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White Paper# 8: Are We Really Part of the Human capital assets Quality World?

Listen to the voice of the marketplace and you are bound to hear references to why can't we get our human capital more engaged within our organizations? At the same time, human capital assets are asking why their organizations don't recognize them as human beings. Upper management in attempt to increase the feeling of loyalty among the organization's human capital introduces various activities of the day to little or no success to reach the intended outcome. This white paper introduces management to a different way to view your human capital assets and thus increasing the involvement of your human capital assets within your organization.

Principles of Choice Theory

In 1998, a psychiatrist named William Glasser M.D. completed a study of a population of individuals who were suffering from varying types of conditions. What Dr. Glasser came to conclude from his studies is that no matter how management tries, they can't motivate anyone to do anything that we want unless the individual sees the benefit to them. I believe in some circles this is known as WIIFM or "What's in it for me."

The basis for Dr. Glasser's Choice Theory, rooted in Reality Theory, is that each and every person, no matter what their standing or situation, chooses to do everything they do. This includes:

- Going through the process of being depressed or being happy.
- Being engaged or not being engaged within our business enterprises.
- When we ask our human capital assets to relocate to a new workplace or perform a new task.

The direct outcome of these results is that we as human resource professionals, managers and supervisors are not in a position to motivate our human capital assets to do something just because we feel that they should. This is especially true in a corporate mobility situation. We may know that the offer of the new opportunity may be the perfect advancement for the human capital asset's career, but unless the human capital asset's perception of reality is identical to ours, they will never perceive the opportunity in the same light as the business. The key to being successful with helping the human capital assets see the benefit of our expectations is that we need to become part of the employee's quality world.

The Quality world of our human capital assets

Before we look at the quality world of our human capital assets, we need to first understand just what we mean by the term quality world. From the time we are very young we learn to exhibit certain behaviors that bring us joy. They bring us joy because they meet our needs at the moment. These needs can be seen through the works of such writers and researchers as Dr. Edward Deming and Dr. Abraham Maslow. Both laid out the criteria for what we are all searching for as we continue in our everyday lives. While the author of this white paper series is not a psychologist or a psychiatrist the evidence from the two above-mentioned individuals is clear on its implications for what we do as human resource professionals.

Dr. Deming in his work The New Economics 2nd Edition made the point that as managers we need to understand that all people are different. This does not mean that we are establishing a pecking order within our departments, but rather that each and every one of us comes from an environment that has shaped our feelings, attitudes, and our outlook on what is best for us and our families. Just because my outlook presents itself in one fashion this does not mean that your

outlook is wrong. The implications for the human resource function or the workplace in general is that when we ask someone to move or perform a task in the workplace, we need to take into consideration their environmental picture—i.e. their quality world.

Dr. Maslow, like Dr. Deming, as the result of his experiments, came to the conclusion that every being requires that certain needs be met in order for them to be satisfied with the direction of their lives. The needs that Dr. Maslow identified can be presented in the format of a triangle. At the base of the triangle are the physical needs. These needs consist of those things necessary to maintain the basics of good health. Part of this becomes how do we deal with the creation of stress in our lives. We should remain cognizant of the fact that the very nature of the request to a human capital asset to change their lives through a relocation for example creates the third highest cause of stress in our lives. The only two stressful situations that cause more stress is the death of a spouse and a divorce.

This need is followed by security needs. As we try and change our employees in a different direction to a new area can we find shelter, can we find food that we can eat, do we feel safe. One of the statements that have been made to me over the years, is that the primary thing the transferee is trying to achieve is to replace their current living style in the new area. Part of this plan is to be able to find a home that matches the one they currently own, find the same kind of stores and the same kind of outlets for recreation.

The third area of Maslow's hierarchy, are the social needs, which satisfy our demand for love and a sense of belonging. The transferee's quality world involves being accepted by the people around them. They need to feel that they are part of something.

The fourth level takes us to an area where the individual looks for a sense of empowerment in business. This empowerment is not necessarily power over others but rather power of controlling one's own life directions. If we return to the writings of Dr. Glasser, we find he discusses that each individual strives to meet five basic needs in making their choices in life. He terms these needs as survival or security, love and friendship, power from gaining respect of others, freedom and fun. Sound familiar?

The outcomes of each of these models is that our human capital assets choose how to react to our decisions within the workplace based on their picture of **their** quality world. Many human capital assets, if they have been in one place for any length of time have created a world around them, which on a basic level makes them happy. Their everyday existence meets all the needs we mentioned above. When they relocated last, they were able to find the home that met their needs at the time. Based on things they have done around the home, the home still continues to do so. They have friends who matter, and are involved in cultural activities, recreational activities, and in many cases they have family in the area, who mean a lot to them. Then we come along and tell the transferee we really need their services elsewhere and then we wonder why the transferee is not jumping with joy. The reason is that the stress caused by the relocation situation upsets all the needs of that transferee to make their life environment one of joy rather than anger and crisis.

