

ORGANIZATIONAL VITALITY: THE KEY TO PRODUCTIVITY AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

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摘 要

員工的工作表現是否有效率，與員工是否願意將其精力投入工作息息相關。吾人以「工作活力」(work vitality)一詞，衡量員工投注精力於工作之意願。本文認為員工工作活力愈強，生產力會較高，產品品質也會較佳。本研究設計一份名為「工作活力剖析表」(work vitality profile)的問卷作為衡量組織內員工工作活力的工具。本研究目的在於「工作活力剖析表」，驗證員工工作活力與其績效間之關係。本研究係針對美國一家大型電腦軟體製造公司顧客支援部門七五〇位員工所做的調查結果分析。研究結果發現，的確可以用工作活力剖析表所得工作活力分數預測員工績效的高低。希望藉此項概念的提出，對從事人事工作者在提高員工工作績效方面，有一些新的啟發與貢獻。

Summary

Effective worker performance depends on the willingness of employees to devote energy to their work. The term that captures the essence of this critical issue is VITALITY. It is through worker vitality that greater productivity and quality are achieved. This research compared Work Vitality Profile scores with manager's ratings of employee effectiveness. Data from a computer software manufacturer and 750 subjects were analyzed. Scores on the Profile distinguished between high and low rated employees at the .001 level of significance. Having successfully measured work vitality and identified contributing factors, we have opened up new opportunities for HRD professionals to contribute to worker and organization effectiveness.

Introduction

More than a decade ago, Miller (1977) suggested that "as our values undergo profound reevaluation,... we [should] consider the enhancement of personal vitality

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as a fundamental goal of all our activities and as the appropriate reward for achievement.” He argued, further, that “vitality is a meaningful life goal ... that [should] be studied and systematically developed as a promising new work ethic” (p. 18).

Since that time, however, little research has been done on vitality, but the signs of rising concerns over lack of vitality are widespread (Cramer et al., 1989; Macleod, 1985; Potter, 1980; Loo, 1985; Lorsch & Takagi, 1986). Yankelovich, for example, has written that “the leaders who run our institutions do not really understand today’s workforce; tens of millions of well-educated ... [workers], proud of their achievements, zealous of their freedoms, motivated by new values, with substantial control over their own production, and ready to raise their level of effort if given the proper encouragement” (as quoted in Galagan, 1988).

As a result of their study of the fastest growing small and mid-size private businesses in the U.S., Hartman and Pearlstein (1987) concluded that the secret to their success is “motivated and enthusiastic employees.” They observed that “all employees bring enthusiasm to new jobs ... [but] smaller companies are able to sustain this enthusiasm by empowering workers and giving them a sense of common purpose” (pp. 61-62).

No other term seems to capture the sense of this new ethic and revolution among members of the new workforce as well as “vitality” (Clurman, 1990; Galagan, 1988; Garfield, 1984; Herman, 1990; Juechter, 1988; Kappel, 1960; Makin, 1991; Macher, 1988; Mescon, 1988; Miller, 1977; and Yankelovich, 1982). Recently a human resource director of a service organization told us that “I am definitely interested in the vitality level of my employees, especially in light of the reorganization and growth that we are planning. I would like to identify exactly where we are and what we can do about it.”

Until recently the degree of vitality of an employee or a group of employees has been unmeasurable and unquantifiable. And, coincidentally, the specific causes of lost vitality have also remained relative obscure. The inability to pinpoint the reasons why a worker’s enthusiasm is affected has made it very difficult to increase work vitality and a worker’s contribution to organization goals.

Work vitality was defined in this study as a person’s desire and ability to perform effectively and vigorously at work, and to derive personal growth and satisfaction from work. Work vitality refers to the perceptions and attitudes of employees who are energetic, enthusiastic, creative, innovative, committed, confident, dedicated, and who contribute fully to their work.

Work Perceptions

An extensive review of theoretical and empirical literature (Pace, Mills, & Stephan, 1990) revealed four basic perceptions that affect vitality in the workplace: performance, opportunity, fulfillment, and expectations, which we characterize with the acronym, POFE.

