

Citizenship is key

Organization citizenship is measured by whether or not a worker knows and does the "right thing" when the demands of the job exert pressure to do otherwise. It boils down to knowing what the "right" thing is, and knowing with certainty that doing it will be favorably recognized.

Doing the right thing for a customer is often an easier decision than are the choices that impact the workforce. Employees have a different obligation - one of being a good citizen by engaging in finding and solving problems that impact their organization's capacity without being prodded to do so.

During the last few years of the 20th century, our research concluded that several important and long-standing trends would likely be dragged into the next millennium. The trends have everything to do with organization citizenship and we offer the most important among them here.

Fairness and equity. The best organizations with the most energized workforce are those where fairness and equity are embedded in the culture. Workers believe that key decisions will be based on these two value-laden concepts. Was it fair and equitable for senior executives to swindle employees out of pension funds while padding the benefits for themselves? Certainly it was not.

Years ago I read a book titled *Managing the Equity Factor*, by Richard C. Huseman and John D. Hatfield. The book's theme is that members of organizations tend to resolve inequity by withholding discretionary effort. In all the data collection work we've done in the last 25 years, this principle seems to be consistently a part of organizational life. It also seems to work in reverse - workers will tend to earn their pay when they have a clear stake in the outcomes.

The gap between front line and leadership. A difficult issue in most large organizations is the gap between front-line workers and senior leadership. The gap consists of fragmented information flow, perspective, understanding, vision, values and a host of similar concerns. The gap results in decisions that are misunderstood, misaligned and that lead to mistrust.

Whenever trust is a problem, one thing has been consistent - misaligned priorities. To build trust, develop priorities that are aligned from the executive suite to the loading dock. Priorities need to be addressed by a "slice" of the organization that touches all elements.

Focus on potential. It is common for prudent managers to focus on past performance, especially financial. After all, prudent decision-making is based on historical data. The more innovative members of a workforce are also interested in going the extra mile to achieve greater organizational potential.

Trying to add new capability without intentionally letting go of less productive efforts is a gamble, but the potential offered often has a big payoff. Asking employees to do something new and necessary without taking something off a full plate, is asking them to find a way to balance their workload without help. Something inconsistent is bound to happen.

Rewards and recognition. As long as the security of foundational pay and benefits has been met, workers will stay with an organization that rewards and recognizes them with non-financial options. To many workers, a genuine pat on the back or a hand-written note of thanks is among the most highly prized validation for a job well done.

Use an ad hoc team to help determine comparability in pay and benefits, then construct a rewards and recognition program that produces the highest possible return-on-investment. Consider workforce and other stakeholder needs in this process.

Open book information flow. Far too much information is withheld from the workforce. The fear on the part of management is that information will be misused and channeled to the wrong people. But the lack of information causes people to fill the void with their own negative fantasies.

The best information flow is reciprocal. The executive suite must know what's going on at the front line and the front line must know the pressures of leadership. If your organization doesn't have a reliable method of exchanging important information, invest in a way to get the job done. It is the one leverage point that will serve all other concerns on this list.

Joseph J. Lacroix is the founder and president of LTI and a principal at Quality of WorkLife Consultants in Newport News. He can be reached by calling 591-0807.



JOSEPH J. LACROIX