

## **LEADERSHIP, ORGANIZATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY, AND CULTURE**

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### **ABSTRACT**

If you are a leader in any sense of the word, you already know it is a difficult job. Leadership is much more than giving orders, managing employees' time and productivity, making money, making schedules, or providing performance reviews. Leadership is an art that takes dedication, perseverance, and a wide range of skills. One of these skills is knowing the psychology and culture of the organization that the leader leads. This is a key element in being successful in any leadership situation. Leading others can get complicated and difficult, but it is a vital role, and a vital role to get right. This narrative will cover the links of leadership, organizational psychology, and culture, and how to bind them together to get employees engaged and empowered so productivity will be high and continuous.

**KEYWORDS:** Leadership, Organizational Psychology & Culture

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **Positive Leadership**

What is positive leadership? Positive leadership is an area of study concerning leadership styles, behaviour, and techniques that are considered deviant, atypical, or positively deviant. It falls outside the normal range of what a good leader is. It is normally classified as positively deviant. Consider a bell curve of leadership styles with negative behaviours on the left and positive behaviours on the right. Most individuals fall somewhere in the middle. Negative behaviours fall in the far-left tail while positive behaviours fall in the far-right tail of the curve. As educators, mentors, or trainers most spend a lot of time and effort pointing out what not to do and trying to get employees to shift to the right side of the curve (Ackerman, 2020).

#### **Positive Leadership Theories**

Positive Leadership is a general term where several different leadership theories live. Some of the best known are authentic leadership development, transformational leadership, charismatic leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership. The models described by these theories differ based on different hypotheses and correlations in which the theories are grounded in. They do all however include some agreed upon elements: positive leadership involves experiencing, modelling, and enhancing positive emotions; leaders are interested not only in the bottom line but the employees' development; leaders have high self-awareness, optimism, and personal integrity (Ackerman, 2020).

#### **Positive Organizational Leadership**

This type of leadership style is an area of focus in Organizational Psychology looking at how leaders influence the organization itself. Positive leadership explores topics like positive deviance and behaviours that indicate loyalty, commitment, the willingness to go above and beyond, and change management. It looks at many high-level activities that these leaders do to impact the company in a positive way. There are many positive leadership styles that can add

engagement, empowerment, and productivity to the organization. For instance, Authentic Leadership style which has four caveats: self-awareness, which is conscious knowledge of one's own character, feelings, motives, and desires; rational transparency; internalized moral perspective, which breaks down to a sense of ethics; and balanced processing, which equates to being fair and open minded. These are all key aspects of an excellent leader. If we bring emotional intelligence into the conversation then leaders must be visionary, coaches, affiliative leaders, and consensus or democratic leaders. Leaders must have an ambitious vision and inspire employees to follow it. These leaders know how to further develop and get the best out of those around their influence. Also, leaders are well-versed in applying and enhancing positive affect in the work environment and bring harmony and conflict resolution to the teams. Furthermore, leaders thrive on collaboration bringing together a diverse range of ideas to make decisions and bring the organization closer and closer to the mission and vision (Ackerman, 2020).

### **THE DIFFERENT STYLES**

When speaking of Positive Leadership one of the first styles that come up in most conversations is Transformational Leadership. Here the leaders have strong ideals and are liked, trusted, and respected by the staff. Most employees will not follow leaders if they do not trust or respect them. Leaders motivate and inspire staff on a consistent basis. They promote creativity and innovation through open-mindedness and non-threatening inquiry of ideas. Individual consideration is one big trait of the Transformational Leader. It is treating each follower as a unique individual with distinctive strengths, weaknesses, and needs. This is a key ingredient in getting employees motivated, engaged, and having a feeling of empowerment. Charismatic Leadership is a subtype of transformational leadership and has many of the characteristics that are transformational. Charismatic leaders are very skilled at communicating with employees, especially on a deep level. These types of leaders have a way of getting people to follow the path that is laid out and communicating the vision that the staff needs to achieve the goals of the organization. One final style is Servant Leadership. Servant leaders embody specific traits: empowerment and development of employees, expressing humility, authenticity, interpersonal acceptance, and stewardship. These are all key traits in getting the employee to be motivated, engaged, and to have the personal power to get objectives done. Transactional leaders over the long run are just not successful because the element of people is left out (Ackerman, 2020).

### **WHAT DO THE FACTS SUGGEST?**

The facts are very clear about the above leadership styles. Positive Leadership styles are linked to better outcomes than negative leadership or transactional leadership. These styles have been found to contribute significantly to employee performance, job satisfaction, and the workforce going well beyond the expected effort margins. Also, servant leaders tend to attract better talent, staff enhancement, and both individual and team performance improvement. Positive leadership is about having good relationships with your employees, understanding other's points of view, not pretending to have the right answer when one does not, and creating an atmosphere of innovation and creativity. A genuinely great positive leader is one that is an observer, a mentor, a change agent, and someone who empowers others to succeed (Ackerman, 2020).

