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# **From Science to Practice: Organizational Psychology Bulletin**

**Enriching the workplace by scientifically integrating  
psychology and organizational life**

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## **Contents:**

<b>Copyright statement</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>From the Editors</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Call for Papers</b>	<b>5</b>
 <b>FROM SCIENCE TO PRACTICE ARTICLES</b>	
<b>Want Better Employees? Then Leave Them Alone!</b> <i>Elizabeth Borcia</i>	<b>6</b>
<b>How's Your Relationship with Your Managers? The Impact of Strong Supervisor-Employee Relationships on Turnover</b> <i>Kevin Pappas</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>The Power of Authentic Leadership in the Workplace</b> <i>Katherine K. Davis</i>	<b>14</b>
<b>Think Diversity Management Programs Are Enough? Think Again!</b> <i>Kimberly N. Dinh</i>	<b>19</b>

### From the Editors:

Welcome to the special issue of *From Science to Practice: Organizational Psychology Bulletin (OPB): Leadership and Management for the 2020s*. *OPB* invites students, practitioners, and emerging scholars of Industrial-Organizational Psychology to share with colleagues and the public applied articles on current topics in the field. Core contributors to this Bulletin are students enrolled in Industrial-Organizational Psychology and Master of Arts in Organizational Psychology at Vanguard University of Southern California. We publish selected papers representing the work of students as they immerse themselves in the field, analyze current empirical literature, and make connections between the science of Industrial-Organizational Psychology and practical applications. The Bulletin also welcomes papers from practitioners in the field, and students and emerging scholars from other institutions.

Our Bulletin reflects the mission and core principles of our program outlined on our program website, <https://www.vanguard.edu/academics/academic-programs/graduate/organizational-psychology>.

The practice of Organizational Psychology and Industrial-Organizational Psychology carries with it a tremendous responsibility. Our work impacts the lives of many individuals within organizations and could make a difference between extremely fulfilling careers and traumatic work experiences, organizational thriving and organizational collapse, sustainable economic development and a cycle of bubbles and crashes. Understanding of this responsibility is the cause of our program commitment to these principles:

**Commitment to ethics and responsible organizational practice.** Values matter. Individual, organizational, and societal outcomes matter. Commitment to values and to our ethical responsibility in organizational practice is not optional. This commitment is our first guiding principle.

**Evidence-based organizational practice.** This commitment stems from our ethical commitment, as well as from the empirical nature of our field. Ethical organizational intervention is also an evidence-based intervention, in which practical decisions are 1) based on thoroughly conducted research studies and 2) supported by solid understanding and appropriate interpretation of research.

**Simultaneous commitment to organizational interests and employee interests.** Sometimes it is assumed that in order to ensure organizational profit/benefit, employees must suffer. Or, that in treating employees well, organizations risk their very existence. In our work, we strive to demonstrate that it is possible to build thriving, strong, sustainable organizations that bring together thriving, productive, engaged individuals – modern, goal-oriented communities of innovation and commitment to the common vision.

The set of papers selected for this special issue, **Leadership and Management for the 2020s**, illustrates how the work of students in our programs is guided by our principles and by our commitment to both organizational sustainability and individual well-being. Elizabeth Borcia discusses a variety of practical methods that can help managers increase employee productivity by

helping fulfill employee autonomy needs in the workplace.

Kevin Pappas focuses on approaches to tackle the problem of employee turnover through research-based evidence. Empirical work based on the theory of Leadership Member Exchange (LMX) suggests that strong supervisor-employee relationships could not only help interactions between leaders and employees but also help organizations create healthy environments.

Katherine K. Davis discusses how the current trend of authentic leadership can have a positive effect on creating a healthy workplace environment and improving employee engagement. Davis goes on to list practical suggestions that authentic leaders should follow and implement into their workplace to inspire employee engagement and develop an environment of physical, mental, and social well-being.

Finally, Kimberly N. Dinh writes about the number two Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology workplace trend for 2020 – diversity and inclusion. Dinh approaches this topic by expanding on the importance of diversity management and a climate of inclusion. She proposes that the combination of commitment from top leadership for inclusion, integration, and addressing resistance will help organizations be better equipped to move the needle from diversity to inclusion.

