Understanding How to Influence the Employee Journey

Understanding How to Influence the Employee Journey

Despite its name, Apple Park is not an orchard, a farm, or a park. It's a round, modern building that looks more like a UFO than the home of the most valuable company in the world, Apple Inc.

This innovative space is where engineers design one-of-a-kind user experiences for the world's best-selling mobile device, the iPhone. Outside the massive building, there are over 7,000 trees surrounding the campus, a meadow, a pond, and an herb garden; inside you can find seven cafes and a sprawling 100,000-square-foot health and wellness center among many other incredible features.

Apple Park cost the corporation five billion dollars to build, which seemed highly extravagant to many people. In fact, Apple shareholders were outraged! Why did Apple spend so much money on a building and campus with features that don't directly impact the work being done?

They did it because they understand that a company's success is entirely dependent on taking care of its employees. An organization's success comes from understanding the journey every individual employee is on with their company, so Apple invested in ensuring that their employee experience elicits high-performing, innovative work. And their success in attracting and retaining talented employees speaks to the effectiveness of this strategy.

In this ebook, we'll show you what the full employee journey looks like, how your organization can influence the factors that determine employee engagement, and why this understanding is so important for every organization.

It's Less About What You Do, and More About Who You Are

The identity of your organization is defined by two primary factors: your people and your culture. Those foundational aspects are the heart and soul of what keeps a company running.

"Businesses don't create value, people do."

- Ram Charan, Best-Selling Author and Business Advisor

HR is at the center of these top two priorities, but many organizations have HR stuck in an operational quagmire of paperwork instead of focused on the strategies that unlock the potential of the organization's people and culture.

Culture and people are completely intertwined: if you have a culture of competition, then competitive people will thrive. If you have a culture of generosity, then you'll attract generous people. Your culture comes from your values, and your values determine how potential job candidates view your organization's personality as a part of your brand reputation.

BambooHR operates under a simple philosophy: managing culture to create a great place to work so great work can take place. An attractive culture can only manifest when your organization understands the needs of its people and clearly communicates how its values align with those needs. The book Time, Talent, Energy: Overcome Organizational Drag and Unleash Your Team's Productive Power from Harvard Business Review Press details how people contribute to their organizations. Most organizations heavily monitor time and talent, but often completely overlook the most important contribution – energy.

Why? Because our HR departments have been directed to watch time like a hawk and optimize talent as much as

possible. Many companies find it easy to count hours worked and tasks completed, but fail to understand how they can positively influence the energy of their people.

You've probably heard the statistic that 90 percent of an iceberg's mass is underwater. Among these three people contributions, energy represents that massive section of iceberg that keeps the whole thing afloat.

You might see an employee putting in time, and their talent might be apparent, but without energy and enthusiasm underpinning their work, it's going to fall flat in the long run. Conversely, even if there doesn't seem to be quite enough time or talent isn't well developed, but the energy to see the work through is there – they can still succeed.

Think about the tasks and projects you accomplish at home. When you have the energy to do them, you will choose to make the time and develop the talent to tackle those tasks and get the job done. But when you don't have the energy, having the time and talent doesn't matter. Even if you decide to start any of these projects, you'll only do them reluctantly. And a life of reluctant work is hardly the kind of life we're striving for.

