Taking the Pulse of Peace in the Organization

A Column by Marianne Farag
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Looking Through the Lens of Peace

Harmonious interactions are an essential component of wellness in the workplace and are vital to an organization's efficient and effective performance. Previous articles in the series on **Peace in the Workplace** dealt with why individuals sometimes behave in disruptive ways, the signs of positive/negative work environments, and how to cultivate harmony in the workplace. The series explored specific strategies that employees can utilize, as well as ones that an organization can employ. This final article discusses tracking the status of peace in the workplace.

As you read on you will soon see that measuring the performance of peace in the workplace does not require that your organization develop a whole new performance measurement scheme. Rather, it's about mining the data you most likely already collect to gauge how your employees and organization are doing at fostering a positive work environment. Organizational results are impacted by the condition of resources deployed. When it comes to human resources, without a work environment that is psychologically healthy, performance suffers.

Risks of Non-Peaceful Interactions

The first step in developing performance measures for peace in the workplace is to identify the risks/consequences to employees and employers of non-peaceful work environments. For employees, the risk impacts include: morale issues, stress leave, formal grievances, and quitting. For employers the risk impacts include: compromised productivity and quality, staff shortages creating added expectations and

possibly stress on employees, reputation loss, added costs from absenteeism/sick leave, having to hire staff to replace those who are on leave or have quit, and training new employees. These impacts of non-peaceful work environments go to the heart of an organization's functioning. Avoiding them is paramount to the success of an organization. Clearly, the relative importance of the risks identified determines the need in this case to track performance.

Outcomes of Harmonious Interactions

The second step is to be clear on the desired outcomes from peace in the workplace. In relation to the risks just identified, the outcomes cold include:
- Reduced stress, anxiety and tension in the workplace.
- Employee retention.
- Reduced cost of filling vacancies and retraining.
- More value-added work is produced.
- Increased productivity.
- Service standards/quality improved (for both internal and external clients of the organization).
- The organization maintains/achieves employer of choice status.

Indicators of Peace in the Workplace

The third step is to identify indicators to track that outcomes are being achieving. By and large, the types of performance indicators for measuring peace in the workplace are already being collected by HR for other uses. E.G., absenteeism, long term leaves, number of formal employee grievances. As a result, measuring the performance of peace in the workplace will require minimal if any additional resources and effort. It's more a matter of analyzing the existing data from the lens of peace in the workplace.

Individual Responsibility

Crucial to a performance measurement scheme for peace in the workplace is placing measurable expectations on employees, at all levels of the

organization, regarding their conduct. The fourth step then is to draw on an organization's values and ethics policies including respectful workplace policies, and core competencies in areas pertaining to interpersonal communication, teamwork, leadership/supervisory skills, etc., as a source for identifying a suite of indicators to measure individual contribution to peace in the workplace.

An employee's annual performance evaluation is a good place to incorporate a discussion of individual performance with respect to peace in the workplace. Based on the feedback, an employee's work plan/learning plan for the coming year would incorporate the goals and actions the employee needs to take to enhance their contribution to peace in the workplace.

Here again, many of the types of criteria that would be suitable for assessing individual contribution

towards harmonious relations are already in performance evaluation forms. Consequently, implementation of this approach is much more about adopting new language – a new lens – than it is about collecting new data. It's about reframing the discussion on core interpersonal skills to bring into sharp relief how they affect peace in the workplace which in turn affects the bottom line of meeting an organization's mission and mandate.

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