We believe this issue will contribute to the important work of translating research findings into organizational interventions that will benefit both individuals and organizations. We encourage our readers to participate in this process and in this conversation – please see our Call for Proposals. We also would love to hear from you through your letters to the editors and e-mail.

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**CALL FOR PAPERS:**

*From Science to Practice: Organizational Psychology Bulletin (OPB)* welcomes articles that summarize recent empirical research findings relevant to the field of industrial-organizational psychology and suggest practical applications on the basis of research evidence. Articles must be written in simple, yet professional language, and be accessible and relevant to organizational practitioners and general public members interested in improving organizational life. In addition to 1000 - 2000 word (not including references) lead articles, we accept brief reports (300-500 words) on current topics in industrial-organizational psychology research and application, and 100-300 word Letters to the Editors, which may include reflections on our articles or suggestions for further research and article topics.

## Want Better Employees? Then Leave Them Alone!

Elizabeth Borgia

With a never-ending stream of new workplace fads, popular consulting programs, and self-proclaimed business gurus, it can be difficult for managers to identify what practices result in increased employee productivity. Certainly, many approaches lack any supporting scientific evidence for their effectiveness, but some techniques withstand empirical scrutiny. This article reviews one solid strategy to increase workplace productivity: increase employee autonomy.

### Autonomy: The Concept

The concept of autonomy can best be understood in the context of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), a needs-based motivation theory first proposed by Deci and Ryan in 1985. In general, SDT is a highly respected theory within the scientific community and has decades of scientific support for its use in the workplace and other contexts (Deci et al., 2017). In fact, you have probably been exposed to their work if you are familiar with the terms *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivation.

Essentially, the theory states that all human beings have three basic psychological needs: the need to feel competent, the need to feel related to other human beings, and the need for autonomy—to feel the sense that one can freely make decisions and engage in behaviors at will.

Motivation can be envisioned as a bar that can be filled from empty to full. When the bar is low or

empty, need frustration results in amotivation—a condition where individuals lack any personal desire to perform any activity and will do so if forced! Conversely, when the three needs are met and the motivation bar is full, the result is a highly (*intrinsically*) motivated employee, who will happily engage in activities simply because they enjoy it. Individuals landing in the middle of this spectrum are *extrinsically* motivated and will engage in behaviors when they perceive an external reward (think good performance reviews and sale bonuses).

Thus, increasing an employee's sense of autonomy increases their motivation level, making them intrinsically motivated (Ryan et al., 2000). This concept is critical for management to understand since research clearly shows that increased motivation leads to improved performance (Deci et al., 2017).

### Autonomy in the Workplace

In a perfect world, everyone would have a job doing what they love—need satisfaction would fill the motivation bar, which in turn, would create high-performing employees. Sadly, of course, this is not reality. However, there are several easy ways to increase autonomy in the workplace.

To be clear, autonomy is not synonymous with being intrinsically motivated (Deci et al., 2017). Instead, the components of autonomy correlate

with increased motivation. For instance, consider a situation where a janitor is motivated to perform well because he consciously values working hard, though he does not inherently enjoy cleaning. While the janitor's boss is technically the one who assigned him the task of mopping the floor, the janitor views his motivation as (somewhat) internal because he is aware that he values hard work (this is known as the *associated process for anyone keeping track*). Thus, despite lacking true intrinsic motivation, the janitor will perform his job well because his bar is modestly full from his internal thought process.

Now, contrast that janitor with a coworker who fails to connect his work performance with his self-concept. In this situation, the employee's motivation bar remains low because his motivation to work stems solely from his fear of being fired for neglecting his duties.

Thus, the filling or draining of an employee's motivation bar is open to manager influence. Individuals can change their thought processes to alter their perception of autonomy, ultimately leading to performance change.

### **The Role of Leaders**

Leaders at all levels of an organization can encourage subordinate autonomy. Despite what the title of this article jests, increasing autonomous work motivation does not (always) entail leaving your employees alone to do as they wish. Rather, managers should show support for employee autonomy need satisfaction through "acknowledging worker perspectives, encouraging self-initiation, offering opportunities for choice and input, communicating in an informational rather than a controlling manner,

and avoiding the use of rewards or sanctions to motivate behavior" (Slemp et al., 2018, p. 707).