Energy is the primary determinant of whether we succeed or not, but our organizations do almost nothing to manage employees' energy.
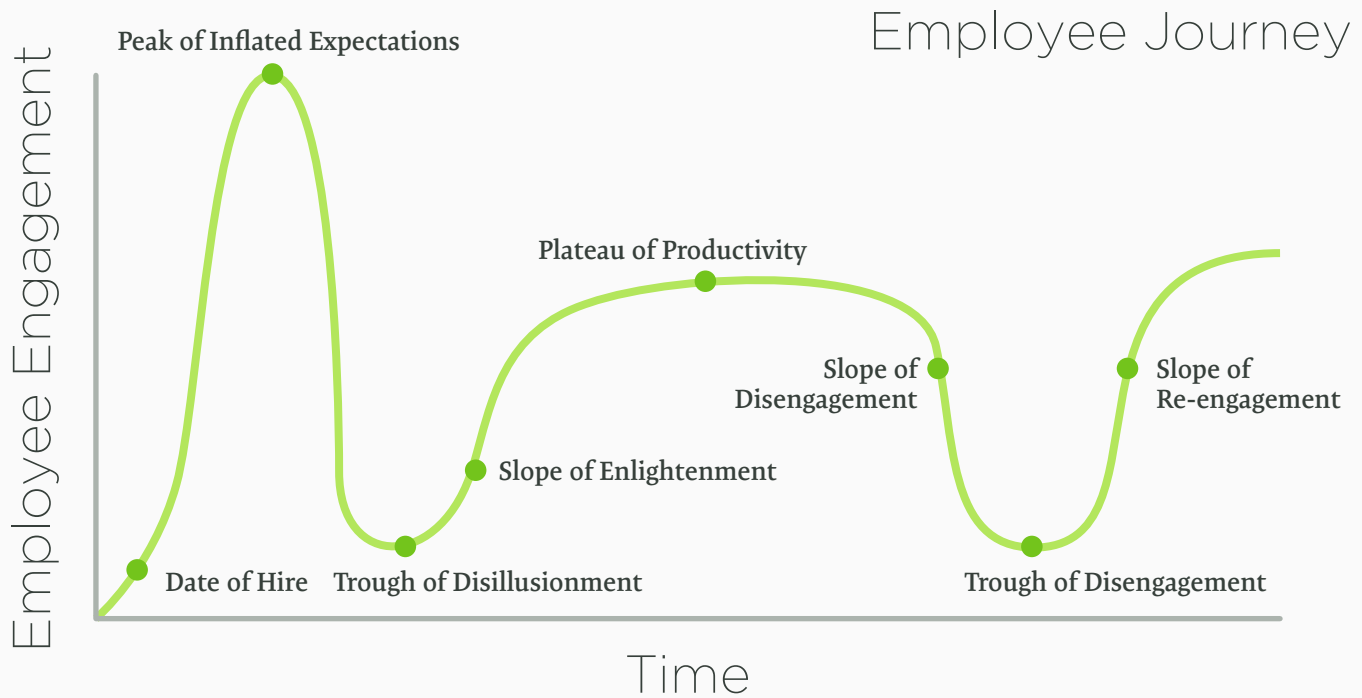
TIME

