Our Company Has No Heart

- Using Profiling Tools To Understand Organisational Issues -

By Amy BC Tan & Uwe H Kaufmann

"We have a problem. Our staff turnover is quite high; our people make many mistakes and do not take any initiative. Moreover it seems to be impossible to hire an HR director who can survive longer than 4 months," said the frustrated CEO of a service management company with staff strength of about one hundred. In addition, there were many rumours about nearly everything in the company – a sign for a harmful culture.

A series of focus group interviews involving about 30 members of senior, middle management and staff level had revealed a dramatic lack of information flow and communication – as a breeding ground for rumours. Someone mentioned that he had spent days in his cubicle without talking to anyone. Management members stressed the fact that they do not want to delegate, they rather do the jobs themselves. The most remarkable comment came from a member of the middle management "Our Company has no heart".

To identify potential drivers for this situation, a DiSC profile was gathered from all focus group members. Surprisingly, the DiSC profiles highlighted an imbalance amongst the interviewees: most of them turned out to be high "C" (conscientious) in their behavioural style, either as main profile or as secondary. A few "D" (dominant) and "S" (steadiness) people were found and – only one "i" (influential).

Clustering these profiles by functional area brought another interesting insight: some managers – consciously or unconsciously – tend to hire staff similar to themselves – probably in order to avoid communication problems with them. As a result of the high "C" organisation, communication is limited to facts and figures, people issues are not important and small talk is not necessary. The so-called informal communication in the pantry or at the copier station is not happening – because of the "no-nonsense" mindset of most of the management and staff members.

The most likely reason for the short survival period of HR directors seems to lie in the profile, too. HR directors are typically not too high in C, often they are "i". Therefore, the CEO of the

Dominance	influence
1. Overstep prerogatives	1. More concerned with popularity than tangible results
2. Act restlessly	2. Oversell
3. Stimulates anxiety in others	3. Act impulsively – heart over mind
4. Overrules people	4. Inconsistent conclusions
5. Blunt and sarcastic with others	5. Make decisions solely on gut feelings
6. Sulk when not in the limelight	6. Unrealistic in appraising people
7. Critical and fault finding	7. Inattentive to detail
8. Inattentive to details, logic	8. Trust people indiscriminately
9. Dissatisfied with routine work	9. Have difficulty planning and estimating time expenditure
10. Resist participation as part of a team	10. Superficial analysis
Conscientiousness	**Steadiness**
1. Seek feedback and direction from supervisors	1. Insist on maintaining status quo
2. Hesitant to act without precedent	2. Take a long time to adjust
3. Bound by key procedures and methods	3. Have trouble meeting multiple deadlines
4. Get bogged down in decision making process	4. Need help getting started on new, unstructured assignments
5. Resist delegating tasks	5. Difficulty with innovation
6. Want full explanation before changes are made	6. Contented with things as they are
7. Yield position to avoid controversy	7. Continue to do things the way they were always done
8. Avoid involvement when threatened	8. Hold onto past experiences, feelings
9. Focus exclusively on their own task accomplishments	9. Wait for orders before acting

Figure 1: DiSC Behavioural Profiles

company had problems with the HR directors: "They are too chatty, going around talking to people all the time." The latest HR director gave up since she could not change the culture. Even the lack of involvement and delegation, hence staff development can be understood looking at the behaviour of a high "C" organisation.

After receiving this sobering report, a comprehensive plan for organisational development was developed and is being implemented.

Conclusion

In order to deliver high performance an organisation needs besides many other ingredients a balanced culture, i.e. a set of shared attitudes, values and behaviours. Especially behaviours can drive or deter an organisation's progress by harming own employees and even impacting customers.

Profiling helps creating awareness for ones preferences and limitations and ones role in an organisational setting. Knowing the profile of other individuals and of an organisation is a great advantage when shaping organisational structure, communication style or even job scope.

And, remember: hiring staff who mirrors yourself makes you feeling comfortable but does not help complementing your limitations.

About the Author

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