

THE OXFORD REVIEW

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Learning, Organizational Development and Human Resources Edition

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Why do some staff readjust to their home organisations better than others?

In large multinational organisations employees will expect to spend time in other countries as part of their career development. This includes government organisations (The Foreign Office and military) but also major multinationals such as banks and large corporate manufacturers such as Interbrew and Coca Cola for example.

On their return to the organisation's home base, a number of those repatriated often resign from their posts. The reason was examined in a study conducted at Minnesota State University, Mankato.



Essentially the factors dictating whether someone will leave or stay are:

1. The level of role clarity or ambiguity
2. Career satisfaction
3. Work autonomy and
4. Job satisfaction.

Other factors moderated these factors. The issues are discussed below.

Preparation

Many people don't like to be thrown in at the deep end and expected to learn to swim. People often need a level of preparation in order to adjust properly to a new situation and this applies to repatriates from a foreign posting. In order to be at their best on their return they need to be prepared for the job at hand.

Yukiko Yamasaki, the author of the paper found that "The cultural adjustment literature indicates that individuals make anticipatory adjustment before they actually encounter the new situation and that it is important that the expectations are accurate in order to facilitate adjustment. The fewer unexpected changes that individuals experience, the smoother and quicker their adjustment will be."

Role clarity and ambiguity

Role ambiguity occurs when people are unclear or uncertain about their expectations within a certain role, typically their actual role in the job or the workplace. Role ambiguity often arises when the definition of the person's job is vague or ill-defined or the boundaries are constantly moving.

While their job at home may be very similar to that of their posting, Yamasaki pointed out that, "Expatriate employees often feel a psychological burden due to the differences in work related values between the home and

host country, in addition to the general unfamiliarity with the market and customs. At that time, working on well-defined tasks and duties on assignment helps employees to smoothly adjust to the new work environments.”

Giving a well defined role to the person returning from their posting will enable them to settle in better.

Work autonomy

When working abroad the employee will often have a higher degree of autonomy in the way they carry out their work. The research shows that autonomy is considered to be an important factor to facilitate repatriate adjustment to the home organisations. In particular, as repatriates usually have a high degree of autonomy during international assignments, they often feel a distinct lack of autonomy when they are back in their home organisations.

This reduction in the level of autonomy severely hinders work adjustment on their return. Indeed, the research shows that a lower degree of autonomy after repatriation not only negatively affects the repatriation adjustment process, it also significantly increases the individuals intention to leave.

Moderators

Cultural knowledge and cultural skill has a significant impact on autonomy and role clarity. Cultural knowledge is

the in depth understanding of why people in a specific culture will do something. When will a British person kiss or shake hands, for example? Cultural skill comes from that depth of knowledge.

Yamasaki found that with regard to cultural knowledge, “cultural knowledge moderated the relationship between preparation and career satisfaction such that those who had less cultural knowledge benefited more from preparation in terms of career satisfaction.”



In other words, even though the individual may have grown up in the base culture, a lower level of cultural skill or cultural competence (the awareness, attitude, knowledge and skills) that an individual can bring to bear, the more chance there is that the individual will have lower levels of career satisfaction on shifting from one culture to another. The preparation the research refers to is a cultural preparation to raise the awareness, knowledge, attitudes and skills of the returning employee to reduce the effect of culture shock.

Conclusions

Preparing the person for repatriation is vital for a successful re-entry into the home work environment. This includes giving them a well-defined role with a good level of autonomy on their return. Sending someone abroad is an expensive operation and for them to quit their jobs at the end is a waste of that investment. The organisation will get a better return on investment by taking these factors into account and

preparing the returning individuals to reduce culture shock.

Reference

Yamasaki, Y. (2016) *Why Do Some Employees Readjust to Their Home Organizations Better Than Others? Job Demands-Resources Model of Repatriation Adjustment*. Cornerstone: A Collection of Scholarly and Creative Works for Minnesota State University, Mankato

Overview

A not insignificant percentage of people returning from international postings resign in the first year of their return.

The four factors that dictate intention to leave

The four factors dictating whether someone will leave or stay when they return are the levels of:

1. Role clarity or ambiguity they experience
2. Career satisfaction they infer
3. Work autonomy they get and
4. Job satisfaction they experience on their return.

Returning employees often need preparation and support to increase their cultural competence and reduce culture shock on their return. This includes giving them a well-defined role with a good level of autonomy on their return.

Eating a beetle: How to get your radical ideas accepted

How do organisations like Apple get new ideas accepted by the public to the extent that they want to buy them?

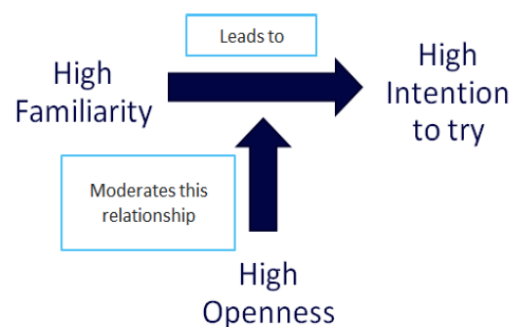
Using the example of entomophagy (people eating insects), a new research study has shown how managers and marketers can use psychology to help break a product to the public domain that is considered to be outside current cultural norms and experience.



In an intriguing thesis entitled 'Cricket lollipops and mealworm chocolate: investigating receptivity to radically creative products' Shreya Zaveri from the University of Pennsylvania examined how a number of small companies around the US have brought insect derivative food products to market in the western world. In East Asia and Africa, insects are just another source of protein and importantly, calcium. However to a

sensitive market like the US the public is a little queasy at the thought of eating insects, despite certain common food additives being harvested from insects, often unknown to the public. For example, red food dyes used in food and drinks to enhance the look of meat, sausages, processed poultry products, surimi, marinades, alcoholic drinks, bakery products and toppings, cookies, desserts, icings, pie fillings, jams, preserves, gelatine desserts, juice beverages, varieties of cheddar cheese and other dairy products, sauces and sweets all comes from ground up cochineal beetle.

The researcher argued that sushi was a radical departure from cultural norms in the 1960s, and something for only the avant garde and those who had been to Japan to eat. Now one can get sushi from your local supermarket and most people don't turn their heads over it.



The hypothesis

The argument put by Zaveri is that sushi is now a very familiar concept to the general public, so with high familiarity there is a high intention to try. This is why so many people eat it.

In order to get to that stage you need the early adopters of the food world who are open to new experiences.

Openness is not enough

Through a survey of 114 people Zaveri showed that familiarity is a key component when trying to get people to try new things: “people are indeed more likely to try a more familiar product, and this is regardless of whether they have been primed for openness or what their personal threshold for openness to experience or resistance to change is.”

However, the openness to experience hypothesis on its own did not stand up in her research. She concluded, “I doubt that openness would moderate the radicalness of the product so much that even a participant scoring high in openness would be willing to try the extremely novel alternative.”



How to break something extremely radical to the public?

Zaveri believes that sometime in the next decade there will be a breakthrough and the US public will consider eating insects as normal as raw tuna. Getting to that breakthrough moment will be more of a war of attrition with marginal gains. She advised, “companies should investigate the potential greater openness to experience or low resistance to change of certain potential target markets, such as international travellers or diasporic communities from places that have an insect eating history.”



Beyond eating insects there is a whole wealth of ideas and products that seem too radical today but will be acceptable at some stage in the future. A classic example was the Sinclair C5 electric tricycle in the 1980s which was a step too far then, but the international delivery company UPS is using a very similar trike to deliver parcels around certain European cities today and electrically powered vehicles are now becoming sought after products.