1. The perceptions a worker has of how well he or she is performing (P) in the organization. Performance represents workers' perceptions of how well they are doing their work assignments. Performance has to do with the extent to which certain behaviors lead to a course of action that in turn achieves some result. In organizations, employees perform by completing two different types of actions: (1) functional activities and (2) behavioral processes. High performing workers are usually considered to be of value to the organization if they complete both functional and behavioral assignments equally well.

2. What a worker thinks about opportunities (O) available in the organization. Opportunity represents the potential to be selected for something or to do something when certain conditions have been met. Workers may be considered eligible for advancement and special assignments (opportunities) when they meet the conditions for eligibility. If a worker sees conditions in the organization that are favorable to achieving some of his or her goals, then the worker feels that opportunity is available in the organization.

A lack of opportunity has been linked to at least five detrimental effects on behavior in organizations: (1) reductions in the self-esteem of workers, (2) lowered aspirations of workers, (3) reductions in levels of commitment of workers, (4) negative labeling and diversions of energy from important tasks to unimportant ones, and (5) passive grumbling and apparent satisfaction in seeing the organization in trouble (Kanter, 1976).

3. The degree of fulfillment (F) a worker derives from work in the organization. Fulfillment represents the sense of accomplishment that workers feel as a result of what they have achieved in the organization. It represents the perceived relationship between what one expects and what one achieves in one's job and how important or what value the worker attributes to those achievements. Fulfillment at work indicates that an employee's work provides a reasonable level of satisfaction with achievement. Fulfillment is associated most often with feelings about the work

and what it has provided by way of responsibility, challenging work, and recognition.

Fulfillment appears to have a fairly direct effect on employee efficiency, productivity, employee relations, absenteeism, turnover, and employee perceptions of health and well-being (Khaleque and Rahman, 1987.)

4. How well a worker's expectations (E) are met by the organization.

Expectations represent anticipations, desires, hopes, and wishes for what should happen to a person at work. Expectations develop from real or imagined promises or assurances imputed to the organization about what will happen in the future as part of our association with the organization.

Workers who feel that their expectations are not being met tend to become dissatisfied, disillusioned, frustrated, angry, defensive, and insecure. The ultimate consequence of unmet expectations is a climate of unrest, aggressive interaction, and low morale. Niniger (1970) found that the satisfaction levels of workers whose expectations had been met were significantly higher than those whose expectations were not met.

The Work Vitality Profile

A four-part questionnaire consisting of 42 items (10 each for P, O, and F, and 12 for E—six each for expectations before and expectations now, although only the “now” scores are used in calculating an index score) was devised to elicit responses from organization members about their work perceptions. The instrument measures employees' perceptions of their performance (P), opportunities(O), fulfillment(F), and met expectations(E). These individual POFE scores contribute to a Work Perceptions Index Score that is an excellent indicator of how vigorously an employee or group of employees are contributing to the organization's goals of productivity and quality improvement.

Recent research has demonstrated that employees who are rated as more effective in their jobs have higher scores on positive work perceptions than employees who are rated as less effective. The research reported here is the result of administering The Work Vitality Profile (WVP) to a potential population of about 750 employees of the customer support division of a computer software manufacturer.

Methods and Procedures

A computer-scored response form and the research instrument were placed in an envelope with a cover letter from the manager of customer support, encouraging

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employees to complete the instrument and providing instructions on how to complete the response form. Employees were asked to return the information within the week. The research instruments were distributed to employees during May 1991. Anonymity was preserved by having employees seal the envelopes that included the research instrument and return it to a specified location where it was picked up by the research coordinator. A total of 627 employees completed the instrument but select responses were missing from some response forms, and identification codes were unavailable for others, resulting in 618 useable answer forms for the analysis.

In order to determine whether any relationships existed between overall employee effectiveness and scores on the work perceptions instrument, each employee was given an overall effectiveness rating by his or her supervisor. Ratings were placed in confidential envelopes and delivered to the research coordinator. All ratings and employee response forms were recorded confidentially and destroyed after the results were analyzed. Each rating was portrayed on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) and ratings were introduced into the statistical procedures for comparison with profile scores. Ratings of 1-3 were collapsed to constitute a low group and ratings of 4-5 were collapsed to constitute a high group. Ratings were secured for 490 of the employees whose work perceptions response forms were complete.

