samewave

The Social Discipline Advantage

How to Create and Use Social Discipline to Increase Engagement, Productivity and Focus

Abstract

Almost every organisation has suffered from the adverse effects of broken promises and poor group motivation. Symptoms of poor employee engagement, these issues are driven by deep-rooted psychological factors and can be extremely difficult to manage. Moreover, they can have a significant detrimental impact on long-term performance.

Offering a long-overdue solution, the arrival of social performance management software provides the ability to address these issues using **Social Discipline** – a powerful management approach underpinned by proven psychological concepts. This white paper explains in detail the fundamentals of Social Discipline and how it can be successfully deployed to increase employee engagement, productivity and focus.

Key concepts discussed

Social Discipline
A powerful psychological management tool that combines acting in accordance with rules with the effects of social influence and responsibility to ensure compliance.

The Free-Rider Effect
Group motivation losses which occur when individuals determine other members in the group will exert enough effort to enable them to reduce or withhold their effort.

Social Loafing
Group motivation losses which can occur when individual contributions cannot be identified.

Promise-based management
The cultivation and coordination of commitments in a systematic way but most importantly, focuses on making a good promise.

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Key performance challenges

Organisations in every sector, in every industry and in every country face two fundamental challenges. The first centres round poorly crafted promises, which often stall and even undermine the success of projects. The second relates to the Free-Rider Effect, which erodes motivation when employees work in groups. Few organisations are fully aware of the prevalence and significance of these challenges, or are able to escape them without conscious effort.

Challenge 1: Poorly crafted promises

Promises are at the heart of every company and help ensure business gets done. Yet, all too often and despite the myriad of organisational tools designed to translate strategy into action, poorly crafted promises are usually the underlying reason when strategy implementation falters.[1] Live projects frequently never get finished, promised projects never materialise and opportunities go untapped.

Research indicates 70% of IT workers have been involved in projects they knew would fail from the beginning,[2] and in a 12-month period, 70% of organisations have suffered at least one project failure.[3] In the same period, only 2% reported that all their projects achieved the desired benefits.[4]

More than a decade of research with hundreds of managers indicates that just 50% of promises can be relied upon. The ironic unreliability of promises leads to managers wasting time endlessly checking progress, exerting pressure to deliver and even duplicating work. As a direct impact, organisational efficiency and effectiveness are compromised.[5]

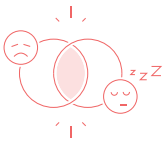
1 Sull, D.N., and Spinosa, C. 2007. Promise-Based Management: The Essence of Execution. Harvard Business Review, April, pp. 1-10.

2 Dr Dobbs Journal. 2011. 2011 Project Success Rates.

3 KPMG. 2010. KPMG Project Management Survey 2010.

4 KMPG. 2005. Global IT Project Management Survey.

5 Sull, D.N., and Spinosa, C. 2007. Promise-Based Management: The Essence of Execution. Harvard Business Review, April, pp. 1-10.



Just **50%** of promises can be relied upon.

Sull and Spinosa argue that promise execution can break down for a number of reasons, such as:

- Employees are disengaged and therefore do not share the same priorities and in turn become dissatisfied and unproductive.
- Activities are poorly coordinated and therefore lack the agility required to respond to needs and opportunities.
- The organisation lacks accountability and as a result, promises are made privately, progress isn't tracked openly and managers refuse to express their dissatisfaction publicly.
- Managers are responsible for overseeing too many activities and therefore lose focus.
- Providers and customers don't understand how to make promises they can keep.
- The organisation is trapped in the status quo and despite new ideas, continues in the way to which it is accustomed.

Challenge 2: Free-Riding and group motivation

In stark contrast to the widely stated belief in teamwork synergy, the second key performance challenge relates to the fact that the majority of task-performing groups experience productivity losses and rarely achieve their full potential. Coordination losses for example occur when a group fails to work together to maximise the contribution of each individual, while motivation

losses arise when members fail to contribute their maximum effort.[6]

The term **Free-Rider Effect** refers to group motivation losses. It occurs when individuals determine other members in the group will exert enough effort to enable them to reduce or withhold their effort, while still allowing the group to achieve the desired outcome. If group members discover that their effort is not necessarily required, they may choose to "let Richard do it". And the less essential their effort, the lower their motivation.[7]

Social Loafing, which also refers to motivation drops with group size, can occur when individual contributions cannot be identified.[8] However, the Free-Rider Effect can be sustained even when all members' contributions are fully identifiable.[9]