The key then to getting radical ideas accepted appears to be down to familiarity. Exposing your ideas to the world and then keep going and keep

modifying. If early adopters, those open to new ideas won't accept the idea initially you have even further to go... and to wait.

So the key question appears to be how can I get people to become familiar enough with the idea?

Conclusions

Where Zaveri thought she had a magic bullet for marketing and psychology at

the outset of her research, that openness to experience, which is a psychological state, was enough on its own to have an idea accepted was disproved with her study. It really does appear that familiarity with similar ideas is more important for acceptance than psychological openness.

Reference

Zaveri, S (2016) Cricket lollipops and mealworm chocolate: investigating receptivity to radically creative products. Wharton Research Scholars repository.

Overview

In order to get radical ideas, products and solutions accepted they need to have an air of familiarity about them. Drawing on the similarity of the idea with other everyday ideas, products or solutions is the best way to get acceptance.

Relying on people who have high levels of the psychological trait 'openness to experience' to open the door for you is not enough and unlikely to work as a strategy on its own.

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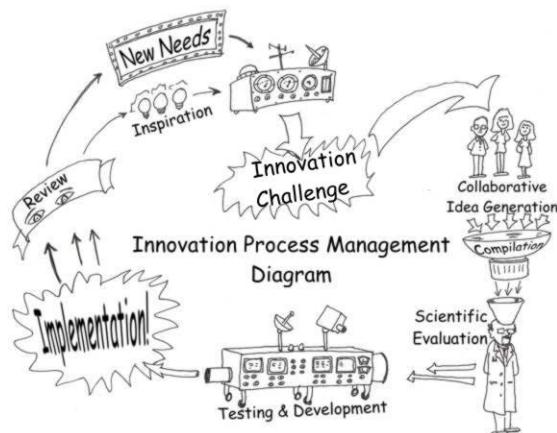


Managing innovation and agility – what makes the difference

Most businesses are involved with innovation in several different areas and directions at the same time in order to remain competitive in the market place.

Selecting which innovations to pursue and where best to direct resources is core to bringing the best innovations to fruition and remaining competitive or to providing the best service.

A new piece of research looked at 179 large companies and how they are managing this constant process of innovation, a process known as Innovation Portfolio Management.



The 3 functions of Innovation portfolio management

Innovation portfolio management requires three co-ordinating functions:

1. Clarity of the organisations strategic goals
2. Formalisation of the innovation portfolio management processes and
3. Controlling intensity.

In addition, there are two cultural, motivating functions that control the innovation capability of an organisation:

1. The risk appetite within the firm, as well as
2. The internal innovation climate.

Together these five aspects affect the decision making quality and thereby the agility of the company as a whole.

Having said that, the environmental turbulence in which the firm sits with reference to its competitors serves as a moderating factor to the agility of the firm.

Let's look at the five elements serving to positively affect the agility of the firm.

Clarity of strategic goals

Innovation is core to competitiveness and increasing service delivery. The organisation's innovation strategy is a vital factor in harnessing the innovation capabilities of the organisation. In a research paper entitled 'Antecedents to Decision-Making Quality and Agility in Innovation Portfolio Management' researchers from the Technische Universität in Darmstadt, Germany found "Innovation strategies are primarily implemented by the innovation projects that a firm pursues and the current portfolio of innovation projects is thus a manifestation of the

firm's innovation strategy."

The problem is that many organisations don't have a clear innovation strategy and, in the organisations that do, many employees either aren't aware of it or the strategy isn't a living entity driving practice.

As the researchers point out "Strategic clarity means not only that the company or

business unit has a clearly formulated strategy but also that this strategy is communicated and understood within the organisation. This form of transparency is a central prerequisite to portfolio decision making."

Formalisation of innovation portfolio management processes

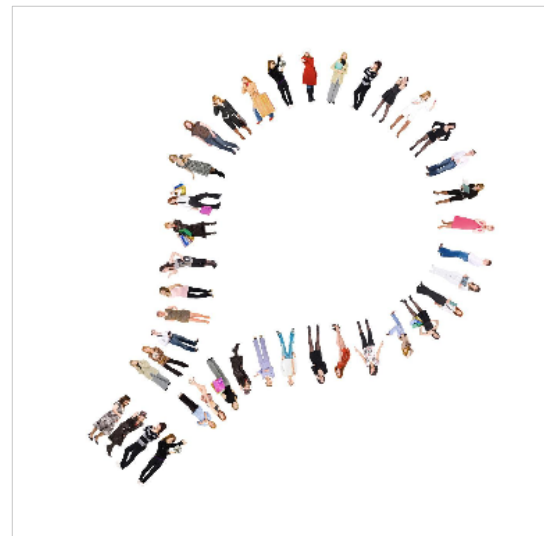
This is where the innovation portfolio management processes "of selection, prioritisation, resource allocation and portfolio control is clearly specified."

Where there is a clear, formal process of innovation portfolio management, "Clear rules and guiding principles tend to ensure more complete and higher quality information on project proposals, project status and resource demands, as well as transparent evaluation criteria and better comparability between projects..."

The aim here is to promote the levels and nature of open and transparent communication and information needed for high-quality decision-

making about innovation and innovation practice and management.

By formalising the innovation portfolio management processes, the organisation is highlighting the central importance of innovation and the role open and transparent communication and information plays in this.



Controlling intensity

The above two factors,

- a. formalisation of processes and
- b. clarity of strategy and goals,

need to be controlled and monitored. "Controlling intensity refers to the effort and quality of continuous screening and monitoring of the portfolio to react to changes."

In effect innovation leads to change and change leads to innovation and these need to be understood and continuously updated so that good decisions can be made at every stage of the innovation and production process.

The next two elements are cultural rather than formal processes:

Innovation climate

This is broadly defined as the extent to which employees are allowed and expected to innovate in terms of the culture or climate of the organisation. Management and organisational support is the degree to which innovation is encouraged or stifled in an organisation.

Developing a climate of innovation within an organisation should be a focus and a priority for the leadership and will impact greatly on the management of the innovation portfolio.

Risk

Monolithic bureaucracies are notoriously risk averse. However, even major large bureaucracies such as Royal Mail, a newly privatised national postal operator, need to survive in what is now a hyper-competitive environment.

This forces even organisations that used to be a moribund bureaucracy to take and deal risk as a part of the innovation process.

How risk is perceived and dealt with culturally within an organisation will often dictate the level of innovation undertaken and how the innovation portfolio is managed. Risk and the perception of risk are seen as moderating factors when organisations

are trying to develop a culture of innovation.

Environmental turbulence

The researchers also found that the extent of environmental turbulence, often tends to dictate and control the organisational response to that turbulence. Further that the level and nature of environmental turbulence, things like rapid changes in the economic market conditions, sudden changes in the political climate, new and sudden technological change for example, will all affect the strategic, organisational and cultural factors which in turn impact the quality of the decision making within the organisation.

What this means is that environmental turbulence often has a significant impact on the innovation and the management of innovation in organisations. This requires significant levels of agility to overcome and use innovation to find the opportunities in the turbulence.

The researchers found that “Agility is only really necessary given a certain degree of turbulence, which is mainly triggered by market and technology changes and/or uncertainty.”

It could be argued that for many organisations that degree of turbulence is becoming the norm.

Conclusions

The research is important as it highlights the need for innovation portfolio management and shows the five elements that need to be taken into consideration. These in turn affect an organisation's agility, particularly in times of turbulence - times when innovation management becomes

even more important.

Lastly the researchers discovered that in turbulent times the influence of formal processes tends to decrease whilst the controlling intensity increases, as does the need for greater levels of innovation.

Reference

Kock, A., & Georg Gemünden, H. (2016). Antecedents to Decision-Making Quality and Agility in Innovation Portfolio Management. Journal of Product Innovation Management.

