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Can management prevent the downside of change?

It has been found through a series of studies that staff cutbacks, particularly in service industries, invariably have a negative impact on frontline employees' ability to interact successfully with customers. Over nine years in the US healthcare industry, the number of patient interactions per employee increased from 182 in 2006 to 216 in 2015. Whilst at first sight this might look like a greater level of effectiveness, in practice it has been found to:

a. Dramatically reduce the amount of 'quality time' that healthcare professionals have with the patients
b. Reduce health care outcomes
c. Increase mistakes
d. Increase offset and long term cost and
e. Increase work stress

Cost efficiencies are usually the driver in staff cutbacks in the service industry, yet one of the most important factors in job satisfaction for those at the coalface is client interaction. Could effective management, where the staff trusts its managers, improve the negative implications of such change?

Research just published in the Journal of Services Marketing suggests that most of the negative impacts brought about by such 'cutback'change cannot be offset by management as they are structural issues.

The study, based on interviews of 879 nursing staff from five US and Chinese healthcare organisations, did find however that good management can, "attenuate the negative effect of frontline employees' role stress on their quality performance and job satisfaction, thus securing the intended benefits of a productivity orientation."

Change – role stress and performance

What this means is that whilst good management cannot overcome the effects of cutbacks on things like the amount of time a nurse gets with a patient, it can help to

a. Reduce the stress experienced by the staff brought about by such changes
b. Increase job satisfaction and
c. Improve productivity

The researchers, from universities in China and the US, found it is the perceptions of the change coupled with the perceptions of management which increase role stress and have a negative impact on role performance and job satisfaction. Together these two factors often exacerbate an already bad situation.

What the researchers also found was that senior management seeking cost efficiencies will inevitably drive their staff harder. This is often as a direct result of the fact that fewer people have to do the same job as a larger team once did.

In many sectors such as healthcare, the passenger airline industry etc. there are definite minimum ratios between staff and clients that cannot be reduced without compromising safety.

However, during cutbacks those on the front lines tend to sense that they can't do their jobs as well as they used to with larger teams. A nurse rushed off her feet will not be able to form relationships with her patients, and the patients will often feel anonymous and uncared for as a result. This feeds back to the nurse through patient attitudes and negatively impacts her job satisfaction as a consequence.

Management trust

However, the researchers did find that trust in management can attenuate the stress associated with change. As the researchers recognise, "establishing trust is not a quick fix that can allow any manager to successfully implement organisational change. Rather, trust must be understood as a long-term asset to be developed, which managers can leverage to more nimbly guide their organisations."

In effect what the researchers found was that in cases where the staff trust and have a good relationship with their managers and the management as a body, and they feel the managers care, then stress levels are likely to be significantly reduced. As a direct consequence of this trust and reduced stress, the researchers found that the staff and management worked together to reduce the impact of the cutbacks on the patients and often actually increased productivity.

Where the relationship between the management and the staff did not promote trust the effect was the opposite; higher stress levels, lower job satisfaction, reduced productivity, reduced patient / customer satisfaction and reduced outcomes.

So where trust has been built between the management and the staff, the negativity associated with efficiency driven change can often be eased. This does not mean that trust in management will entirely prevent the negative consequences of cutback focussed change, but it will definitely ease the consequences and, where that trust does not exist, cutback focussed change will invariably result in worse outcomes than intended.

Reference

Jun Ye Jesse King , (2016),"Managing the downside effect of a productivity orientation", Journal of Services Marketing, Vol. 30 Iss 2. Pp 34-41

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Organisational culture change through HR?

Are the goals of organisational culture change and HR the same?

Human Resources teams are charged with selecting, advising and assisting with the development of the people in order to achieve the aims of the organisation. This isn't just about hiring and firing – this is about ensuring that people work together as a cohesive whole and about using their collective strengths to achieve output that is beyond them as a loose collective of talent.

Human Resources teams can (but few do) start going about this by defining and then moulding the culture that the organisation needs in order to achieve its aims. This, the paper claims, should be the starting point. It is not about talent alone.

How do you define culture?

There is no solid, repeated definition of an organisational culture. The paper published in the Strategic HR Review instead describes three phases to defining a company's culture:

1. Phase 1 is to start seeing the culture through the symbols, rituals, stories and other organisational events. We tend to experience and notice these cultural artefacts most when we first enter or join an organisation. These artefacts quickly become accepted as the norm as people 'bed in' to the organisation.
2. Phase 2. Is to analyse how the culture shapes how people think, behave and feel in the organisation. The researchers comment "Culture shows up in the values, norms, unwritten rules, emotional responses to, or flows of how things are done in a company. Most of the above current definitions of culture follow this logic."
3. The third phase is describing the identity of the organisation or company. The authors suggest this is often summed in very few words – Apple wishes to be known for design and simplicity while the Marriott hotel chain wishes to be known for exceptional service.

Creating and building a culture

Having defined the culture using these three phases the paper goes on to describe what the authors assert is a series of steps HR functions can use to help develop the culture:

1. Define the 'right' culture. This is best done by the Human Resources team asking the senior management for three things that the company wishes to be known for. The senior management team needs to be in at least 80% agreement.
2. Create an intellectual agenda. This should be easily communicable by senior management and the HR function to staff and customers alike. The idea is that this needs to be simple and based around a few core ideas and principles that get people to think.
3. With the intellectual agenda comes the behavioural agenda. How do you want people to act, both internally (employees) and externally (customers / clients / stake holders etc.) What is the experience you want people to have and what behaviours will lead to this experience?
4. Design and deliver key processes and structures. The authors explain this as institutionalising "the culture through management and organization practices like staffing, training, promotion, measurement, compensation, organization design, information management, physical arrangements and leadership development."
5. Define and implement a leadership brand. Once the structures and ideals are in place, so leadership and HR must reflect and encourage them throughout the organisation at all times in all that they do. Usually, the authors note, this entails a 'customer focused culture lens' so the organisation lives and breathes its culture from top to bottom.

The paper concludes, "HR professionals who understand the why, what, and how of culture will complement a talent agenda with a more sustainable winning organization." This the authors argue puts functions like HR and L&D firmly at the centre of organisational development and change.

Editor's note: It is essential that all the central functions of an organisation are at least aligned with any new culture. As this paper is arguing, functions such as HR can really help to embed new cultural practices. However this only really occurs where they themselves have gone through a process of 'getting' the new cultural norms and practices and are embedding it themselves

Reference

Ulrich, D., & Brockbank, W. (2016). Creating a winning culture: next

step for leading HR professionals.
Strategic HR Review, 15(2).

How to Predict Unethical Management Behaviour

A paper just published by a team of researchers from universities in the UK, Germany, Austria and Switzerland looked at what the primary factors are in the development of unethical behaviour by managers and leaders. Both unethical behaviour and the tolerance for unethical behaviour is gaining wide recognition as being a primary threat to businesses and organisational health both financially and operationally.

Previous research has shown that part of the problem is that unethical management behaviour can frequently bring short term financial benefits, rewarding and strengthening the behaviours, attitudes and thinking underpinning such behaviours. It has also been recognised that managers who attempt to incorporate and promote more ethical practices that are at odds with the prevailing management culture often face difficulties.

Recent research has focused on two primary predictors of unethical management behaviour:

1. Moral disengagement and
2. Situational strength

Moral Disengagement

It has been found that in order for managers to engage in unethical behaviours such as unfair practices, cheating, manipulating data, bullying etc. they first have to rationalise or disengage from their own moral compass or standards and those of society in general in a process known as moral disengagement. Considerable research has been conducted over the last 20-30 years in this area and it has been found that three processes are central to moral disengagement:

1. **Lower level of self-awareness and reflection**. This enables the individual to focus more on the task and achieving the result whilst ignoring any internal chatter or signals that their actions may be at odds with their own or others' standards.
2. **Lower levels of what is known as self-organisation** or congruency. In effect we are more self-organised when all of our systems are congruent and aligned. Moral disengagement requires that the individual reduces this natural self-alignment and started to tolerate lower levels of self-organisation.
3. Lastly that the individual has **reduced levels of ability to regulate their own emotions and behaviour**.

This includes, but is not confined to, the emotional regulation and emotional intelligence involved in empathy. This makes the individual more volatile and reactive.

The process of moral disengagement

The process by which people become morally disengaged is also fairly well understood these days as well. Moral disengagement is usually a four stage process whereby the individual:

1. Firstly has to mentally reconstruct or tell themselves a story or context where the action or actions being or about to be taken cannot be viewed as being immoral or unethical. This can include recourse to devices like 'others are doing it', or 'it's not against the law' for example.
2. Secondly they will usually reduce their own sense of importance or agency in the actions. This is usually done by blaming others, the organisation, situation or context as the driver or originator of the actions.
3. Next they will fail to see or deny the consequences of the actions being undertaken or their inaction
4. Lastly they will need to change how they perceive and regard the victim(s) by either downgrading their status, importance or the effect and impact on them.