TALENT
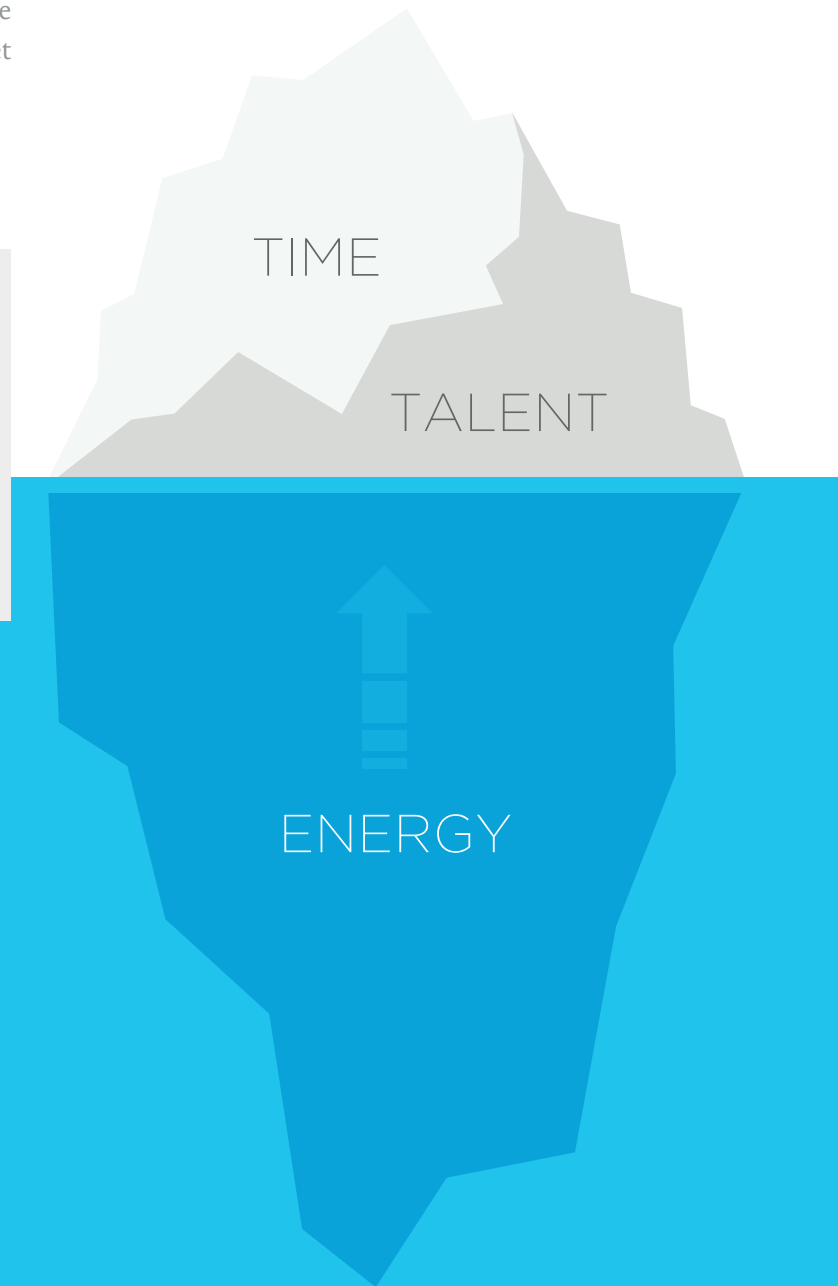
ENERGY

How Can We Engineer the Energy Within Our People?

It starts with understanding the breadth of the employee journey. The energy that an employee carries into their role fluctuates over time and has a direct effect on their level of engagement with the company and their work.

The Gartner Life Cycle illustrates this concept through the example of new innovations coming into the market:
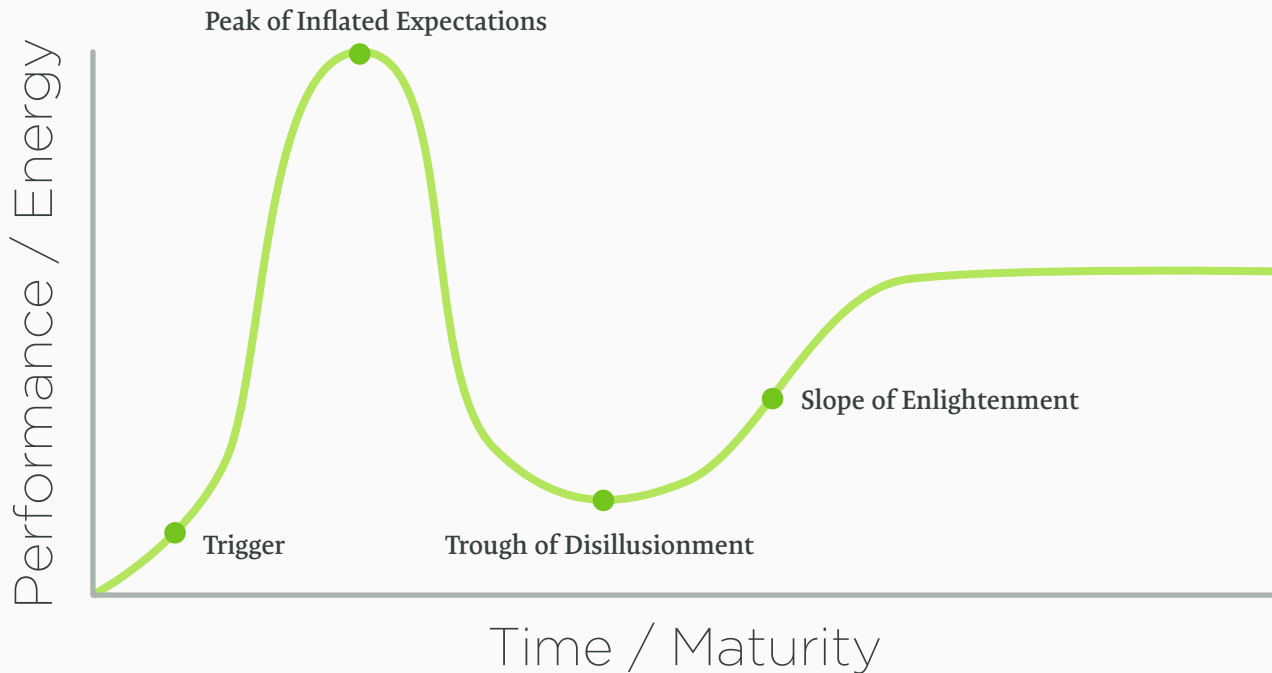
- As a need in the market triggers the development of a new product or service, excitement begins to brew.
- Expectations peak as the innovative new offering enters the market.
- Flaws and disappointments of the new offering start to show.
- Unrealistic expectations from investors and customers fade, leading to disillusionment.
- As the proverbial dust settles, the true value of the offering becomes more apparent.
- The realistic market value and performance reaches a suitable plateau.