Overview

There is a critical connection between agility and innovation capability in organisations. There are five factors which contribute to effective innovation portfolio management and the development of organisational agility:

1. Clarity of the organisations strategic goals,
2. Formalisation of the innovation portfolio management processes and
3. Controlling intensity.

The other two factors are cultural, motivating functions that control the innovation capability of an organisation:

4. The risk appetite within the firm as well as
5. The internal innovation climate.

The research is important as it highlights the need for innovation portfolio management if an organisation is going to develop a culture of innovation and deal with external turbulence.

Lastly the researchers discovered that in times of turbulence the influence of formal processes tends to decrease whilst the controlling intensity increases as does the need for greater levels of innovation. However, turbulence often decreases innovation activity.

The Cost of presenteeism

Absenteeism is a well-known drain on organisational resources. This is where people are off sick or away due to legitimate reasons like training for example. This is measured fairly easily with hard figures – people will be away from work and this will be reflected in company records. Absence can be therefore compared to overall productivity.

Presenteeism on the other hand is where someone is at work but either not working at all or not working effectively. Measuring this is another matter – how does a company work out that its employees are only working at 70%?



Different methods have been used over the years at a micro and macro economic level, but none have attempted to look at an individual business. A new piece of research has looked at a Finnish food processing business and via questionnaires, attempted to glean the costs to the business through presenteeism.

Research methods

The researchers sent out questionnaires to all the employees at the company over a period of 7 years asking them, “define your current work ability compared to your lifetime best” on a scale ranging from (0 = totally unable to work, 10 = work ability at its best).

These records were compared to company turnover, absenteeism and company profits.

Research findings

1. The researchers found that presenteeism consistently cost the company 1% of its annual turnover, and between 3.7% - 4.4% of employee costs.
2. Though there was a weak correlation they also found that absenteeism and presenteeism combined could knock the company's profit by as much as 36.43%.
3. The lowest annual presenteeism cost per employee was EUR 986 and the highest EUR 1302.
4. The lowest number of presenteeism days per employee was 8.7 days and the highest number was 10.4 days in a year.
5. Estimated losses to a company due to sickness absences and presenteeism ranged from EUR 4.6 million to EUR 5.6 million annually.

Depression?

This research deliberately steered clear of assessing why people engaged in presenteeism at work. The research was looking at what rather than why. However the researchers did remark that the 4% impact correlates with incidences of depression in a normal workplace – one of the symptoms of clinical depression is a lower than average ability to function and focus at work. Depression and other mental health issues (to include grieving and other more serious illnesses) are much stigmatised but people will do their best to meet the demands of their work, even if they cannot function properly due to their disability.

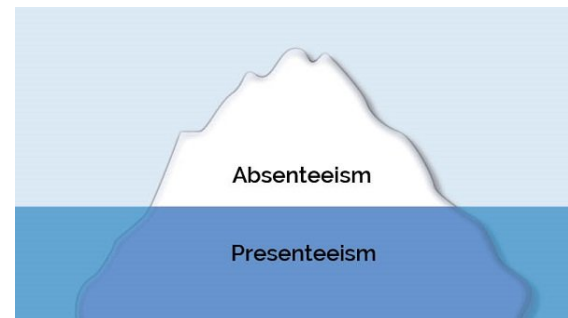
Operating at 70%

The modal or most frequent response was where employees felt that they were between 7-8 out of 10 over a day. This score accounted for some 70% of presenteeism days during the 7-year study period. It was rare for people operating at this level to take time off work.

The researchers also found that those rating themselves at 4 or below tend to take a lot of time off work. Between 4-7% of employee turnover came from those rating themselves at 4 or below.

Interestingly, the times when presenteeism are most prevalent and profits are particularly hardest hit by presenteeism also occur during the periods the organisation is under stress. For example when the

company has released some particularly well received new product that was in high demand. The authors suggested, “The explanation could be that when the company tried to achieve the best possible profit employees were working while ill and efficiency demands were high.”



Stable results

The researchers did find that the 1% impact on turnover was very stable and not as volatile as the impact on profits. They said, “However, our data showed that both the presenteeism and sickness absence figures were quite stable across time and we assume that there would be no dramatic changes in the figures if data were to be collected today. Moreover, data was collected from four separate factories (business units) and an administration unit which served to mitigate the label of a single-company study.”

Reference

Vänni, K., Neupane, S., & Nygård, C. H. (2016). An effort to assess the relation between productivity loss costs and presenteeism at work. *International Journal of Occupational Safety and Ergonomics*, 1-30.

Overview

As opposed to absenteeism, presenteeism is a situation where an employee is not working effectively but still remains at work.

1. The researchers found that presenteeism consistently costs organisations 1% of its annual turnover, and between 3.7% - 4.4% of employee costs.
2. Though there was a weak correlation they also found that absenteeism and presenteeism combined could knock the company's profit by as much as 36.43%.
3. The lowest annual presenteeism cost per employee was EUR 986 and the highest EUR 1302.
4. The lowest number of presenteeism days per employee was 8.7 days and the highest number was 67.9 days in a year.
5. Estimated losses to a company due to sickness absences and presenteeism ranged from EUR 4.6 million to EUR 5.6 million annually.

The researchers are highlighting the issue of presenteeism and suggesting organisations may want to take it into account and find remedies to it.

Why are some professional firms more entrepreneurial than others?

Many professionals not only have to master their profession and services but also how to run and manage a business. In other words, they need to balance both the professional and entrepreneurial aspects of their business.

A new study published in the International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research has looked at the factors which contribute to the success of this balance.



The research compared professional role identity and entrepreneurial role identity to examine how the balance of the focus on one of the two identities impacts the general success of the firm. The researchers from Georgia Southern University and Florida Atlantic University examined 138 professional medical service firms in the US.

Entrepreneurial role identity

An entrepreneurial role identity forms “when an individual internalises the external meanings associated with the entrepreneurial role and makes those meanings self-defining; the individual begins to call himself or herself an ‘entrepreneur’”. In other words an individual is considered to have taken on an entrepreneurial role identity when they take on the values and behaviours of an entrepreneur.

This is where business development, risk taking and innovation come into focus for the professionals running the business.

An example of an aggressively entrepreneurial / professional business is the much pilloried ‘ambulance chaser’ law firms. They are very firmly profit making, entrepreneurial businesses based on professional services. Many professional firms steer clear of this level of entrepreneurial identity as their professional identity is more important to them than their entrepreneurial / business identity.

The research found that where a greater entrepreneurial role identity developed a much more profit orientation and business aspect took hold in the firm. These firms tend to shift from professional service provision to a more entrepreneurial one, prone to taking a more business like identity and behaviour.

Professional role identity

Professionals develop through a significant level of inter-professional socialisation and identity formation. This is usually associated with more formal education, apprenticeships, licensure or certification, continuing education and membership in and identifying with professional associations. Additionally, the researchers found that there is a higher level of risk associated with being a professional as they usually personally become responsible for the delivery of the service to their clients and directly accountable for their behaviour.

Protected professions like doctors for example are naturally very conservative. They must consider their licences, continuing professional development, as well as spending a long time conducting academic study, completing internships and the like just to get licensed in the first place. To that extent, the research found that professional role identity can hold a firm back from being extremely entrepreneurial.



Conclusions

The research found that the level of importance the professional services firm placed on their entrepreneurial identity dictates and predicts their business orientation and success. Business success, it appears, hinges to some degree on the role identity of the founders and leaders of the organisation.

Reference

Stewart, S., & Castrogiovanni, G. (2016). A Foot in Both Camps: Role Identity and Entrepreneurial Orientation in Professional Service Firms. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour and Research*.