This research reports on 2 separate studies conducted by the researchers on 213 and 231 participants in Germany last year.

Their first finding was that general moral disengagement is a strong predictor of unethical behaviour.

Their second finding was that authenticity significantly reduces the chances of an individual undergoing moral disengagement and therefore engaging in unethical behaviour. Authenticity is seen as a level of internal and external and internal congruence that comes from self-awareness. Additionally, authentic people have lower levels of defensiveness, ego driven behaviours and thinking, and are more open to learning, both about the situation and about themselves.

Situational Strength

Lastly the researchers found that what is known as 'situational strength' or the cues provided by the environment (other people, the culture, observed behaviours, actions and inaction, rewards and punishments etc.) regarding the desirability of potential behaviours, has a significant impact on whether an individual or indeed a team or group of people will engage in unethical behaviour.

Situational strength is a measure of the ability of a situation or set of circumstances to create psychological pressure on the individual to engage in and/or refrain from particular behaviours.

The development of unethical behaviour

So the pattern for the development of unethical behaviour appears to be:

1. Firstly the level of authenticity an individual has predicts how likely they are to morally disengage in the first place. Authenticity largely appears to be an antidote to the chances of moral disengagement and consequently unethical behaviour.

2. Therefore, when a manager or leader with lower levels of authenticity finds themselves in a environment or situation (Situational Strength) that suggests:
    1. The primacy of the task or goal above all else (task focused) and
    2. The situation promotes or doesn't actively disapprove of or takes action against moral disengagement, and
3. The individual morally disengages by:
    1. Creating a narrative or story about why the action is necessary and/or not unethical or out of the ordinary
    2. Reducing their own sense of involvement or importance in the decision or actions
    3. Failing to see or being wilfully blind to the consequences, and
    4. Reducing the impact their actions will have on/or blaming the victims

Then the chances are high that they will engage in unethical behaviour.

Reference

Knoll, M., Lord, R.G., Petersen, L.E. and Weigelt, O., 2016. Examining the moral grey zone: The role of moral disengagement, authenticity, and situational strength in predicting unethical managerial behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, *46*(1), pp.65-78.

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How to manage people who do boring, repetitive jobs

There has been a lot of previous research into how boredom impacts productivity in a wide range of settings. Virtually all the studies found, as you would probably expect, that when someone is bored they tend to make more mistakes and become increasingly inattentive to their work. Other than mistakes, studies have also found, somewhat counter-intuitively that repetitive work frequently results in slower output over time.

Research just published in the journal Human Resource Development Quarterly looked at boredom in a university catering setting and found, unexpectedly, that though many of the task routines matched that of factories in terms of speed per cycle and repetitiveness for example, the staff didn't tend to get bored or suffer from the resultant level of mistakes and slowing output over time.

Job cycles

The first thing the research looked at was job cycles. Previous research has suggested that between 20 – 50% of factory workers get bored at work. This is linked to the routines that they do, with routine cycles taking as little as 7 seconds. A 7 second cycle can be repeated 2057 times during a four-hour stint between breaks on a shift, and this has an (often negative) impact on the worker's enjoyment of the job.

In the university catering service, job routines could take between 7-18 seconds depending on the job – for example, clearing the waste food off a plate and putting it onto the washing machine conveyor belt etc.

However, none of the employees reported being bored on the job, with one even saying "I haven't heard of a single person who has complained about the boredom." Despite the similarities on the surface between the catering job and the factory job, the staff aren't bored and they infrequently suffer the problems of other low-skilled workers in repetitive roles.

Why?

The question is why? What is the difference between a catering setting and other repetitive settings?

Job rotation

In the university catering services studied there were a large number of semi-skilled repetitive roles in places like coffee shops and restaurants. All the employees tend to be rotated through the different roles every day. One day a person may be working on the till in the coffee shop – the next they may be at the washing machine. Indeed, the researchers found that often workers had to move from one role to another as their shift progressed to match need. This variety it appears to contribute to the motivation and lack of boredom among the staff.

However, the story doesn't end there. What the researchers found was that staff are constantly having to make decisions about where the need is at any particular moment.

Management involvement

Another thing that helped motivate the staff was that management in these settings are usually operational, in that aren't afraid to get their hands dirty when the staff are under pressure and they usually show willing to lend a hand. It was found that all of the staff observed their managers working at whatever station required them, due to a backlog for example. This operational 'hands on' management approach served to motivate the staff, and reduce any perceptions of 'us and them' between the staff and the managers.

This effect doesn't occur where managers won't / don't get involved operationally. Additionally it was found that this approach to management gave the managers a much better appreciation of the issues staff face, which in turn enabled them to manage better.

The researchers found that in these types of environment the managers tend to be less distanced from the work and as a result were almost always more positive with their staff, offering encouragement on a daily basis for example. This close connection of the managers to the work has a significantly positive psychological impact on the workers.

Professional development

Additionally, the researchers found that where there is a continual involvement in often small professional development processes for the staff, this significantly correlated with higher levels of motivation.

Customer contact

One of the big differences between catering and factory work is that catering staff have a lot of contact with the customers. In effect they could see the immediate effect of their actions on the customers and this has been found to further increase the level of staff motivation and develop a service attitude.

Conclusions

This study provides a number of interesting conclusions about the environmental aspects of good job design and management practice. Things like:

- Having direct contact with the customers with a problem solving orientation
- Job rotation based on needs and the ability to decide where the need lies
- Having a positive management team who are close to the work and are prepared to roll their sleeves up and help when necessary
- Continual professional development, even small things

like ‘show and tell’ or 10 minute briefings or discussions

all contribute to getting rid of the boredom factor altogether and to motivate people even in more repetitive roles.

Reference

Tsai, CJ, (2016) Boredom at work and job monotony: An exploratory case study within the catering sector, Human Resource Development Quarterly April 2016.

The 2 factors which predict burnout and your personality isn't one of them

A series of new research studies looking at what can predict burnout in staff have just been published and they all point to just two things that can predict whether you will experience burnout or not.

One study just published in the International Journal of Stress Management looked at a range of factors thought to be involved in burnout. Burnout or organisational burnout is considered to be a form of stress that is characterised by a feeling of exhaustion, a lack of enthusiasm, motivation and effectiveness. Burnout is often accompanied by cynicism, frustration, avoidance, distraction and disengagement. Burnout is considered to be the complete opposite of engagement.

The researchers looked at a range of potential factors that have been thought to be contributors to burnout. In particular, they looked at job characteristics such as tenure, position, the type of role or job, the educational level of the individual as well as their personality type, previous experience of stress and their level of emotional intelligence.

The study was split into two phases each looking at 1,230 and 2,209 employees in a series of educational employment settings.

Conducting a SEM analysis, which is a form of factor analysis, the researchers found that only two factors were significant predictors of burnout.

The two reliable predictors of burnout

All of the studies published this year have all come to very similar conclusions.

The first, unsurprisingly, is that the level and duration of stress an individual experiences is an accurate predictor of burnout. The higher the level of stress experienced and the longer they are stressed, the more likely an individual is to burnout.

Secondly, the higher the level of emotional intelligence, coupled with the ability to regulate their emotions (emotional resilience), the less likely an individual is to experience burnout.

Other factors like personality, educational level, type of job, previous experience of stress etc. do not reliably predict whether someone will burnout.

The effect of this and a number of other recent studies is that emotional intelligence and emotion regulation (emotional resilience – the ability to be able to change your emotions at will) appears to be the only reliable antidote to burnout and to offsetting the effects of stress.

The best antidote to preventing burnout therefore is reducing stress whilst increasing emotional intelligence and emotion regulation skills.

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Zysberg, L., Orenshtein, C., Gimmon, E. & Robinson, R (2016) *Emotional Intelligence, Personality, Stress, and Burnout Among Educators*. International Journal of Stress Management, Apr 11 , 2016,

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Lu, C. S., & Kuo, S. Y. (2016). *The effect of job stress on self-reported safety behaviour in container terminal operations: The moderating role of emotional intelligence*. *Transportation Research Part F: Traffic Psychology and Behaviour*, *37*, 10-26.

The effects of leadership training on organisational learning

Effective leadership can improve organisational learning and help drive the organisation in new directions.

Organisational learning as a concept is the process of creating, retaining and transferring knowledge within the organisation. The primary purpose being to prevent organisations from losing what they learn from experience over time.

In the modern knowledge based economy organisational learning can create a real competitive advantage for almost all organisations.

An interesting piece of research has just been published in the Journal of Workplace Learning that shows how leadership training can influence the 7 forms of organisational learning.

