

Total leadership and working with appreciation in managerial practice. Influence to job insecurity.

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Abstract

Total leadership technique is a management dynamic in which the individual face the different perspective in his life and makes them work together to improve the performance of each of the different domains available. Domains considered are work, oneself, family and community. By making them working together the individual experiences a richer life being real, being whole and being innovative. This is achieved by acting with authenticity, integrity and creativity. This process when carried out in advance becomes a success factor when employees face job insecurity. Total leadership technique is consistently based when the approach goes thorough working with appreciation.

Keywords: total leadership, job insecurity, appreciation, emotional intelligence.

1. Introduction.

Nowadays business environment is directly linked to dynamism and uncertainty. This statement obliges to continuously face different situations in which challenging and unknown clearing is a common part of managerial practices.

A specific effect of uncertainty is the perception of job insecurity. Such perception is sometimes supported by real facts and sometimes not. Nevertheless a transparent analysis to those situations is worthy and will help, either to clean it and recover the path on efficient work or coping it and taking actions that will help to approach rationally and find solutions if possible.

The postmodern approach on working with appreciation not just considers interaction for positive appreciation but also a rational approach to those cases in which negative circumstances need to be addressed. There is some evidence that negative conversation and emotionally can create constructive experiences within organizational life. Promoting organizational growth and development may require inquiry into both positive and negative life-giving forces as part of management practice.

Job insecurity commonly is coming with negative perspectives and perceptions. Employees in front of job insecurity perception can recover through appreciation as a managerial practice.

Total leadership techniques consider an approach in which work, family, community and oneself domains help each other to improve the leadership capabilities of an individual through a continuous learning process. The process itself delivers a better knowledge of the environment in which we are involved and becomes a success factor together with the

working with appreciation techniques we mention for those situations in which job insecurity flows.

2. Working with appreciation and total leadership.

Total leadership techniques deal with acting with authenticity, acting with integrity and being creative. First in this model is becoming conscious of what is important for us. Once this has been acquired the next step is understanding what we can do to positively contribute on the life of our stakeholders (Friedman, 2008). At this stage the process of working with appreciation totally fits since through that process is critical knowing ourselves and respect those in front of us. We cannot respect them if we do not know them. That stage then will help to build for the future positive experiences mainly starting from the positive experiences and learning taken from the past or projecting what would be the ideal model under our design as far as from our stakeholders. It will also apply to negative situations in which it is required to recover and positively face the next steps to be taken.

Total leadership process above mentioned starts with the self domain knowing what is really important for us, which aspects have a material meaning in our life and which not. That is the essence of being real, of acting with authenticity. By this mean we create value for ourselves, for our family for our business and for our community. This approach help effective leaders to articulate a vision- a compelling image of an achievable future- that inspires them and the people around them. Hence all the different domains have a specific impact in the work domain and the influence a leader has to practice working with appreciation.

The move toward viewing organizations as relational and socially constructed phenomena alters our perspective of conversation as primarily being about transmitting information among organizational members to being a powerful force that shapes the texture of organizational life. Conversation shapes the form of rationality, the type of power relationships, the identities of individuals and collectivities, and the types of emotions that are experienced by organizational members.

The significance of conversational activity within organizational life has resulted in additional attention being directed to the importance of managing conversations in productive ways, particularly in the service of fostering organizational learning and change.

Proponents of the dialogue approach have focused on creating conversational patterns that facilitate detailed collective inquiry into the underlying assumptions, values, beliefs, and contexts that compose organizational activity in order to create new patterns of actions.

Alternatively, proponents of the appreciative inquiry movement contend that the foundation for affirmative change is fostering conversation that inquires into the life-generating experiences, core values, and moments of excellence in organizational life. Both approaches attempt to instill a new type of conversation within organizational life – a form of conversation that moves away from adversarial discussion-oriented forms of discourse with a focus on problems to a more collaborative dialogic mode of inquiry that affirms the life giving within organizations.

Appreciative inquiry emphasize on valuing what works well within organizational life and its assumption that certain forms of emotional and spiritual life within organizations are required to foster learning and change. The process is focused on identifying what constitutes excellence in a work context. Positive emotions such as joy, pride, happiness and excitement

are generated in the process of telling inspiring stories about excellence, and these emotions, when coupled with a change agenda, provide the necessary energy to make transformation happen quickly (Fineman, 2000). Appreciative inquiry directly attends to the emotional and spiritual dimension of organizational life. The quality of this process is enriched by the total leadership process in which communication with stakeholders and combination with the rest of the domains enhance the level of knowledge to deliver appreciation.

Appreciation itself has a positive influence in the total leadership process. Four managerial competences are deployed for creative appreciative systems (Barrett, 1995).