Overview

The success of a professional firm depends to a large extent on the **role identity** that predominates within the firm. Where the leadership of a professional services firm assumes a balance more towards a professional role identity then the business is likely suffer. However, when the leadership of such a firm assumes more of an entrepreneurial role identity then there will be much more of a business orientation and the likelihood of business success increases dramatically.

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Human resources professionals were among the first to actively engage organisationally with and promote the use of the internet in the 1990s and now are among the vanguard in the use of social media (also described as Web 2.0 where content is 'user generated').

embarrassment caused by a wrong move in social media, it has by and large been used quite effectively by human resources teams.

Danial Arjomandy, of the Polytechnic of Milan has come up with a model as to how social media is used by a range of companies ranging from Fortune 500 giants such as IBM and McDonald's to a number of small and medium enterprises (SMEs). This is summarised in the diagram below – we will look at the segments beneath them.

Open social e-Human Resource Management (eHRM)

The first quadrant is what is known as ‘open, social eHRM’. This is essentially where the human resource team uses social media as an outreach tool. One example that stands out is Chrysler’s Connect2BFit system, a specially made social media system designed in conjunction with the company’s health insurance provider. This actively engages employees and their families to improve their health and wellbeing. This has been very successful, with widespread engagement and many tonnes of excess body weight lost among the car manufacturer’s staff and families!



Open, social eHRM is a system where HR can actively engage with the wider public and has the effect of really improving the company's profile in the eyes of the public at large.

Internal social

In this case the social media is available exclusively to people inside the company. It is developed so only internal employees can communicate with each other. For a small to medium sized enterprise this may only be a 'private group' on Facebook or google apps for example – accessible only by those invited to join. This fosters

communication, but the researchers saw that this tends only to be used for efficiency and internal business oriented use. Larger companies often have their own dedicated and secure systems and tend not to use publically available social media like Facebook and Twitter, for example, for internal communications.

Specialised social

Specialised social sits at the more segmented side of the model. You may have heard of Second Life, a virtual world created for people to live an alternate reality. This was in fact developed by IBM as a platform for training its staff and as a sales platform for its wares. Many of the people inhabiting Second Life are not using it as IBM intended and nor do they use its more specialised features.

The researcher states, “there is stratification (i.e., specialisation) involved both internally and externally in terms of who can contribute content. This model is especially suited to HR process and practice standardisation in targeted internal units and/or geographies because it helps companies filter both the information and the nature of the interactions on the system.”

Where there is a ‘world’ outside of IBM, there are also a number of areas hidden behind a firewall that the public can’t get access to. The author found that “The conference centres are established behind firewalls to restrict access, prevent fraud, and limit security risks. Authorised participants take part in discussions using speakerphones and/or instant

messaging. Their avatars can also engage in various movements helpful to the communication process, such as hand raising.”

Segmented social

This system is where only a select group can broadcast via the social media system. No one from outside the company can use or see it, and not all staff can access it. One example of its use is Nuts about Southwest, run by Southwest Airlines. The author described it thus: “Designed to promote engagement, this blog is used to share job-related stories reflective of company values, as generated by a select group of employees. Members of the blog number about 30 and change from time to time to reflect a broad mix of frontline and behind-the-scenes activities, involving executives, marketing representatives, customer service agents, pilots, flight attendants and mechanics.” It is kept small to encourage wider engagement, though people cannot post content again to keep it light and interesting.

Conclusions

The researcher does not suggest who

should use what and when – this is heavily dependent on the company’s culture. Not all organisations are the same, and for that reason it is down to the organisation to decide as to the limitations of their social media use.



This is useful as it opens up other uses and control systems for social media use in communications, decision making, problem solving and the like.

Reference

Arjomandy, D 2016 Social media integration in electronic human resource management: Development of a social eHRM framework. Canadian Journal of Administrative Sciences Revue canadienne des sciences de l’administration 33: 108–123 (2016)

Overview

There are roughly 4 models of the use social media by Human Resources in organisations:

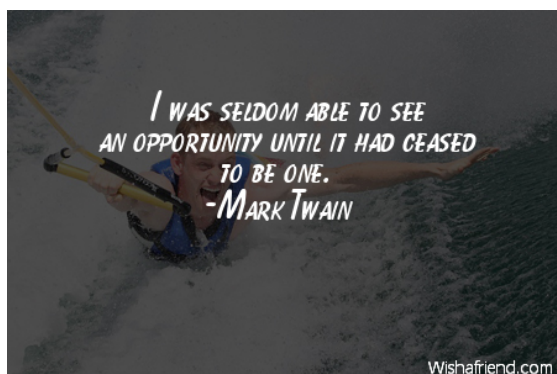
1. Open, social eHRM. This is where HR uses social media as an outreach tool to engage with people publically.
2. Internal Social. This is where engagement through social media is exclusively internal to the organisation
3. Specialised social, where what people can engage with is controlled around the topic or field. Like the social open model, the social media often includes people outside of the organisation, like suppliers, consultants etc.
4. Segmented social on the other hand is where only particular defined groups of internal employees have access to the social media in question.

Who and why are some people more likely to see new business opportunities?

One of the big questions in research into entrepreneurial behaviour is who and why are some people more likely to see and pursue more opportunities than others?

In a paper entitled 'Prior knowledge, cognitive characteristics and opportunity recognition' published in the International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research, researchers examined the behaviour and actions of 64 nanotechnology entrepreneurs and found three core reasons behind who and why some people are better at spotting business opportunities than others:

1. Prior knowledge in the field and thereby opportunity recognition
2. Entrepreneurial alertness to those opportunities and
3. Learning within that field that enables people to see things that others do not.



Prior knowledge

The researchers summed this up thus: "Different people identify different opportunities because they possess

different sources of prior knowledge; and entrepreneurs tend to only discover opportunities that draw on their prior knowledge."

Our experience, familiarity and knowledge of the field the opportunity is in is a significant predictor of our ability to spot the next opportunity.

Entrepreneurial alertness

The second predictor is what is termed 'alertness to opportunities'. Basically this is whether we have experience and a mind-set that is cued for entrepreneurial opportunities.

The researchers defined entrepreneurial alertness as a set of skills developed over time that enables them to "acquire (scan and search for information), organise (associate and connect information) and interpret (evaluate and judge) information from different areas to aid them in recognising opportunities."

Entrepreneurial learning

The last factor that was found to be significant in having an opportunities mind-set is a focus on learning. What the researchers discovered was that successful entrepreneurs and opportunity spotters have a learning orientation and that they don't hold onto previous beliefs. These people are evidence driven. Rather than trying to be right they look to try to find

out what the evidence suggests is the case. The researchers noted “As entrepreneurs are obtaining knowledge through experimental learning and thereby searching for new opportunities, the positive impact of entrepreneurial learning on opportunity recognition demonstrates its great importance in the process of gaining and transforming experience (experimental learning) in opportunity identification.”

In other words, the learning orientation of entrepreneurs means that they readily transform experience into practical learning for the future.

Mediating factors

The researchers found that these three factors are interrelated. The learning orientation means that prior knowledge

is constantly challenged and updated, keeping it relevant and practical. This in turn sharpens their entrepreneurial alertness which then feeds back into the learning orientation.

Conclusions

This research has thrown up some interesting ideas as to what makes the spark go bang in an entrepreneur’s head. It also shows why some people have more entrepreneurial sparks in their minds than others.

Reference

Hajizadeh, A., & Zali, M. (2016). Prior knowledge, cognitive characteristics and opportunity recognition. *International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behavior & Research*, 22(1), 63-83.