In fact, a recent meta-analysis—a research study that uses several other studies as individual data points—found that leader autonomy support increased all three basic psychological needs in employees, which in turn strongly predicted employee well-being and work engagement, moderately predicted proactive and prosocial workplace behaviors, and was negatively related to employee distress (Slemp et al., 2018, p. 707).

### **Training Effectiveness**

The effect of supervisor support on training effectiveness—measured by the behavioral changes presented by an employee post-training—is undisputable (Ford et al., 2018). However, the jury is still out on whether or not allowing employees to choose or skip a training program is more beneficial to an organization overall (Gegenfurtner et al., 2016). Thus, decisions regarding employee autonomy involving training sessions should be carefully considered on an individual basis.

Still, a unique study conducted by Slemp et al. (2018) illuminates the benefits of choice in training situations. In a clever experiment, the researchers presented two groups with almost identical digital training programs and had them take a knowledge test following its conclusion. In the first group, participants were sat down and presented with a screen that told them about the content they would be studying. They then clicked the "next" button and continued onto the training. In the second group, however, the participants were presented with a choice of two training topics and could click on the topic of their choice. Here is where the trick comes in: it was a *feigned* choice, as both options lead to the



same training material read by both sets of participants. The descriptions were just so vague that they could both refer to the same reading material while seeming artificially different.

Interestingly, the results showed that the individuals who were given a feigned choice scored higher on the final test compared to their counterparts who were not given a choice, suggesting that increased autonomy increases training effectiveness.

A word of caution, however, is needed. The researchers repeated the same design with an *irrelevant feigned choice* (one group was given “a choice” of background music to play during the training instead of the training topic), and these results showed no difference between the two groups. It appears that choice options must be relevant to a work context to influence perceived levels of autonomy.

### **Practical Ways for Managers to Increase Employee Autonomy**

- Look for opportunities to connect employee values with the actions they are performing (remember the janitor) (Deci et al., 2017)
- Communicate information in an educational manner, rather than proclaiming it to be a new company law (Slemp et al., 2018)
- Whenever possible, allow employees to choose how and when they perform tasks, so long as it is within reason (Slemp et al., 2018)
- Provide your employees with a choice of training options whenever possible (Schneider et al., 2018)

- Avoid patronizing your employees with irrelevant or fake choices. They will likely see through the ruse, damaging your relationship (Schneider et al., 2018)

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## How's Your Relationship with Your Manager? The Impact of Strong Supervisor-Employee Relationships on Turnover

Kevin Pappas

More than ever, organizations face the growing challenge of maintaining strong talent as employees are leaving jobs quicker than ever before. Many approaches have been taken to help tackle the problem of employee turnover; however, the question still remains, what is the best method for keeping employees happy and engaged enough to stay? Recent research has shown that strong supervisor-employee relationships could be the solution.

For decades researchers and organizational leaders alike have sought to find solutions to the growing problem of employee turnover. In a culture of transience and low commitment, corporations are struggling more than ever to find ways to retain top talent and avoid the cyclical process of replacing employees. Turnover dramatically impacts the bottom line as additional resources have to be allocated to recruitment, selection, and the training of new employees. Additionally, changeover within organizations has the potential to unsettle social networks and decrease productivity as teams adjust to the shift of losing key players and onboarding new coworkers.

### What Motivates Commitment?

Corporations such as Facebook, Google, and Slack have explored many methods for creating work cultures that inspire engagement and keep their people happy. From complimentary taco Tuesday lunches to dog-friendly offices and kombucha on tap, corporations are taking proactive steps to avoid employee turnover. Yet, amidst all of these

strategies lies a fundamental question: what do employees really want? Even with the growing perks, retention rates still remain a problem.

We are all wired for connections and relationships that fulfill our pressing desire to know and be known. Perhaps the human phenomenon of needing to feel connected to others applies to the workplace as well. It seems possible that with the deep desire to feel connected at work, strong relationships could serve as a powerful motivator and incentive for employees to stay engaged and, as a result, commit to their organizations.

