

Training for Managers on SCARF Model of Engagement

The SCARF model, developed by David Rock, provides a valuable framework for understanding and influencing our interactions and collaborations with others. As James Dalton, Group Head of Employee Engagement & Health at FirstGroup said: *“For us, it is important that people understand the psychology behind decision making and also understand the psychology of what motivates people and where their opinions comes from.”* The SCARF model involves five domains of human social experience that activate either the ‘primary reward’ or ‘primary threat’ responses from the brain: **Status** (understanding our place in our life, our story, self-awareness), **Certainty** (being able to predict the future), **Autonomy** (a sense of control over our lives), **Relatedness** (being part of a team and family and relationships) and **Fairness** (being treated fairly, no discrimination).

The SCARF model enables individuals to understand how these five domains potentially affect human behaviour. The SCARF model can also be linked to the four enablers of engagement identified in the MacLeod Report: **Strategic Narrative, Engaging Managers, Integrity and Voice**. As James Dalton explained: *“We use the four enablers as our model for engagement, but what the SCARF model does is, it explains why the four enablers work. So by helping somebody understand the strategic narrative, it fulfils several of the elements of the SCARF model.”* The model can also play a critical role in supporting Diversity and Inclusion at the workplace. It can help managers and leaders understand the origins of unconscious bias and why people might feel alienated or excluded. For example, if an employee perceives they are not being treated fairly by their manager and is being discriminated against, it might activate a threat response from the individual. As James Dalton described *“It (the SCARF model) links seamlessly to the diversity agenda because it makes people understand why they shouldn’t use certain language, and why they shouldn’t treat certain groups differently, because of the way that will make those individuals feel.”*

Managers at UK Bus, part of FirstGroup, are trained on the SCARF Model of engagement, as it provides a robust scientific framework for building self-awareness and awareness of others. James Dalton believes that the SCARF Model provides organisations with a check list of issues that need to be addressed at organisational level to make sure they are creating positive working environments that helps all employees feel engaged. It has helped a section of management teams to really understand what engagement means, and what triggers certain reactions amongst employees. The positive feedback received from managers who have undergone training on the SCARF model has encouraged FirstGroup to roll it out to their other divisions as well. As James Dalton explained: *“By using neuroscience in our training, it has really helped a lot of people understand why engagement is important and how their behaviour effects people’s engagement.”* For James, the SCARF model is the missing piece in engagement and an essential tool for supporting diversity and inclusion within organisations.