Overview

Being good at spotting business opportunities is based on:

1. Having a genuine learning disposition, rather than trying to prove you are right or having a pet theory you are trying to push.
2. Experience, familiarity and knowledge of the field the opportunity is in is a significant predictor of the ability to spot the next opportunity.
3. Having a focus on and building a mind-set or constant alertness for business opportunities is also important in building the skills of spotting good opportunities.

Manipulation as Managerial Motivational Tool

When you think about it, motivating someone involves manipulation at some level, even if the intention behind the manipulation is wholly positive, both for the individual and the organisation.



80% Disengaged employees

The annual Gallup analysis of the US workforce usually finds that somewhere around 30% (28-34%) of the workforce falls into what Gallup term 'engaged at work'. Gallup defines engaged employees as those who are involved in, enthusiastic about and committed to their work and workplace. This means that approximately 70% of employees in the US are either 'disengaged' or 'actively disengaged' from their work. The worldwide figures are even worse. The 2013 worldwide Gallup poll, across 142 countries found that an average of just 13% of the global workforce can be considered 'engaged' at work.

Workforce motivation is a major issue in many organisations.

Motivation and manipulation

At the 13th International Scientific Conference on Human Potential Development, held this year at the University of Szczecin in Poland, Mario

Bogdanović, a researcher from the Faculty of Economic Psychology at the University of Split in Croatia, presented a new paper looking at the manipulative aspects of workplace motivation.

The first issue in any motivational behaviour in organisations is to identify and understand that motivating someone is at its core a manipulation. The issue then becomes whether it is what Bogdanović terms a positive or a negative manipulative action.

Central to the distinction between a negative and positive motivational manipulation is an ethical issue of creating a climate that eliminates a sense of injustice and negative manipulation. In doing so, the resistance to managerial manipulative techniques tends to decrease.

The idea of the ideal manipulation

Any manipulation is really the exercise of undue influence through mental distortion and/or emotional exploitation, with the intention to seize power or control the other in some way.

The author presented the concept of an 'ideal manipulation' where the intention is to influence someone's behaviour (impression management) positively, by suggesting that someone does something (either consciously or unconsciously), and that they engage with it voluntarily and with free will, and further that this is a conscious decision.

spending or some other similar moral imperative.

Types of motivational manipulation

Bogdanović's research found that managers and leaders tend to use manipulations on a daily basis in most organisations and situations in order to motivate (manipulate) employees and others to do what they want. Bogdanović divided the motivational manipulations into two types:

1. Direct and
2. Indirect.

Direct motivational manipulations

1. Management by fear – this is where the employee works in order to avoid some form of loss or negative economic coercion (a fine), a violation (being shouted at) or direct force (violence).
2. Create a moral obligation to conduct the work. These tend to be appeals that the work required is for the good or health of the organisation or the individual. This forms a type of psychological contract or moral obligation where the individual either feels they should be doing what is requested or feels bad because they are not meeting that obligation.
3. Create a legal or pseudo-legal rationale for the required behaviour by appealing to regulations and law. Usually this includes a phase of indoctrination in the regulations or laws. This is actually a form of law based moral obligation to act (or not act) in a certain way.
4. Using appeals to reduce



Indirect motivational manipulations

1. Diverting attention – usually this involves getting people to focus on irrelevant facts, keeping their attention on news feeds etc. as a method of control. This usually works by flooding the individuals with information so that they are unable to sort out the important information. This flooding or diversion technique overwhelms people and makes them more compliant as they become reliant on others to tell them what is important and what to do.
2. Creating problems or a crisis. The basis of this technique is to create a problem that people react to preferably emotionally, particularly one that creates or transfers fear or a threat. Creating a crisis is a particularly powerful way to manipulate whole populations of people and motivate action toward the now 'necessary evil'.
3. Gradual change also known as the method of small steps or the thin end of the wedge approach. You design the approach to the manipulation in a series of small and apparently inconsequential steps, which over time builds up to the outcome you want. This approach can reduce or even eliminate resistance to even quite dramatic things like longer

- working hours, reduction in pension expectations and increased surveillance.
4. Disposal. This is a method whereby some change is announced a long time before the implementation date. This is used extensively in national budget situations. It reduces concern because the implementation date isn't immediate and by the time implementation is due, people have got used to the idea.
 5. Use of child-like voices and intonation during the appeal. This has been shown to be effective in suppressing critical thinking and increases suggestibility. Advertisers are particularly fond of this approach/manipulation/motivation.
 6. Abuse of emotion. This is a method of intimidation that heightens an emotional response. In doing this it also reduces the individual's cognitive and critical capability.
 7. Ignorance. The need to know technique. The lack of information or access to the information increases submissiveness and control.
 8. Glorification of stupidity and mediocrity. This is usually achieved by glorifying uneducated approaches and action as being 'practical', 'more grounded' and 'more like us' usually creating an anti-intellectual and, importantly, an anti-critical and anti-expert culture.
 9. Create a sense of guilt. This lowers people's self-esteem as it implies failure, usually an ethical or moral failure. Inducing guilt has been found to be a very effective method to gain

compliance.

10. Abuse of knowledge. Often this is as simple as knowing how to manipulate people and populations and using it for your own ends. Noam Chomsky has written extensively about this manipulation. It is studied, used and abused by many political and managerial level people and parties.



How managers increase (manipulate) production

Bogdanović found that managers and leaders tend to use 3 basic manipulations to increase productivity:

1. Punish unwanted behaviours. Sudden and strong adverse stimulus tends to be the most effective.
2. Reward desirable behaviours. These manipulations include economic (more pay, bonuses etc.), creating positive emotions through praise and emotional rewards (the feel good factor). This usually hinges on creating a connection between the desired behaviours, the reward and the inculcation that this makes the individual a 'good person'.
3. Manipulating happiness. This means creating a situation where people think that they are working for their own ends and

rewards when in fact they are working for someone else's good. The aim here is to:

- a. Promote the idea that hard work is morally a good thing to do and to make it a socially acceptable and desirable trait.
- b. To make work evasion morally and socially unacceptable on moral rather than fear grounds.
- c. To internalise a set of ethical values around work and work compliance (having a conscience).

explicit about the exact transaction being engaged in for that work to be carried out.

Bogdanović suggests that workplaces should:

- a. Openly recognise and identify manipulative behaviour.
- b. Openly reject manipulative behaviours and make manipulation unacceptable.
- c. Promote the values of truth and direct negotiation.

This, Bogdanović states, will develop a greater climate of trust, openness and connection with the tasks to be completed.

Ethical culture and non-manipulative strategies

Bogdanović's research found that non-manipulative motivation strategies were rarely implemented in the work place.

The paper goes on to say that paradoxically, the best way to motivate one's staff is to create a culture where manipulation is unacceptable. In order to do this the managers and employees should become aware of manipulations and have the means to prevent or stop them from continuing.

Material reward systems (for pay for example) are considered to be ethically less manipulative than the psychological motivational methods. This is because there is a direct transaction ostensibly based on free-will.

With regards to moral behaviour, the author suggested, "Correct behaviour is deeply moral in terms of human thoughts, feelings and behaviour. This means that people (even elites) should behave ethically towards others and for the benefit of each human being, regardless of his material, social, educational and/or other status."



An ethical motivation climate is considered to be one which is open about the work to be done and being

The research concludes that actually the best way to improve productivity and motivation is through honest and truthful communication and negotiation as opposed to manipulation.

Reference

Bogdanović, M. (2016) Contribution to the Theories of Working Motivation/Job Engagement: Human

Mind Manipulation as Managerial Motivational Tool 13th International Scientific Conference on Human Potential Development 2016.

Overview

Most if not all management / organisational motivation techniques are manipulative in nature. They aim to influence or coerce an individual or group of people to do something that they otherwise might not do of their own free volition.