### Strong Management Relationships

It has been commonly said that “people leave managers, not jobs.” Indeed, researchers have successfully identified strong links between managerial relationships and employees’ turnover intentions. According to Jeffrey Muldoon and researchers at Emporia State University, “often one of the primary determinants of organizational outcomes among subordinates is their relationship with their supervisor” (Muldoon et al., 2018, p. 232). In exploring this affiliation, scholars traditionally utilize the theory of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) to explain management style and the relationship between employees and supervisors. LMX suggests that the leader-follower, or employee-supervisor, relationship exists on a continuum of low to high-quality relationships. High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by increased levels of mutual trust, respect, and obligation. Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships operate from a purely

obligatory standpoint. In this case, the relationship is transactional and does not involve any level of association apart from formal job requirements.

With limited capacity and resources, managers unconsciously develop high-quality LMX relationships with a selected few employees. This segregation naturally creates “in-groups” and “out-groups” in the workplace. As a result, those employees that establish high-quality LMX relationships receive more support from their leader, more rewards, and more access to additional resources and positive feedback. Studies have consistently shown a negative relationship between LMX and turnover intentions, supporting the idea that positive LMX relationships construct a strong relational connection that works as a reinforcement for employees to stay committed to their leader and organization.

### **How LMX Decreases Turnover?**

From the follower’s perspective, if the LMX relationship with a supervisor is strong, they will be less inclined to abandon the relationship. This is true for three fundamental reasons.

- 1) Self-interest—research grounded in social exchange theory shows that when the benefit of the supervisor-employee relationship exceeds the cost of the amount of work put out for the job, employees are less likely to leave.
- 2) External social pressure—if the relationship is positive, then it would be unjust to leave the supervisor and therefore is sensible for the employee to continue the relationship.
- 3) Norm of reciprocity, which creates an internal conviction to offer an exchange of some value when one has been provided something. In this

context, the level of support, resources, and attention provided by the supervisor naturally create a sense of guilt and obligation in the employee to mirror the benefit he or she has received from the manager.

A recent study done by Sobia Rashid and colleagues (2018) discovered that high-quality LMX relationships are directly connected to employees’ level of organizational commitment. Their findings align with the literature of social exchange theory, which suggests that employees who feel supported and connected to their supervisors naturally reciprocate in their commitment level. With this clear link, supervisors can dramatically impact their employee’s level of organizational commitment by forming strong relationships marked by trust, honesty, and mutual respect. This intentional pursuit of strong leader-member exchange can act as a major antidote to employee turnover. As employees feel closer and more connected to their supervisors, they will hope to preserve that relationship and, as a result, remain committed to the organization.

### **Combating Negative Feelings Toward Work**

Although it is clear that LMX can have a tremendous impact on employee’s positive attitudes towards work, recent studies have also found that strong LMX relationships can help employees combat negative feelings about their work. One of the primary reasons why people leave organizations is because of perceived social exchange imbalance. When an imbalance occurs, an employee might experience high levels of stress, ambiguity, and change—shifting the scales to negative stressors outweighing the benefits of the job.

In a recent study, Muldoon et al. (2018) investigated how the added resources provided through strong LMX relationships can help reduce the impact of negative stressors such as organizational change, perceptions of organizational politics, and interpersonal conflict in the workplace. They discovered that the establishment of strong LMX relationships significantly helped reduce the impact these negative stressors had on employees' turnover intentions. What we now know is that supervisors can significantly reduce the impact that organizational stressors can have on employees' intention to quit. With this in mind, the formation of LMX relationships can truly be a deciding factor of whether or not an employee stays or leaves during organizational turbulence.

LMX has also been shown to have a positive relationship with the employee's organizational identification; this means that as followers establish closer relationships with their leader, they also begin to identify more closely as committed members of the organization. In another recent study of two garment manufacturing companies in southern China, Loi et al. (2014) examined the impact LMX had on organizational identification and job satisfaction. They specifically sought to see if and how organizational identification might mediate the relationship between LMX and job satisfaction. They discovered that quality LMX relationships had a positive relationship with employee organizational identification and that it acted as a mediator between LMX and job satisfaction. Undoubtedly, the quality of LMX relationships can be a powerful determinant of an employee's level of organizational identification. As employees begin to identify more with their organization, they are more likely to feel a part of the larger mission and goals, which in turn creates higher

levels of engagement, satisfaction, and ultimately reduces turnover.

