



The Key to Organizational Success

By Rob Statham

The key to organizational success is bringing together a skilled group of people to work as a team toward an agreed-upon goal. It's easy to say, but it seems to be derailed quickly.

Existing organizations are loaded with robust management systems in place and very skilled people. They have clearly defined the vision or goal. Yet success would not be the first adjective used to describe their results. Struggling is closer. Why? Because they have made the same mistake that has been made for years, many organizations have fallen into this trap. They overlook Latency, the cause of all problems. Latency is the portion of our work culture, the way we are, that is causing problems and needs to change.

They prioritize the organization over the people in it. As a result, the individuals within the organization don't value each other, nor do they trust one another. This leads to mediocre communication at best. Skilled people are now doing what they are told rather than raising issues that need to be addressed to move towards the goal. It's difficult to pinpoint what's wrong. The problem is intangible, not a matter of fixing a piece of equipment or updating a procedure. The problem lies in the way people are and the way they interact. The culture drifts slowly, deeper and deeper into a culture of blame. This undermines trust, the foundation for all healthy relationships, and brings a sense of shame and sometimes even fear. People avoid doing anything to be associated with failure, even if it means not trying to help improve things for fear their efforts won't work. It's safer to do nothing. The entire organization seems to respond as if in quicksand, and the most frustrating part about it is one person cannot fix it, regardless of their authority. It takes a majority that sees it and agrees on how to address it. This requires trust, a rare attribute. Trust, by definition, means an individual is willing to risk themselves by relying on someone else. That means a shift in the way we are - from blame to understanding, from adversary to trust. This needs to be modeled so all within the organization see the benefits and importance of trust and respect in improving performance.

This is not difficult when a relationship matters more than money or anything else. When a relationship is somewhere down the list, this is virtually impossible. Our organizations are set up with a lack of value for people. You can



easily see it when you look at an organization's relationship with its contractors. This is a magnified view of how they treat all people. Anytime people are treated like they have a lower value than others, they will perform according to those expectations. Why should they trust and risk anything for a response that doesn't honor or value them? Is a relationship valuable enough in your organization that you are willing to experience a failure (pain), learn from it, and grow together? In most places, the answer is a hard no. They run from the idea of failing to come back stronger. This is how everyone learned to ride a bike, but we've grown up and think there is a better way. We add multiple people and multiple constraints and then expect to jump on a unicycle, for the first time, with a square wheel and win a race. It sounds absurd because it is. It is the elephant in the boardroom. Yet they keep looking for ways to improve human performance other than treating humans with honor, trust, and compassion and watching how performance improves. Here, individuals can begin to trust one another and act like a team. The strength of any organization is its unity, not its individual talent. It's joining together for one goal. The organization gets the glory, not the individuals.

The question begs to be asked is, 'How do you address this?' The answer most often offered is to quit treating people that way. Value them. Open lines of communication up. Lead by example. It all sounds good, but the results speak for themselves. It is a dilemma to know what needs to be done but unsure how to do it. That is why you are still reading this. The answers are all good. I don't dispute that, but the problem is bigger than any edict or leadership example will address. **The problem involves every single person within the organization. Therefore, the solution rests with every single person within the organization.** When people think others need to change, that's part of the problem. It is not that management needs to change. It is that management, supervisors, and the field all need to change. Given human nature, most groups think the other groups need to change, not them. Step one is to make the problem visible. Everyone needs to help with this one. How? Use a process that will show each individual within the organization how they are part of the problem and how they can improve. That is where Latent Cause Analysis comes in. It is a process used to walk people through the 'How' for improving and addressing their part of the problem. People need to see their part and quit blaming others. Then, people will treat one another with respect, building trust,



so it is safe to learn from failure. When people learn the skills provided by Latent Cause Analysis, a noticeable change becomes apparent. This methodology offers a healthy and conscientious approach to analyzing hidden causes that impact work culture. Using Latent Cause Analysis can lead to a shift from a mediocre work culture to improved performance, requiring only a minimal investment of time and resources.

