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*Red Lodge, Montana*

## Images and Inspiration

After 19 months of managing work and life since the global pandemic began, companies are grappling with the decision of resuming in-person working arrangements vs. remote: when to do it, how to do it and whether or not it should be mandatory. At the same time, many employees are struggling with burnout, **especially women**. Throughout the pandemic, employees have become familiar with a remote work situation, so the ambiguity around reentering the office environment has contributed to stress and anxiety. One way to combat this trend is by encouraging leaders to articulate a clear vision of the future and the transition to get there in a compelling way through visual communication. Not only are visual narrative structures effective, but they are backed by science as a proven way to connect emotionally with others.



*Yellowstone National Park*

Paul Zak and his team of researchers have been studying the effects of oxytocin on the brain for decades. Their largest discovery came when they determined that oxytocin signals empathetic feelings in humans and encourages mutual understanding. This effect has been monitored in people viewing forms of visual entertainment, like stories and movies, which increase oxytocin levels. However it can also be applied to other visuals that we consume. Most notably, in my case, are the visuals of nature and how they can benefit my motivation and mindset.

Our natural landscapes are not only important to the overall health of this planet, but they also inspire me to apply the feelings I associate with nature in a productive way. I can take the beauty and inspiration I find in nature, and use it to improve the way that I communicate and empathize with others.



*Henry's Fork, Idaho*

Not only is visual communication a necessity for improved professional relations, but Paul Zak's research also suggests that "without attention, the emotional resonance that is hoped for fails to occur." This means that in order for the sincerity and understanding to come across, we must not only apply visual communication but do it in a way that keeps people engaged the same way that nature keeps me engaged.



As the transition of work continues, there is an opportunity for leaders to ensure that their colleagues feel supported and inspired vs. stressed and burnt out. Applying visual communication can reduce the negative feelings associated with the current work landscape and inspire hope for the future.



Read more about Paul Zak's oxytocin research [here](#)

Use the attached [Change Story Tool](#) to support your efforts in articulating a vision for change.

To hone your visual communication skills as a leader and learn more about Ocean Beach's work in this area, sign up for this complimentary 60 minute session to be hosted on October 15th:

**Sign Up Here!**



*Upper Mesa Falls, Idaho*





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