Employee Journey

Employee Engagement (y-axis) vs **Time** (x-axis)

- Peak of Inflated Expectations
- Date of Hire
- Trough of Disillusionment
- Slope of Enlightenment
- Plateau of Productivity
- Slope of Disengagement
- Trough of Disengagement
- Slope of Re-engagement

The employee journey follows a similar shape, but rather than staying at that plateau, the shape repeats itself over and over again. This is a natural part of human experience, whether at the workplace or in any other ongoing commitment. It helps to view the customer or employee experience in the model of a wedding engagement:

In the employee journey, these highs, lows, and plateaus will continue end over end, and pretty soon the shape starts to look like a heartbeat.

- It starts with inflated expectations—a new love means that everything will always be wonderful for the happy couple.

- Then the practical, difficult aspects of the relationship start to kick in.

- If the couple wants to stay together, they must work through their issues and reach an equilibrium.

- This equilibrium lasts until the next major issue arises.

- When things are at their lowest, the couple has a choice: re-engage with each other, or call it off.

Moments of Peak Engagement
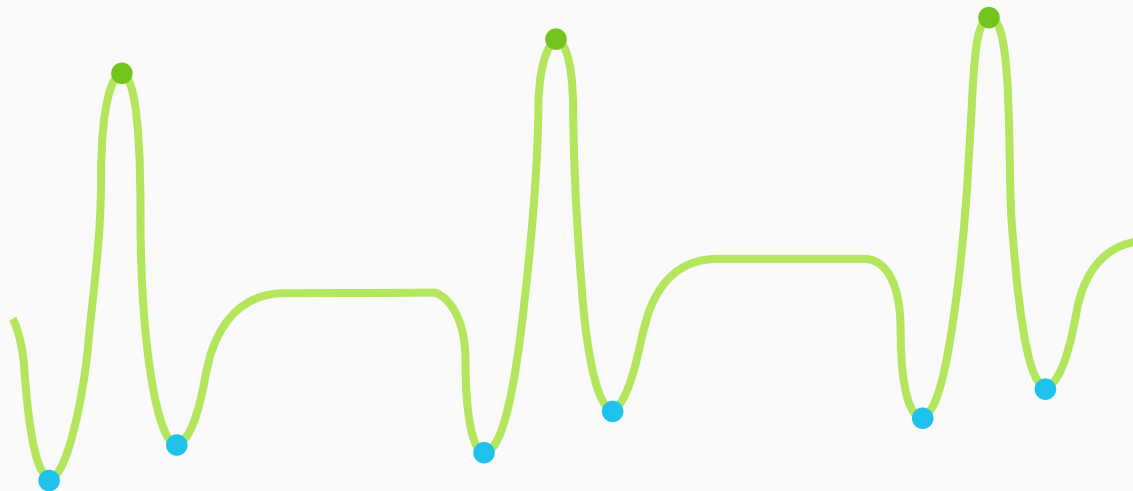
At-Risk Employee Exit Points

HR has to start recognizing employee energy levels as the heartbeat of their organization.

When you understand the shape of the employee journey, you can begin to identify where employees are, steps to shorten the time they spend in the troughs, and strategies to maximize the moments of peak engagement.

Those times when it's necessary to intervene and help an employee re-engage are essentially "re-boarding." This has to be in partnership with managers; they must be trained on how to recognize the signs that someone on their team is heading into a trough of disengagement and emotionally distancing themselves. When your managers understand that this cycle is a normal part of their team's dynamic, it makes it easier to discover how to re-engage employees.

