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PURSUING EXCELLENCE: WORK STRENGTHS, ASSETS AND RELEVANT VALUES (AN EXPERIENTIAL EXERCISE)

Richard E. Dutton, The University of South Florida

INTRODUCTION

“The achievement of excellence requires both a widespread competence among people and an environment which encourages and enables the expression of that competence. We are blessed with the first, but we have defaulted on the last. We have created organizations, which punish rather than encourage and suppress rather than enable a full expression of human competence. There is an irony in all this, which every leader should ponder. (Hall, 1988, P. xii).”

As one moves up the organizational ladder, the job role becomes less tangible and predictable. The organization is perceived by the leader as more dynamic. Change, ambiguity, and contradiction become more the rule than the exception. Complex and intuitive decisions are needed. Many new leaders are unable to cope with the stress, uncertainty and tension related to these roles. They remain novices. What causes some to become excellent and successful managers and some to revert back to the comfort of a job which is well described and controlled?

The purpose of this exercise is to examine this concept of excellence and success in the workplace beyond what may be considered a rational choice.

The World of Work

Of all our activities, our work has the greatest potential to satisfy our basic and social needs. It should follow that accurate self-knowledge precedes a job choice and, in fact, it should define the job choice. When our self-knowledge increases our chances of pursuing a personally-appropriate job should also increase. Our chances of becoming self-fulfilled improve accordingly.

We must consider our strengths, needs and values. Strengths are those characteristics, which we have that we use with effective results. They are usually activities or skills that please us and please others. Needs and values are often difficult to distinguish. A need is a strong force, like an emotional desire. A value is a need transformed into a concept by which we interpret our world and by which we guide our lives.

By careful observation of past experiences and our behavior, our strengths and values may be identified, analyzed, and verified.

The Exercise Events

Event One: Priority List of Strengths

Rank your strengths in the order of ability and frequency of use. (A strength in which you have great ability and frequent use would be listed higher than one of great ability and moderate use, etc...). Each participant will have a form for listing strengths and their verification.

Event Two: Defining Your Assets

Our assets are our natural resources--granted to us at birth - height, looks, smile, posture, bone structure, emotional outlook, etc... Each participant will list as many assets as they can.

Next, have someone who knows you well, prepare a similar list from their perspective. Even better, have several friends respond if this is possible. Ask them not to consult each other as they are writing their list of assets. (If they are willing, also ask them to write down ten strengths that you show in your work.)

Event Three: Identifying Values

Some values are conscious and easily identifiable, others are unconscious and require more work to bring them to the surface. The following list reflects the most typical values identified by people as relevant to their work.

Respond to the following items in as much detail as possible in the space provided. Focus on how important each one is to you in the work setting.

- | | |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. <u>Security</u> | 9. <u>Independence</u> |
| 2. <u>Status</u> | 10. <u>Altruism</u> |
| 3. <u>Compensation</u> | 11. <u>Creativity</u> |
| 4. <u>Achievement</u> | 12. <u>Ethical Harmony</u> |
| 5. <u>Advancement</u> | 13. <u>Intellectual Stimulation</u> |
| 6. <u>Affiliation</u> | 14. <u>Variety</u> |
| 7. <u>Recognition</u> | 15. <u>Aesthetic</u> |
| 8. <u>Authority</u> | |

Now, select the top five-(5) values-the ones that are most important to you. List the top five Values. List your top five Strengths.

Conclusion

By thoughtful analysis and selection, you now have found you're most important and most relevant values and strengths. This creates the “fit” that you should seek when looking for a career position. In such a position, you are most likely to find the best matching of talents, desires and strengths with the goals and performance needed by the organization.

The possibility of success by doing the things that you do best is greatly enhanced. Some would say that progress is made almost “effortlessly”. But this is not really the case. Good results and the joy of pursuing excellence come from greater knowledge of strengths and values, and finding a much better match of talent and organizational needs. We cannot be effective in pursuing the right career unless we first know ourselves in terms of assets, strengths, priorities and values. The realistic performance of this exercise will help greatly in finding what we have to offer as a human resource.

REFERENCES

References are available upon request.