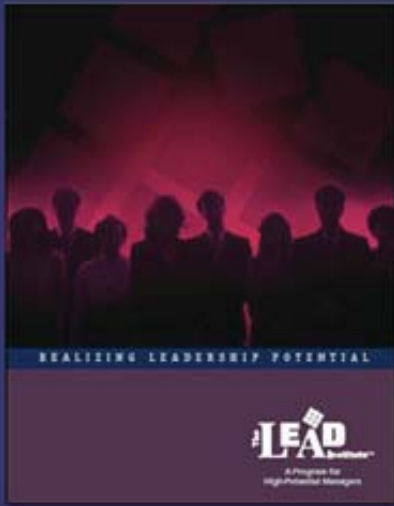


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Changing Organizational Climate: A Six Pack of Leadership Practices

By: Frank Petrock, Ph.D.

What the research shows and what you probably already knew is that when positive organizational climates are in place, they create healthy, satisfying work environments that sustain high levels of motivation and performance.

18 Management/Leadership Practices: Sooner or later, in the course of our change management consultation, it always becomes apparent that producing a high performance, satisfying and healthy work climate depends heavily on how managers go about leading others. We recently came across a list of leadership practices** showing that positive organizational climates are related to the 18 leadership/management practices listed below.

1. Establish clear, specific performance goals.
2. Clarify who is responsible for what in the group.
3. Ensure that tasks/projects are thoroughly explained and understood when assigned.
4. Set challenging performance goals and standards.
5. Demonstrate personal commitment to achieving performance goals.
6. Give subordinates feedback on how they are doing on the job.
7. Encourage people to initiate tasks or projects they think are important.
8. Expect people to find and correct their own errors.
9. Encourage innovation, experimentation and calculated risk taking.
10. Recognize people for good performance more often than being critical of poor performance.
11. Use recognition and praise to reinforce people for excellent performance.
12. Relate compensation, recognition and promotion to the excellence of job performance rather than to factors such as seniority, personal characteristics and personal relationships.
13. Being supportive and helpful to subordinates in their day-to-day activities.
14. Go to bat for subordinates with supervisors when subordinates are right.
15. Conduct team meetings in a way that builds mutual trust.
16. Communicate excitement and enthusiasm about the work.
17. Involve people in goal setting.
18. Encourage people to participate in decisions.

Six Pack Hit List: Further analysis of the data related to these 18 practices and climate showed that there was a "hit list of six" essential practices that contributed the most to producing positive work climates.

The implication of this hit list of six is that a healthy, satisfying, high-performing climate results when managers do at least the following six well:

2. Clarify people's roles and responsibilities.
4. Set challenging performance goals and standards.
5. Demonstrate their personal commitment to the organization's goals.
9. Encourage innovation and risk taking.
15. Conduct team meetings in a way that builds mutual trust.
18. Encourage people to participate in decisions

What does this mean? First, these six practices describe a leadership approach that is high involvement, high trust, challenging and committed. This also means that when employees scored their managers as doing well in at least these six practices, you could predict that the overall climate in the work unit was more positive. Next, it means that if the company ensures managers are doing these things, then there will be a high on motivation, performance and satisfaction.

Caution — Style Is Important: Please keep in mind that how a manager goes about doing these six practices and the other twelve is equally important. In our LEAD Institute Program we help managers see that good leadership is a function of both substance (what you do) and style (how you do it). In regard to substance, I am sure that even Genghis Kahn would have scored well on using most of the 18 leadership/management practices listed above. I guess, however, he would not have scored to well on style. And, maybe the only decisions in which you would participate in with him would be when and how you would like to be executed for poor performance. Substance and style go together. Do the right things in the right way and the organizational climate will change.

Survey Guided Development: The objective of changing the climate or culture is to make your organization or work unit more productive and a better place in which to work. Climate or culture change is an output. Behavior changes come first and then a new climate or culture develops. Climate or culture change is not an input. You do not put in a new climate to get behavior change.

Let us know if you would like to learn more about how we use Organizational Climate Survey assessments to guide and drive organizational transformation and leadership development.

** Source: Robert Stringer, Leadership & Organizational Climate, Prentice Hall, 2002.

Frank Petrock, Ph.D., 734-995-5222
gscg@ic.net
www.leadinstitute.com