

21st Century Organizational Trends: *A Foundation for Developing Organization Citizenship*

Overview

A. Research. For fifteen years, we have conducted invitation-only and public Forums to engage in learning about how organizations run and what it would take to run at "Ideal" capacity. Simply stated, "Ideal" capacity organizations are able to find and fix their own limitations. We've sifted through the literature on best practices, fads, and benchmarking domains - we've read the best and brightest management books, sifted through articles, and devoured mountains of tapes, and presentations in leading association conferences. We've also tapped into the experience of our clients and interested participants in our Forums. The results have been practical and realistic approaches to helping organizations change.

1. Forum Participation. Our Forums have always included participants representing a full "slice" of the organization from board of directors, CEO's and presidents, senior and middle managers as well as front-line supervisors. The most interesting group and the group we are most indebted to have always been the non-supervisory workers close to or at the front-line and often intimately knowledgeable of the customer. Our learnings apply to each of these groups with equal intensity. The empathy gap between the top of the organization chart and the bottom has grown dangerously wide in the last two decades and appears to be widening. Our best hope for closing that gap is open dialog in a well-attended Forum where the views of every "slice" are expressed and understood. We are also keenly aware that those closest to the front-line are often the least likely to attend the open Forum, and are rarely encouraged to attend by their supervisors. From this group of non-supervisors springs the lament that Forum participation and self-directed group learning is not "real work." Yet we believe it is as real as any other work there is but we'll certainly admit that it is directed at solving an atypical organizational problem, the problem of capacity development.

2. Inventory and Survey Data from our Own Clients. Among other things, *QWLC* collects data from our client organizations in the form of workforce surveys. Over the last decade we've collected survey data from organizations totaling over 80,000 employees. Although organizations vary, the trends from the last Century are clearly being dragged into the new millennium.

3. Organization Development Literature. We have also actively integrated organization development literature (books, journals, and magazines) into our conclusions. These sources are continuously reviewed, "extracted," and linked to our own technology to assure a comprehensive perspective of organizational life from which to draw. Our own library has expanded in recent years to over 700 books alone.

4. Association Memberships and Academic Participation. *QWLC* supports and maintains memberships in several professional associations that lend expertise to our area of interest. Through association participation we attend and present to local, regional, and national conferences thus gathering a wide-range of professional opinions that add to our understanding of organizations as well. Academic involvement includes an active "internship" program with local and regional colleges and universities. Interns bring up-to-date academic insights to our experience-base for a win-win solution.

B. R-G-B Technology. The use of Red-Green-Blue Work-style Preference technology has assisted in the development of this list of trends. We have therefore presented each trend within the appropriate "color preference" that might be expected to most effectively take corrective action in the organization setting. For a more detailed explanation of the R-G-B Technology visit www.QWLCI.com.

C. The Nine Trends. As a way of introduction, we have provided a short description of each trend. Participants at our monthly Forums may also contribute ideas to improve and expand the suggestions that will turn each adverse trend area into a positive opportunity. The following trends are important, perhaps even vital, for an essential cultural capacity turn-around. The hard part in weaving these fundamentals into the fabric of an organization's culture is the discretionary nature of each fundamental. We believe there are nine fundamental initiatives that individuals and organizations need to pay attention to in order to get on and stay on course toward "Ideal" capacity through the development of Organizational Citizenship.

D. Systemic Thread - An Underlying Value of "Respect." Because of the systemic nature of this list of trends, nearly every one is connected to all the other trends. Effectively correcting any one is likely to have a positive impact on correcting all the others as part of a sustained effort. We also readily acknowledge that simple r-e-s-p-e-c-t is at the root of all these trends. Organizationally it appears that we've either never had the respect for one another needed to perform "Ideally" or we've lost the respect needed because of our organization's culture. We believe this respect is recoverable.

The "Red" Trends

Trend R1 - The lack of appropriate authority and accountability at all levels in organizations is a barrier to progress. A large number of survey respondents want to know what it will take to succeed on the job and be held accountable for job performance, BUT only if others are held to the same clear standard. Our experience and the data we've collected leads us to believe that poor performers are not held accountable for their own performance thus forcing their coworkers to do their own job plus pick up the slack for less diligent peers (or even supervisors and managers). This double standard causes overworked employees an added burden that eventually results in them holding back on their own potential performance in order to balance the scales of equity.

