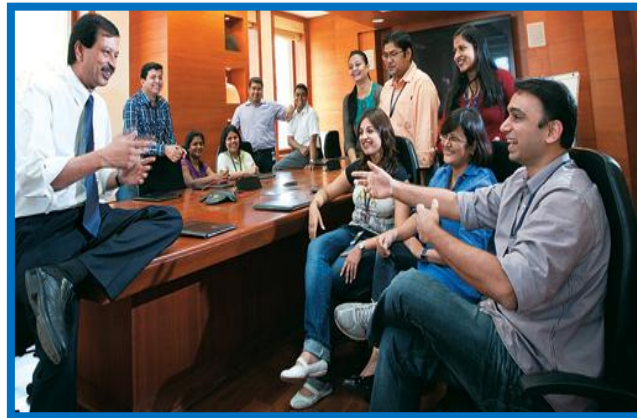


EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT: LEADERSHIP AND CREATIVITY



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ABSTRACT

Employee engagement is a key business driver for organizational success. High levels of engagement in domestic and global firms promote retention of talent, foster customer loyalty and improve organizational performance and stakeholder value. A complex concept, engagement is influenced by many factors—from workplace culture, organizational communication and managerial styles to trust and respect, leadership and company reputation. For today's different generations, access to training and career opportunities, work/life balance and empowerment to make decisions are important. Thus, to foster a culture of engagement, HR leads the way to design, measure and evaluate proactive workplace policies and practices that help attract and retain talent with skills and competencies necessary for growth and sustainability. This paper focuses on building employee engagement through leadership and creativity.

KEYWORDS: Leadership, Creative Process, Creativity, Leadership Styles.

INTRODUCTION

Leadership has been described as "a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task. Other in-depth definitions of leadership have also emerged. Leadership is "organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal". The

leader may or may not have any formal authority. Studies of leadership have produced theories involving traits, situational interaction, function, behavior, power, vision and values, charisma, and intelligence, among others. Somebody whom people follow: somebody who guides or directs others.

**LITERATURE REVIEW
LEADERSHIP STYLES**

A leadership style is a leader's style of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people. It is the result of the philosophy, personality, and experience of the leader. Rhetoric specialists have also developed models for understanding leadership (Robert Hariman, Political Style, Philippe-Joseph Salazar, and L'Hyperpolitique. Technologies politiques De La Domination).

Different situations call for different leadership styles. In an emergency when there is little time to converge on an agreement and where a designated authority has significantly more experience or expertise than the rest of the team, an autocratic leadership style may be most effective; however, in a highly motivated and aligned team with a homogeneous level of expertise, a more democratic or laissez-faire style may be more effective. The style adopted should be the one that most effectively achieves the objectives of the group while balancing the interests of its individual members.

ENGAGING STYLE

Engaging as part of leadership style has been mentioned in various literature earlier. Dr. Stephen L. Cohen, the Senior Vice President for Right Management's Leadership Development Center of Excellence, has in his article Four Key Leadership Practices for Leading in Tough Times has mentioned Engagement as the fourth Key practice. He writes, "These initiatives do for the organization is engage both leaders and employees in understanding the existing conditions and how they can collectively assist in addressing them. Reaching out to employees during difficult times to better understand their concerns and interests by openly and honestly conveying the impact of the downturn on them and their

organizations can provide a solid foundation for not only engaging them but retaining them when things do turn around.

Engagement as the key to Collaborative Leadership is also emphasized in several original research papers and programs. Becoming an agile has long been associated with Engaging leaders - rather than leadership with an hands off approach.

AUTOCRATIC OR AUTHORITARIAN STYLE

Under the autocratic leadership style, all decision-making powers are centralized in the leader, as with dictators.

Leaders do not entertain any suggestions or initiatives from subordinates. The autocratic management has been successful as it provides strong motivation to the manager. It permits quick decision-making, as only one person decides for the whole group and keeps each decision to him/herself until he/she feels it needs to be shared with the rest of the group.

PARTICIPATIVE OR DEMOCRATIC STYLE

The democratic leadership style consists of the leader sharing the decision-making abilities with group members by promoting the interests of the group members and by practicing social equality. This has also been called shared leadership.

LAISSEZ-FAIRE OR FREE-REIN STYLE

A person may be in a leadership position without providing leadership, leaving the group to fend for itself. Subordinates are given a free hand in deciding their own policies and methods. The subordinates are motivated to be creative and innovative.

NARCISSISTIC LEADERSHIP

Narcissistic leadership is a leadership style in which the leader is only interested in him/herself. Their priority is themselves - at the expense of their

people/group members. This leader exhibits the characteristics of a narcissist: arrogance, dominance and hostility. It is a common leadership style. The narcissism may range from anywhere between healthy and destructive. To critics, "narcissistic leadership (preferably destructive) is driven by unyielding arrogance, self-absorption, and a personal egotistic need for power and admiration."

TOXIC LEADERSHIP

A toxic leader is someone who has responsibility over a group of people or an organization, and who abuses the leader-follower relationship by leaving the group or organization in a worse-off condition than when he/she joined it.

