know ‘is what I do important’. Service roles are often repetitive and sometimes challenging – if we don’t think what we do is important... why should we bother?

The Adam Grant research demonstrates – **if we can link purpose to an activity** – in this case helping patients and handwashing – **that combination can lead to powerful and positive behaviour changes.**

Take action by:

- ◇ Helping teams (particularly non-customer facing teams) define their customer impact. (Often this is easier done by thinking about what if their role didn't exist – how would that impact the customer.)
- ◇ Get closer to the customer. (see previous blog – Customer is just another c-word.)
- ◇ Developing customer-focused job descriptions – using these to hire, recognise, coach and manage.
- ◇ Dropping us at line at hello@signal.cx. We'd love to bounce some ideas around with you.