A study by Kerr and Bruun further revealed that the particular members of the group and the task itself can also promote Free-Rider behaviour. For example, each member will have his or her own ability, which may influence motivation for a particular task's demands.[10]

6 Steiner, I. 1972. Group Process and Productivity. New York: Academic Press. Cited in Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

7 Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

8 Latanè, B., Williams, K., and Harkins, S. 1979. Many Hands Make Light the Work: The Causes and Consequences of Social Loafing. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Vol. 37, pp. 822-832. Cited in Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

9 Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

10 Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

Other examples which demonstrate when the Free-Rider Effect can take hold include:

1. When the number of members in a group exceeds the number of tasks. This is because member motivation is lower than when the number of tasks exceeds the number of members.[11]
2. When an emergency or crisis occurs and it is perceived there are a sufficient number of bystanders. This can be because the diffusion of responsibility reduces the probability of an individual intervening.[12]
3. When effective performance does not depend on an individual's effort, reducing the likelihood of task-relevant behaviour.[13]
4. When an individual has significant experience in the task at hand, and therefore is possibly better able to recognise opportunities to Free-Ride.

The existence of Free-Riding in groups is a significant problem because it can have a negative impact on long-term performance and deny an organisation of its competitive edge.

11 Barker, R., and Gump, P. 1964. Big School, Small School: High School Size and Student Behaviour. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press; Wicker, A.W. 1969. Size of Church Membership and Members' Support of Church Behavior Settings. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Vol. 13, pp. 278-288. Cited in Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

12 Latanè, B., and Darley, J. 1970. The Unresponsive Bystander: Why Doesn't He Help? New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts. Cited in Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

13 Seligman, M. 1975. Helplessness. San Francisco: Freeman. Cited in Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

Introducing the Social Discipline advantage

To help overcome the two key performance challenges, Social Discipline is a powerful psychological management tool that combines acting in accordance with rules with the effects of social influence and responsibility to ensure compliance.

"Social Discipline combines acting in accordance with rules with the powerful effects of social influence and responsibility."

A defining feature of Social Discipline is the practice of publicly making and tracking the progress of promises. In turn, everyone is clear on what they have to do, what others are doing and publicly held to account for their actions. Keeping promises and contributing fairly and productively are fundamental to Social Discipline.

Benefits of Social Discipline

The adoption of Social Discipline can lead to the following benefits:

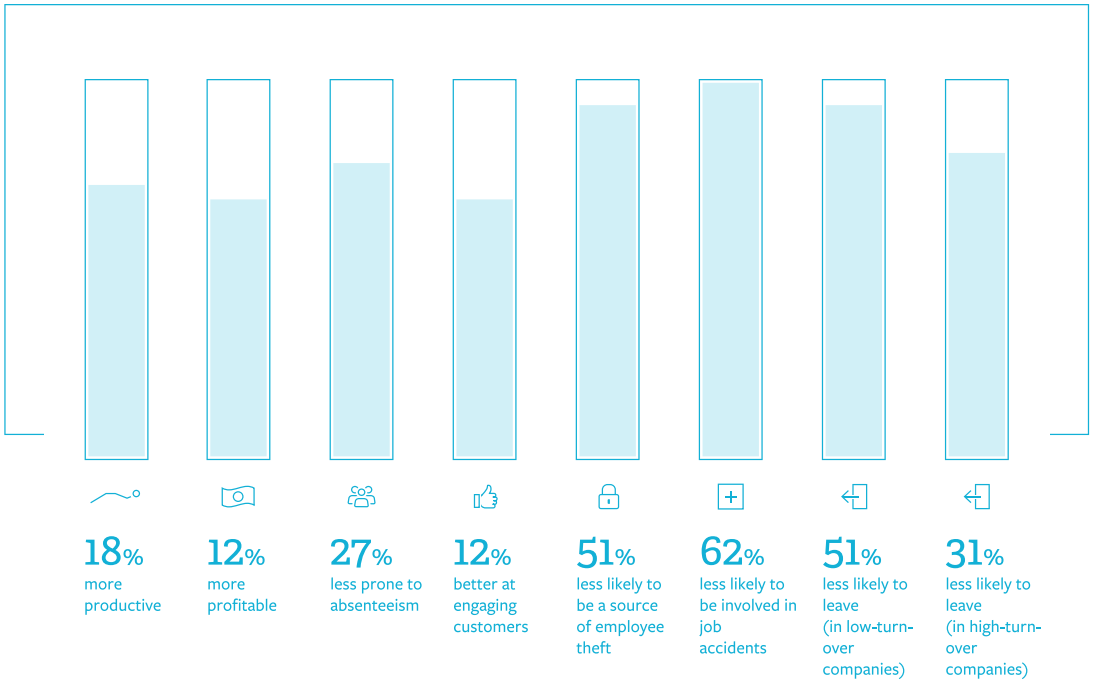
1. Increased employee efficiency and productivity through the use of publicly made and tracked goals.
2. Increased employee focus and desire to succeed due to peer accountability and a heightened opportunity for recognition and reward.
3. Increased employee engagement and motivation by fostering a collaborative and accountable culture while enabling individual effort and success to be recognised.
4. Increased coordination and collaboration since everyone is clear about what is required and works together to achieve a mutual benefit.