How Do We Get Into the Human capital assets Quality World?

In a typical corporate environment the decision to relocate an human capital assets is generally decided because a critical position opens up and you as an employer need the gap filled quickly. The goal is to do with the right person, at the right time and in the right place. We totally understand that a vacant position cost you money. This is based on work not done, and an increased workload for those who need to pick up the slack. As a result we find the typical scenario goes something like this:

We have John Q. Public who is a young, rising executive with his employer sitting at his desk. Rumors have been flying around the office that John's boss is due to retire and he is next in line for the job. It's five o'clock on a Friday afternoon and the phone on John's desk rings with a phone call from his boss. For discussion sake we will call the boss Tom T. Tactless. Mr. Tactless asks John to step into his office for a moment. John gets excited about the prospects of the pending promotion and so he heads for the office. Upon arriving in the office, Tom Tactless asks John to sit down and the following scenario takes place:

Tom: John, come on in and sit down
John: Thank you
Tom: John do you enjoy working for the corporation?
John: Yes I do

Tom: John, we have reviewed your record with the company and we feel that you have a good chance to be promoted to my level or higher. However, before that happens we want you to get to know the operations in the field. Therefore we have transferred you to the position of General Manager of our plant in Barre, Massachusetts. You are expected to report to your new office a week from Monday.
John: Ah, Thank you.

What has the corporation done? To begin with they have made the assumption that the needs of the corporation are more important than the needs of the transferee. Mr. Tactless only thought is that he has a vacant position and it needs to be filled within the next two weeks and he feels that Mr. Public is the man for the job. Unlike the findings of Dr. Deming, the corporation looks at Mr. Public as just another warm body to be moved around like a chess piece.

So how could they have done it differently? There are several strategies that the corporation could have implemented to ease the stress that they have put the human capital asset into. Based on the basic needs demonstrated above, the scenario could have changed to consider the quality world of the human capital assets.

Determine in Advance the Needs of the Human capital assets – While we understand the need to have human capital assets where they are needed, it is also critical to the success of your relocations that the human capital assets sees that this move fits into their quality world. This means that you need to take steps to find out just what the human capital assets needs to be comfortable with the move in the first place. Part of this means that you need to stretch out your timetable to give all sides to the equation, time to determine whether this move is truly in the human capital assets' best interest at this time and at this place. Throughout this white paper we have tried to demonstrate the importance of the quality world in the lives of your human capital assets. Take this into consideration and realize that there just might be some situations where you need an human capital assets in a particular assignment, but because of many issues in their lives this assignment is just not right for them here and now. Leave them in the loop for the next assignment and do not hold it against them for not taking this particular assignment.

Provide targeted information on the new area –In order to be part of their quality world, it is necessary that we provide the human capital assets and his family with targeted information on the new area. This does not mean calling a real estate broker or a chamber of commerce and asking them for a copy of their newcomer package. This means providing information directed at the areas that the human capital assets had expressed concerns about. For example, if the transferee asks about the availability of Chinese American social activities provide them with name, rank and serial number. Provide the transferee with the name of the organizations, the addresses and phone numbers and the name of a specific person to contact. The same should go for each area that they are concerned with.

Provide 24/7 Access to the resources for the move – The human capital assets must be given access to the information when they want it and where they want it. Use technology to its fullest by providing a website where they can get the information they need. This would include copies of the relocation policy and either an online chat or e-mail capability to the relocation counselor, the manager, the move vendors and anyone else who plays a vital part in the process.

Plan out the time line – Forget the Friday scenario we showed above. Call the human capital assets into the office and let them understand that there is this critical need at the new location. Explain to them why they were selected to be offered the position and what is in the move for them. Find out what they need to come to a decision about whether this is the right place for

them. Work out a mutually agreeable timeline for both the move and to let the human capital assets come to a decision with their family as to whether this is the right place at the right time.

Provide on-going support to the entire family – For discussion sake, let's assume that the human capital assets comes back to you and says that they are willing to accept the new position. It is incumbent on you to develop an ongoing system to ensure that the move remains in the quality world of the human capital assets. This means that you need to carefully monitor the human capital assets after the move. If the relocation is turning sour, there will be signs of it fairly quickly after they arrive in the new location. These signs include excessive absenteeism, lower work productivity and frequent requests for changes in the work schedule. Be prepared to explore avenues where you can assist the human capital assets in finding their quality world environment again. Do not overlook the possibility of relocating the human capital assets back to their previous location if this will remove the problems that are affecting the work environment because of their failure to adapt to the new location.

Final Thoughts

Our organizations more than ever before depend on our ability to be innovative and to collaborate as teams in order to enhance the future. In order to reach this goal, we need to have complete buy in from all of our human capital assets. To reach the buy in, as managers we must understand what drives our human capital. We need to understand what they expect and anticipate from the workplace environment. We get there by understanding their quality world and being careful about offering the kinds of assistance that allows us to become part of that quality world.



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