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Corporate Sustainability Factors that Promote a Positive Work Environment

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I. Introduction

American firms aspire to improve their quality of services/product lines to stay competitive within their industry standards. It is highly encouraged that swift organizational change initiatives are initiated to stay ahead of organizational competitors. However, certain organizations are promoting misguided organizational change initiatives. Consequently, studies have suggested that misguided organizational change initiatives trigger bullying by managers. In some cases, when allegations of workforce bullying are reported, management does not take corrective action. As a result, the work environment becomes deplorable, which will have an effect on work productivity in the long run. Most importantly, modern organizations should consider hiring a progressive leader who is suitable to deal with organizational change dilemmas, as it relates to corporate suitability issues. The hiring of a progressive leader will not prevent certain organizational behavioral issues, but will certainly make a difference.

II. Misguided Organizational Change

Progressive organizations throughout America continue to strive to improve services rendered to clients/customers due to fierce competition. Unfortunately, organizations are aiming beyond expectations to meet deadlines and are pressured to do more for less.

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In an effort to have a better understanding of misguided organizational change issues, a recent study suggested that employees are expected to perform beyond the norm without additional resources. According to Rivero (2013) "…….employees are pushed to perform at peak levels with unrealistic expectations, which has resulted in a counterproductive work environment" (p. 169). Although organizational change is critical to organizational sustainability, most have been unsuccessful. According to Kotter (2008), "….it is estimated that 70 percent of needed change either fails to be launched or completed" (p. 12). Tragically, misguided organizational change has triggered managers to mistreat employees. Hutchinson, Vickers, Jackson, and Wilkes (2005) point out that "…rather than accepting that processes and pressures of organizational change might be an 'accidental trigger' for bullying by managers who may be in over their heads" (p. 57). This being said, workplace bullying should not be tolerated in any organizational setting regardless of the circumstances.

As a result of staff reduction, scarce resources, and added pressure to complete deadlines, managers develop a "Siege Mentality" behavior to deal with added stress due to overbearing expectations. As Horstein (1996) further suggests, "Siege Mentality" exists when managers are forced to micromanage employees in an effort to stay abreast of day-to-day functions. Unfortunately, employees are then severely mistreated, which will eventually lead to counter productivity.

III. Workplace Bullying

Several years ago, workplace bullying was not commonly known among researchers and practitioners. However, Adam & Crawford (1992) conducted a landmark study on the effects of workplace bullying and how it can have a direct impact on the overall workplace environment. This study has provided a foundation for other researchers to establish measures to explore this phenomenon in the workplace.

According to Namie & Namie (2000), workplace bullying occurs when an individual with authority within an organizational setting deliberately mistreats employees. Through the collaboration of several researchers, a survey was conducted to determine the severity of workplace bullying in the United States. The survey consisted of 3,461 respondents and the following results were revealed. Those who were currently being

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bullied amounted to 12.6% of the respondents while 24% had been bullied in some sort of way and another 12% had witnessed workplace bullying, but did nothing to address the issue. The remaining of the totality did not experience or been targeted as victims. Unfortunately, 72% of the perpetrators held a position of authority. Also, the distribution of respondents who were either bullied or had been bullied during a certain period of time totaled 36.6%, rounded to 37% (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2007, p. 4; Namie & Namie, 2009, p. 205). Most experts suggest that mid-management should take an active role to reshape the organizational culture to prevent workplace bullying (Liefooghe, & Mac Davey, 2001). Doing so would allow the organization to minimize cost associated with the potential of work productivity loss, employee turnover, workers compensation, and court litigation (Hoel & Einarsen, 2010).

IV. The Lack of Leadership Initiatives

In certain instances, organizational leaders are faced with the challenge of meeting work expectations in an effort to increase work productivity with minimal resources. Unfortunately, this has led to misguided organizational change issues (Rivero & Theodore, 2014). Other studies suggest that the lack of communication between employer/employee is to blame for organizational change resistance (Ford, Ford, and D'Amelio 2008). On the other hand, it is understood that organizational leaders who promote trust in the workplace, (particularly when organizational change initiatives are taking place), are far more successful as opposed to other organizations that do not promote this philosophy. Rivero further states,

> During organizational transition, employees are uncertain of the future, which can have an effect on the transitional stages of an organization. This is a critical stage that will determine how quickly the organization can transcend its business processes. This being said, it is important that an organization promotes organizational change readiness. This leads to successful change agents that promote a positive work environment (2014a, p. 2).

