# Leadership Strategies to Shape Organizational Culture

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**Abstract -** It is assumed that leadership is the most researched issue in the field of organizational behavior. The relationship between leadership and organizational culture has provoked the greatest interest and initiated a number of researches. This paper provides some vital information for leaders to consider as they attempt to influence the organizational culture in their organizations. The paper emphasizes leadership strategies that give considerable attention to the impact of human behavior and the dynamics of interpersonal interactions in an organization. The reader will also gain valuable information regarding an instrument which a leader might employ to evaluate the culture of their organization.

Keywords: leadership, organizational culture, strategies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Organizational culture includes a structure of assumptions, norms, values, and attitudes manifested through symbols, developed and adopted by members of an organization through their collective experience which helps them to establish the meaning of their surrounding environment and how to behave in the same. This paper is not planned to discuss the massive amount of leadership strategies that might be used by a leader to influence organizational culture, nor is it intended to describe the immense body of research and theory about organizational behavior and culture change. The following is simply an overview of some of the more pragmatic leadership concepts that are vital for leaders to consider as they attempt to shape the culture of their organizations. We should begin this journey by taking into consideration what the optimum culture would be for a public sector organization. A leading book about the optimum organizational culture is Elliot Jaques' Requisite Organization: A Total System for Managerial Organization and Managerial Leadership for the 21st Century. The book refers to what Jaques terms the "Requisite Organization". Through the book, Jaques develops his theme that a requisite organization will enjoy the following distinct traits: mutual trust, fairness and justice for all employees, recognition of individual worth, openness and honesty, and specific employee behaviors such as integrity, commitment, reliability, initiative, and cooperation. Dr. Harrison describes the desired organizational culture as one characterized by a "transcendent" level of consciousness, and he pointed out that organizations, like, experience, people varying stages of consciousness.

Experts be in agreement that healthy organizations are characterized by certain human behaviors which influences the culture and are influenced by the culture. In these healthy organizations, employees tend to think on a higher plane, and the resulting behaviors tend to maximize the talent and efforts of each employee towards a common purpose.

## II. LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN ORGANISATION

1. **Survival:** The organization puts great efforts to survive and grow, moving from crisis to crisis. Motivation is from hope of achievement and fear of failure. People accept strong control from the top and will sacrifice for the organization's survival. There are few systems, little planning, many short term "quick fixes." Learning is by trial and error; "organizational memory" is lacking. Typical situations include turnarounds, new plants and business startups

2. **Defense:** The culture is out of balance and not working. The demands made on members are not remunerated by matching satisfactions Organization members feel deprived or in deficit, as more energy is required for less result. In denial of failure, and in the attempt to prop up the system, leaders exhort or coerce people to do more of what is not working. Although almost all may recognize the need for change, people are too busy keeping their heads above water to find time and energy for learning new.

3. **Security:** The culture is stable and exerts strong control over members. Rewards provided by the

organization are reliably available to conforming members. Norms, rules and standards are consistent, known to all and conformed to by most. Sanctions are applied to bring deviants into line. Energy of members is devoted to maintaining the system and doing the work. People act and are treated as though the organization is more important than they are.

4. **Self Expression:** The culture is impudent, self-reliance and individuality. Structures are flowing and open. There are few sanctions for violating rules. There are few supports for individuals. It is "sink or swim." Members are compete strong, Loyalty, common purpose, responsibility, and mutual support are devalued or given lip service. Autonomy,

energy, confusion, conflict, and constant change are characteristic. Often there is more learning and creativity than productivity.

5. **Transcendent:** A culture of meaning, purpose and love. People join to give rather than to get. Work, contribution and relationships are enjoyed for their own sakes, not for rewards. Thus, people are not easily managed by the application of incentives or punishments. They value diversity. They operate according to high principles and ethical standards, because it feels right to do so. They see the organization as part of a larger part, and manage it for the benefit of all stakeholders.