### **Practical Applications for Organizations**

With various strategic initiatives all seeking to reduce employee turnover, organizations would do well to consider the impact that healthy LMX relationships can have on employees' overall level of organizational commitment and intentions to quit. Managers must take the time to develop relationships with subordinates that are characterized by open sharing, honesty, and mutual respect. Additionally, organizations should consider training options to help develop managers' relational leadership skills so that they can purposefully develop higher quality LMX relationships with their employees. Managers can also consider carving out additional time during one-on-one check-ins to connect with their employees on topics outside of their specific role as an employee. In doing so, employees perceive their manager as being someone that cares about them on a personal level, which results in higher quality relationships and greater overall commitment to the leader.

Finally, managers should identify those who have become a part of the "out-group" and seek to build a stronger rapport with those members that might feel on the outside. In doing so, those employees are likely to feel more connected to their leader and organization at large and potentially prevent intentions to quit. People are driven by relationships. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the same principle is true within the workplace. As organizations seek to create healthy environments of open sharing, support, and feedback, employees will feel closer to their managers which, as shown by the research, is a leading solution to the problem of employee turnover.

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## The Power of Authentic Leadership in the Workplace

Katherine K. Davis

If you were asked to describe your boss or supervisor in three words, what would they be? Were the words that came to mind positive or negative traits? Well, if one of your answers includes self-aware, genuine, integrity, visionary, transparent, consistent, or practices solid values, then your leader is what the new generation is asking for. Authentic leadership has been on the rise as employees want more character-based leaders with whom they can build a work relationship and someone who is trustworthy as well as willing to learn. Followers are more likely to respond positively to a leader who is transparent and promotes a growth mindset.

### The Four Components of Authentic Leadership

Whether you're a leader or a follower, traits of authentic leadership can help your organization. The four components of authentic leadership are known as self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Walumbwa et al., 2007).

#### 1. *Self-awareness*

Leaders understand their own inner and outer qualities and how these relate to leadership. Ways to develop self-awareness include: knowing your strengths and weaknesses, understanding that the self is a multi-layered concept, learning about your impact on other people and vice versa, and developing a continuous self-exposure and development process.

Bruce J. Avolio and Tara S. Wernsing highlighted in their chapter *Practicing Authentic Leadership* three ways authentic leaders practice self-awareness:

- I. Actively seeking feedback from the environment
- II. Using self-reflection as a way to understand their behavior
- III. Engaging in self-observation to stay aware of feelings at all times

#### 2. *Internalized moral perspective*

Authentic leaders are able to distinguish between right and wrong. The moral perspective on leadership and the different behaviors it brings about is not based on external factors, nor is it something the authentic leader finds imposed upon him or her by the organization or even society. Instead, self-regulatory behavior is self-imposed and comes from the leader's internalized moral value.

#### 3. *Balanced processing*

The authentic leader does not just strive to make morally correct decisions, but he or she tries to be fair-minded during the process. Leadership is based on openness and fairness and in an environment where opinions are not just welcomed but encouraged. The idea is to ensure opposing viewpoints will be voiced before the leader, sometimes together with subordinates, considers the actions.

#### 4. *Relational transparency*

Authentic leadership rests on the concept of genuineness. When authentic leaders communicate and act, they do so honestly. There is no room for hidden agendas or mind-games in authentic leadership. These leaders seek to create an environment where everyone knows

where he or she stands in terms of his or her relations with the leader.

### **The Pros of Authentic Leadership**

Many studies have shown the importance of authentic leadership and the traits of authentic leaders, but how does this translate into the workplace? The two areas that are of current organizational importance include engagement and workplace environment.

#### *Engagement*

The concept of employee engagement emerged in 1985 when Deci and Ryan conducted a study on employee engagement that expanded on early work by differentiating between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Through dedicated and meaningful work, employees are able to recognize how valuable they are within the organization, which then makes them engaged.