A seasoned leader should be emotionally stable in order to deal with uncertainties as the organization is transitioning. Moreover, other researchers have suggested that leaders with a high level of emotional intelligence (EI) are ideal for leading an organization. According to Goleman (2011), a leader with high emotional intelligence is one who is self-aware of his/her surroundings, portrays empathy among employees/staff members, and has good social skills. As Stein & Book (1999) point out, due to the complexity of organizational change, a highly emotionally intelligent leader is better equipped to make difficult decisions that may have an effect on others in the workplace.

According to Rivero (2014b), "Modern organizational leaders are placed in difficult situations to act upon due circumstances that are beyond their control. At times, expectations are unreachable/ unrealistic and employers/employees are expected to perform despite the unlikeness of reaching those expectations" (p. 12).

V. Corporate Sustainability

Corporate Sustainability has continued to be an important part of organizational behavior discipline throughout America. As a result of organizational change initiatives, it is important that corporate sustainability be embraced to keep the organization right on track with its strategic objectives.

According to Heintz & Parry (2014), a corporation is considered to be a legal entity that is separate by its owners and administrative staff members (p. 7). As Theodore (2014) points out, United States Government corporations and private/business corporations represent approximately 90% of revenues produced in the United States and are economically powerful with close ties with local/state/federal government officials (p.23).

According to Dunphy, Griffths, and Benn (2007), corporate sustainability is concerned with the ecological system, human survival and survival of other species, the development of a humane society, and the creation of a work environment that provides dignity and self-fulfillment for those parties involved.

This being said, from an external environment perspective, an organization should be concerned with ecological and sociological areas that are beyond its control. For example, an organization should be concerned with government legislations, economy, or physical environment that may have a direct impact on the overall organizational strategic plan. "Moreover, it is vital that organizations keep abreast of new government relations sudden changes to the environment. By doing so, the organization is better prepared to make sudden changes to the overall strategic plan" (Rivero, 2014b, p. 13).

Similarly, from an internal environment perspective, an organization should promote equitable treatment of its employees at every level of the organizational hierarchy (Rivero & Theodore, 2014, p. 2). By doing so, it will support the corporate sustainability model throughout the organizational setting, which will eventually lead to a positive work environment.

Most importantly, it is critical that leaders have an understanding of corporate sustainability factors that may have an effect on the overall organizational setting. Although it is understood that organizations are faced with challenges with minimal operational resources, a leader should maintain his/her composure prior to communicating with staff members. This will have a

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positive impact on the overall work environment, which will eventually lead to the increase of work productivity. Also, leaders should monitor the organizational climate for subtle changes that may have the potential to derail the organizational setting.

VI. Recommendations

Progressive organizations should continue to make improvements to embrace the corporate sustainability model. This being said, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Consider hiring a seasoned corporate emotionally intelligent leader who is willing and able to embrace the corporate sustainability model.
2. Mid-management should create a reporting mechanism so that employees are able to report allegations of workplace bullying. Most importantly, confidentiality should be enforced to protect parties involved from retaliation.
3. Establish a training program for employers/ employees on communication skills, particularly when it comes to soft skills. According to Winstead, Adams, & Sillah, "Soft skills include a collection of communication, interpersonal, teambuilding and other business skills that today's employers value in hiring new recruits" (2009, p.35). Most importantly, it is important that all involved are able to understand the importance to respect one another.
4. Organizational leaders should establish a formal assessment process to make sure that the organization's expectations are not overwhelming, or beyond reach. At times, when this occurs, it will have a negative impact on the organization's overall work productivity.
5. Reevaluate employees' expectations to determine if they are realistic and attainable. By doing so, employees' responsibilities are well aligned with the organization's strategic plan.

VII. Summary

It is understood that American firms need to embrace organizational change initiatives in order to stay competitive. Misguided organizational change occurs when goals and objectives are not aligned and well presented to subordinates, which leads to miscommunication. In some cases, employees are overworked, and mistreated by management. In certain instances, managers are not emotionally fit to deal with the day-to-day work responsibilities due to the lack of leadership abilities. This causes infighting among employers/employees preventing the organization from ever meeting its goals and objectives.

Although there are certain organizations that have embraced the corporate sustainability model, there are others that have not. Corporate sustainability should be incorporated by all organizations, regardless. At the end, the organization is better fit to meet its goals and objectives.

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