There are all kinds of surveys and interventions to proactively discover issues that employees experience before they get to the point of finding a different company, including eNPS and pulse surveys, one-on-one coaching with managers on a regular basis, and stay interviews.

Instead of focusing on the number of people leaving your organization, focus on WHY they're leaving. Spend the time to define your ideal culture, then examine your current culture and see how it measures up. Hone in on the aspects of your current employee experience that don't align with your stated values, and take action to fix these problems.

Even when your culture is aligned, people will still leave. Everyone has their own journey in life, and while part of that may be with your organization, there will come a time when their financial or personal needs take them in a different direction.

As you examine each case, you'll sometimes find that employees leave because their values don't align with the culture you're trying to build. In this case, it's better to let these employees move out and move on than it is to try and change the organization's values just to avoid hiring someone new.

Whatever the reason for leaving, trying to hold on to employees after they've decided to go can be both costly and futile.
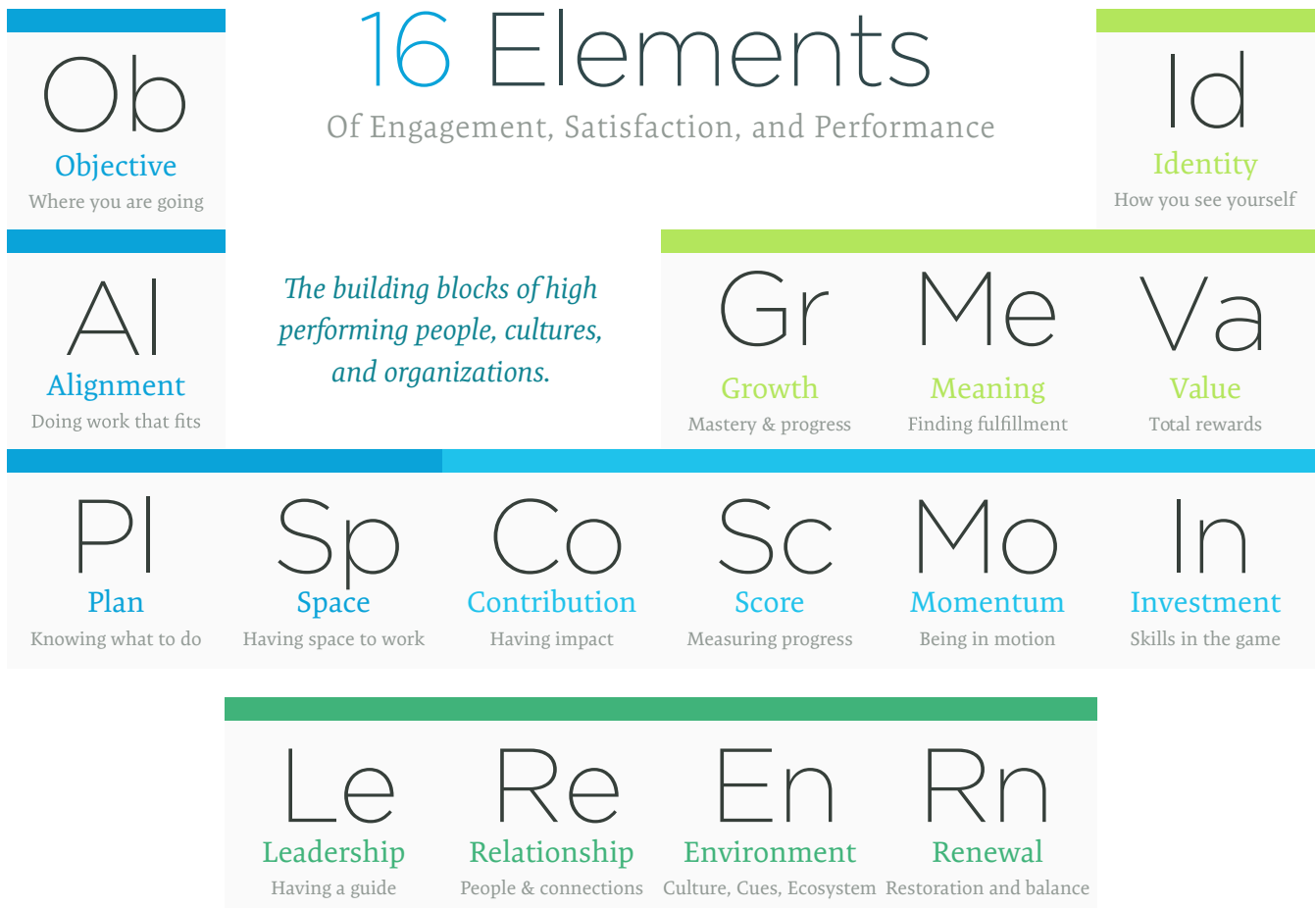
Managers who spend time and effort on these employees end up trying and failing to engage the unengageable.