Wei et al. (2018) developed a mediated moderation model to test the interactive effect of leadership perspectives on engagement. This model shows how a leader's authenticity and competencies have an interactive effect on followers' performances through the mediation of work engagement. Researchers' work stems from the idea that authentic leaders enhance followers' engagement. This includes the leader giving autonomy for opportunities of development, providing incentives, and encouraging followers to invest themselves in their work. Authentic leaders develop their followers by openly discussing their own vulnerabilities and followers' vulnerability, leading from the front, and continuously emphasizing personal growth. The results support the assumption that work engagement mediates the effect of authentic leadership on followers' performances.

Workplace interactions characterized by respect and dignity, as well as supportive communication, can help promote a sense of engagement from employees. As a result, followers are motivated by an authentic leader to exhibit positive behavior in the workplace, show higher engagement, and have a willingness to reciprocate. In addition, authentic leaders emphasize the importance of openness, honesty, and respect by living out these values through their interactions with followers. By showing courage to express their genuine emotions, authentic leaders help followers build openness and free lines of communication, which results in both leaders and followers engaging in genuine self-expression. Empirically, a positive relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement also has been found in previous and current research.

#### *Workplace Environment*

Since the average individual spends about half of all waking hours at work, it is essential that the workplace be a positive environment. Newer studies are attempting to understand how a leader can create this healthy workplace environment.

Larsson et al. (2016) examined a work health promotion from a managerial perspective using a qualitative empirical approach. For the study, workplace health promotion was defined as "the combined effort of employees, employers, and the community to improve the health and well-being of people at work" (Larsson et al., 2016, p. 486). Data was collected by using semi-structured interviews focusing on workplace health promotion. This included work environment, leadership strategies, and company organization. Larsson et al. found that the management of



workplace health promotion was influenced by fitness programs focusing on individual health behaviors. However, results indicated that, when trying to implement action plans related to workplace health promotions, the workplace health promotion management needs to be strengthened.

Although there is no single way to define a “healthy workplace,” The American Psychological Association breaks down a psychologically healthy workplace into five categories:

- (1) employee involvement
- (2) work-life balance
- (3) employee growth and development
- (4) health and safety
- (5) employee recognition

It is stated that a psychologically healthy workplace “fosters employee health and well-being while enhancing organizational performance, thereby benefiting both employees and organizations” (American Psychological Association, para. 1). In addition, the World Health Organization defines a healthy workplace as “one in which workers and managers collaborate to use a continual improvement process to protect and promote the health, safety and well-being of workers and the sustainability of the workplace...” (Burton, 2010, p. 2). However, organizations that implement these healthy practices still are often placing unhealthy demands on employees, thus leading researchers to not only study how a healthy work environment is created, but also how a healthy work environment is sustained.

Johansson et al. (2011) evaluated the characteristics of an excellent work environment to understand the involvement of leadership in that environment. Researchers found emerging

categories of congruence in leadership, mature group functioning, adequate organizational structures and resources, and comprehensive and shared meaningfulness to be essential to the work environment. It is stated that resources and organizational structures may be the core elements in creating a positive, productive, and successful work environment. However, the leader's role is to create these organizational structures and obtain the necessary resources. Overall, the study showed the complexity and mutual dependence of numerous elements that exist in a good work environment and how leadership can positively influence outcomes.

It is stated that the psychological engagement of employees by authentic leaders may be a key mechanism by which a healthy work environment is created. This factor of engagement may be viewed as an important consequence of authentic leadership that mediates its effect on followers' outcomes. In the current literature, engagement is being studied in connection with stress and burnout in the workplace. It is assumed that engaged employees contribute positive emotions, attitudes, and behaviors to the workplace, resulting in a sustainable healthy work environment that is characterized by positive people, high finances, and quality outcomes. Furthermore, authentic leadership plays a significant role in the engagement and general contentment of employees as well as creating a healthy work environment. For employee engagement to occur, the leader must create a psychologically safe workplace, showing all three variables simultaneously coinciding.