**FIVE LEVELS OF CONSCIOUSNESS IN ORGANISATIONS**
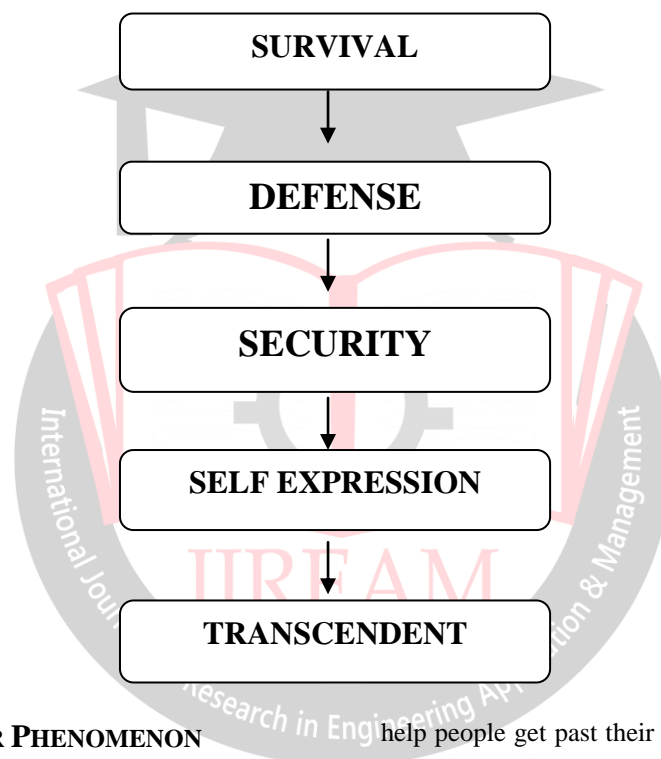


## III.    TRUST – FEAR PHENOMENON

A fundamental leadership strategy to help managers in changing organizational culture is to focus on establishing trust and reducing fear in the workplace. Most research has been conducted in recent years about the impact of fear and trust in the workplace, and many experts have declared the importance of the trust- fear phenomenon. Kathleen Ryan and Daniel Oestreich stated: "We see fear as an increasingly visible background phenomenon that undermines the commitment, motivation, and confidence of people at work. When fear is reduced and trust is enhanced, people naturally become more committed to their work and are more enthusiastic about their organizations…Today leaders cannot manage to pay for to lose information or creative ideas that may help their organizations face the future. They especially cannot afford to drop the energies and talents of employees to fear and low morale. In order to help their organizations accomplish needed changes and

help people get past their fears, leaders must generate open workplaces where everyone can be candid about her or his experiences, concerns, ideas and hopes. Stephen Covey describes trust or the lack of trust in an organization as either a tax or a dividend. In a company, high trust materially improves communication, collaboration, execution, innovation, strategy, engagement, partnering, and relationships with all stakeholders".

## IV.    POSITIVE REINFORCEMENT

Positive reinforcement is a common sense leadership strategy that has been discussed for decades, and even today it has enormous value for leaders who are attempting to shape the organizational culture. Trust is enhanced by recognizing and rewarding positive behavior, and sustaining positive behaviors will influence the organizational culture.

## V. APPRECIATIVE INQUIRY

As a leader places out to influence the organizational culture there will unavoidably be some positive characteristics of the organization that should be highlighted and replicated. These positive characteristics in the organization constitute a core of hope around which the organization can rally. Focusing on these optimistic qualities and behaviors in the organization is a positive and helpful strategy for organizational change. Appreciative Inquiry begins with a sequence of questions for each employee that helps them beat into and regard as what they value most about themselves, their organization, and the things which give life to the organization. It plans to rise above the fear and distrust of some in the organization, circumventing their resistance to change on the organization's successes.

## VI. DIAGNOSING THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE

Leaders should be attentive about efforts to change the culture of their organization, and diagnosing the culture is a recommended starting point. Dr. Harrison stated the following during a phone interview: "In any sort of organizational change effort, you are going to want to do some serious evaluation of the organization before you start taking the inventiveness to make changes, and in fact that judgment can be the beginning of an initiative" (Harrison 2012). In organizations with high levels of consciousness, the dynamics of power, roles, achievement, and support work in harmony to create a healthy, flexible, vibrant organization committed to serving others and united around a higher purpose. Lower levels of consciousness result in the abuse of power, low trust, fear, self-indulgence, selfishness, and ineffectiveness. Such organizations tend to lose sight of their purpose, and the employees work there for the good of themselves rather than the good of others.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The concepts discussed in this paper are not new. Leadership and its effect on organizations have been considered for centuries. Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics, written around 340 BC., states that the moral role of a leader is not to develop his or her own power, but to create conditions under which followers can accomplish their potential. As public servants, we are stewards of the human potential in our organizations, and it is our unavoidable responsibility to generate a culture that maximizes the talents of each employee, leveraging their best for the good of others. If we fail to judge the organizational culture and its result on human potential and service delivery, we have violated the public trust and eventually the citizens we serve pay will pay the price for our failures. Leaders are encouraged to consider the strategies discussed in this paper, and if change is necessary the process should begin by using the recommended instrument to establish the organizational culture.

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