

Executive Summary

People and their needs: a new priority for the workplace

In an era where the quest for growth calls for new competitive solutions and the curbing of public spending, the labor market is asking questions about the place of people in the workplace and the importance of their work.

Since 2007 stress and depression in the workplace have become topics of increasing discussion and concern. Work in France has become synonymous with suffering and has created awareness about the inherent psychosocial risks, well-being and the quality of life at work. Steps have been taken to tackle these problems.

If a company is created: “In order to share profits or to create value”, as defined by article 1832 of the Code Civil, work can never be reduced to simple and rational operational production, whether in regard to social, moral or efficiency dimensions.

When the human element is not taken into account, the risk of dysfunctions in the workplace increases (sometimes with dramatic consequences), to the detriment of people and performance and the cohesion in public and private organizations.

Emotions are part of our perception, our intuition, our capacity for action, our analysis, and our socialization. They influence the development of the person, their health, their individual and collective competence. Emotions show how satisfied or dissatisfied we are. All of them are useful and none of them should be rejected.

Organizations (companies and administrations) are only as good as the people who make them up (with all their human dimensions). To give back to people their rightful place, to not consider them simply as factors of production or as capital to be exploited, is to reconsider and recreate a new concept of motivation in the workplace.

130 interviews in France, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy and India and their analysis confirmed that taking care of people generates benefits: well-being, motivation, self-fulfillment, and as a consequence cohesion and improved performance within the organization.

This aspect is especially important in a country like France where pride at work is so important. The job is an integral part of self-fulfillment where professional and personal identities are combined and where recognition at work is of vital importance.

Today, if around 2/3 of employees say they are “globally” or “in general” “satisfied with their professional life”, it appears that this refers to their work as an absolute value. Concerning their perception of “how they feel in their own work”, the perception is just the opposite, leading to clear dissatisfaction.

Greater appreciation, involvement and consideration, being able to express oneself and be listened to, a better balance between professional and private life are all major stakes for French employees in today’s workplace.

Six levers directly related to people and their emotions

Starting from today’s situation in many companies or public administrations in France we wish through our study and proposals to raise awareness, and encourage action by taking into account emotions in order to improve satisfaction, well-being and self-fulfillment of employees at work.

Our proposals are made to help everybody within the organization in his or her day to day work to establish a better climate in the office.

Six levers for action are:

- **Freedom:** Top management, and middle management by their attitude and the organization of work, give, authorize, or allow employees freedom to make decisions. On the other hand, freedom has to be earned: it is everybody’s duty to exercise, utilize and assume the freedom he is granted.
- **Wisdom:** To give a sense of purpose, respect the human factor in the organization, have confidence in human nature and strive to be fair.
- **Kindness:** To give personal recognition, take care of the physical and psychological health of employees, be attentive and understanding, create a beneficial environment for people.
- **Authenticity:** To develop confidence using transparency, conceive emotions as a benefit, a source of motivation, truth, whatever our position within the organization.
- **Dialogue:** To give autonomy to staff members, recreate links to initiate collective motivation, develop active listening and exchange of views, anticipate the impact of our own emotions on others.
- **Self-fulfillment:** To bring pride, promote pleasure at work, facilitate personal development.

Create freedom for oneself and others, in an environment of dignity, freedom, initiative and self-confidence to enhance performance

In an environment where no actions are seen as beneficial if they cannot be measured, this proposal supports a different concept: work can have an added value even if the tasks carried out cannot be measured. Leaving staff a certain level of freedom within the process leads to better performance and excellence.

Targets for this proposal are:

- Give trust and delegate;
- Make people responsible for their own work;
- Improve potential and skills;
- Active listening and a frank exchange of views;
- The right to make mistakes, to learn from them and thus improve performance;
- Coherence within the organization between positive dialogue and constructive analysis of individual mistakes.

Wisdom: the role of ethics in giving meaning to work

The crisis of the meaning of work within our organization is a true modern reality. The increase in workload (feeling of acceleration and urgency), automation, the multiplication of tasks and the financial dictatorship of the economy create a feeling of depersonalization and instrumentalization for employees.