There are 3 basic manipulations or motivations employed in organisations:

1. Punishing undesirable behaviour either by force, psychological or emotional manipulation.
2. Rewarding desirable behaviours either directly (pay) or indirectly by psychological (praise), emotional (feel good) or moral (belief in the righteousness of hard work) grounds / techniques.
3. Manipulating happiness. Constructing a context or climate where people believe it is socially the right thing to do and they should be happy about it. This includes consumerism – getting a bigger car / status etc.

Ethical climate of motivation

An ethical motivation climate is considered to be one which is open about the work to be done and which is explicit about the exact transaction being engaged in for that work to be carried out.

Bogdanović suggests that workplaces should:

- a. Openly recognise and identify manipulative behaviour.
- b. Openly reject manipulative behaviours and make manipulation unacceptable.
- c. Promote the values of truth and direct negotiation.

Commonly held values in entrepreneurs

What drives you to get out of bed in the morning? The alarm clock on its third attempt to kick you out of bed to face your life of drudgery in a job you hate?

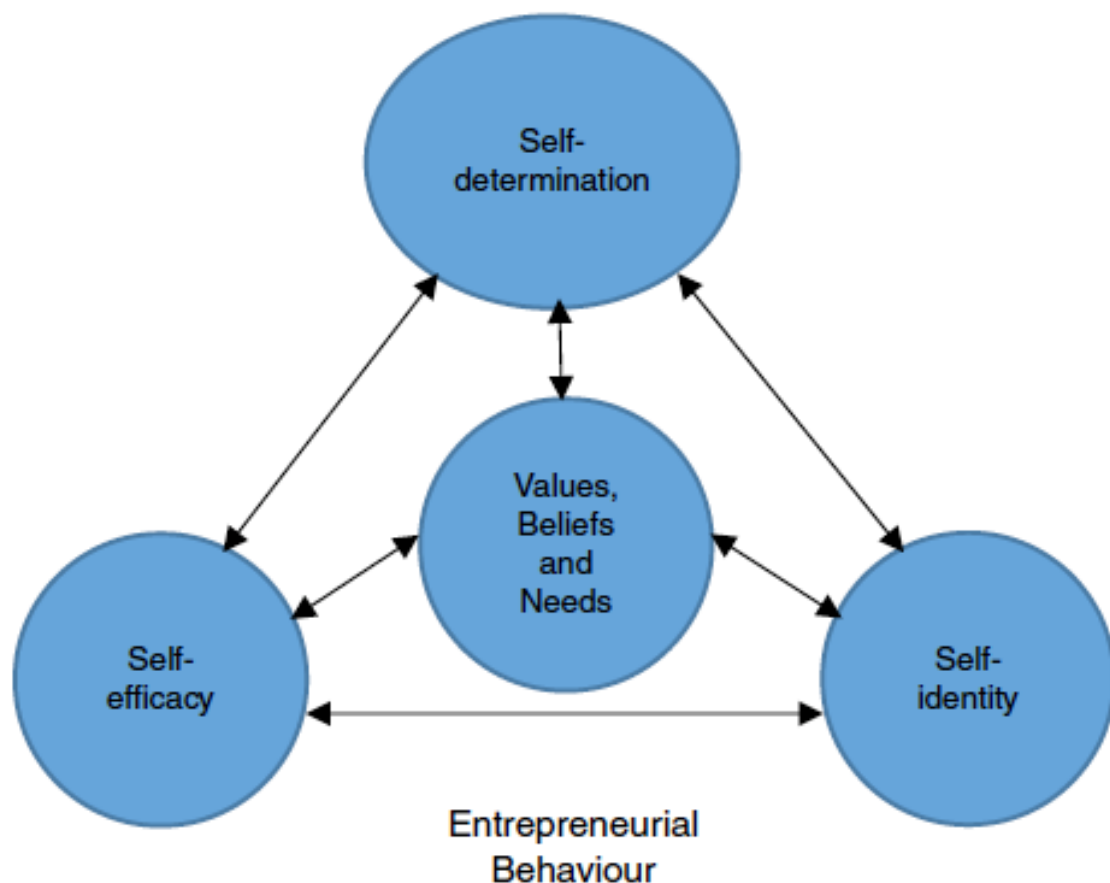
For entrepreneurs the motivation seems to be their ideas along with a drive to make their ideas work, no matter what.

In a research study just published in the International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research,

William Kirkley examined the deeply held values of entrepreneurs, and four primary factors that distinguish entrepreneurs:

1. Independence
2. Ambition
3. Creativity and
4. Daring

Values



As you can see in the figure above, three factors have been shown to contribute to one's values, beliefs and needs. They are all fed by one another.

Kirkley argues that, "Entrepreneurial behaviour is founded on a specific set of values (beliefs) and needs which provide the individual with the intrinsic

motivation and self-determination to engage in entrepreneurial behaviour. These values also drive the individual towards the acquisition of the requisite knowledge, skills and experience (self-efficacy and confidence) to effectively engage in the entrepreneurship process. Altogether, self-determination, self-efficacy and the entrepreneurial value-set combine to enable the individual to express identifiable entrepreneurial behaviour.”

So what are these values?



Through a series of in depth surveys of 120 participants and a regression analysis of the results Kirkley identified the four values common to all:

Independence

Independence was common to all participants in the survey. The researcher found that there were three overriding reasons independence is such a central drive for entrepreneurs:

1. First is the overwhelming focus on the control individuals need

to have over their lives, business and potentially those who work in it.

2. Second is their belief in the freedom to be able to make decisions without influence from others and
3. Third is a self-perception of leadership that develops from being sought out for advice or solutions.

Ambition

The research found that ambition in entrepreneurial behaviour is characterised primarily by

- a. Goal setting
- b. High levels of energy
- c. Stamina to stay the course and
- d. Persistence in the face of obstacles

Kirkley found that ambition and being entrepreneurial are not one and the same though: “Being entrepreneurial sets the context within which ambition functions as a motivating force, driving the individual towards the achievement of goals that are beyond the norms of ordinary business performance.”

Creativity

Creativity comes out in different forms, with businesses being unique in their different ways. Kirkley found that creativity is another key driver for entrepreneurs. This usually takes the form of:

1. Coming up with new ideas
2. Finding new ways of doing things,

3. Solving problems or applied creativity
4. Identifying new opportunities
5. Unique problem-solving situations
6. Challenging the status quo
7. Looking at the world differently
8. New thinking and
9. Introducing commercial creativity and products to the market

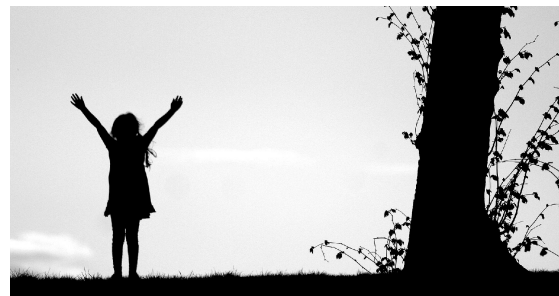
Daring

Daring is one of the values that most people assume to be part of entrepreneurial behaviour. Taking financial risks and either flying or dying on the results is one of the more exciting parts of setting up and driving a new business forward.

Interestingly, the same perception was held by the entrepreneurs themselves – that others tended to take huge risks whilst they themselves were being quite conservative!

Kirkley commented that “their perception of others’ propensity towards risk in the launching of their ventures, products or services was significantly higher...” than their own.

Everyone, including entrepreneurs perceive that taking risks is part of entrepreneurial behaviour, except the entrepreneurs taking that particular risk...