Mean scores of high and low groups and other categories of employees were compared using analysis of variance, regression analysis, the Pearson R correlational statistic, and contingency tables analyzed with a Chi Square statistic. The significance of the results found was assessed at the traditional levels of .05, .01, and .001, ranging from significant to highly significant.

Results

The score on work perceptions (POFE) indicates the level of overall Work Vitality. To more clearly understand the work perception scores, those who responded were divided into three equal groups based on overall work perceptions scores (POFE scores). The result was a low group of 203 Ss (1.00 — 3.42), a middle group of 211 Ss (3.43 — 3.86), and a high group of 203 Ss (3.87 — 5.00).

The low group represents low work motivation and vitality, the middle group represents average work motivation and vitality, and the high group represents exceptional motivation and vitality. The mean POFE score was 3.62 with a range from 1.11 to 4.72 and a standard deviation of .48.

In order to discover which of the four variables (P, O, F, or E) seemed to be exerting the greatest amount of influence on the overall vitality of the organization, we divided each of the individual POFE scores into three comparable groups: Low group: 1.00 to 3.42, Middle group: 3.43 to 3.86, and High group: 3.87 to 5.00.

The distribution of scores on P, O, F, and E indicates that employees clearly differed in their perceptions of Performance and Opportunity, with the majority scoring high on perceptions of Performance (376) and the majority scoring low on perceptions of Opportunity (472). A similar difference appeared between numbers of employees high on fulfillment (336) versus the number high on expectations met (31), with considerably more employees scoring low on expectations met than scoring low on fulfillment.

Table 1
Number of Employees Who Had High,
Middle and Low Scores on P, O, F, and E

POFE Scores	Number of Employees			
	P	O	F	E
1.00 — 3.42	99	472	152	238
3.43 — 3.86	141	110	129	348
3.87 — 5.00	376	35	336	31
Missing	2	1	1	1
Totals	618	618	618	618
Means	3.97	3.03	3.88	3.60

The results of a stepwise regression analysis showing relationships between work perception scores and ratings of overall employee effectiveness revealed that the F score for the work vitality (POFE) index was significant at the .00000 level of confidence (Table 2). In other words, employees who were clustered in the high group also had higher POFE scores, indicating that POFE scores are an excellent predictor of ratings of overall effectiveness.

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Table 2
Results of Regression Analysis
Between Ratings of Employee Overall Effectiveness
and Work Perceptions (POFE) Scores

	B	Constant	R Sq.	Standard Error	F Score	Sig. of F
Work Perceptions Scores (POFE)	.224	1.156	.47	.492	24.450	0000 ^{•••}

- = significance at the .05 level
- = significance at the .01 level
- = significance at the .001 level

These data show that employees who are rated as the most effective overall are also those employees who perceive themselves to be performing their jobs well, to have opportunities in the organization, to be fulfilled by their work and to have their expectations met. High rated employees are also employees with high levels of vitality.

When these results are applied to the management of employees of an organization, they imply that many workers lack the spirit, enthusiasm, and vigor they need to be effective employees. Such data also suggests that organizations are losing much of the potential productivity and quality work performance they need to be competitive.

Discussion

To be truly competitive during the coming years, organizations will need to have employees who enjoy their work, who bring spirit to the workplace, and who reflect the finest features of vitalized employees. Employees need to be able to contribute fully to the organization, to be involved in basic business and management decisions, and to feel responsibility for their roles in the organization.

Having vitality implies that employees act with an intensity that impells them to continuous, energetic activity. In the world of work, vitality is defined as the desire and ability to perform efficiently and vigorously, and to bring about effective results. The argument for vitality is quite simple: By focusing an organization's

efforts on the vitality of employees, the more traditional goals of improved worker morale, increased productivity, and higher quality of work automatically follow.

Vitality suggests that the worker and the organization are moved by a constant driving force characterized by physical and mental energy. Thus, when an organization adopts this third agenda item — first, to increase productivity; second, to increase quality; and third, to increase vitality — it accepts responsibility for finding ways in which both workers and managers can feel energized and vigorous, and demonstrate vitality in their worklives. Vitalized workers perform better, feel more fulfilled by their jobs, have their expectations met more closely, and see opportunities in the organization. Enhanced worker vitality, in turn, strengthens overall organizational vitality. That is, work vitality increases the total output and the total quality of goods and services produced by the organization.