The 7 forms of organisational learning

1. Individual learning – this is the learning everyone undergoes, either through experience or through formal training etc.
2. Dialogue and inquiry learning. This can either be formally set up as a series of inquiry learning tasks or the learning that occurs through normal dialogue and conversations.
3. Team learning – this is both the formal or informal learning that teams undergo as a team.
4. Continuous learning – this refers to the programmes and development opportunities the organisation provides .
5. Learning through empowerment – this refers to the learning people and teams accrue when they are given more authority and responsibility.
6. Systems that promote learning and the capture of organisational learning – this refers to the learning gained directly from organisational systems. These can include Management information systems, Learning Management Systems, operational and process systems, work flow systems etc.
7. Learning from the leadership both directly and indirectly from their behaviours and actions. Leaders and managers as role models.

The researchers provided a development programme for leaders, helping them to understand the 7 forms of organisational learning and facilitated them to find ways improve the organisational learning using this knowledge.

The researchers then collected stories from across the organisations both before the event and afterwards to try to discern what changes had occurred in organisational learning as a result of the programme with the leaders.

Findings

Where there are seven types of organisational learning, only three of those were found to be impacted by programme. They found that Continuous Learning improved after the training in that the organisations had a wider range of learning opportunities and many in the organisations felt they were better.

The leaders didn't think that there was any development or improvement in Empowerment based or Embedded Systems learning. However the employees did believe that these had got much better and that they were learning more from these sources.

In terms of the team and individual forms of learning, neither the employees nor the leaders thought there had been any improvements as a result of the programme.

The paper suggested that "evaluations of leadership training programs should examine changes in organizational learning from several stakeholders." Where perceptions differ as to the outcomes of a programme focused on changing the organisation as a whole, samples of all stakeholders should be consulted to assess whether there have been changes at all.

Where management is being trained, their staff should be consulted as to the effects of their management's training.

Editor's Comment

Whilst the study itself is interesting, efforts to increase organisational learning across the 7 forms are comparatively rare. Often I find that 'Organisational Learning' falls into the gaps between the leadership, management, HR and L&D/OD functions and rarely does anyone have direct responsibility for organisational learning as a strategy for developing a competitive advantage and developing a systemic and strategic approach to the accumulation, retention and access to and deliverance of learning and experience across an organisation.

The Dimensions of Organisational Learning on their own are a useful starting point and I have attached some references to get you started.

Reference

Hasson, Henna, et al. (2016) "Improving organizational learning through leadership training." Journal of Workplace Learning 28.3 (2016): 115-129.

Dimensions of Organisational Learning References

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Yang, B., Watkins, K. E., & Marsick, V. J. (2004). The construct of the learning organization: Dimensions, measurement, and validation. Human Resource Development Quarterly, 15(1), 31-55.

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Does a positive outlook really make a difference to our success?

Do you have a more positive orientation to life or do things get you down easily? And how quickly do you bounce back? Do you believe that being more positive means you are more likely to achieve your goals?

Some fascinating new research has been looking at these questions and in particular if having a positive mind-set makes a difference to whether entrepreneurs are successful or not.

Looking at the most successful entrepreneurs of the modern day, a number of stereotypes emerge about their character and the acclaimed role of positive thinking. The late Steve Jobs of Apple was a driven man always seeking to break new ground and then dominate it. He drove his staff just as hard as he did himself and expected nothing short of perfection from himself and his core team. His relentlessly positive outlook (or so the story goes) took his business through some huge highs and lows. This in turn led Apple from his parents' garage in California to being one of the biggest companies in the world today.

The question is does having a positive orientation lead to success and does the opposite, i.e. having a negative or pessimistic orientation, lead to more failures? This is a common belief and the core of thousands of books, but is it true?

Positive orientation

Research just published in the journal Applied Psychology looked at how a positive or negative orientation impacted 246 entrepreneurs (143 women) who had been running their businesses for at least two years and were either married or in a stable relationship. The researchers from Poland and Italy were testing the hypothesis that, "more positive entrepreneurs may engage more strongly in personal goal realisation thanks to higher resistance to stress and a greater availability of personal resources."

Findings

The first thing the researchers discovered was that people who are more optimistic also tend to feel better about their goals than those with a more negative outlook.

The next thing they found was that achievement has a direction. This is a significant and important finding.

The researchers discovered that

having a positive orientation on its own does not necessarily and automatically lead to success and achievement. However, when looking at the entrepreneurs that do tend to achieve their goals, they found that they have a positive outlook (measured in terms of self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism) *and* they have positive personal and family goals first. This is important. The people whose goals were mainly business success orientated, even if they were positive, were significantly less likely to achieve their goals than those who had goals around being a better person, having better relationships and providing for their family and as a consequence saw the fulfilment of these goals as being through their business goals.

In effect the achievers tend to strive to accomplish positive personal goals focused around making themselves better and making things better for their family first. As a result the researchers found the entrepreneurs also tend to have positive work goals such as to make a difference or build something.

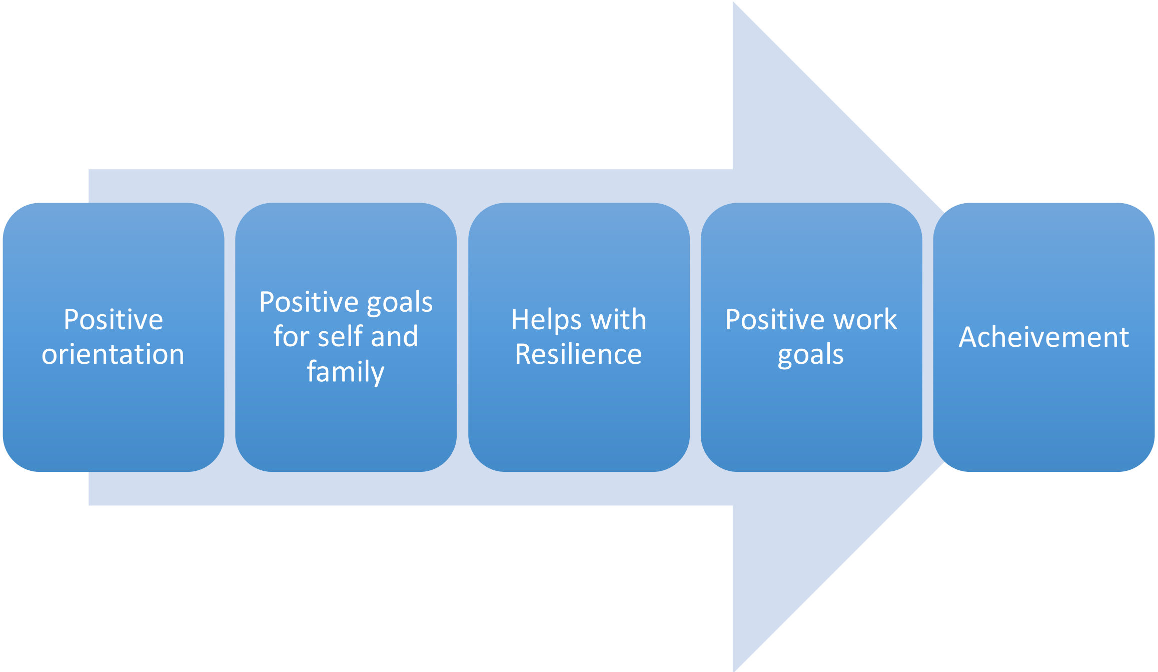
Entrepreneurs with a more negative outlook (lower levels of self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism) tend to either lack personal development goals or frame them in the negative, for example 'not make mistakes' or 'I just need to survive this'. These entrepreneurs were significantly less likely to achieve their goals than either the positively orientated primary focus on business goals group and the higher achieving positively orientated primary focus on self and family development with a secondary focus on business success.

The researchers also found that that these two outlooks tended to either develop greater resilience (in the optimistic group) or reduce resilience (in the pessimistic group). Further these orientations also had an effect on their family life satisfaction and the realisation and achievement of their personal goals.

A positive mind-set isn't enough

Achievement has a direction which is only partially accounted for by having a positive orientation (self-esteem, life satisfaction and optimism). People who focus on their own and their family's development tend to be more resilient and therefore better at achieving their business/work goals compared to those who focused on their work goals first and the family and their own development as a second regardless of how positive the individual is.

So if you want to achieve your life goals this is what we have learned:



Focus on your own development and that of your family first. Set positive goals here and then use work or your business to help to secure that. A positive mind-set does make a difference if you get it in the right order.

Reference

Laguna, M., Alessandri, G., & Caprara, G. V. (2016). Personal Goal Realisation in Entrepreneurs: A Multilevel Analysis of the Role of Affect and Positive Orientation. Applied Psychology.

The five R's of recovery from organisational decline

Whilst all businesses seek perpetual growth this isn't always possible and many organisations at some stage in their history face a decline which some will not pull out of.

A new study suggests that recovery from organisational decline is often possible if you understand the architecture of recovery.