5. Increased organisational agility as a direct result of providers handling requests with greater efficiency and productivity because of public accountability.

6. Increased overall performance by achieving all of the above benefits.

While employee engagement is not the primary focus of this white paper, it is important to recognise the significant correlation between employee engagement and business performance. Companies with the most engaged employees report revenue growth at a rate two-and-a-half times greater than their competitors with the lowest level of engagement.[14] Moreover, a 15% improvement in employee engagement equates to a 2% improvement in an organisation's operating margin.[15]

Other research by O.C. Tanner shows that engaged staff are:[16]



14 Hay Group. 2010. Giving Everyone the Chance to Shine.

15 O.C. Tanner. 2008. Global Recognition Study.

16 O.C. Tanner. 2009. Improving Staff Engagement: A Practical Toolkit.

Achieving the fundamentals of Social Discipline

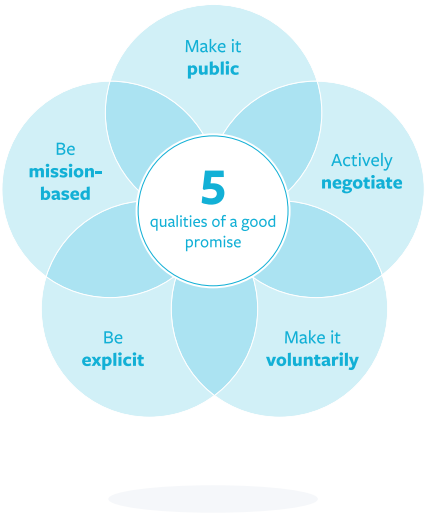
With Social Discipline offering so many performance benefits, this section addresses how to achieve its basic fundamentals. It covers promise-based management, the prevention of promise breakdown and the reduction of opportunities for employees to Free-Ride.

Implementing promise-based management

Sull and Spinosa argue that productive, reliable workforces capable of achieving long-term success can be achieved through **promise-based management.** This type of management cultivates and coordinates commitments in a systematic way but most importantly, focuses on making a good promise.

The five qualities of a good promise

To prevent strategy implementation faltering, employees should be trained to know how to request and make a good promise. A good promise will have the following five key qualities:[17]



17 Sull, D.N., and Spinosa, C. 2007. Promise-Based Management: The Essence of Execution. Harvard Business Review, April, pp. 1-10.

1. Public

A promise made in front of other colleagues is unlikely to be abandoned because employees will naturally want to protect their reputation and trustworthiness. Moreover, they can't intentionally "forget" what they committed to do.

It is important the promise remains public throughout its lifetime so that poor performance cannot be hidden. Performance should also be publicly tracked to cultivate a culture of transparency and execution.

2. Active

Promises which are made with little thought about the actual requirements and implementation are more likely to never materialise. All too often, customers (such as managers) toss requests to providers (such as assistants) who passively accept them before returning to what they were doing.

Skilled promise makers, however, will actively negotiate their commitment throughout its lifetime to ensure successful delivery. Such negotiations may cover unrealistic time schedules, conflicting assumptions and possible misunderstandings.

3. Voluntary

Promises are more likely to fail if people are pressurised into making them. This pressure may arise from the desire to be seen as a good team member, to please someone else or avoid looking incompetent. Promise makers must have the confidence and capacity to decline a request and voluntarily make an alternative suggestion. In turn, because they have made the promise willingly, they will naturally assume personal responsibility.