There is a tendency to provide too much policy and procedural guidance for workers. Too often, policy and procedures are developed to eliminate the potential of a future mistake in judgement. Many policies are simply not needed. No single individual, manager, supervisor or otherwise; can possibly be an omnipotent guardian for so wide a spectrum of contradictory organizational interests. At the team level, however, people can know each other and balance the worklife equation to assure equity and fairness for all stakeholders. We believe in the power of team decision-making.

Giving people who must accomplish negotiated organizational goals access to other's talent and interests is the only way that synergy can emerge as commonplace. People are hired to do specific work for their organization, yet they are not hired to work in isolation. It is the combination of people's chemistry that enables more work to get done than there are people to do it. This does not mean that any two people will become synergistic in their relationship. It does mean that organizations must find ways for people to seek out partners where synergy has a better chance of emerging.

"The participative organization must be designed to ensure that everyone is accountable and has appropriate power and that his or her rights are respected. The key is the balance of these three elements. As accountability is extended to everyone, so must power and rights. As power and rights increase, so must people's accountability for the results. Participation is not an easy response. It acknowledges the choice-making capacity of human beings, and it demands that everyone consciously take responsibility for and accept the power of this gift. "

Patricia McLagan, Christo Nel, The Age of Participation

Trend R2 - Fairness and equity concerns across the workforce prevent a full commitment to problem finding and solving. In a typical organization well over 50% of survey respondents' rate their supervisors and managers low on issues involving "fairness and equity." Symptoms run a full range from unfair career decisions to inequitable compensation. One large organization pays top dollar for the CEO (nearly \$2 million), while some front line employees qualify for food stamps and welfare payments. Employees are often bitter about this wide a range - and often with justification. In other cases, "favorites" get the good jobs, while hard work seems not to enter into the selection process for advancement at all. In some cases, a growing number of employees lack the motivation to vie for advancement opportunities while supervisors remain perplexed at the low numbers who respond to their requests for advancement applicants.

Participation in the decision-making process is often based on limiting criteria. "It's somebody else's job!" needs to be stricken from our organizational language and be replaced with the desire to participate in those activities where one's talent and capacity can be put to best use. Too often workers are pigeonholed by their job boundaries so that they are only able to participate in matters that impact them directly or are denied participation in decisions that impact them altogether. The result is dire loss of organizational capacity.

Trend R3 - Traditional performance evaluation systems are ineffective at motivating members of the workforce to improve performance. The requirement for supervisors and managers to provide feedback through formal coaching, counseling, and annual performance reviews must be reversed so that people seek opportunities for improvement by way of rigorous self-examination. The job of the supervisor or manager would be to assure that the process of self-examination is engaged and fruitful. In addition, the supervisor or manager would also help acquire the resources needed for capacity improvement. Personal Improvement Plans are a step in the right direction but often lack the depth, range, emphasis, and support for truly astounding results.

"You cannot hope to build a better world without improving the individuals. To that end each of us must work for his own improvement, and at the same time share a general responsibility for all humanity, our particular duty being to aid those to whom we think we can be most useful."

Marie Currie, Great Quotes from Great Women, ed. Peggy Anderson. (Illinois: Celebrating Excellence Publishing, 1992), 23.

The "Green" Trends

Trend G1 - The "gap" between the front-line and the executive suite is growing; leaving a battleground of mistrust and misunderstandings that rob the organization of capacity. There is a disconnect between "doing the work" and "developing the capacity to do the work more effectively." Many in senior management position would argue that the responsibility for making strides in enhanced capacity is within the province of management while the non-supervisory workforce is supposed to do as they are told. When this cultural barrier to improvement pervades, both the individual and the organization loses.

Seeking approvals to be involved in projects or waiting patiently to be selected must be replaced with encouragement to volunteer for on-the-job tasks as well as community service projects. There must be an acknowledgement that people are hired to do specific work and justifications often require that full-time positions be loaded or even overloaded with tasks. This, however, gives little recognition to broader unforeseen, yet apparent, organizational requirements that are ever-present. The ability to fully prioritize organizational work may mean that individual job requirements suffer for the good of larger organizational issues that need the service of randomly identified or self-selected individuals.

"It ought to be axiomatic in this country that every man must devote a reasonable share of his time to doing his duty in the . . . life of the community."