In the face of economic globalization, becoming competitive is seen as the only chance of survival. As a manager, the temptation is great to increase productivity and push employees to become more and more efficient. However, this concept of “always demanding more” is a dangerous threat.

Wisdom, is leading to a “step back concept”, ethics and fair treatment of employees, to create a favorable environment for people within the organization.

This proposal has the following objectives:

- Be aware of the limits of human performance;
- Grasp the complexity of each employee;
- Take as much care of the health of the team as of new products/new market share;
- Avoid pure rationality;
- Place employees at the heart of the creation of added value;
- Create a precise framework of intentions and actions;
- Choose actions best suited to the common good rather than the best deal;
- Link passion to the profession;
- Reduce conflicts;
- Base the value of the organization on those of the employees.

Kindness, Cornerstone to regain confidence

This word which originally meant “friendship and fraternity” now means a willingness to create happiness and well-being for others. In a professional environment where pressure is high, proximity and cohesion between managers and employees are vital.

This proposal aims to:

- Create shared responsibility, by creating collective responsibility;
- Prefer performance to “politics”;
- Develop friendly relations, between employees and managers;
- Reward achievement;
- Take into consideration the physical and psychological health of people;
- Take care of yourself;
- Seek a healthy organization;
- Be pro-active in detecting distress and support these colleagues.

Authenticity, a prerequisite for action

Acting and thinking in line with our convictions, our emotions, our values, is the best way to foster authenticity and build our credibility.

It is the link between ideas, emotions, speech and acts which found the credibility of our relations to others. Authenticity is a true prerequisite for all our actions. Indeed, authenticity is what everybody perceives before anything else. Without authenticity, our speech and actions lose their value, and could even be counterproductive.

This proposal has the following objectives:

- Learn about each other and act according to our character;
- Renew management of high potentials and top managers;
- Create a healthy trust;
- Improve our relationships with others;
- Live, work and act in the full understanding of ourselves and those around us.

Dialogue Vector of cohesion between colleagues

To dialogue is to free people to express their emotions openly and encourage them to communicate their thoughts, issues and knowledge.

Individualism has become a central value in our society, is visible in our organizations, due to the weakening of collective links and institutions (unions/ Mentors). In the face of this individualism and the lack of motivation at work, we would like to set up five proposals in order to reestablish a real dialogue in our organization, and between colleagues:

- Involve employees in the decision making process, to make them more responsible;

- Recreate social links to generate collective actions;
- Develop a flat management model;
- Anticipate impact of our own emotions on others;
- Develop active listening and dialogue.

Self-fulfillment, Summit of Satisfaction, Pride, Performance at Work

This last lever is dissimilar to the five previous ones. They are mostly related to a “state of mind” or an attitude. Self-fulfillment is especially for many of us a target or a purpose. For very few of us it is a real “state”, the accomplishment of our private or professional lives.

An employee’s self-fulfillment in a company and through his job depends on his rank within the system. However this system exploits him for maximum benefit.

Yet our study has convinced us that pleasure, pride and personal development at work should no longer be “tabou”. On the contrary, they are a real source of accomplishment, contributing to greater cohesion and improving performance.

Those proposals’ targets are:

- Increase pleasure in a job well done;
- Develop pride in work successfully carried out;
- Focus on positive experiences;
- Develop well-being, and conviviality to enhance organization;
- Stimulate team spirit;
- Respect personal development.

To Conclude

Putting people at the heart of organizations should appear self evident. After all people make and shape organizations. Clearly we have forgotten this since today’s world is governed by objectives and financial measures and targets.

Moreover, even in this time of crisis, taking into account the human element is paramount if our organizations are to flourish. A change of strategy is needed in order to take into account the fundamental needs of the employees and channel the positive energy towards improving performance. Those elements constitute a modern vision, responding to today’s expectations especially from the young.

It is not an easy task, but we should focus on some basic attitudes which exist within each of us. Our international experience demonstrated this on many occasions.