Reference

Kirkley, W.W. (2016) Entrepreneurial behaviour: the role of values, International Journal of Entrepreneurial Behaviour & Research, Vol. 22 Iss 3 pp. 290 - 328

Overview

Four values tend to drive entrepreneurial activity, behaviour and energy:

1. The need for independence,
2. Ambition (and belief) to see ideas come to fruition
3. Engaging in creative acts
4. Taking risks

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What motivates people to engage with Continuing Professional Development?

The continuing professional development (CPD) of any professional is crucial to maintaining both a capable, competent and up-to-date workforce and keeping professional standards as high as possible.



Strategic engagement

There is significant previous research evidence to show that workers largely approach CPD strategically, in that they tend to engage in the activities that help them achieve their goals and motives. Additionally, previous research has shown that mandatory CPD tends to be only superficially engaged with if the individual does not perceive direct relevance to their goals and interests.

Further, the research evidence supports the notion that people tend not always to plan their CPD deliberately, rather they jump through the hoops and complete the CPD that helps them attain their goals as opposed approaching things from a

skills, knowledge and attitudinal development gap approach.

New research

A new study, just published by researchers from three universities in The Netherlands, completed a thorough literature review of the previous research into the motivations of people and CPD activities they tend to engage in. They then conducted their own research looking primarily at nurses to see if they could discern the relationships between the motivations of people and the CPD activities they undertake.

Findings

The 9 main reasons for engaging with CPD

The researchers discovered that people tend to engage in CPD for 9 main reasons:

1. To increase their competence in their current role
2. To comply with requirements
3. To deepen knowledge
4. To enhance career development
5. To get some relief from the routine of work
6. To improve the service given
7. To increase self-esteem
8. To fill gaps in previous education and

9. To network with other similar professionals

The 4 main types of CPD

The four types of CPD activity found that people tend to engage in are:

1. Organised learning activities
2. Direct experience
3. Vicarious experience or social interaction with other colleagues
4. Self-directed learning – using media such as the internet, books, journals etc.



Secondary findings

1. The researchers found that the first four rationales for engaging in CPD tended to be the most frequent. Interestingly the first reason, 'To increase their competence in their current role' usually quoted something like 'To master a technical skill or to learn a new procedure' as the main motive here. This reason

tended to develop the deepest level of engagement in CPD activities.

2. The second most frequent reason for engaging with CPD activities (to comply with requirements) was also seen as the most frequent reason for engaging in e-learning as well.
3. It was also found that beyond organised learning activities, the other types of CPD, experience, social learning and using media were almost entirely self-directed and tended to occur in the workplace. This highlights the importance of the workplace as the primary learning and development arena.
4. Further there was found to be a growing trend of more formal organised learning events arranged at the work unit level (as opposed to centrally) in the workplace by managers. These 'short burst' arranged events, often on a single topic, were found to be fairly well accepted.
5. The researchers found that mandatory regulatory courses also tended to be viewed as competence increasing events and additionally that participants often tend to incorporate the need for the external regulations into their own values for development.
6. Acceptance of CPD tends to increase the closer to the workplace the event takes place.

Overview

1. The 4 most frequent reason people engage in CPD are to:
 - a. Increase their competence in their current role
 - b. Comply with requirements
 - c. Deepen knowledge
 - d. Enhance career development.
2. CPD events tend to be more accepted the closer to the workplace they occur.
3. The workplace tends to be the primary location for CPD, often through informal learning.
4. Mandatory and regulatory CPD is often rationalised as competence enhancing and people will often incorporate the values of the regulations into their own.

What human factors prevent successful change programmes?

In a research paper Tonja Blom from the University of South Africa says that one of the chief problems for organisational change programmes is that employees tend to feel threatened by the unfamiliarity of the unknown. This leaves them scrambling for some sense of familiarity and stability and they can often resist change, causing drag for any change programme.



It is often a mistake to think about organisations purely as a process or a machine. They rely on the human beings that are within to achieve their aims. Humans who have feelings, thoughts, points of views, likes and dislikes. Interestingly Blom's research shows that 46% of organisations have as many as three change programmes or events taking place at any one time. As Blom points out, people need some sense of stability and familiarity in order to work effectively and where this is denied them they often tend to react negatively. The negative reactions she found range from drug taking, both prescribed and casual drugs to people leaving through stress, depression and maladaptive behaviours.

Organisations need change

Since the financial crisis of 2007, change has come to businesses unrelentingly and the speed appears to be increasing as globalisation and other factors have forced ever fiercer competition. In order to survive, businesses have to change to regain a competitive advantage or to continue to supply their services in a world that has ever shifting economics, demographics, technological and political change.

This goes against the grain for many people – who have the need for stability and some level of certainty.

The research

Blom ran a series of focus groups and constructed case studies using CEOs, senior and middle management from a number of businesses around South Africa.

People need stability

At an individual level, Blom found that largely “organisational change results in fear, stress and anxiety. Fear of the unknown, habit, self-interest, economic insecurity and failure to recognise the need for change, distrust, perceptions and scepticism were all identified as factors that may contribute to the individual's resistance to change.”

With multiple individuals experiencing such negative emotions, so this often feeds up to the organisational level:

“the presented data confirmed structural and cultural inertia, threats to existing power relationships, threats to expertise and resource allocation as well as scepticism about previous unsuccessful change efforts and poor planning as organisational factors standing in the way of successful organisational change.”

One of the biggest issues Blom found was that multiple concurrent change tends to multiply the human factor problems.

Beginning – middle – end

One of the better ways to tackle the human factors of organisational change is to institute one change programme and have clear delineations between the beginning and end. Blom argued, “Continuous flux and lack of understanding result in disconnect and reduced cognitive capacity. Clear begin and end points allow for improved adaptation and self-organisation, creating an opportunity where the individual can lift chaos into order.”

Good leadership can tackle these issues

Good leadership can help settle nerves and inject confidence into the change programme.

Blom shows that “When leaders do not assist or guide people to identify a purpose or at least an understanding of organisational change, and when

people are driven by negative feelings and emotions, these people are at risk of losing perspective. Similarly, successful organisational change could be compromised.”



Conclusions

Good leadership will help reduce negative emotions and guide people through a change programme with clear outcomes and a clear purpose. For all the visions of driving the organisation to a better future, one needs to remember that an organisation is actually a disparate range of people with a complex set of reactions and that usually these very people actually want the organisation to be a success.

Reference

Blom, T. and Viljoen, R. 2016. Human Reactions to Change: Proceedings of the 2016 IAABR/Academic Oasis – Palm Beach International Conference on Business, Economics, Finance and Accounting. 11 – 13 May, 2016.

Overview

- Up to 46% of organisations have multiple concurrent change events happening.
- Often these change events are not tied together nor do they tend to share a similar discernible trajectory or goal.
- One of the issues with multiple change events is that it enhances negative reactions to change.

It does get easier and nicer by Friday!

The old stereotype of employees being relaxed and happy on Friday yet grouchy and somewhat prone to have a go at each other when they return on a Monday seems to hold true, as a new study of 181 people over a three week period shows. The research goes further, saying that the fall in workplace incivility actually falls on a linear scale – you are about half as likely to receive abuse on a Friday as you are on a Monday!



Moods and recovery over a weekly cycle

The research by psychologists from Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia shows that people tend to recover their energy levels over a weekend more than they do on a weekday evening. During the work week people tend to sleep less than they do at weekends. As they go through the week the declining recovery process appears to leave them too tired either to raise to attack others or see slights in something someone else has said or done.

Work induced tiredness appears to be a good thing in terms of reducing abuse and incivility toward the end of the week. The researchers also found that as workers near the weekend

there is a measurable positive impact on their mood. The authors found that weekend anticipation predicted positive mood in employees. Previous German research published in 2008 found similar results. This previous research concluded that “Conversely, lower mood can be expected on Monday as employees anticipate a full working week ahead.”