4. Explicit

An explicit promise is vital for eliminating multiple interpretations and misunderstandings, especially when different cultural backgrounds are involved or when empty buzzwords such as "optimisation" and "innovation" are used.

Requests from customers must be clear and specific while providers should maintain regular progress reports, which accurately reflect the state of the promise's execution and detail success (or failure) at the time of delivery. Checklists can be helpful in ensuring the promise is explicit by clearly specifying key aspects, such as names, delivery dates, underlying rationales and required skills.

5. Mission-based

Effective promises are mission-based. The customer explains the reasoning behind the request and the goals that are to be achieved as a result of successful delivery. The customer also invests the time to ensure the provider understands the mission, removing any uncertainty or confusion, which could comprise achievements.

The three phases of every promise

In addition to these qualities, Sull and Spinosa emphasise that to create and execute an effective promise, the customer and provider must move through three distinct phases:[18]

Phase 1: Meeting of minds

Once the customer has requested a product or service from the provider, both clarify how and when it will be fulfilled, why it is important and which resources will be used. This phase ends when the provider makes a promise the customer accepts.

Phase 2: Making it happen

At this phase, the provider executes the promise. The promise remains active throughout so renegotiations may occur in light of reshuffled priorities or reallocated resources. The provider may change the delivery terms, for example if he can't satisfy the promise, while the customer will inform the provider if circumstances or priorities change. This phase ends when the provider declares the task complete and submits it to the customer for evaluation.

Phase 3: Closing the loop

Finally, the customer publicly confirms whether or not the provider has delivered the goods. To help improve future promise delivery, both parties provide feedback on how to work together more effectively in the future.

18 Sull, D.N., and Spinosa, C. 2007. Promise-Based Management: The Essence of Execution. Harvard Business Review, April, pp. 1-10.

Preventing promise breakdown

Without the presence of Social Discipline, only half of all promises can be relied upon. It is therefore important to prevent as far as reasonably possible the breakdown of a promise by adopting the following practices, which will help achieve Social Discipline:

- Train employees about how to make and manage successful promises. Use the five qualities of a good promise and the three phases of effective promise execution as a foundation for this knowledge.
- Publicly make and monitor the progress of promises, ensuring there is no room for anonymity or hiding poor performance.
- Bear in mind that even with the best intentions, commitment to too many promises can lead to loss of focus and in turn, failure to deliver. It is better to request or commit to a small number of promises, which can be successfully achieved. Employees should therefore be empowered to decline unreasonable requests, make counteroffers and renegotiate promises when circumstances change.
- Explicitly link requests and promises to an overarching mission, which employees fully understand and are committed to.
- Ensure employees understand how the successful delivery of the promises they make will support overall performance.
- Publicly celebrate delivery on promises or declare dissatisfaction.

Implementing the above practices across a large organisation or team can, however, pose a challenge in its own right. In such circumstances, the use of a software tool designed to achieve Social Discipline can prove extremely useful.

Reducing Free-Riding

As well as managing promise delivery, the propensity for employees to Free-Ride when working in groups should be actively managed to maximise team

motivation, productivity and output. The following techniques can all be used with great influence:[19]

- Ensure every member's contribution is absolutely necessary and adds value to the group. Reallocate unnecessary resources to be used more productively.
- Add or increase incentives for high effort.
- Introduce disincentives for low effort.
- Publicly monitor the performance of individual members. The absence or clear noticeability of each member's effort will become a powerful influence on motivation.
- Eliminate member anonymity, which can otherwise reduce member motivation and increase the perception that individual effort is not essential for group success.[20]

"Social performance management software combines the benefits of performance management software with integrated social technology to create a truly social yet results focused workspace."

19 Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

20 Harkins, S., and Petty, R.E. 1983. The Role of Intrinsic Motivation in Eliminating Social Loafing. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology; Sweeney, J.W. 1973. An Experimental Investigation of the Free-Rider Problem. Social Science Research, Vol. 2, pp. 277-292. Cited in Kerr, N.L., and Bruun, S.E. 1983. Dispensability of Member Effort and Group Motivation Losses: Free-Rider Effects. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Vol. 44, No. 1, pp. 78-94.

The role of software in achieving Social Discipline

While the fundamentals of Social Discipline are straightforward, achieving and managing them in practice can be more challenging. The reality is that without continuous management, promises can easily break down while opportunities to Free-Ride can be plentiful. The implementation of **social performance management software,** however, offers a practical solution.