### **Positive Leadership in Action**

So, what does positive leadership look like? It is leaders that care, empower their employees, and who support their staff throughout the day. It is leaders that have gotten the respect and trust from their workforce and then use it to achieve the mission and vision of the organization. One big trait of a positive leader is that a leader who cares will respond to a mistake

with compassion and concern rather than condemnation. This is a key attribute of a leader because people are human, and they will make mistakes. This may only be a signal that additional training and support need to be supplied. One can gain great engagement by adopting this characteristic in their style. Leaders must understand that there is a reason behind the mistake and speak to the employee to see if they are struggling, do not have enough resources, or is it something that is not apparently obvious. An empowering leader delegates projects to their staff but enables them on how they will go about completing the tasks. Leaders also let staff choose the training and development activities to ensure employees are invested in their own growth. Support is an important activity that the leader must engage in. It may be acting as a backup and being there when staff needs assistance, or it may be speaking up for an employee when they are struggling at a task or project. Some key skills of a positive leader are positive affect, mindfulness, hope, confidence, self-esteem, self-efficacy, locus of control, and emotional stability (Ackerman, 2020).

### **The Flow State**

Flow state constitutes the emotions experienced when tasks are going well, and the employee feels in the flow or in the zone. The theory is if employees have a perception in this way, they are more motivated and engaged in day-to-day activities. Staff then have a subjective experience that is pleasurable, and they will go to great lengths to experience it again and again. Employees describe a “current” or “flow” throughout the activity. This adds an experiential involvement in day-to-day tasks and increases creativity, innovation, and effort. This in turn can increase productivity, profits, and facilitate a competitive environment. Flow state has some unique key dimensions and emphasizes the characteristics of being in a flow state. The dimensions make it easier for leaders to understand how to get the employee in this mental state and become more productive (Houston, 2020).

### **Challenge-Skill Balance**

Flow state requires a balance between the staff members’ skills and the challenge of the task. When employees have a task that they are not adequately trained or educated for they can become disheartened and experience negative emotions. If the task is too easy, they can become disinterested and disengage. It is important for the team member to experience the flow and become actively engaged in the task and not overwhelmed by the activity. Proper training is a large part of this process so they can become a master at the task and be highly productive. This can come to fruition when this dimension occurs, and the employee is at the right level to handle the situational demands of the activity. They get in the flow and the optimum state of engagement occurs rendering the staff member highly engaged and competent at the task. This in turn increases productivity (Houston, 2020).

### **Clear Goals and Unambiguous Feedback**

To be in a flow state one must refute the incompatible demands of the task and focus on the next step. Setting defined goals sustains a clear meaning on what actions need to be done to complete the task at hand. There are positive correlations between flow state and performance goals that reinforce the idea that employees need unambiguous feedback to successfully achieve the mission and vision of the company. While positive feedback can come from different areas and managers the meaning is identical, its goal is to let staff know they are succeeding in the goals of the organization. The guiding feature of flow state is the intense experiential involvement in day-to-day activities of the organization. It can only be achieved based on the employee’s individual innovation and creativity. While much of the research of the experience of flow is based on structured leisure activities it certainly has a foundation in the everyday business tasks.

Much of the research has found that experiencing flow aids in the emotional well-being of the employee. A staff that is undergoing a feeling of well-being will be more productive and engaged in the mission and vision of the organization. Flow correlates positively with motivation and the feeling of empowerment within the employee which can improve intrinsic motivation. A business work activity will then be completed with more enthusiasm, motivation, and concentration and this will increase the flow state of being. This in turn will lead a greater focus on the mission and vision of the firm (Houston, 2020).

### **Action-Awareness**

Being in the flow facilitates a staff member that is in the here and now and one that is concerned with the task at hand. The activity becomes absolute and second nature; it is almost automatic. The behaviours that the company needs to be successful are ingrained in the employee and then performed naturally daily. This can be described as “in the zone” or “in the groove.” This is the place where one wants their staff, so the staff can take care of customers and make them customers for life (Houston, 2020).

### **Concentration on the Task**

Immersion or total concentration is one of the key dimensions of the flow state. Focusing on the here and now enables workers to get into the state of flow and direct their attention on the task. The flow itself circumvents distractions and promotes full engagement in the business activity. The employee then concentrates on the task and is only aware of relevant factors and ignores any unrelated elements that could interfere with success (Houston, 2020).

### **Sense of Control**

In the state of flow, a sense of control is present without it being cognizant. Without the mindset of being in control, it is a sense of control where they feel they can achieve anything. The concept of exercising control in difficult situations is key to the flow actuality. With the flow experience, employees have stronger control characteristics which can lead to increased productivity. Individuals with weaker internal control levels do not reach the flow state and thus, efficiency and profitability suffer (Houston, 2020).

### **Loss of Self-Consciousness**

How he or she appears to others may be a key element of an employee’s work life. In the flow environment, any concerns of self disappear as an employee concentrates on the task. At this point, the employee is too involved in the activity to be concerned with matters of the ego. When an employee is set free from self-consciousness he or she tends to do things intuitively and with aplomb. Self-preoccupation dissipates and the employee shifts his or her focus to the endeavour all the while rejecting outside and egocentric distractions (Houston, 2020).