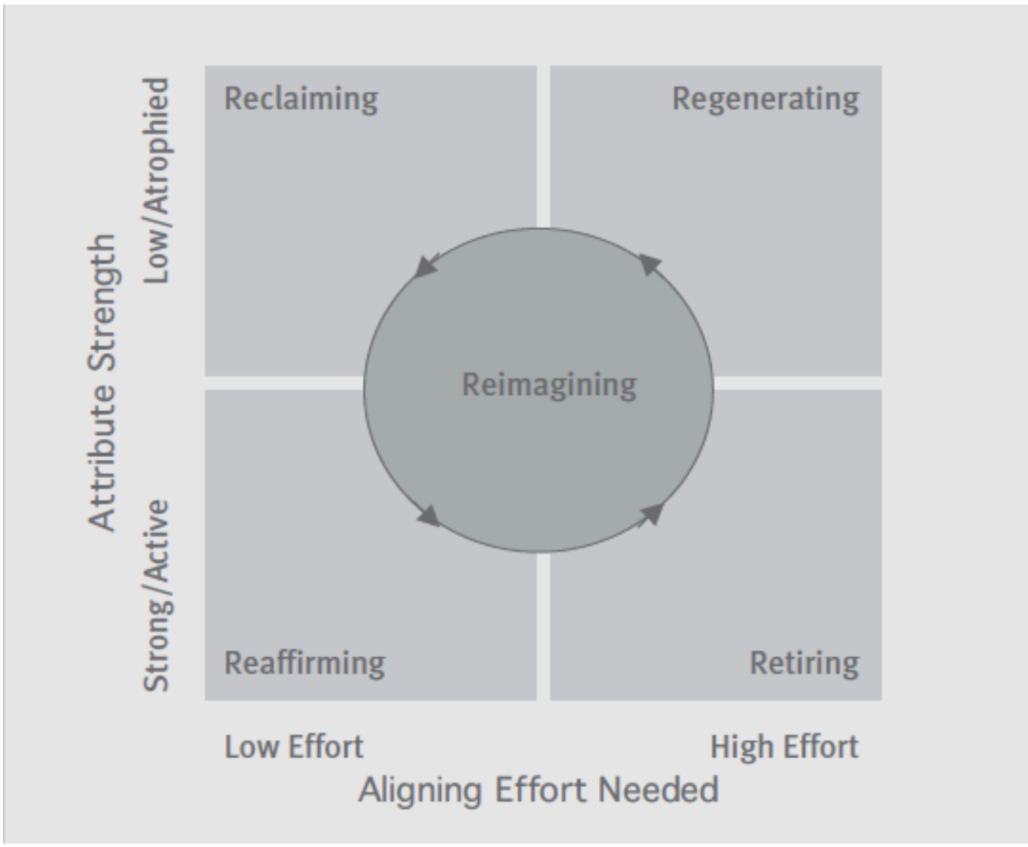
Pulling out of a decline and starting a recovery path often starts with reviewing what the purpose of the organisation is and focusing on i's core values.

This process of introspection is best done in a structured way and the author of the paper, Sam Rockwell, suggests that it should be done through the '5R model' – retiring, reclaiming, reaffirming, regenerating and reimagining.

The 5 Rs

The process is centred around working out what the organisation is and why it was set up? What its founding story was - what was its vision when it was set up? What makes everyone leap out of bed every morning to go to work there? Rediscovering the organisation's core purpose and aims, Rockwell argues, enables the business to be rebuilt to make it the success that it once was.

Figure 1 looks at this process:



Attribute Strength is described by Rockwell as, “Over time, some attributes atrophy and diminish in strength, while others remain strong and active in members’ thoughts and behaviors.” Some attributes will take more time to recover or forget (depending on whether they are strengths that are wanted or weaknesses that are unwanted). Equally, others will be more easily recovered or forgotten.

The other axis is the Alignment Effort Needed. How much effort is required to bring these identity attributes into alignment with the identity required for success?

A breakdown of the 5R’s model

Aspects that need *retiring*, according to the author, are “identity claims and attributes that are active, conscious, but adverse to recovery are released from the organization’s identity.” The paper suggests that if the video rental company Blockbuster had left behind its bricks and mortar stores and moved into video streaming then the company may have survived. It needed to retire its shops.

Other aspects of the organisation’s identity need *reclaiming*. According to Rockwell, these are “organizational traits vital to recovery but which have been forgotten or abandoned by the organization are recalled, restated, and carried forward in an unchanged manner.”

Some facets of the organisation’s identity will need *reaffirming*. Here, “active and conscious organizational traits that remain vital for the organization are reasserted and carried forward in an unchanged manner.” Rockwell cited Pennsylvania State University that had lost its way, becoming more aligned with the private sector rather than serving PA students from poorer backgrounds. The PA Governor removed its funding in 2009 until it had reaffirmed its position as a public university, when it regained its public status and won funding again at the end of the year.

Regeneration is about getting those organisational traits that are vital to recovery, but are in disrepair, restored and recreated. According to the author, “Regenerating can require a substantial amount of effort from organizational members, as it involves determining those attributes needing restoration, directing resources and attention to re-label and reframe those, and creating a wraparound linguistic and visceral experience that supports their recreation.”

Reimagining is described as the central organisational traits that “may have atrophied, been forgotten or abandoned, or may remain active in leaders’ and members’ organizational consciousness. What signifies an organizational trait in need of reimaging is that the trait in a new form is vital for the organisation’s future.” A classic example of this is how Polaroid started developing digital cameras to compete in the new world of photography.

Conclusions

In going through such a structured process of organisational introspection based on the 5R's of structured introspection should enable the organisation to recover and move on – assuming there is still a market for their services or products. If not, going back to the founding story may not help.

Reference

Rockwell, S. (2016) Supporting Organisational Turnaround Through Identity Work. OD Practitioner, Vol.48 No1 2016.

Making employee relocation work

Among people born around the turn of the century (2000 - 'Millennials'), one of the major draws to working in a company is the opportunity to work abroad. Prior research has found that relocating their staff to different territories improves employee retention.

Until recently the process of staff relocation has been a messy business with organisations often unable to get to grip with the true costs involved, both in terms of the time lost due to relocation by the staff members and in the actual costs involved in making it happen. As a result, there is often no easily gathered and calculated evidence as to the cost benefit of such moves. It has been found that organisations are increasingly deploying dedicated software packages that manage relocations and these have been shown to reduce administration while at the same time providing a better basis for a cost benefit analysis.

Relocation - the evidence

In a paper just published in Strategic HR Review researcher Brynne Herbert found that, "More than 70 percent (of new employees) expect and want to do an overseas assignment during their careers."

International relocation is an attractive facet of a career at any company, and is good for the company as a whole. The study also found significantly higher rates of organisational loyalty, motivation and engagement among employees who have been relocated abroad:

1. 92% of international assignees agreed with the goals and objectives of their organisations,
2. 84% would recommend those firms as good places to work and
3. 97% would offer discretionary effort to help their organisations succeed

It is all well and good having a happy workforce but businesses are all about their bottom line. The research cited evidence that showed that employees committed to their organisations (organisational commitment and engagement):

1. Put in 57% more effort on the job and are
2. 87% less likely to resign than employees who are disengaged and with less organisational commitment.

How to go about it

The three most frequently employed methods of organising relocation have been:

1. A lump sum or bursary may be

given to the staff member who is given time to organise the move themselves. Where this may be seen as an easy option it costs in terms of productivity while the employee organises the move for themselves and their family, moves and then acclimatises / establishes themselves in the new location.

2. Use an in-house relocation team. This is often the slowest, most bureaucratic and costly in terms of internal resources and also, it turns out, the most error prone option.
3. Use external relocation services. This is often seen as the costliest method.

The paper cites the French bank, Societe Generale, who reported that “it had had no visibility into its total move costs with its global relocation vendor” until 2015, when it changed its talent mobility system over to a dedicated relocation software package.

The bank went over to a Software as a Service relocation platform. The paper states, “it automated and centralized relocation processes, reduced the number of required sign-offs during those processes, standardized forms and so minimized errors and improved the tracking of costs.”

The paper continued, “The new system also gave employees online access to a single source of information on their move, their new cities, potential neighbourhoods and schools—all of which are the types of things that help keep employees happy and engaged. Instead of relying on phone and email with multiple contacts, employees have a single source of information.”

Herbert found that transferring relocation processes to a decent software system significantly streamlines the process, reduces costs and errors and centralises financial records. It takes less employee time, and is usually very efficient to run.

Reference

Brynne Herbert , (2016), Moving employee talent key to competitive edge. Strategic HR Review, Vol. 15 Iss 2 pp. 65 - 69

Two core methods for change management

One of the earliest lessons taught to UK military officers at Sandhurst, Dartmouth and Cranfield is ‘First, appreciate the situation’. In the fog of war, a good understanding of the immediate situation is core to helping you work out how you might be able to turn the situation to your advantage and complete the mission.

While most leaders don’t have to send their peers into life threatening situations for the survival of the team as a whole, the lesson can be applied throughout organisational leadership, regardless of the job you are doing.