What is social performance management software?

With the advent of the social media revolution, the applications of using social-based mechanisms to communicate, collaborate and report are being increasingly recognised. Social performance management software combines the benefits of performance management software with integrated social technology to create a truly social yet results focused workspace.

As with other social platforms such as Facebook, the defining feature of social performance management software is user generated content. Staff can create online forums where they can share ideas, discuss figures, agree actions and monitor performance, wherever and whenever. Discussions and searches can be facilitated and tracked using familiar @Identifying and #Tagging.

Complete visibility and clarity ensures everyone knows what is expected of them. No one can forget, hope that others will forget or take a back seat and Free-Ride. At its best, social performance management software allocates team members duties which define what is required to achieve success. It maintains a constant dialogue, updating progress, highlighting problem areas and feeding back information on key performance indicators (KPIs). Crucially, social performance management software ensures promise makers keep their promise and team members fulfil their duties.

Benefits of Social Performance Management software

Performance management software compares actual to expected or desired results to determine any performance improvement zones. It focuses on areas including productivity, efficiency and progress to deliver several key benefits (Figure 3). The software can be used to monitor and optimise effectiveness at an individual and collective level.

Performance management software is a key segment of the booming talent management market because it can help to attract, recognise and retain the very best talent. When used in conjunction with social-based mechanisms, it can be extremely effective in promoting Social Discipline.

- Improve workforce motivation
- Improve financial performance
- Improve management control
- Allow employees to track their progress
- Enable employees to secure recognition and reward
- Reduce task duplication
- Create transparency and accountability
- Facilitate project management
- Increase organisational alignment and coordination
- Reduce costs
- Simplify communication
- Increase employee engagement

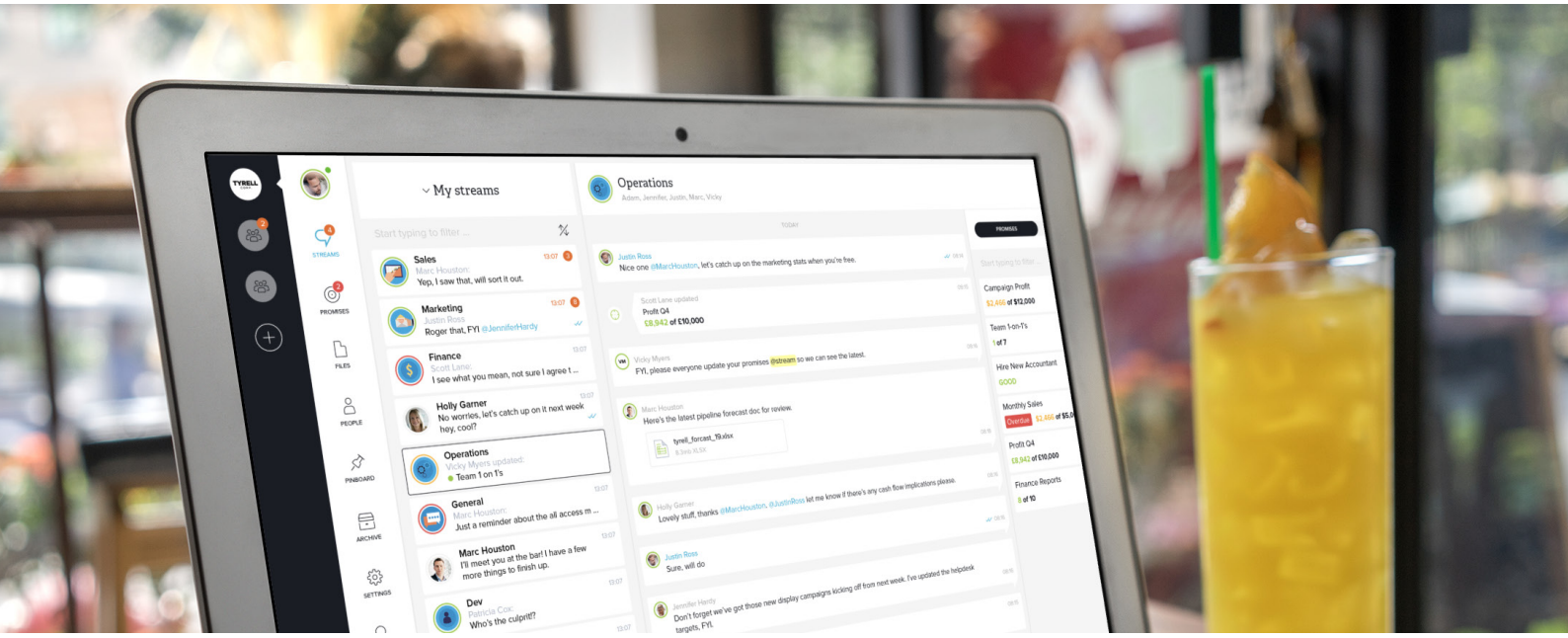
Key requirements for effective social performance management software