TASK-ORIENTED AND RELATIONSHIP-ORIENTED LEADERSHIP

Task-oriented leadership is a style in which the leader is focused on the tasks that need to be performed in order to meet a certain production goal. Task-oriented leaders are generally more concerned with producing a step-by-step solution for given problem or goal, strictly making sure these deadlines are met, results and reaching target outcomes.

Relationship-oriented leadership is a contrasting style in which the leader is more focused on the relationships amongst the group and is generally more concerned with the overall well-being and satisfaction of group members. Relationship-oriented leaders emphasize communication within the group, shows trust and confidence in group members, and shows appreciation for work done.

Task-oriented leaders are typically less concerned with the idea of catering to group members, and more concerned with acquiring a certain solution to meet a production goal. For this reason, they typically are able to make sure that deadlines are met, yet their group members' well-being may suffer.^[62]

Relationship-oriented leaders are focused on developing the team and the relationships in it. The positives to having this kind of environment are that team members are more motivated and have support, however, the emphasis on relations as opposed to getting a job done might make productivity suffer.

SEX DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Another factor that affects leadership style is sex. That is, whether an individual is male or female. When men and women come together in groups, they tend to adapt different leadership styles. Men generally assume an agentic leadership style. They are task-oriented, active, decision focused, independent and goal oriented. Women, on the other hand, are more communal when they assume a leadership position; they strive to be helpful towards others, warm in relation to others, understanding, and mindful of others' feelings. In general, when women are asked to describe themselves to others in newly-formed groups, they emphasize their open, fair, responsible and pleasant communal qualities. They give advice, offer assurances, and manage conflicts in an attempt to maintain positive relationships among group members. Women connect more positively to group members by smiling, maintaining eye contact and respond tactfully to others' comments. Men, conversely, describe themselves as influential, powerful and proficient at the task that needs to be done. They tend to place more focus on initiating structure within the group, setting standards and objectives, identifying roles, defining responsibilities and standard operating procedures, proposing solutions to problems, monitoring compliance with procedures, and finally, emphasizing the need for productivity and efficiency in the

work that needs to be done. As leaders, men are primarily task-oriented, but women tend to be both task- and relationship-oriented. However, it is important to note that these sex differences are only tendencies, and do not manifest themselves within men and women across all groups and situations.

PERFORMANCE

In the past, some researchers have argued that the actual influence of leaders on organizational outcomes is overrated and romanticized as a result of biased attributions about leaders (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987). Despite these assertions, however, it is largely recognized and accepted by practitioners and researchers that leadership is important, and research supports the notion that leaders do contribute to key organizational outcomes (Day & Lord, 1988; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008). To facilitate successful performance it is important to understand and accurately measure leadership performance.

Job performance generally refers to behavior that is expected to contribute to organizational success (Campbell, 1990). Campbell identified a number of specific types of performance dimensions; leadership was one of the dimensions that he identified. There is no consistent, overall definition of leadership performance (Yukl, 2006). Many distinct conceptualizations are often lumped together under the umbrella of leadership performance, including outcomes such as leader effectiveness, leader advancement, and leader emergence (Kaiser et al., 2008). For instance, leadership performance may be used to refer to the career success of the individual leader, performance of the group or organization, or even leader emergence. Each of these measures can be considered conceptually distinct. While these aspects may be

related, they are different outcomes and their inclusion should depend on the applied or research focus.

CREATIVITY

In a summary of scientific research into creativity Michael Mumford suggested: "Over the course of the last decade, however, we seem to have reached a general agreement that creativity involves the production of novel, useful products" (Mumford, 2003, p. 110). Creativity can also be defined "as the process of producing something that is both original and worthwhile". What is produced can come in many forms and is not specifically singled out in a subject or area. Authors have diverged dramatically in their precise definitions beyond these general commonalities: Peter Meusburger reckons that over a hundred different analyses can be found in the literature.

CREATIVE PROCESS

There has been much empirical study in psychology and cognitive science of the processes through which creativity occurs.

INCUBATION

Incubation is a temporary break from creative problem solving that can result in insight.^[29] There has been some empirical research looking at whether, as the concept of "incubation" in Wallas' model implies, a period of interruption or rest from a problem may aid creative problem-solving. Ward^[30] lists various hypotheses that have been advanced to explain why incubation may aid creative problem-solving, and notes how some empirical evidence is consistent with the hypothesis that incubation aids creative problem-solving in that it enables "forgetting" of misleading clues. Absence of incubation may lead the problem solver to become fixated on inappropriate strategies of solving the problem.^[31] This work disputes the earlier hypothesis that

creative solutions to problems arise mysteriously from the unconscious mind while the conscious mind is occupied on other tasks.

CONVERGENT AND DIVERGENT THINKING

J. P. Guilford performed important work in the field of creativity, drawing a distinction between convergent and divergent production (commonly renamed convergent and divergent thinking). Convergent thinking involves aiming for a single, correct solution to a problem, whereas divergent thinking involves creative generation of multiple answers to a set problem. Divergent thinking is sometimes used as a synonym for creativity in psychology literature. Other researchers have occasionally used the terms *flexible* thinking or fluid intelligence, which are roughly similar to (but not synonymous with) creativity.