#### **Practical Suggestions for Authentic Leadership**

To enhance the above characteristics and start leading in an authentic manner, a leader needs to implement core principles to guide their way.

Kevin Cashman, CEO of LeaderSource and executive of Leader Institute, recommends in his 1998 book *Leadership from the Inside Out* five principles that authentic leaders should follow.

Principle #1: Know yourself authentically

Principle# 2: Listen authentically

Principle #3: Express authentically

Principle #4: Appreciate authentically

Principle #5: Serve authentically

With the combination of these principles, an authentic leader can create a healthy workplace environment that inspires employees to be more engaged. In addition, an authentic leader can promote engagement, which then creates a healthy workplace environment. This can be done by:

1. Having supervisors and managers conduct an authentic leadership program/training by using resources like
  - eNaropa: Authentic Leadership Program
  - Trillium Teams: Authentic Leadership Course
2. Making sure followers are satisfied with the level of recognition they receive at work
  - Example: creating benefits and bonuses that are applicable and wanted by employees
3. Allotting intentional time between followers and leaders
  - Example: bi-weekly meetings to check-in and for personal development practices
4. Promoting wellness
  - Example: consider an employee assistance program for those who have

financial troubles, excess stress, or depression symptoms

5. Creating a comfortable space
  - Example: redesigning the office to allow both individual space and open communication

Overall, research indicates and supports the notion that authentic leaders have positive effects on creating a healthy workplace environment as well as encouraging employee engagement. It is the role of the leaders in an organization to reflect authenticity in order to improve engagement and workplace health culture. The first step is to recognize the current leadership techniques, assess employee engagement, and understand the workplace health culture. The second step is to commit to making change in leadership practices based on these findings. Gathering information and hearing employee voices is crucial to the foundation of change in an organization.

Now think about the leader you want to be or the leader you want to have. With these practical suggestions and research knowledge, individuals and organizations can make that dream a reality.

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## Think Diversity Management Programs Are Enough? Think Again!

Kimberly N. Dinh

Organizations are now starting to implement diversity management programs to address their diverse workforce needs. However, diversity management programs alone are not enough to reap the valuable (and profitable!) benefits of a diverse and inclusive workplace.

*Diversity management* is more than just policies and procedures. It includes diverse demographics and a climate of inclusion. A *climate of inclusion* is defined as an environment where employees are treated fairly, have equal access to resources, and creates a sense of belongingness as well as uniqueness.

Studies have shown that diversity management can promote attractive results like reducing turnover and increasing employee engagement in helping behaviors. But what are the factors that come into play to really leverage these diversity management programs?

### **Fair Climate vs. Inclusive Climate**

A three-year study in Australia examined the implications of two types of diversity management programs. Li et al. (2019) found that diversity management programs that were identity conscious promoted a greater sense of organizational commitment than diversity management programs that were identity blind.

While most organizations opt for an identity blind program, it only creates a climate of fairness. This means that employee differences are disregarded, and employees are treated fairly. Identity conscious programs acknowledge, embrace, and value diversity in all dimensions.

This creates an inclusive climate that builds on fairness. So not only are employees given equal chances and opportunities, but the playing field is leveled as differences are valued.

Diversity management programs alone are not enough, and a climate of inclusion carries powerful potential to impact organizational commitment. In other words, diversity management programs and a climate of inclusions together can reduce turnover.

### **Integration and Approach**

Diversity management programs need to be integrated into everyday practices to create a climate of inclusion. An organization's integration and approach to a diversity management program have the potential to demonstrate the perception of an organization's ethical virtues such as trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

Proper integration creates a sense of belongingness by finding opportunities to remove barriers and enhance equal or fair treatment among all employees. It also creates a sense of uniqueness by valuing the expertise of individuals from diverse backgrounds. Together, belongingness and uniqueness foster a climate of inclusion and support honest dialogue in debating different perspectives, resolving them, and creating new ideas while expressing ethical virtue.

A recent study by Rabl et al. (2018) found that employees who rated their organization favorably on its integration and approach to

diversity are more likely to engage in helping behaviors in their organization. The idea is that when employees view their organization as having ethical values, employees are more likely to embody those values and engage in organizational citizenship behaviors. Additionally, the study also found that employees with a high personal value for diversity were more likely to engage in helping behaviors than those who had a low personal value for diversity. The study all together illustrates the importance of organization and employee values.