A paper just published in the International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy and Research looked at the role of Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Action Learning in change management.

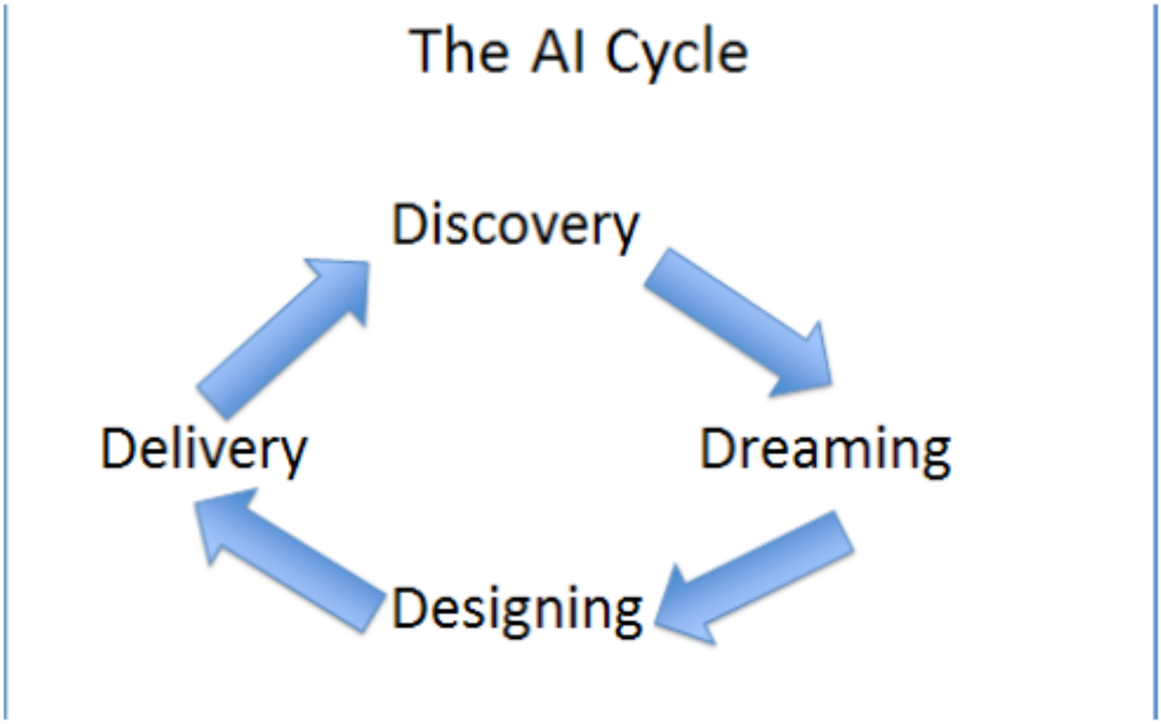
The paper looks at these two concepts – Appreciative Inquiry and Positive Action Learning and argues that together they are robust tools for leading an organisation, particularly in uncertain situations and further that if deployed in an organisation can create organisational cultural change.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is based on the understanding that the questions we ask of a situation tend to focus our attention and thinking in a particular direction. For example, viewing something as a problem assumes that the situation is negative and needs to be changed or fixed. Previous research has found that excessive focus within an organisation on dysfunctions or problems for example can actually cause the situation to become worse or fail to become better.

The underlying principle of Appreciative Inquiry is that when all members of an organisation are motivated to understand and value the most favourable features of the situation then they are more likely to make better improvements. Appreciative Inquiry is what is known as a strength-based methodology and can be used in the creation of organisational development strategies and the implementation of tactics to develop organisational effectiveness without throwing the baby out with the bath water.

Appreciative Inquiry is a cycle that amounts to a feedback loop.



Discovery involves speaking to and listening to staff about the challenges and successes that they face from their points of view. In gathering their stories commonalities can be discovered and the organisation can find what is working and what needs to be changed to make it work.

The dreaming phase involves accepting what is going right and using those, as well as the challenges discovered to feed into the design phase.

The design phase is where the organisation crafts a response to change and make the areas that aren't working so well better.

The delivery phase is the process of implementation as a test to see what works and what doesn't.

As the cycle never ceases, it turns into a continuous improvement process from a positive perspective.

The point here is that the leadership, managers and employees conduct the appreciative cycle together, rather than its being done to them.

Positive Action Learning

Positive Action Learning takes Appreciative Inquiry and uses it on the ground.

Action learning is simply a process of testing and learning. Try something, observe, feedback and change until you have the desired result in tight and fast iterations of learning.

The paper reports on the application of Positive Action Learning in an unnamed major company with 2,200 staff that was facing a sharp fall in business.

In this situation the process was applied in the following way:

1. Share best practice and process understanding across the organisation through building effective knowledge management networks like communities of practice.

2. Swap logistics people into manufacturing.

3. Build a culture of networking: e.g. cross functional workshops: share specialist skill sets.

4. Practice empowerment: allow different decisions to be made and adopt a true coaching culture.

5. Learn from other businesses / areas.

6. Consistency in communication messages:- How are we performing and what can I do? Acting on decisions quickly.

7. Celebrate success and recognise people: little treats and thank yous / individuals and teams.

8. Honesty: tell it how it is and enable individuals to rise to the challenges.

9. Simplify: give it a go. Break the process to ensure lean / speed. Be less of a perfectionist culture.

10. Alignment and detail: clear accountability from the exec down."

This went through three cycles and led to the business maintaining its (reduced) market share and no longer having to shed staff to remain profitable. They are now using the same process to increase their market share and grow.

Conclusions

Where there is a situation that threatens an organisation as a whole, leaders need to start from the point of admitting that they don't know what is going on and then appreciating what they find, beginning with a blank page. Only by listening to all participants can one fully understand the threats, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities and only then can a strategy be put into place and tested in tight iterations to start winning again.

Reference

Gold, J "Reconnecting leaders to organisation cultures" (2016) International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy and Research 2016 Vol 1 No1: 21-33

Evidence Based Change Management?

This briefing looks at a paper just published in the new peer reviewed journal the International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy and Research.

It has some useful messages about the causes of failure in change. However, it starts with the assumption that 70% of all organisational change programmes fail, which as members will know isn't actually true. Anyway regardless of this problem, the paper does have some interesting insights into organisational change and, when it does fail, what might be causing any failure.

They cite examples of change failure like DHL experiencing a crisis as a direct result of such programmes failing to achieve their aims. The same stories also report on senior management being fired or resigning as a result of the change programmes taking too long or not meeting their objectives.

Research is continually surfacing, pointing to a variety of problems in change programmes ranging from resistance among employees to poor management of the programmes.

They all inevitably conclude by making suggestions as to how better to manage the change / or help employees better handle the situation. The author of this paper, Bob Hamlin from the University of Wolverhampton, argues that organisations do something different. That they research other change programmes and their own organisations before taking the leap into a major change initiative. He also argues that that Human Resources Development teams carry out the research and then work closely with management at all levels to bring about the change in a considered, timely fashion. This use of a research based solution and the use of HR to carry out the research is what caught my eye, as it is a novel approach, even though the author really needs to check his sources and assumptions a bit more closely.

Evidence Based Human Resource Development

Human Resources teams frequently have a poor image among management. Their Learning and Development partners (the Human Resource Development practitioners) are often tarred with the same brush and as a result their suggestions carry less weight among management than they should, Hamlin argues. The paper calls for the Human Resource Development practitioners to gain more expertise in the business in which they work. The paper suggests, "to become truly expert, HRD practitioners need to use the findings of high quality management-related and HRD-related research to inform, shape and evaluate the effectiveness of their consultancy and change agency practice."

For evidence based human resource development to be most effective, the practitioner, Hamlin argues, should use the following three principles:

1. "Mode 1 research which is about testing theory and generating conceptual knowledge,
2. Mode 2 research which is about generating instrumental knowledge to resolve real-life/work-based problems, and in some cases developing mid-range theory and
3. Use descriptive studies or the consensus view of a body of field experts."

In building up the evidence base, HRDs are much more likely to improve their image within the company or department in which they are working and as a result will be in a much better position to help the management create change.

The 6 Failings

Hamlin found that there are 6 major failings which contribute to change failure:

1. Failing 1 - Managers not knowing the fundamental principles of change management.
2. Failing 2 - Managers succumbing to the temptations of the 'quick fix' or 'simple solution.
3. Failing 3 - Managers not fully appreciating the significance of the leadership and cultural aspects of change.
4. Failing 4 - Managers not appreciating sufficiently the significance of the people issues.
5. Failing 5 - Managers not knowing the critical contribution that the HRD function can make to the management of change.
6. Failing 6 - Trainers and developers lacking credibility in the eyes of line managers.