Work vitality methods and programs are designed to assist in the transformation of organizations from places of sluggishness and stagnation to places of vigor. Helping organizations improve the vitality, quality, and productivity of employees is actually a by-product of our research on work vitality. For more than a decade researchers have chronicled a growing concern among organization leaders with the increasing numbers of employees who are reporting dissatisfaction with their work and a loss of motivation to contribute more fully to their organizations. Senior human resource officers in major manufacturing and service organizations have reported that a lack of vitality is evident in as high as forty percent of employees and that the productivity of these employees is only about eighty percent of their potential (Payne, 1986; Feldman and Weitz, 1988).

Work Vitality is based on the assumption that a competitive advantage comes to those organizations in which everyone in the workforce is engaged in improving their own vitality, which is accomplished by strengthening their own work performance, finding opportunities in the organization, achieving a sense of fulfillment in their work, and in seeking ways to meet their expectations.

Organization leaders, in addition, must be committed to removing barriers in the work system that prohibit, inhibit, and deter employees from taking responsibility for improving their vitality on the job. Changes in management practices used in the organization, the structure and procedures of the organization, the philosophy and policies that govern the organization, and the work itself must be subject to review and possible adjustment in order to enhance worker and organizational vitality.

Work vitality has at its core a set of values about people and work that create and sustain a culture of constant enhancement in the vitality of workers and the organization.

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- Value 1: Focus on vitality all of the time.
- Value 2: Seek to improve vitality everywhere.
- Value 3: High levels of organization vitality reduce labor costs, prevent errors, eliminate defects, and add value to goods and services.
- Value 4: Vitalized workers perform better, feel more fulfilled in their jobs, have their expectations more closely met, see opportunities in the organization, initiate ideas more frequently, interact more warmly with other employees, and think and approach problems and difficulties more optimistically.

A general outline for developing a vital workforce and a vital organization is found in seven key principles: (1) recognize the value of people, (2) give them something useful to do, (3) give them some say in how things are done, (4) reward them in line with their contributions, (5) keep them informed, (6) develop their work skills, and (7) strengthen their relationships with other works.

Human resource development professionals are uniquely qualified to initiate steps to enhance worker and organization vitality. Some specific suggestions that may assist in that process are described below.

Recommendations

1. One way to start focusing on vitality within the organization and among its employees is to implement a “work vitality break.” This is done by changing the name of “rest break” or “coffee break” to a “work vitality break.” Every day employees should focus some of their time on identifying ways to improve their performance, achieve greater fulfillment, find opportunities for growth, and meet their expectations. The management of the company needs to adopt management practices to ensure that employee ideas are implemented in an expedient and purposeful manner.

2. A way to involve employees in the process of increasing work vitality is to implement a work vitality “appraisal system” This is achieved by including the POFE categories in employee reviews and having managers and employees negotiate ways to improve vitality as part of the regular review process. As part of the appraisal system, appropriate rewards and development/growth activities could be identified and made part of the reward/recognition system. Rather than simply having regular performance reviews, it might be more productive to review all of the POFE variables periodically to determine whether employees are feeling fulfillment and

where they may not be, whether employees see opportunities and where not, whether employees see ways to improve their performance and where they do not, and whether their expectations are being met and where they are not being met.

3. To lay the foundation for implementing any suggestions for making changes in work vitality, the company should introduce a work vitality training seminar to help manager learn how to involve employees in their own development. The seminar should demonstrate ways in which individual employees can make a difference in their own lives.

4. To make certain that new employees are appropriately introduced to work vitality methods and procedures, a work vitality empowerment module should be included in the company new employee orientation program. This is accomplished by setting aside two to four hours during new employee orientation to teach them how to take a work vitality break and how to share responsibilities for their own growth and development.

5. The organization should use a form of the Work Vitality Profile as part of the process of selecting new employees. The WVP has been adapted for use in new employee selection to allow companies to select the most vitalized and effective individuals.

6. Finally, at critical transition points in employees' employment, the organization may wish to evaluate how well it is helping employees meet their expectations, achieve fulfillment, secure opportunities, and improve performance. Some of those critical points occur at initial employment, first employee review, salary and position changes, and when changes in work operations occur.

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