Psychology principles to power your digital team’s success
About me

• Digital PR Manager at Brighton-based digital marketing agency Propellernet

• Over five years' experience in all things digital PR

• I love reading, running and karaoke

• BSc (Honours) in Psychology from University of Nottingham
I’ve always loved learning about how our brains work and how we interact with each other in everyday life.
My psychology passion has always been useful, but it came into particularly good use in 2020...
Coronavirus COVID-19
1 million deaths
67% of all workers felt that burnout had worsened during 2020

Indeed, Company Burnout Report, 2021
The marketing and advertising industry has a worldwide burnout rate of 69.6%
57% of digital agencies reported preventing burnout as their **top challenge**
Why are digital marketers at higher risk of burnout?

Potential reasons for burnout:

- Many digital marketing roles require ‘always-on’ creativity
- Agency work = higher workloads
- Lots of digital marketers WFH = harder to achieve work life balance
- Quick-moving, competitive industry
- Marketing and PR departments are often under-funded
BURNOUT

A GUIDE TO IDENTIFYING BURNOUT AND PATHWAYS TO RECOVERY

GORDON PARKER,
GABRIELA TAVELLA and KERRIE EYERS
Digital marketers are all perfectionists
Over 100 digital marketers:

- Digital PR – 55%
- SEO – 24%
- Digital marketing – 11%
- Other – 10%
(the personality trait which reflects the tendency to be organised, goal-directed and hard-working)
Perfectionism and the Big Five: Conscientiousness predicts longitudinal increases in self-oriented perfectionism

Joachim Stoeberr, Kathleen Otto, Claudia Dalbert

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2009.04.004

Get rights and content
AND THE RESULTS ARE IN.
Digital marketers showed above average scores in conscientiousness.
Almost \textbf{1 in 10 (9\%)} digital marketers scored 35/40 or above on conscientious traits
67% consider themselves a perfectionist
Digital marketers are at a high risk of burnout, which can lead to:

• employee mental health problems
• disengaged workforce
• lower productivity
mental health support

regular workload
check ins

culture of open communication

mental health days

mental health first aiders

flexible working
Psychology-backed ways you can engage your workforce...
The neuroscience and psychology of helping teams love what they do
Many organisations are de-activating part of their employees’ brains called the seeking system.
A neural network that runs between the prefrontal cortex and the ventral striatum

Our seeking system creates the impulse to explore our world, learn about our environments and extract meaning from the situations we’re in
In 2023 digital marketers need to be more creative and quick-thinking than ever.
There are three triggers that activate the seeking system:
There are three triggers that activate the seeking system:

1. Self-expression
There are three triggers that activate the seeking system:

1. Self-expression
2. Experimentation
There are three triggers that activate the seeking system:

1. Self-expression
2. Experimentation
3. Purpose
The seeking system at work

- Seeking system
- Urges
- Exploration
  - Self-expression
  - Experimentation
  - Purpose
- Result
  - Zest
  - Curiosity
  - Enthusiasm
  - Creativity

Activates
1. Self-expression

EXPRESSION YOURSELF,
DON'T REPRESS YOURSELF.
When our colleagues know who we are when we’re at our best, the more likely we can feel like ourselves at work and express ourselves more authentically.
Use this to develop existing strengths and create opportunities for those people to do what they’re best at as often as possible
2. Experimentation
Affective neuroscientists* explain that one way to activate the seeking system is to create an experimental “safe zone”

*Wright & Panksepp, 2012
Performance situation

\[
\text{anxiety} = \text{more risk-averse and less willing to persist}
\]

(vs. people who frame the same task as a learning situation)
How can we create environments of psychological safety?
1. No bad ideas.
Weetabix @weetabix

Why should bread have all the fun, when there's Weetabix? Serving up @HeinzUK Beanz on bix for breakfast with a twist. #ItHasToBeHeinz #HaveYouHadYourWeetabix

9:38 AM - Feb 9, 2021

34.7K Retweets  68.9K Quotes  125K Likes  9,110 Bookmarks
2. Encourage experimentation.
3. Make time for play.
The PR Team's weird & wonderful quirks (feel free to add more to the thread if you remember any)

- Talking to myself – full-scale discussions about upcoming meetings/conversations/practicing two sides of the conversation
- Weird hands thing when excited – seal clapping hands
- Ordering apps by colour in my phone
- Eating grapes with one in either side of my mouth and then squelching both at once

The most overrated things, according to the PR Team

- The Stone Roses
- Swagger middle aged men
- Lou Parker
- The Muppets
- The Kardashians
- Amanda Holden
- Avatar
- Olives
- The Fast and Furious Franchise
3. Purpose

FIND YOUR PORPOISE
It is much more powerful, more comprehensive and less expensive to motivate people intrinsically (with purpose) rather than extrinsically (with incentives)
It’s PR not ER
BUT good marketing strategies can drive real growth for businesses of all sizes – and that is meaningful
Evans Cycles – Return To Gold Hill

The challenge: Position Evans Cycles as the leading authority in the UK’s electric bikes market

What we did: We recreated Britain’s favourite advert – Sir Ridley Scott’s 1973 Hovis advert - depicting the original ‘Hovis boy’ (now 62) finally conquering Shaftesbury’s steep Gold Hill with the pedal assistance of an electric bike.

Results: 62% increase in online sales, 28% increase in offline sales, hundreds of high-quality pieces of coverage and links – and a very happy client team.
Regularly have transparent sessions and catch ups with the team to communicate the impact everyone’s work is having.
In summary...

• Digital marketers are at risk of suffering from burnout more than ever before
In summary...

• Digital marketers are at risk of suffering from burnout more than ever before

• We can prevent burnout by harnessing the seeking systems of our employees and activating three key triggers: self-expression, experimentation and purpose
In summary...

• Digital marketers are at risk of suffering from burnout more than ever before

• We can prevent burnout by harnessing the seeking systems of our employees and activating three key triggers: self-expression, experimentation and purpose

• If we can do this, we can help our teams become more fulfilled, more creative and less likely to burnout!
Thank you!

#UpNorth

ABI BENNETTS - DIGITAL PR MANAGER