Theodore Roosevelt, "The Duties of American Citizenship," Buffalo, New York, January 26, 1883: www.tamu.edu/scom/pres/archive.html

Trend G2 - The value of embracing the full range of diversity has not been realized leaving some members of the workforce less than fully engaged. Diversity program

involvement has barely skimmed the surface of easy-to-recognize but hard-to-improve conditions with regard to race, gender, age, physical disabilities, economic disparity, and similar concerns. Yet there remains a host of equally dysfunctional biases left unattended. As we deal with immigration issues, issues involving terrorism and even generational or regional issues we begin to deepen our understanding of the full spectrum of capacity development yet untapped. We are each unique and our talents often lay dormant for lack of authentic invitation to be a part of legitimate work.

Trend G3 - The earnest application of cross-functional teams prevents adequate return-on-investment. The way teams are formed to deal with critically important issues has left a lot to be desired. In one organization where we formed teams to deal with issues that emerged from survey data, progress toward objectives was slow and cumbersome. While reflecting on the reasons for poor performance, a key middle manager openly admitted, "If I'd known this was an important team, I'd have assigned a different player." Too frequently, team assignments are made helter-skelter rather than by design. The same manager later confided that he was proud to put his team representative in for an award even though the team's recommendations would have an adverse impact on him personally. The team product, however, was the best option for the whole organization.

The "Blue" Trends

Trend B1 - Progress measured by output and financial gains is insufficient to forecast organizational potential. Numbers associated with output and financial performance are "lag" indicators and often lack the vitality to be measures of organizational potential. Measures associating the level of engaged talent being applied to innovative processes that save money and increase revenue ("lead" indicators), are a better measure of potential, than historical data. Capacity is a measure of potential that stirs excitement and enthusiasm leading to real breakthroughs.

Trend B2 - Reward and recognition systems provide little or often negative incentive for employees to excel. It is difficult to recognize people for going above and beyond job requirements in an environment where accountability is lacking. It is also difficult for supervisors and managers to recognize one worker in the full knowledge that it will create hard feelings or resentment among others. Recognition programs often fall short of expectations because they are "rubber stamp" programs that carry little meaning or prestige with them. In one client organization the annual awards day celebration consisted of the "project team leader" receiving the on-stage award while team members looked on from their seats in the audience without recognition of any kind. Several award recipients asked their teams to stand and be recognized, but too embarrassed to stand most team members just remained seated.

Stilted recognition programs must be replaced with genuine opportunities to celebrate in the success of our own efforts and the efforts of others that have made exemplary efforts toward organizational success. The "feelings" of loyalty and "feelings" of productivity that surface in people as they come to know the good work they have accomplished can and should also measure progress. An often-missing ingredient in an organization's culture is the genuine sense of celebration when goals are achieved or exceeded by others.

Trend B3 - Information is guarded based on a need-to-know "rule," leaving the workforce ample room for potentially negative guesswork. Instead of hearing the common complaint that communications are hampered or broken, we need to open the store of information to those having an interest to inquire and see to it that no inquiry goes unsatisfied. A common defense for guarding information is that the information may be "private," or may only be given out on a "need-to-know" basis. Certainly some of these assertions have sufficient legitimacy that a limited amount of information may indeed require safeguarding. Shifting to a climate of greater openness in asking for needed or wanted information, and being able to receive it without suspicion is a step in the right direction.

"Our rule is simple--if information can be put in the open where people can use it to inform their daily decisions and if it can be done in a way that doesn't compromise a confidentiality or expose a trade or strategic secret, do it. People make choices on the basis of their mental maps. The more complete and accurate the maps, the better the choices. "

"The Balancing Act," Kerry Patterson, Joseph Grenny, Ron McMillan and Al Switzler; The Balancing Act

Summary

All of these initiatives are fundamental to achieving "Ideal" capacity in our organizations. People who work together need the opportunity to thoroughly understand the potential of their organization and to find and fulfill their fit in achieving that potential. There may be other items that might have made this list, but these raw ingredients for "Ideal" capacity in an organization will quickly embrace others that come to mind. The list may never be complete. We are certain that if all these issues were improved, there is a great likelihood that a new set of fundamental trends would emerge overnight.

We are hopeful that these brief introductory comments about each trend will stimulate some thought and motivate your participation in a dialog that promises to be informative and entertaining. Call our office at (757) 591-0807 to reserve a seat in any one or all of our monthly Friday Afternoon Forums.

Expanded versions of this publication are available to Forum participants at no cost.

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