The paper showed, “Mondays are the lowest point in the week as they represent the transition from the pleasurable world of rest and relaxation to the demanding world of work, while Fridays are positive as they herald the start of the weekend. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that Mondays are associated with a peak in negative events, including lower financial returns and higher employee absence, fatigue, overtime, sleep complaints, depression, suicide, stroke and heart problems.”

Conclusions and other research

This research backs up and expands on previous similar studies from around the world that show that the workplace is a more hostile place to be on a Monday and a more genial place on a Friday. This research shows that there is a definite pattern among those doing the Monday – Friday, 9-5 routine.

What this research doesn't answer is whether shift workers and people who work away from home have similar patterns or not.

Additionally the cause the researchers are suggesting (sleep deprivation) is more of a correlation. The increase in mood could also be down to the reduction in incivility and the anticipation of the weekend.

Reference

Nicholson, T., & Griffin, B. (2016). Thank goodness it's Friday: weekly pattern of workplace incivility. *Anxiety, Stress, & Coping*, 1-14.

Overview

- Incivility decreases in the work place as the work week continues, with the lowest levels of incivility being experienced on a Friday.
- Workers' moods conversely tend to become more positive as the week progresses with the highest recorded mood levels being found on Fridays.

Is there any difference between people's perceptions of burnout and depression?

Scholars in France have looked at the differences in perception of the medically recognised illness of depression and the publicly recognised concept of 'burnout'. They surveyed just over 1000 people to understand what their perceptions and attitudes are to the two different concepts.

Depression

Depression is a medical mental health condition that has widely recognised symptoms. As well as feeling dejection and severely despondent, one will have other symptoms such as reduced motivation, loss of interest in things, feelings of tiredness and lethargy, low levels of self-belief, pessimism, despair and despondency.

Depression can be brought on by a number of factors and is often difficult to predict what will result in depression from one person to the next.

Burnout



Burnout, unlike depression, has no formal medical diagnostic criteria and

is not considered a mental illness as such in most parts of the world. It is a very commonly used term in business and in the public domain and is often associated with work situations. The researchers described it thus: "Burnout has been characterised as a long-term, negative affective state combining physical fatigue, cognitive weariness and emotional exhaustion."

The symptoms are very similar to depression. Indeed, the research shows that the symptoms of depression and burnout overlap in many areas to the extent that the two conditions are often inseparable from a medical point of view.

However, is this what most of us think?

Burnout is actually a commonly defined construct (as opposed to a medical definition) and has no true medical meaning at present.

Perceptions

Depression is a mental illness that often comes with a stigma. People often don't want it to be known that they are suffering from clinical depression and will often remain at work and hide the fact that they have been diagnosed with it.

Interestingly, the researchers found that neither depression nor burnout carried much of a stigma from the

people surveyed.

The survey was done by two different online questionnaires being sent to two groups of people, with the only difference being the use of the term 'burnout' or the term 'depression' in the surveys of stigma. It is interesting that, "we observed a disattenuated correlation of .91 between burnout and depression, suggestive of empirical redundancy between the two constructs ... Associations of such a magnitude are likely to be found when correlating two measures of burnout ... or two measures of depression ..., in other words, two measures of the same construct."

In short, burnout and depression are interchangeable in the language of many people.

However when the survey was widened out to the general public they discovered that younger and older people (15 – 25, and 60+) had more negative views about both depression

and burnout. Additionally, the less educated an individual is, the more likely they are to form a negative opinion about both concepts and the people who suffer from them.

Conclusions

This study found that burnout and depression are very much the same concept in the public imagination. However, there does appear to be some evidence to suggest that professionals are more likely to resort to explanations of burnout rather than depression when describing their own and their colleagues' problems.

Among the better educated and median age groups of those of working age, there is far less likely to be a stigma around these illnesses.

Reference

Bianchi, R., Verkuilen, J., Brisson, R., Schonfeld, I. S., & Laurent, E. (2016). Burnout and depression: Label-related stigma, help-seeking, and syndrome overlap. *Psychiatry Research*, 245, 91-98

Overview

In this French study, researchers found that for most people burnout and depression are seen as similar, if not the same, problems. Further, that educated people in the age range 25-60 are significantly less likely to see either burnout or depression as some form of stigma or negative quality of the individual.

However people in the age bracket 15-25 and those over 60 and the less well educated are more likely to assume that depression and burnout are negative qualities of a person.

Lastly the survey looked at individuals' views of *other people* being diagnosed with depression and burnout, not how people with these symptoms view the conditions themselves.

Building trust in with virtual employees

Millions of people work virtually and remotely, both full and part time, subcontracting and freelancing from around the world, often for organisations in completely different countries. The output of 'virtual workers' is worth many billions of pounds a year to the global economy.

So, what of the culture of a company that relies on virtual workers? Does it impact the virtual worker? Do virtual workers require similar social incentives to those working in a dedicated office for the team?

An interesting study from India (which has a huge and increasing population of virtual workers, shows that one of the biggest problems both employers and virtual employees face is that of trust.



Further that the culture of the organisation can impact the trust relationship between the organisation and the virtual worker. In particular, organisational climate factors like its performance standards, conflict resolution structures and habits, reward systems and identity problems are found to be positively correlated with trust in an organisation. These issues and how they are handled can

greatly impact the trust associated with workers. This is exacerbated with virtual workers who are often not part of the internal day-to-day culture and therefore miss the behavioural cues that build trust.

Organisational climate

Ultimately to work for an organisation over a period of time, the individual must have some sort of personal affinity for it. The researchers state that, "from the psychological perspective (the issue is) whether ... people perceive their organisational climate as positive and whether they can form the kind of trusting relationships with others in the office setting while formal and informal meetings (including gossiping) are going on virtually and remotely."

How to improve a climate of trust with virtual workers

The researchers point out that, "interpersonal trust, communication between staff, information systems, rewards and organisation structure play an important role in defining the relationships between staff that affect things like knowledge sharing."

The researchers found that the following practices can increase inter-worker and worker/organisational trust:

1. Encourage virtual face-to-face interviews and plan orientation and induction programmes that take place over a period of time.

2. Organise frequent face-to-face meetings. Option to work in offices and having temporary cabins and office spaces can give the required touch with co-workers at times, like in IBM and other organisations.

3. Combine work arrangement like job sharing with virtual work to develop sense of responsibility and trust.

4. Where possible organise informal meetings like social events, celebrating birthdays, anniversaries together by which team members can maintain strong social bonds. Team building activities can also build social bonds.

5. Prepare and facilitate recreational activities to develop a sense of affiliation. One of them could be international holidays for virtual workers, local club memberships etc.



Not all of these will be possible where the outsourced workers are in India working for a UK company for example. However, the social side is an important factor to foster relationships and improve output and can often be achieved online through games, problem solving meetings etc.

Reference

Birdie, A.K. & Jain, M. (2016) Perceived Organizational Climate & Interpersonal Trust among Virtual Workers. The Indian Journal of Industrial Relations, Vol. 51, No. 4.

Overview

Trust is important in all human relationships. It is harder to foster in virtual relationships especially where the virtual worker is not part of the organisational culture, which will define 'trust indicators and signifiers'.

To improve trust with virtual workers:

1. Encourage video conferencing as the facial cues are important in establishing trust.
2. Have induction programmes spread out over a longer time for virtual workers.
3. If possible, create opportunities for real face-to-face contact with representatives of the organisation.
4. Try job sharing between virtual and attended employees.
5. Organise (virtual and live) social events the virtual employees can attend.
6. Organise recreational events to develop a sense of affiliation.



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