CREATIVE COGNITION APPROACH

In 1992, Finke et al. proposed the "Geneplore" model, in which creativity takes place in two phases: a generative phase, where an individual constructs mental representations called preinventive structures, and an exploratory phase where those structures are used to come up with creative ideas. Some evidence shows that when people use their imagination to develop new ideas, those ideas are heavily structured in predictable ways by the properties of existing categories and concepts. Weisberg argued, by contrast, that creativity only involves ordinary cognitive processes yielding extraordinary results.

THE EXPLICIT-IMPLICIT INTERACTION (EII) THEORY

Helie and Sun^[36] recently proposed a unified framework for understanding creativity in problem solving, namely the Explicit-Implicit Interaction (EII) theory of creativity. This new theory constitutes an

attempt at providing a more unified explanation of relevant phenomena (in part by reinterpreting/integrating various fragmentary existing theories of incubation and insight). The EII theory relies mainly on five basic principles, namely 1) The co-existence of and the difference between explicit and implicit knowledge; 2) The simultaneous involvement of implicit and explicit processes in most tasks; 3) The redundant representation of explicit and implicit knowledge; 4) The integration of the results of explicit and implicit processing; and 5) The iterative (and possibly bidirectional) processing. A computational implementation of the theory was developed based on the CLARION cognitive architecture and used to simulate relevant human data. This work represents an initial step in the development of process-based theories of creativity encompassing incubation, insight, and various other related phenomena.

CONCEPTUAL BLENDING

In *The Act of Creation*, Arthur Koestler introduced the concept of bisociation—that creativity arises as a result of the intersection of two quite different frames of reference.^[37] This idea was later developed into conceptual blending. In the '90s, various approaches in cognitive science that dealt with metaphor, analogy and structure mapping have been converging, and a new integrative approach to the study of creativity in science, art and humor has emerged under the label conceptual blending.

HONING THEORY

Honing theory posits that creativity arises due to the self-organizing, self-mending nature of a worldview, and that it is by way of the creative process the individual hones (and re-hones) an

integrated worldview. Honing theory places equal emphasis on the externally visible creative outcome and the internal cognitive restructuring brought about by the creative process. Indeed one factor that distinguishes it from other theories of creativity is that it focuses on not just restructuring as it pertains to the conception of the task, but as it pertains to the worldview as a whole. When faced with a creatively demanding task, there is an interaction between the conception of the task and the worldview. The conception of the task changes through interaction with the worldview, and the worldview changes through interaction with the task. This interaction is reiterated until the task is complete, at which point not only is the task conceived of differently, but the worldview is subtly or drastically transformed. Thus another distinguishing feature of honing theory is that the creative process reflects the natural tendency of a worldview to attempt to resolve dissonance and seek internal consistency amongst its components, whether they be ideas, attitudes, or bits of knowledge; it mends itself as does a body when it has been injured.

Yet another central, distinguishing feature of honing theory is the notion of a potentiality state. Honing theory posits that creative thought proceeds not by searching through and randomly 'mutating' predefined possibilities, but by drawing upon associations that exist due to overlap in the distributed neural cell assemblies that participate in the encoding of experiences in memory. Midway through the creative process one may have made associations between the current task and previous experiences, but not yet disambiguated which aspects of those previous experiences are relevant to the current task. Thus the creative idea

may feel 'half-baked'. It is at that point that it can be said to be in a potentiality state, because how it will actualize depends on the different internally or externally generated contexts it interacts with.

Honing theory can account for many phenomena that are not readily explained by other theories of creativity. For example, creativity was commonly thought to be fostered by a supportive, nurturing, trustworthy environment conducive to self-actualization. However, research shows that creativity is actually associated with childhood adversity, which would stimulate honing. Honing theory also makes several predictions that differ from what would be predicted by other theories. For example, empirical support has been obtained using analogy problem solving experiments for the proposal that midway through the creative process one's mind is in a potentiality state. Other experiments show that different works by the same creator exhibit a recognizable style or 'voice', and that this same recognizable quality even comes through in different creative outlets. This is not predicted by theories of creativity that emphasize chance processes or the accumulation of expertise, but it is predicted by honing theory, according to which personal style reflects the creator's uniquely structured worldview. This theory has been developed by Liane Gabora.

CREATIVITY AND EVERYDAY IMAGINATIVE THOUGHT

In everyday thought, people often spontaneously imagine alternatives to reality when they think "if only...". Their counterfactual thinking is viewed as an example of everyday creative processes. It has been proposed that the creation of counterfactual alternatives to reality

depends on similar cognitive processes to rational thought.

CONCLUSION

The level of engagement determines whether people are productive and stay with the organization— or move to the competition. Research highlights that the employee connection to the organizational strategy and goals, acknowledgment for work well done, and a culture of learning and development foster high levels of engagement. Without a workplace environment for employee engagement, turnover will increase and efficiency will decline, leading to low customer loyalty and decreased stakeholder value. Ultimately, because the cost of poor employee engagement will be detrimental to organizational success, it is vital for to foster positive, effective people managers along with workplace policies and practices that focus on employee well-being, health and work/life balance.

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