To effectively achieve Social Discipline and minimise the challenges highlighted earlier, social performance management software should offer the following key features:

Feature	Function	Benefit
Targets	Tracking all the numbers that matter, from group turnover to project specific expenses, including actual versus budget	Short-term performance is clearly visible, allowing under performance to be addressed and over performance to be celebrated
Goals	Tracking the progress of one-off objectives, projects or pledges	Long-term performance is monitored, measured and reinforced
Checklists	Creation of mini lists of important tasks which are to be done on a regular basis	Ensures tasks are never forgotten while allowing staff to focus and free their mental capacity for other critical ad-hoc priorities
Management meetings	Facilitating ultra efficient information sharing	Dramatically reduces the need for traditional time consuming meetings. Tracks meeting minutes to ensure nothing is lost or forgotten
Management reports	Automatic report generation at frequencies pre-set by the user	Updates everyone on progress at regular intervals. If no progress has been made the report is a stark reminder
Social	Inclusion of familiar social features, such as chat and group discussions	Enables remote, tracked and carefully orchestrated collaboration across the entire organisation, regardless of time or location
Social Discipline	Publicly declaring goals, roles and responsibilities. Publicly sharing individual and collective progress	Keeps everyone on track. Transparency and peer accountability ensure promises are kept and Free-Riding is eliminated. Promotes engagement and focus
Social reward / gamification	Socially rewarding individual effort	Stimulates natural competition, a sense of achievement and in turn engagement among colleagues
Security	Protection against internal and external threats	Keeps data safe and secure
SME friendly	Use of plain, non-technical language and an easy to set up and use platform	No need for a dedicated IT team
Mobile	Mobile-friendly design to enable employees to work and access information remotely, such as when travelling or working from home	Provides an optimised user experience and allows more efficient use of time

Introducing Samewave

Samewave is a social performance management app specifically designed to leverage the benefits of Social Discipline.



Samewave provides:

Clarity
A single integrated view of all data.

Direction
Ultra-clear data reports, agendas and to-do lists delivered in an instant.

Consensus
Private and group chats for constant dialogue between team members.

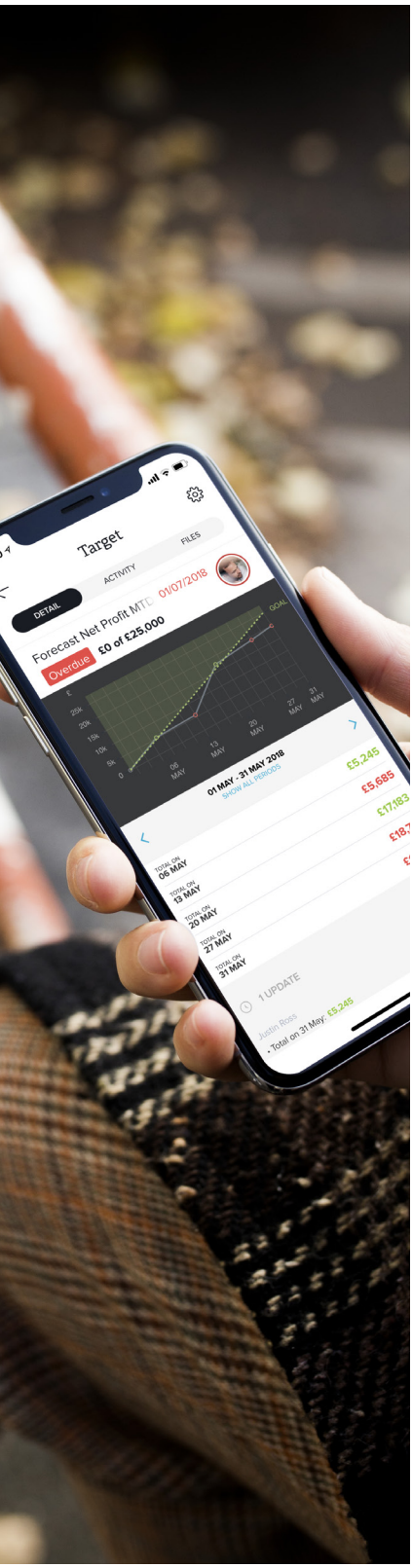
Momentum
Team members are reminded to update their goals.