Defining your culture and evaluating your employees' current engagement levels are the first steps toward improving your employee experience. This leads to the next big question: HOW do we move them toward re-engagement?

The 16 Elements of Engagement, Satisfaction, & Performance

There are four segments of the employee experience that must be present for people to be fully engaged.

- Input – what an employee needs to get work done
- Output – what employees get from their work
- Action – things that help the work get done
- Influencers – factors that fuel, or enable that work

16 Elements
Of Engagement, Satisfaction, and Performance

The building blocks of high performing people, cultures, and organizations.

Ob — Objective — Where you are going

Id — Identity — How you see yourself

Al — Alignment — Doing work that fits

Gr — Growth — Mastery & progress

Me — Meaning — Finding fulfillment

Va — Value — Total rewards

Pl — Plan — Knowing what to do

Sp — Space — Having space to work

Co — Contribution — Having impact

Sc — Score — Measuring progress

Mo — Momentum — Being in motion

In — Investment — Skills in the game

Le — Leadership — Having a guide

Re — Relationship — People & connections

En — Environment — Culture, Cues, Ecosystem

Rn — Renewal — Restoration and balance

These are not standalone elements—they influence each other and add up to a formula of high engagement. Remove one element, and employees will begin to move into the trough of disengagement. Remove multiple elements, and that descent accelerates, leading to deeper disengagement and higher toxicity before they decide to leave. You can help them move past that trough, or get through it more quickly, by proving that you're invested in all of these areas.

These are the factors that affect our employees' energy at work, which in turn determines their level of engagement. This table of the elements is important because it helps give form to something that is otherwise intangible – if your leaders can't see the concrete ways that improving engagement has an impact on the organization's mission, then they're not going to buy into the interventions that you've recommended to improve your engagement levels.

Engagement has a real impact. Strong onboarding programs that immerse new employees in your culture can help reduce their time to value, and fostering the 16 elements of engagement can help increase their time-in-role. Paying attention to where your employees are on their employee journeys can ramp up and extend their contributions to your organization, leading to a greater employee lifetime value.

When we do all of this, we're acknowledging the humanity in our people, fostering higher levels of energy, and proving that valuing people and culture is at the root of solving any business challenge. And when we do that, we're fulfilling our roles as Human Resource practitioners.

Emotional Capital is the most important capital in our organizations. Let's work with it, rather than against it.

bambooHR™

BambooHR is the No. 1 online HR software for small and medium-sized businesses that have outgrown using spreadsheets to manage their employee information. BambooHR's intuitive interface, streamlined implementation process and responsive support team ensure a fail-safe transition from spreadsheets to our flexible Human Resource Information System (HRIS) that adapts to your changing needs. Clients make time for meaningful work by using BambooHR's Applicant Tracking System (ATS) and HRIS to manage the employee lifecycle. A winner of the 2013 Alfred P. Sloan Awards for Excellence in Workplace Effectiveness and Flexibility, BambooHR serves hundreds of thousands of employees in 70 countries worldwide.

BIZ ▶ LIBRARY

BizLibrary is a leading provider of online learning for growing organizations. Our award-winning microlearning video library engages employees of all levels, and our learning technology platform is a progressive catalyst for achievement. Partnered with our expert Client Success and Technical Support teams, clients are empowered to solve business challenges and impact change within their organizations.

To learn more, visit www.bizlibrary.com.

About Rusty Lindquist

Rusty is the Vice President of Thought Leadership at BambooHR where he speaks, writes, and teaches about high-impact people practices, and how to help HR deliver the value their organizations most need.

Rusty has spent 18 years as head of product and strategy in technology companies in the learning and development, and technology industries. He is a husband, a father of seven, and someone who loves life and loves sharing knowledge.