### **Transformation of Time**

Most employees can lose track of time, which can be a normal result of the situation. The experience of flow can distort the concept of time as an employee is completely engaged in the moment and the activity. A transcendence of time can occur if one is deeply engaged in the task. Time can slow down, speed up, or in some instances it can become completely irrelevant. It produces an employee who is highly engaged, motivated, empowered, and productive (Houston, 2020).

### **Autotelic Experience**

Having employees with deep autotelic feelings is important to overall organizational success. These feelings are a sense of personal wholeness, sense of discovery, and a sense of human connectedness. This is driven by servant leadership, trusting your leader, and getting appreciation from the leader. The autotelic dimension is the end result of being in a flow state with entropic experiences being transferred into the flow (Houston, 2020).

### **The Flow and Workplace Settings**

Flow has many advantages in the business atmosphere. Number one, it encourages creative thinking, cultivates innovation, and opens new business horizons. It can produce strong ideas that will increase profitability and productivity. Flow can heighten motivation, engagement, and empowerment among staff. This will lead to better products, services, and customer interaction (Houston, 2020).

### **Job Crafting**

Individuals mostly spend their week working. Many see it as a daily struggle, feeling bored, and waiting for a day off. But what if leaders could make the job tasks more meaningful, worthwhile, and could leave the employee feeling satisfied and a part of something bigger? This is a key element of job crafting. Job crafting is essentially taking positive steps and actions to redesign everyday work duties, changing tasks, relationships, and perceptions of the job itself. The main assertion is that staff stay in the same role but get more meaning out of the jobs they do by changing how they do the tasks every day. Leaders strive to craft a position that the employee will love where they can satisfy and excel in the daily functions of the job. The tasks align with the strengths, motives, and passions of the stakeholder. This can in turn stimulate better performance, intrinsic motivation, empowerment, and engagement (Kohll, 2018).

### **Key Types of Job Crafting**

The standard definition of Job Crafting is “An employee-initiated approach which enables staff to shape their own work environment such that it fits their individual needs by adjusting the prevailing job demands and resources” (Tims & Bakker, 2010 pg. 4). Wrzesniewski and Dutton postulated in 2001 that there are three ways to job craft: task crafting, relationship crafting, and cognitive crafting. This aids in the types of behaviours employees need to be successful in the organization and become crafters. Leaders, through these activities, can then create a job person fit that meets the needs of the staff member as well as the company.

### **Task Crafting**

Task crafting is the shaping or moulding of one’s role in the organization. It can involve adding or dropping activities outlined in the job description. In a sense, the leader is making the tasks in the job the employee’s own. The employee, using a mindset of Extra Value Added (EVA), sets out to make the experience with the customer a unique, gratifying, and profitable endeavour. This type of crafting may involve changing the nature of the job or dedicating different amounts of time to what is being currently done, but the goal here is to increase the quality of the customer experience (Kohll, 2018).

### **Relationship Crafting and Changing up Interactions**

This is how employees change and reshape the type and nature of how they interact with others for the benefit of themselves as well as the company. Relationship crafting involves changing staff work on tasks, communication, and engagement with other individuals throughout the external and internal environment. Here the staff member changes these actions to provide a better experience not only for customers, but also for everyone inside and outside the organization.

Employees become a positive force throughout the company and this can provide more profitability and increased EVA. This is a combined effort between the employee and the leader to find the best fit for everyday action (Kohll, 2018).

## COGNITIVE CRAFTING

The third type of crafting is cognitive crafting and is about how employees change their mindset and behaviour to better match success. By changing perspectives and perception on what we are doing on a daily basis, one can find or create more meaning. Many times, this leads to increased engagement and a feeling of empowerment among staff. Through the job crafting components, leaders and employees can redefine, reimagine, and get more meaning on what they do every day. This can bring increased benefits to the organization (Kohll, 2018).

### Crafting Items

Following are some crafting items or concepts to take into consideration. Give preference to work tasks that suit an employee's interests, skills, or expertise. Introduce skills that better fit the staff member's skills or interests. Change the scope or types of routine tasks. Organize special events in the workplace. Encourage work group friends with others with similar interests or expertise. Assign a mentor. Remind workers of the significance that their work has on themselves and the company. Reassure staff about the positive effects that the job has on them and the organization. Finally, remind employees the importance of what they are doing day to day on the community at large (Kohll, 2018).

Organizational leadership is a psychological endeavour that involves not only excellent leadership skills but also, a knowledge of culture. We must keep in mind that we are leading human beings. Employees will have feelings, perceptions, and mindsets that will need to be cultivated for the achievement of the mission and vision of the organization. This will take a keen understanding of what motivates, empowers, and engages the workers. Leaders must have a sharp focus on these factors to be successful so the entity can be profitable. It is the personnel that make the company great and profitable.

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