



HUMANIZE YOUR WORKPLACE

The Books@Work Approach

Books@Work fosters and deepens the social connections that create cultures of trust, respect, inclusion and productivity. Through facilitated discussions of narrative literature in the workplace, Books@Work breaks down barriers and transforms individuals, teams and organizations from the front line to the C-suite.

In a typical Books@Work program, groups of up to 20 colleagues meet to share life and work experiences, challenge assumptions and deepen relationships, using a narrative text as a platform for discussion. With expert facilitation, Books@Work discussions invite critical analysis, healthy debate, openness and enhanced psychological safety.

Books@Work partners with you to tailor the program to your business priorities and the needs and interests of your employees. Whether natural teams or multi-level groups – meeting weekly, monthly or quarterly – Books@Work creates the conditions for inclusion and belonging, wellbeing, team effectiveness, leadership and/or culture change.



Why Books@Work?

Books@Work creates a safe space to nurture the high-quality social interactions that drive scientifically demonstrated outcomes at the individual, team and organizational levels. Organizations offer Books@Work to address a wide variety of issues:

Diversity & Inclusion. The text provides a springboard for respectful conversations on otherwise sensitive topics. Colleagues challenge themselves and others, discuss the “undiscussables” and find common ground.

Team Effectiveness. Books@Work is a “loosening and stretching exercise” that hones effective team dynamics and capabilities. Team effectiveness is a muscle that requires regular conditioning – Books@Work discussions provide a pleasantly productive “work-out.”

Social Wellbeing. Social connections are the strongest predictors of workplace well-being. Books@Work nurtures these connections in an engaging, low-stakes environment.

Culture Change. Books@Work is a powerful partner to ongoing organizational culture change initiatives, enabling voices at every level to contribute and be heard.

Personal Development and Community Building. Books@Work offers a unique opportunity to build critical thinking and communication, encourage self-reflection, nurture mutual respect, expand personal perspectives and deepen workplace relationships.

Books@Work: Demonstrated Impact

Comparing pre- and post-program surveys, participants report marked improvement in social/cultural outcomes:*

Survey Item	Change
It is safe for me to take a risk in this organization.	↑ 9.85%
I am able to bring up problems and tough issues with my coworkers.	↑ 7.89%
I develop and make recommendations concerning issues that affect my workplace.	↑ 5.74%
At work, others have an accurate view of who I am.	↑ 6.02%

*Selected items, n=176, identical respondents in entry and exit, 7 point scale, weighted average of responses.

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WHAT DO PARTICIPANTS SAY?

"There is a deeper understanding of each other after exchanging personal insights and stories. One team member said that this was the most genuine form of community building and culture creation they have experienced."

President, Global Manufacturer

"It heightened my sensitivity. When patients are upset, I pay a lot of attention to the words they use. And it made me more conscious of the words I use."

Nurse Practitioner, Urban Medical Center

"It was remarkable. . . being in that environment where you have people you have come to know and you can trust and be supportive. It was about the books, but then it quickly became about so much more."

Administrator, Large University

"[Books@Work] gives us a platform to discuss ideas that are not threatening in the work environment. There's no right answer. It's an exercise to better your communication skills and the team dynamic. It's tremendously beneficial, and it's a great deal."

Senior Executive, Global Manufacturer

"When we have a safe conversation, [we] open up a shared tribal knowledge. Because unless you can converse and understand where somebody's coming from, they're not going to share with you that tribal knowledge."

Quality Technician, Manufacturing Company

What Makes Books@Work Different?

It's multi-level engagement. We bridge hierarchy, function and educational experience.

It runs in the background.

Participants can meet over lunch or during the day without disrupting workflows.

It creates energy. Books@Work does not drain energy; rather, it excites & energizes its participants.

It's not prescriptive. No two programs are alike: Books@Work meets participants where they are and engages them on issues they deem relevant.

It's a gradual build. Rather than a one-time experience, Books@Work incorporates itself into the regular flow of work.

It's cost-effective and low-risk. Measured in dollars or in time, an investment in Books@Work yields high returns.

It plays well with other initiatives.

Books@Work augments and complements existing initiatives, whether in wellness, inclusion, leadership development, team building or culture change.

It fosters a common language.

Participants co-create a unique organizational dialect.

It deepens relationships. Once participants learn something new about each other, it sticks.

The Science behind Books@Work

Books@Work creates the conditions for employees and organizations to build high-quality connections. Multi-disciplinary research from leading universities demonstrates that these high-quality interpersonal connections – at every level – drive important organizational outcomes:

- **Psychological Safety**, by enabling interpersonal risk taking (Harvard)
- **Inclusion**, by creating the familiarity that neutralizes bias (Harvard & Tel Aviv University)
- **Personal Growth**, by creating a social context in which to embed learning (Rice, University of Michigan)
- **Productivity**, by creating the conditions for more engagement and higher efficacy (MIT)
- **Affirmation and Recognition**, to enhance information exchange and creative problem solving (Harvard, London Business School and UNC Chapel Hill)

EXAMPLES OF THE TYPE OF BOOKS AND STORIES WE READ



For more information about partnering with us, please contact Executive Director, Ann Kowal Smith, at anksmith@thatcanbeme.org or visit our website at www.booksatwork.org.