Commissioning Specific Research

The author goes a step further than using existing research ahead of the organisational change programme and suggests that some dedicated, deliberate research into the organisation is done to make an assessment of the position of the company as it stands. The author stated, "When conducted with academic rigour, such organisation related research can lead to deep seated fundamental issues about the running of the organisation being surfaced and confronted. Examples might include those ineffective aspects of managerial/organisational culture, or specific managerial and employee behaviour that impedes or blocks innovation and change."

Ultimately, Hamlin concludes, "both managers and non-managerial employees are more likely to accept the evidence of ineffective features of organisational life that impact negatively, or are likely to impact negatively, on the OC (organisational change) process, including their own individual performance or behavioural deficiencies. Additionally, they are more likely to advance personal opinions, reactions, and ‘theories’ that would otherwise not be revealed.”

Conclusions

Empirical research on previous situations can show the strengths and weaknesses of a proposed new change programme. Far too few organisations use the learning from other organisations to inform their change, usually from a “but we are different” perspective. It is always better to make an error in a new way than in a way countless others have done before. Further using an evidence based approach is much more likely to reduce errors and help to speed change up.

Reference

Hamlin, B, HRD and Organisational Change: Evidence Based Practice (2016) International Journal of HRD Practice, Policy and Research Vol 1 No1: 7-20

Do workplace resilience programmes work?

During times of significant change in organisations, for example during downsizing and mergers, many companies around the world have instituted workplace resilience programmes to guide their employees through the turbulent times of change. There has been a number of evaluations and papers published about the success of these programmes but much of it has been heavily criticised for its methodology, bias/ lack of objectivity and poor measurement.

A new study has just been published using randomised control groups and is probably the most objective study we have seen to date. The study was conducted last year into 28 employees of a company that was undergoing downsizing and facing a merger. Staff subjected to this change were going through the uncertainties and stress associated with these major changes to their environment and the possibility of redundancy. Though a relatively small scale research project in terms of numbers of participants, it was done with a good level of scientific rigour.

Measurements and technique

Subjects of the study were recruited ahead of the commencement of a workplace resilience programme and had to meet a number of criteria. For example; they could not be undergoing psychiatric or psychological treatment or counselling that would skew the results, they had to be able to attend all five sessions in the programme and they had to have been working at the company for at least twelve months.

The course comprised five, hour long sessions taken during the staffs' lunch breaks. This was sufficiently short and of minimal impact on company time to be repeated elsewhere.

Before and after the course, the employees were subjected to interviews and self reporting of levels of resilience which were then compared to their results from the standard Resilience at Work (RAW) scale. This validated scale measures people's resilience in the workplace.

Finally, there was a control group who did not do the course but were treated in every other respect the same as the sample group. People were allocated to either the control group or the subject group at random. This provided a comparison between those doing the course and those who did not during the same period.

The course

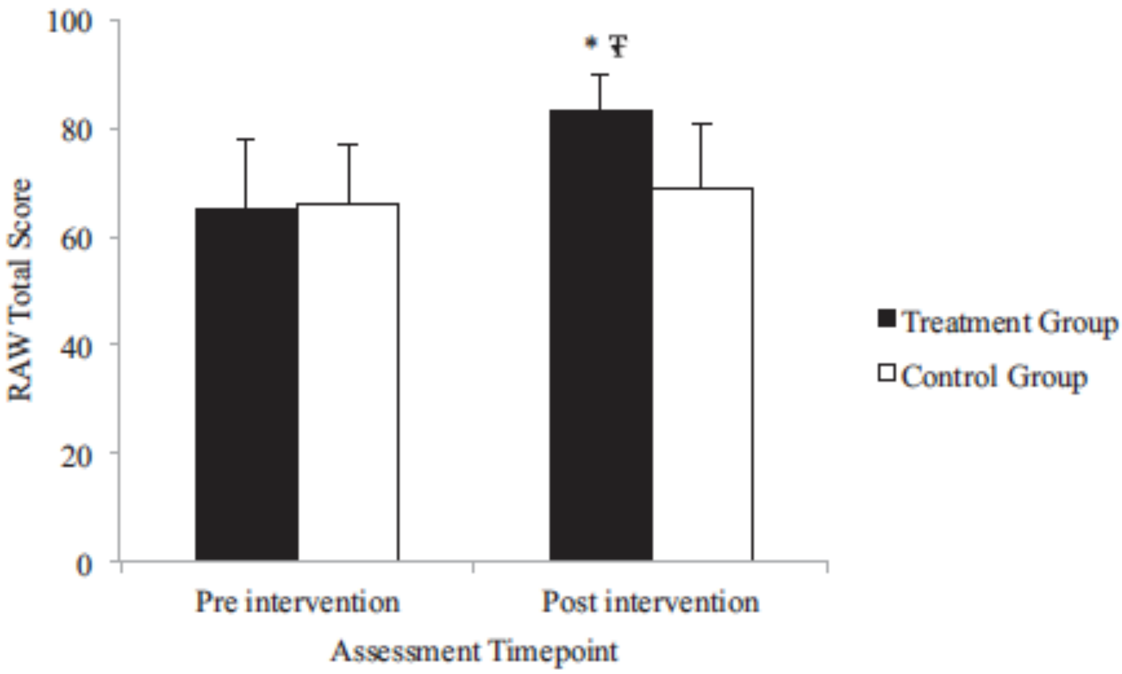
The course involved five, hour long sessions that looked at the following:

Workshop Module	Workshop Focus
1. Introduction to resilience	Introduction to the concept of resilience and return of baseline resilience scores to participants.
2. Understanding what drives you	Understanding personal strengths and values and positioning work to use and capitalize on these.
3. Healthy body healthy mind	Developing individualized and sustainable nutritional and exercise behaviors to enhance physical and mental capacity.
4. A resilient mindset	Identifying unhelpful thinking styles and learning to reframe unhelpful thoughts. Developing an optimistic outlook with an emphasis on gratitude in the workplace.
5. Building resilient behaviors	Developing skills to mitigate common organizational and personal workplace stressors Maintaining and further developing work and nonwork relationships that provide emotional, practical, and professional support.

One of the important parts of the course was that those leading it were careful to bring in real world scenarios that were specific to the staff involved. Thus it wasn't a completely general course, but gave the attendees grounded real world situations to relate to.

Results

The chart below shows how the overall Resilience at Work score changed for the participants of the course compared to those in the control group. As you can see those who attended the course did significantly better than those who did not do the course at all.



There were 7 aspects to the course and the measurements:

1. Living Authentically – this content area was significantly higher at the end of the course for the treatment group.
2. Finding Your Calling – again this area was found to be significantly higher in the post treatment group compared to the control group.
3. Maintaining Perspective – similarly Maintaining Perspective was significantly greater in the treatment group than the control group after the programme.
4. Managing Stress - was significantly greater in the treatment group than the control group after the programme.
5. Interacting Co-operatively – this area of focus for the course was not statistically significantly different in either of the groups following the programme.
6. Staying Healthy - was significantly greater in the treatment group than the control group by the end of the course.
7. Building Networks – This area increased significantly for both the control group and the treatment group following the programme! There was no difference between the two groups however. This suggests that the process of the study on its own may have increased the networking ability of the two groups or that some other process was involved here.

Conclusions

While this wasn't a large scale study it does have significant merit largely due to the research methodology used. Unfortunately, the researchers did not revisit the subjects after the study to see how long these effects lasted for. However previous studies have indicated that the effects of similar programmes tend to last for about 7 weeks without further intervention or support.

Editors note:

This is a significant study which usefully breaks the programme down to its component parts. In terms of the longevity of the effects of such a programme there is evidence emerging from a number of ongoing studies that support in terms of things like

- communities of practice,
- refresher and advanced emotion regulation sessions and
- embedding resilience and emotional intelligence as part of the culture may extend the results considerably.

Reference

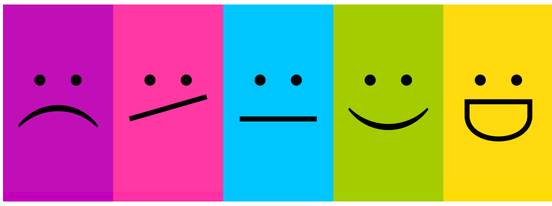
Rogerson, S et al, A Randomized Controlled Pilot Trial Investigating the Impact of a

Workplace Resilience Program During a Time of Significant Organizational

Change (2016) Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine Vol 58 No 4

How our mood (and productivity) is directly affected by different forms of communication at work

A team of computer scientists have used technology to anonymously measure the psychological states of a group of workers at an IT company in Italy to see how the multiple channels of communication, email, text, documents, chats, face-to-face interactions etc. affect them. This study can be used to better help Human Resources professionals in designing job descriptions and may even inform how certain people can work better according to their dispositions.



It is well known that some people find certain forms of communication less stressful than others. A friend of mine with Asperger's Syndrome prefers to talk on the phone than face to face as they understand tone of voice far better than they do the body language and other aspects of face to face communication. Though people with autism are all different, this is an aspect of many of their personalities that runs in common with many of them. Given that many people with autistic traits work in IT due to its complexity and limited face to face human interaction, it has long been assumed that people with autistic traits have chosen a career in IT for this very reason.