Affirmative competence that refers to the ability to identify positive possibilities by bracketing out imperfections and focusing on past and present successes, assets, strengths, and potentials.

Expansive competence refers to the ability to challenge existing thinking and organizational practices, with an emphasis on stretching the capability of organizational members by having them engage passionately with important personal and organizational values.

Generative competence then refers to the ability to create systems that foster individuals' recognition of the consequence and the value of their contribution to the organization and that provide a sense of how they are making progress.

Collaborative competence finally refers to the ability to create conversational spaces where members work together and share diverse ideas and perspectives.

All these competences suggest that high quality conversation is characterized by a particular set of conversational topics and practices, as well as type of emotionality. Conversational topics should focus on the positive moments of the organization, centre on members' highest and aspirations and values, and be future oriented. It is important to dedicate as much time in meetings discussing the ideal future state as is spent discussing past and present issues. The conversation should be maintained highlighting and maintaining energy in the conversation (Barrett & Cooperrider, 1990).

Using these techniques in the interaction with stakeholders the knowledge of the counterpart becomes clearer and helps to establish a positive communication path to build the future and share goals and objectives between the parts.

The way that total leadership develops is through interviews with the stakeholders. Specifically there is one domain involved in work and the process to develop this area is knowing supervisors, colleagues and the team. There are instances where agreement cannot be achieved, and a manager may need to argue for his foci and way of managing the conversation. In such instances it will become critical for managers to construct linguistic landscapes where they can articulate the legitimacy of their actions (Shotter, 1993). Knowing the stakeholder together with pragmatic experimentation provides a means for different foci of appreciation to be connected in conversation where both parties view the focus as useful.

During the process of perception interchange between the stakeholder and us the steps designed by appreciative conversation are useful. First is to discover –appreciate and value the best of “what is”. Then dream-envision “what might be”, dialogue-discuss “what should be”, and destiny-determine “what will be” (Hammond & Royal, 1998). This process in the

conversation with the stakeholder will help to define and also to revise the best way to align our interest with our stakeholders' ones and becoming a better leader.

Particular forms of emotionality in talk are dismissed and discounted as being unimportant and potentially detrimental to organizational life (Foucault, 1980). Knowledge that is being produced through discourse is knowledge about positive high points and best practices in the organization, and employees' bodies are being shaped to be inspired, passionate and positive.

There is some evidence that negative conversation and emotionality can create constructive experiences within organizational life. Promoting organizational growth and development may require inquiry into both positive and negative life-giving forces as part of management practice. Full appreciation is seen as building on the positive as well as avoiding the negative (Golembiewski, 1999).

Particular embodiments of emotionality are not permitted when appreciation becomes fixed as being positive. In keeping with post 1970s emotional research on positive emotion, showing appreciation is associated with positive emotions, such as taking pride in the organization, enjoying one's work, and being satisfied with one's job, thereby making "love, empathy, verve, zest and enthusiasm...the sine qua non of managerial success and organizational "excellence"" (Fineman, 1996). Negative emotions such as anger, disgust, fear, vulnerability, fragility, and irritation are viewed as problematic, and the expression of these should be diminished and discouraged.

Viewing appreciation as being positive in conversation has a great potential to obscure power differences within the organization. Once appreciation becomes a tool to increase production, the nature of the relationship among organizational members is fundamentally altered.

Proponents of appreciative conversation contend that pursuing the positive within organizational life will lead to more democratically based and egalitarian types of organizations (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2000).

Acting appreciatively in conversation does not provide a means of determining what will be valued if different stakeholders appreciate different aspects of the organization. Discerning which aspects are to be brought to the foreground and which moved to the background presupposes collaborative competence. It is highly likely that managers will impose their views on others and pursue their own self-interests.

Acting appreciatively in conversation does not guarantee more democratic and egalitarian workplaces. Team-based management was adopted in a high-technology organization owing to a new commitment by management to foster egalitarian principles and employee empowerment.

The centrality of language as a way of making distinctions among differing forms of constructions, an emphasis on the fluid emergent nature of the contemporary world, a recognition that power and knowledge are connected and an acceptance of pluralism and fragmentation (Alvesson & Deetz, 1996). On discourse and linguistic practices as the institutional practices that shape rationality, construct power relationships, and enact member identities (Mumby & Putnam, 1992). The unfolding and evolving intersection of discourses at different moments in organizational life makes meaning unstable and fluid. Managers then should cultivate an appreciative spirit regarding conversation and emotionality. The task is to

coordinate these forms of talk and emotion with others in ways that sustain growth, learning and development.

Therefore we can conclude that the best approach of using appreciation for the total leadership context is in a poststructuralist perspective that opens up several possibilities for further exploration. Considering appreciation as being positive, where various linguistic constructions and forms of emotionality could be viewed as life enhancing is the principal focus of the process. Appreciation looks for inquiring into dreams, core values, and moments of excellence or providing statements of what organizational members view as important life generating properties.