Connectivity
Instant updates to all your devices.

Simplicity
Simple and intuitive to use.

Focus
Removes the need for the majority of face-to-face management meetings.

Security
With bank grade security and enterprise level cloud hosting, your data is safe and secure at all times.



Transforming business with Samewave and Social Discipline

Samewave employs four powerful forces to establish and maintain Social Discipline:

Total clarity

Samewave monitors the goals of its team members - the promises that define everything they need to do to deliver success. Goals, KPIs, checklists and agreed actions can be assigned and tracked in seconds. Once set up, Samewave never forgets, keeping businesses firmly on track.

Constant dialogue

Samewave never shuts down. It automatically tracks figures from accounts, facilitates discussions among team leaders and beautifully formats progress data in preparation for review. It constantly maintains a live agenda, with live information and a live conversation. Team members cannot “forget” the promises they have made or Free-Ride on the back of engaged colleagues.

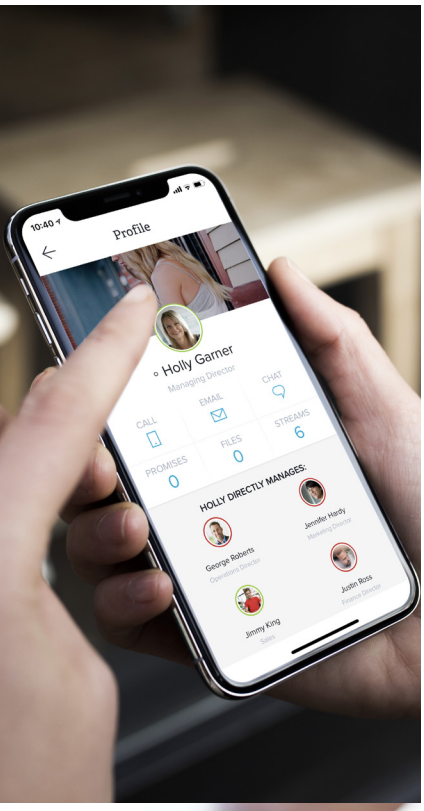
Complete data integration

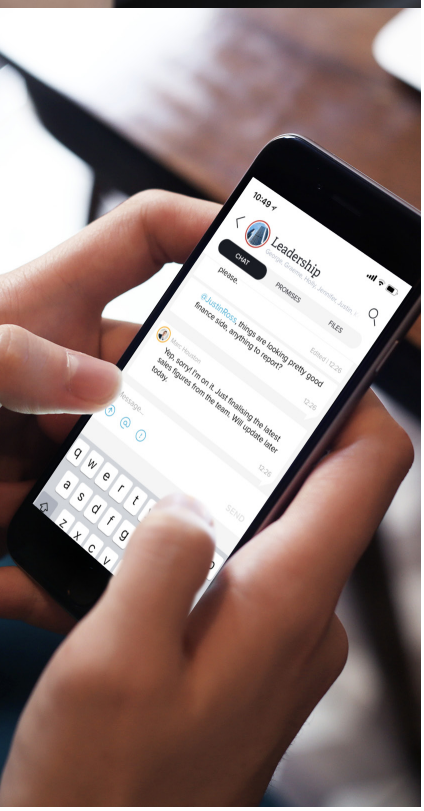
Samewave integrates all the important data – numbers in people’s heads, numbers in obscure spreadsheets and numbers in many popular software suites. All of it is collected and collated automatically so everyone is aware of progress and singing from the same song sheet.

Insightful reports

Samewave generates stunning data reports, agendas and action lists at the touch of a button. Perfect for regular updates, virtual catch-ups and of course traditional, face-to-face meetings.

The above four forces ensure everyone is clear on what they have to do. Everyone is automatically reminded to get it done and everyone is publicly held to account. Bad plans and practice become impossible to hide and instigate immediate action.