A report in 2013 found that a small number of companies including German computer software giant SAP actively seek out employees with autistic spectrum disorders exactly because of their intense focus, attention to detail and ability to think differently.

The research, published in the journal PLOS One, gives a very firm steer on the communications preferences of who likes to communicate and how.

Research methods

52 people in an Italian IT company were given 'sociometric badges' that measured:

1. Body movements,
2. Prosodic speech features (e.g. pitch), (iii)
3. Proximity to/colocation with other people and (iv)
4. Face-to-face interactions respectively.

They had to wear the badges at work during the work day over a period of 30 working days during which their mood was also assessed throughout the day. These specially designed and made badges enabled the researchers to anonymously collect data on interpersonal relations on a continual basis. Further all the participants were assessed in terms of personality traits as well.

In addition, 119 people had their mobile phones tracked over 26 working days and they also had their moods tracked daily as well as their personality traits assessed.

Personality traits and communications

The first thing the researchers found was that the association between network diversity and subjective well-being is dependent on individual differences and communication modes. What this means is that how we feel at work significantly depends on a mixture of our personality and preferences and the type of communication we are having to engage in.

Specifically, they found that diversity of communication is beneficial for certain personality types in some communication types, while it is not beneficial for other personality types.

For example, diversity in phone calls is experienced as good by introverts. They found that when introverted people connect with a diverse range of other people on the phone, they experience a 'positive affect', which is to say that they are given a temporary lift by speaking to a range of people on the phone. The opposite effect was found for extraverts who when faced with a range of phone calls tend to a negative affect.

In terms of face-to-face communications, the researchers found that this was less of a personality issue and more of an outlook issue. People with a positive outlook tend feel a positive affect by regular and diverse face-to-face interactions where those who have a more pessimistic or negative outlook tend to feel stressed by this.

Previous research has found that those with the most diverse networks and forms of communication preferences tend to do better economically that those who stick to a few forms or channels of communication.

What this means for organisations

Apart from the specific findings about the effects that types of communication, for example phone calls, email, face-to-face, have on different people there is another important message here - That there are some people who are comfortable with and prefer to operate with a wider range of types of communication channels than others. These 'broadband' individuals prefer a mix of communication types and work better when they have a range of types of channel to play with. These people will tend to experience stress if they are limited in the range of communication types they can use during their work day, for example an organisational emphasis on email as the preferred communication method at the expense of other methods like phone calls, face-to-face communications etc.

Other people however, have definitive communication preferences due to their personality, outlook and other attributes. These people become stressed if they have to operate outside of their preferred channels for any extended period.

This paper has implications for recruitment and selection, management (and who you choose as managers), leadership and the roles people are placed in.

Editor's note:

This has been an area of my particular interest for some time. All too often people are forced to work according to the environment with little ability to change that environment to suit their preferences. The implications for productivity from studies like this are potentially enormous.

Reference

Alshamsi A, Pianesi F, Lepri B, Pentland A, Rahwan I (2016) Network Diversity and Affect Dynamics: The Role of Personality Traits. PLoS ONE 11(4)

Can you really teach empathy?

Is empathy just part of our personality or can it be taught / learned?

Many organisations have empathy as part of their values or competencies with little consideration about whether it can be developed and if it can, how to develop it. The closest many organisations get to venturing into this field is to run ‘emotional intelligence’ courses, which when evaluated turn out to be largely powerpoint led cognitive exercises as opposed to the real development of emotional skills like empathy and emotion regulation.

What follows in this briefing is a useful report from a roundtable colloquium of expert witnesses run earlier this year at Virginia Commonwealth University in the USA to discuss how empathy can be taught/developed in classroom/academic/workshop/organisational environments.

What is empathy?

Empathy is the capacity to understand or feel what another being, whether human or animal, is experiencing from within the other being's frame of reference. In other words, the capacity to place oneself in another's position and see and experience things from their perspective whilst still able to maintain a separation of identity – to understand which are our emotions and views and which are those of the other.

When you think about it this is a complex series of emotional and cognitive skills, awareness (consciousness and meta-consciousness – the ability to perceive your consciousness) and dexterity.

A lack of empathy often sits behind the majority of violence including wars, responses to crises like the current migrant crisis, disasters and the like right down to the creation of a blame culture, anger towards others etc.

Teaching empathy

The colloquium identified five ways of teaching empathy in the classroom:

1. Give students experiential opportunities for building empathy. This includes the following 5 types of activities
    a. Observe the emotional experiences of others
    b. Being given more responsibility
    c. Learning more about the people around them, particularly people they wouldn’t normally associate with
    d. Discovering a personal connection with others
    e. Experiencing a challenge to their previous thoughts about a situation.

2. Incorporate empathy into students' reflection.
    a. Tutors should incorporate empathy into their personal reflection diaries and self report their empathy levels at the beginning and end of a semester or course.

3. Show, demonstrate and develop what is known as 'the empathy toolbox'. This is a set of skills to have the students consider and actively develop through exercises and real life events that the subsequently reflected upon that are collectively known as the 'empathy toolbox'. These are:
    a. Active listening
    b. Empathic communication
    c. Cultural competency,
    d. Entertaining complexity
    e. Respect

4. Assess and reimagine classroom culture and design. Where classrooms are traditionally laid out with rows of desks facing a multimedia unit and lectern for the lecturer, perhaps another layout could be considered with the tutor wandering around the room and being among the students. Another aspect to consider is group work that shares the learning / teaching among the students – so it is not spoon-fed by the lecturer/teacher/trainer. This is a facilitation exercise.

5. Add empathy to the learning objectives/outcomes and graded coursework. While it is not wise to grade someone specifically for not being sufficiently empathetic (this often sets up aversion learning) you should consider that empathy be graded as part of other work, assessment or appraisal.

Conclusions

In a world where 'greed is good', society still requires people to have empathy. Being able to teach it, and moving away from a purely monetary success oriented model, is important to help retain the very fabric of a society predicated on human values.

Reference

Everhart, Robin, et al. (2016) *Empathy Activators: Teaching Tools for Enhancing Empathy Development in Service-Learning Classes*. Virginia Commonwealth University and University of Richmond, Richmond, VA. Retrieved from Virginia Commonwealth University, Scholars Compass, Division of Community Engagement Resources:

http://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/community_resources/

Levels of organisational development and which ones respond best to rapidly changing market conditions

A really interesting paper has just been published in the International Journal of Applied Engineering Research. Whilst the paper looks at how to ensure business continuity in engineering manufacturing in the face of change, the lessons learned have implications for every organisation facing a rapidly changing external environment, be that innovation, political upheaval, economic change etc.

The point the authors make is that changes in the market and environment put pressure on organisations to increase operating and manufacturing flexibility. The paper identifies six levels of organisational development which are a really useful formulation for many organisations.

The 6 Levels of Organisational Development

Level 1: Formation

Distinctive features of the formation level of organisational development is characterised by: -

a) Absence of formalised goals and scorecards
b) Absence of a formalised planning system (planning of resource requirements, development planning)
c) Absence of a formalised organisation structure of management
d) Absence of clearly expressed functional responsibilities for both managers and employees
e) Absence of formalised goals, performance and efficiency indicators
f) Absence of the necessary regulatory documents
g) Centralisation of management (all strategic decisions tend to be made by the CEO)
h) Absence of organisation's development strategy

These organisations tend to be start ups and the goals of the organisation and the employees mirror each other. There a few delineations of role and the roles may be interchangeable. There tends to be a high degree of employees' involvement in the process of decision making, which allows the organisation to use their potential in achieving the organisations goals to the maximum extent.

One of the defining characteristics of organisations in the formation level or stage is fast decision making by the management determines the high speed of response to changes in external and internal factors. These in turn directly affect both the operation and development of the organisation.

Additionally, successful companies are based on high levels of personnel competence that is sufficient for the set operational and organisation development tasks. Low levels of competence cannot be carried or allowed with organisations at this level of operation.

Level 2: Formalisation

The distinctive features of the formalisation level of organisational development is characterised by: -

a) 'Functional' barriers appearing between departments and employees.
b) These delineations and barriers force employees and managers to defend their own local goals and indicators which can often conflict with those of the organisation's common goals
c) Bureaucratic administrative apparatus becomes larger together with the increased volume of management functions (control, coordination and meetings) and the growing total number of 'managers

Companies in the formalisation level of organisational development find that they have to formalise the management system elements such as

1. the development of normative and regulatory documents
2. definition of organisational structure in management
3. the development of an information system to collect, record and analyse data on performance and efficiency of business processes

for example. Additionally they have to start to take steps to reduce variation and the variability of the organisational processes and growing systems and processes

Then there becomes a clearer division of responsibilities and authority among the employees. Higher level of personnel administrative competence starts to become valued as well as operational competence. This then leads to a more formalised development strategy to ensure the continuity of development and operations.

