

Maximizing business value

Frequently, I notice ideas that originated decades ago are being recycled with slight tweaks and updated research. Take, for example, the late 20th-century correlation between employee satisfaction, customer loyalty and financial results, which has been referred to by several speakers at SCNetwork as if a revelation.

So it was refreshing to hear this concept spoken about with new terminology reflective of the generational shift taking place in the workforce. The term “employee satisfaction” seems a relic when positioned against the new moniker of “employee happiness.” This is how Jim Moss, CEO of Plasticity Labs, restated the value chain and seamlessly linked it to the entirely different mindset gen Y brings to the employment bargain.

Taken as a whole, this group of presenters provided clear evidence a seismic shift has taken place in the employment contract, one that savvy organizations have already adapted to. No organization signals this change more than IBM. The titles alone — of spokespersons Anna Dreyzin, education program manager, social engagements and insights, and Colleen Burns, manager influencer engagement, social business — reflect how far IBM has come from the days of conformity,



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ORGANIZATIONAL
EFFECTIVENESS

secrecy and grey suits parodied in films like the *Matrix*. But when coupled with out-of-the-box value statements such as “dare to be the wild duck” and a culture that touts the sharing of knowledge as power, it is clear this is an organization to be admired and emulated, one that has inculcated a 21st century culture into its fabric.

Rather than monitoring employees for unwanted online activity, it is expected. It is the means through which design innovations and services become potent collaborations, from the sharing and tweaking of PowerPoint presentations to product development.

For those who choose to work at home, there is recognition of the

need to be heard — or “to work out loud,” as they labelled it — something they emphasized can’t be done by living in an inbox. Email is reserved for communicating what’s private while internal and external forums and social access tools maximize value.

A corollary to this fresh way of getting things done is if someone is on vacation, sick or on leave, productivity is not affected as others in the online community answer questions as they arise.

The implications for organizational effectiveness are far-reaching. Gone are the days when bosses and co-workers get away with hoarding information based on the false belief knowledge is power. Now, all levels of the organization are expected to actively participate in online forums and evaluated based on their contributions in these realms. Except where legitimate, the measure of individual success is no longer secrecy, signalling a welcome change to culture where contributions can be provided and valued at all levels — a kind of balanced scorecard in real time.

The work done at Plasticity Labs further erodes the conventional way of getting things done. Decades-old tools like annual employee and customer surveys

are obsolete now that technology enables organizations to continuously collect data and pinpoint trends over time, rather than one moment in time. The implications are far-reaching, challenging the validity of how organizations currently measure everything from engagement to performance appraisals and the use of leadership tools such as 360 surveys.

The unmistakable message for organizations that want to maximize productivity through enhanced employee “happiness” is to constantly evolve the processes and systems for getting things done through effectively updating and leveraging an array of social technologies. Failure to adapt will, in due course, result in extinction.

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