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The New Workplace: Where Meaning And Purpose Are More Important Than Ever

Leadership

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More than ever, people are wanting more out of work than money. They want more meaning and more purpose. They want to be able to see how their contribution to the workplace makes a difference. Purpose and meaning is a

two-way street where an employee is encouraged to bring their full set of values and strengths to work and, in turn, the organization supports the employee in using those values and strengths in service of its mission. For that reason, it is not only social enterprises that can provide purpose for employees, or that should. [Research](#) has found that employees who derive meaning and significance from their work are much more likely to stay with their organizations.

In order to shift our work environment to one that has more meaning, there are some pivotal employee essentials that must be accounted for by employers to enable such a transformation. In my 20 years of consulting on organizational strategy, I have observed what happens when these conditions are in place and the ramifications and limitations when they aren't, which helped to develop the following framework.

Imagine a pyramid: The first element is a foundational requirement for the item above it. From the bottom up, wellness, emotional intelligence, conscious leadership and transformed cultures build toward the creation of an employee who gets more from their work than simply a salary -- a sense of meaning and purpose.

Wellness

Many organizations have embraced wellness in some way, whether partnering with their health insurance carriers and offering employee wellness programs

or providing pedometers that monitor daily steps. Other more advanced organizations are offering meditation, yoga and access to nutritionists and personal trainers. Health and wellness are basic essentials needed to bring our full selves to work. It fuels the energy to be our best and to continuously improve.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence (EQ) is defined as a set of behaviors that enable "your ability to recognize and understand emotions in yourself and others, and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships." It is nearly impossible to improve our emotional intelligence without wellness (adequate sleep, exercise and nutrition, etc). *Emotional Intelligence 2.0* co-author Travis Bradberry found that emotional intelligence skills account for 58% of performance in all job types and that 90% of high performers also exhibit high emotional intelligence.

The most important aspect of EQ is self-awareness. Awareness of self (emotional self-awareness, accurate self-knowledge and personal power) is the launching point for individual transformation. Awareness holds the key to success in aspects of managing relationships such as building trust, visionary leadership, innovation, teamwork and many more. Self-aware leaders understand their triggers, their strengths and their weaknesses, which allows them to navigate many complex situations and more easily grow and develop

themselves. It is cultivated through mindfulness, learning and intentional self-discovery (such as personality assessments). We must truly know ourselves and our own purpose before we can lead others and the organization with purpose.

Conscious Leadership

Highly self-aware, emotionally intelligent leaders are then able to make a shift to conscious leadership. Consciousness and competence move together: As leaders become more conscious on the inside, their outer competence grows to enable them to navigate complexity, make better strategic decisions and deepen professional relationships. They are able to move from operating in a more reactive state where decision-making is not shared and obedience is required to sharing authority and operating from a place of inner purpose where their values, talents and strengths are guiding the contributions they make to an organization.

This type of leadership is required to create lean, innovative, visionary, agile, high-fulfillment organizations and cultures. Leadership is shared: The leader takes responsibility for crafting the vision, involving others in the vision and helping them connect how it enables each teammate to fulfill their personal purposes collectively. The culture consulting work I engage in is always most successful when preceded by work that helps ensure the executive team is self-aware and operating at a more conscious level.

Transformed Cultures

Humans who embrace wellness, emotional intelligence and conscious growth become leaders and employees capable of working in new ways. Conscious leaders are able to look at the strategy and processes within an organization and begin shifting them by flattening hierarchies and empowering people to bring all of their gifts, talents and values to work. Conscious leaders are able to construct work as a place to truly grow and develop. It is these types of cultures where employees not only find meaning at work but produce extraordinary results.

The Way Of The Future

Recently, I facilitated a board and executive team strategy retreat for an organization where I'd been coaching and consulting the executive team for almost a year around emotional intelligence and conscious leadership. The quality of connection, strategic discussion and new possibilities that emerged were truly transformational.

Of pioneering organizations who have made such shifts, Frederick Laloux [wrote](#), "They show how we can deal with the complexity of our times in wholly new ways, and how work can become a place of personal fulfillment and growth. And they make today's organizations look painfully outdated." Many organizations spend little time in onboarding on the company culture and relational training for new employees. Many organizations still have large

top-down hierarchies which prevent employees lower in the hierarchy from making decisions they know the most about since they are closest to the work. And many organizations still do not provide meaningful development for employees. These current processes get in the way of purpose. In 50 years we may shake our heads that we ever actually ran organizations this way.

Where does your organization fall within the pyramid? How will you make these shifts in order to be part of the changing nature of work? Will yours be one of the organizations people shake their heads about in 50 years?



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