Samewave – the business benefits

Samewave transforms employee responsibility and as a direct result increases engagement, productivity and focus. The benefits can be summarised as follows:

Clarity and focus

With Social Discipline at its core, Samewave ensures everyone knows what's expected of them, and what to expect from others. Performance is measured and presented graphically so clear, confident business decisions can be made quickly. These data visualisations also make sharing with colleagues, investors, directors, or anyone else who needs a progress update a simple process.

Responsibility and accountability

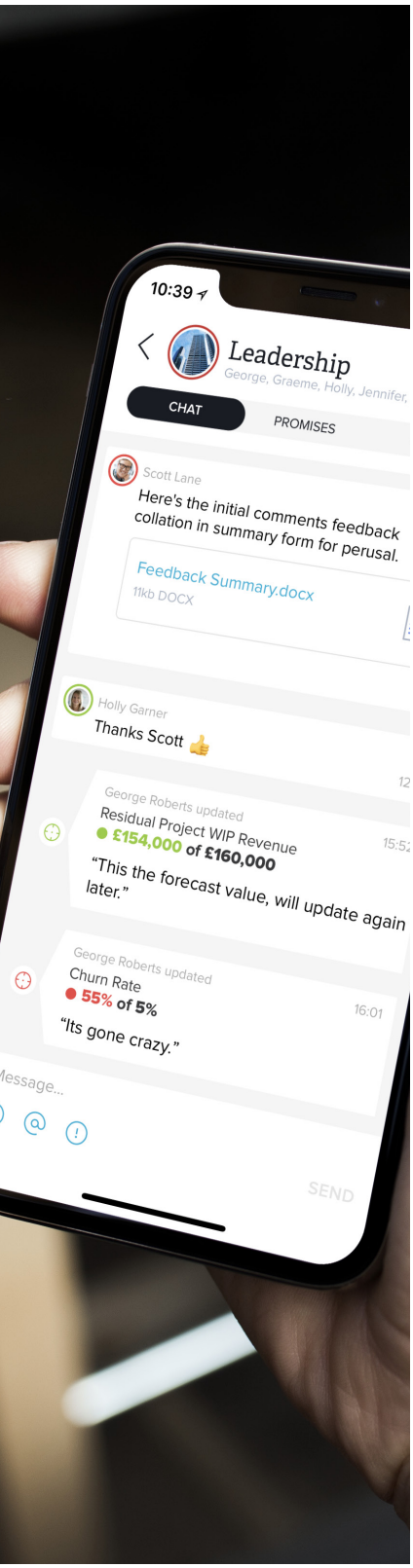
Setting targets, prioritising goals and measuring performance is simpler than ever with Samewave. Everyone receives regular snapshots of the goals assigned to them, while clear reports show how each individual is performing against their promises.

Unrivalled management

Samewave makes management automatic. Chasing colleagues becomes automated. Files, discussions and business activity can be accessed from anywhere, and smart permissions push reports and figures around the business faster than ever before. Samewave makes management fast and simple - without sacrificing control.

Impossible to ignore or forget

Social Discipline is in Samewave's genes. Daily reminder alerts of the tasks and targets at hand keep everyone seamlessly on track with no excuses. Moreover, the software will collect information and issue reports at an individual and collective level at set frequencies – regardless of progress.



Rich discussions and knowledge sharing

Samewave discussions capture and record everything. Smart social features make sure whoever needs to know is told. Genius ideas needn't go to waste or get lost in the email jungle, and there's no need to hold a time consuming old-fashioned meeting.

Complete integration

Samewave brings together and organises people and data – efficiently and simply. Groups known as "Streams" facilitate project-specific discussions while cloud data storage means files, conversations, reports and goals can be accessed from anywhere with an internet connection.

Easy to use

Easy to use software will naturally have a higher take up. Samewave draws its DNA as much from Facebook and Twitter as it does from Microsoft Office. Every pixel has been hand crafted to deliver a simple but powerful user experience. Beautiful design, intuitive data visualisation and extensive community tools all ensure a captivating experience.

Easy to deploy and scale

Samewave is cloud-based software so it can be deployed in just 10 minutes – with no need for new hardware or expert IT support. What's more, because the software is delivered over the internet with all data stored in the cloud, it is easy to scale to coincide with growing demands.

Robust security

The application and data is hosted in a secure infrastructure, with optional two factor authentication and strong password rules. Cloud storage additionally means all data can be rigorously backed up for safe keeping.

Visit www.samewave.com and sign up for free

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