In addition, previous literature indicates that diversity management programs have the potential of being perceived as insincere or as the exploitation of a diverse workforce for bottom-line reasons. Employees with high personal value for diversity may have higher standards and expectations for the appropriateness of diversity practices. Because of this, it is imperative that organizations take precautions in implementation approaches. When organizations focus on an appropriate plan for their integration and approach to diversity, it speaks volumes about an organization's ethical values. And when values between an organization and employees align, the magic of a healthy organizational diversity and inclusion culture happens.

### **Leadership Commitment**

When top leadership is committed to the implementation of diversity practices, there will be a ripple effect on the rest of the organization. A study recently conducted in Canada by Ng and Sears (2018) confirmed this idea. It turns out, when employees (or in this case, HR managers) perceived their CEO as having positive beliefs towards diversity practices, the implementation of these diversity practices was more effective.

In this study, the researchers examined positive beliefs of CEOs' advocacy for diversity as a strategic initiative to increase performance and innovation. Negative beliefs were defined as beliefs that diversity would lead to inter-group conflict or discrimination. Ng and Sears (2018) also looked at whether a CEO's moral values for social responsibility mattered, and as expected, they did.

The pushback that HR managers may experience as they implement diversity practices has the potential to be emotionally exhausting. Some employees may feel resistant and lash back against organizational change. It is important that HR managers lean on their CEO's positive diversity beliefs as a form of support to effectively implement diversity practices throughout the organization.

### **Addressing Resistance**

In the workplace, resistance is the state of mind reflecting unwillingness or lack of receptiveness to organizational change. Velasco and Sansone (2019), experts in the field of change, diversity and inclusion, and transformational leadership conducted a recent study to investigate different types of resistant behaviors towards diversity and inclusion initiatives. The researchers collected feedback from seven transformational leaders and asked participants to identify effective strategies to address resistance.

Resistant behaviors were classified into passive and active forms. Examples of these passive resistant behaviors are:

- Under resourcing time, personnel and budget
- Leadership failing to prioritize initiatives
- Leadership failing to create structure and mechanisms for success

- Delegating the initiatives to HR department instead of making it everyone's job
- Not showing up to training programs, diversity meetings or strategic planning sessions

Examples of active resistant behaviors are:

- Undermining - questioning the purpose and need for the initiative
- Blocking - openly expressing opposition
- Fault finding – criticizing the cost and the lack of fit with the culture
- Intimidating/threatening - pushback and framing with vehemence
- Manipulating/distorting fact - accusations of hiring and promoting those unqualified
- Appealing to fear - cautioning to not "rock the boat" to avoid making others feel uncomfortable

Three sources were identified as underlying aspects of fear at times of diversity and inclusion initiatives.

1. Change and the unknown (anxiety)
2. The perceived threat of losing privilege and power (perceived injustice)
3. Exclusion

This can be translated into the employee's perception of anticipated loss of job, position, income, power, authority, and economic security. To address these fears, Velasco and Sansone (2019) suggest identifying the underlying type and sources of fear-based behavior. It is recommended to invite open dialogue to discuss concerns and educate others about change and building competency. By addressing resistance with empathy and facilitating reflection, diversity

management programs have a great potential for success.

### **Bringing it All Together**

As organizations attempt to acknowledge a diverse workforce and implement diversity management programs, it is more imperative than ever that organizations redefine their approach to truly maximize the return on investment. Desirable work outcomes like a reduction in turnover and employees engaging in helping behaviors can become a reality through diversity management programs with the following practical suggestions:

- Moving beyond identity blind programs and introducing an inclusive climate
- Integrating inclusive behaviors into everyday practices
- Promoting organizational ethical values
- Ensuring top leadership is committed and showcasing pro-diversity beliefs
- Educating employees by inviting open dialogue to address resistance or fear

Together, with commitment from top leadership for inclusion, integration, and addressing resistance, organizations will be well equipped to move the needle from diversity to inclusion.

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