Then what tends to happen is that some form of scorecard or dashboard is developed to connect the financial and non-financial indicators. In other words the organisation now starts to look at what is happening in the organisation and tries to use this to predict financial performance.

Level 3: Integration

The distinctive features of the integration level of organisational development is characterised by: -

a) Various aspects of activity start to become integrated, such as
    a. quality management
    b. environmental management

c. integration of logistics functions

which leads to greater centralised control over these aspects of activity.

b) Expenses for the centralised management of key aspects of activity increase, influencing the sustainable competitiveness of the organisation.

In effect, as the organisation starts to integrate the functions and activities, the internal costs of managing the organisation start to increase considerably. This has an immediate impact on its competitiveness and profitability until the integrations start to allow for economies of scale.

Level 4: Expansion

The distinctive features of the expansion level of organisational development is characterised by: -

a) Competition now starts to appear between departments to achieve better results. They are now competing against each other to achieve their own personal departmental goals and indicators and to obtain more of the centralised resources of the organisation.

b) Insufficient delegation of authority to the 'lower' management levels. This level of organisational development is characterised by decisions being made at levels higher than necessary. This considerable slows down decision making and slows the organisational responsiveness to external factors.

c) Absence of an organisation wide corporate culture (principles, values and policies). We tend to find this stage of development characterised by a dog-eat-dog competitive culture with departmental or unit cultures driving behaviour and thinking.

d) Absence of a system for measuring loyalty, satisfaction and emotional commitment of employees.

In this stage of development we tend to find that key operational indicators of employees' activities are developed aimed at improving employees' motivation and developing a results oriented work environment. Additionally there is often an introduction of 'internal entrepreneurship', which includes changing the organisation structure and management accounting system within the organisation to produce better financial results (more sales). This is often accompanied by the introduction of competence based approaches to personnel development and effort to control and boost productivity.

Level 5: Coordination

The distinctive features of the coordination level of organisational development is characterised by: -

a) Bureaucratic management and inadequate motivation systems do not allow people to work in ways which increase emotional and intellectual engagement. People start to feel like 'a number'.
b) Organisational structure of management with a particular functional responsibility prevents the organisation from further development because of the slow and overly bureaucratic decision-making

The coordination level of organisational development needs to result in the formulation of a 'unifying' development strategy for the organisation which includes the articulation and formalisation and implementation of corporate cultural norms within the organisation. This results in increasing the degree of involvement of the entire organisation's personnel in defining and developing the culture and working practices within the company and an increasing interest in the development of the staff particularly in terms of values development.

Level 6: Self-organisation and self-development

The distinctive features of the self-organisation and self-development level of organisational development, otherwise known as a holacracy, is characterised by: -

a) A reduction in central control and management.
b) The primacy of roles as opposed to job specifications. One person can fulfil a series of roles. The roles are defined by work teams and will change as requirements change.
c) Based on circles of practice which are self-organising (not-self-directing in so far as they need to fit with the mission of the organisation) and not controlled by external hierarchy for day-to-day organisation. They are allowed to self organise to best achieve their goals.
d) Each circle is assigned clear areas of accountability and a clear purpose.
e) There is a defined governance structure and what is termed integrative decision making, which is a structured approach creating change and giving voice.
f) Processes for aligning teams and circles around operational needs and for collective and integrated work.
g) A blanket authority to take any action needed to perform the work required. This allows for innovation and change within

the abilities of the organisation (resources, other circles missions and work etc.).

h) Open communications within and without the circles.

The self-organising and self-developing level of organisational development has the following critical success factors:

1. The maximum delegation of authority, accountability and decision-making to the lowest practicable level of management and ownership.
2. The ability of the ground floor staff to respond quickly to the needs of the customer / client / environment.
3. The rapid flow of pertinent information to the right place / level of authority.
4. A direct connection between results and remuneration at all levels as opposed to pay grades.

These levels of organisational development are incredibly useful and strongly suggest very different leadership, management, HR, OD and L&D thinking and responses dependent on the level of development the organisation is in and is transitioning towards.

Beyond that the researchers found that the organisations that were best able to deal with rapidly changing external environments were those at levels 1 and 6.

Editor's note: I think that the levels of organisational development are such useful constructs that we have designed an infographic which you should have received by now. If you haven't just email me and I will send you a copy.

Part of their usefulness is in understanding where an organisation is at any particular moment in terms of its development and where the organisation is likely to be heading next.

Reference

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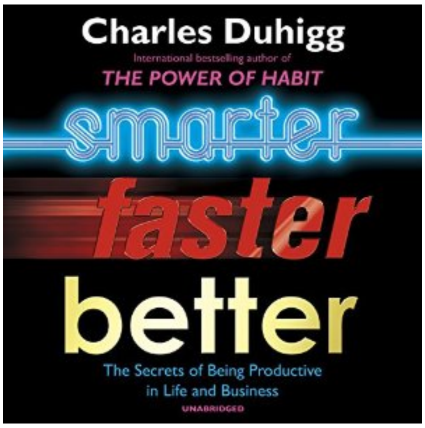
Book Review

Smarter, Faster, Better by Charles Duhigg



Written by Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Charles Duhigg, Smarter, Faster, Better, who wrote *The Power of Habit,* which I would also recommend, *Smarter Faster Better* looks at how to become more productive and generally better at what we do. This is an interesting book with form really useful take away lessons for all of us. Duhigg weaves a series of real life stories around the points he makes about how to be more productive, lead better and do more. When Barack Obama was interviewed by Michael Lewis a few years ago,he stated that he only wears gray or blue suits so as to cut down the choices he has to make each day, and then he cited research showing that "you need to focus your decision-making energy. You need to routinize yourself." The studies that Obama was referring to suggest that if you exhaust your decision-making capacity with unnecessary -choices, you'll end up making mistakes when it really matters.

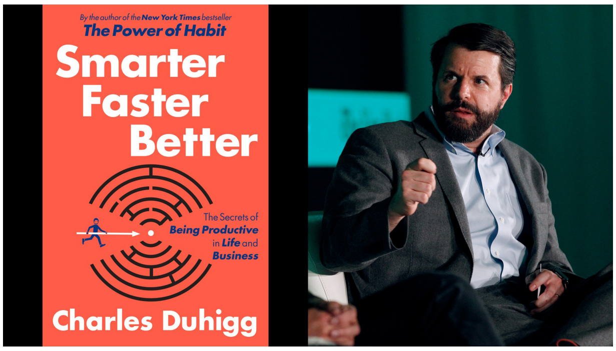
There are eight chapters each focussing on one main point. The chapters cover:

3. Motivation
4. Teams
5. Focus
6. Goal setting
7. Managing others
8. Decision making
9. Innovation
10. Absorbing data

Each of the chapters starts with a narrative of a real life event like the Air France Flight 447 disaster, an analysis of the start of the Yom Kippur war and how the film Frozen was rescued from being a dud to . People who know my work will know I am a fan of illustrative stories. The problem here is the details of the stories take over. In fact the majority of the book is taken up with the illustrative stories rather than the points he is trying to make.

Some of the points Duhigg makes are:

"People like Darlene who are particularly good at managing their attention tend to share certain characteristics. One is a propensity to create pictures in their minds of what the expect to see. These people tell themselves stories about what's going on as it occurs. They narrate their own experiences within their heads. They are more likely to answer questions with anecdote rather than simple responses. They say when they daydream, they're often imagining future conversations. They visualize their days with more specificity than the rest of us do." (Ch. 3, *Focus*)



"This, ultimately, is one of the most important secrets of learning how to make better decisions. Making good choices relies on forecasting the future. Accurate forecasting requires exposing ourselves to as many successes *and* disappointments as possible. We need to sit in crowded *and* empty theaters to know how movies will perform; we need to spend time around both babies *and* old people to accurately gauge life spans; and we need to talk to thriving *and* failing colleagues to develop good business instincts." (Ch. 6, *Decision Making*, author's emphasis)

"In theory, the ongoing explosion in information should make the right answers more obvious. In practice, though being surrounded by data often makes it harder to decide….It's not enough for your bathroom scale to send daily updates to an app on your phone. If you want to lose weight, force yourself to plot those measurements on graph paper and you'll be more likely to choose a salad over a hamburger at lunch. If you read a book filled with new ideas, force yourself to put it down and explain the concepts to someone sitting next to you and you'll be more likely to apply them in your life. When you find a new piece of information, force yourself to engage with it, to use it in an experiment or describe it to a friend—and then you will start building the mental folders that are at the core of learning." (Ch. 8, *Absorbing Data*)

So over all the eight points it is making are really useful but you have to strip through a lot, and a I mean a lot of detailed stories to get to them. Not Duhiggs finest book, but useful all the same.

Useful 4/5
New material 4/5
Interesting 3/5
Overall 3.5/5


End