No form of organizing is superior to another and not privileging one real over the other makes constructing organizations that are humane more likely. Negative emotions can play a constructive role in organizational life and should be developed within the skills of total leadership and should not be avoided (Bush & Folger, 1994). The challenge is to develop ways of working with in organizational life that provide a safe place for individual to express negativity but that also ensure individuals do not become stuck, because they are so focused in the past and attributing blame they cannot generate new ways of acting in the future.

Working with appreciation and applying this behaviour to the total leadership perspective requires attuning to the unique quality of emergent situations that will occur in the process of interacting and getting feedback with the stakeholders. Those meetings are areas where different perspectives intersect and meaning is continually unfolding. Managers require the ability to pick up the flow of conversation and to develop a sensibility for when and where to shape the conversation in new directions.

The previous steps taken in the total leadership process explained by Friedman building the relationship with the stakeholders and acting with authenticity, integrity and creativity will be the ground to strengthen and guarantee the success of working with appreciation in the business environment.

In this interaction there will probably be different conceptions of what needs to be appreciated. Managers are required to be able to provide legitimate arguments and reasons for why their actions fit within the situation. Also it is mandatory to understand and correctly interpret the linguistic from the stakeholder and also what he does not say but means.

3. Job insecurity and total leadership.

Business environment nowadays is affected by continuous dynamism that takes part in each of the organizations and their employees. Such dynamic is a source of uncertainty for employees as companies that sustain their performance are normally headed to continuous changes adapting to the market environment. Under such circumstances employees are coping job insecurity and that job insecurity is translated into different behaviours that leaders need to confront and mitigate or reduce its impact in the company performance.

A specific behaviour that results from job insecurity is the drop of affective commitment to the company. Job insecurity has negative consequences for employees, including reduced work effort, reduced organizational commitment, and reduced work satisfaction. Further more, job insecurity can lead to health problems, owing to the stress involved in coping with ambiguity, and that these problems act to reduce employee performance. Specific management techniques can result under this environment in positive outcomes. As part of

these managerial skills is the total leadership process that interacts and links the work domain with the community domain, family domain and oneself domain. Opening the circle and sharing part of it with the employee in the process of understanding the perceptions of the employee will help to identify opportunities to recover the affective commitment. Job insecurity can be controlled and an action plan can be established between the parts to mitigate its impact in the behaviour of the employee and his performance.

Many employees do not seek a career within one organization; they seek instead to maximize their external marketability (Kanter, 1989). The total leadership process of knowing more about the employees and establishing a better contact about their expectations in their life tends to reduce that previous statement since new links gets established between the manager and the employees. A stronger relationship gets established to the project via the relationship with the manager.

Coping behaviours as response to emotional reactions coming from job insecurity are intended to reduce job related tension through amelioration of experienced stress. Problem-focused coping, is intended to address the source of job-related tension directly when emotion-focused coping, is aimed at minimizing the emotional ramifications of stress (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Both behaviours can have either positive or negative effects on individual outcomes. Such impact is strongly related to the way the supervisor interacts under such circumstances.

Employee using positive problem-focused coping chooses trying to understand and thus resolving the stressful situation. Through cognitive reappraisal the employee can reframe the situation as an opportunity, rather than as a threat. Alternatively, the employee can seek to establish constructive social networks that provide emotional support. While the support that emerges from these networks contributes to positive emotion-focused coping, the actions required to set up these networks directly address the problem of job insecurity perceptions and therefore can be considered positive problem-focused coping. This approach is a ramification of the total leadership perspective in which employees reinforce his focus and face the uncertainty by interconnecting the different domains of his life.

The expression of anger and abuse of immediate supervisors is an example of negative problem-focused coping for the organization's failure to provide job insecurity. This type of behaviour not only reinforces the employees' own and other employees' perceptions of job insecurity but also may affect support networks that the employee can draw on in times of stress (Fitness, 2000). If the employees were to use positive problem-focused coping, however, he might choose to try to understand and, thus, to resolve the stressful situation. Through cognitive reappraisal (Latack, 1986) the employee can reframe the situation as an opportunity, rather than as a threat. Alternatively, the employee can seek to establish constructive social network that provide emotional support. While the support that emerges from these networks contributes to positive emotion-focused coping, the actions required to set up these networks directly address the problem of job insecurity perceptions and therefore can be considered positive problem-focused.

Negative emotion-focused coping behaviours with potential negative outcomes include withdrawal (Mobley, 1979), self-blame, wishful thinking (Vitaliano, 1985), and emotional avoidance. These behaviours may alleviate short-term concerns, but they fail to deal with the underlying stress. Further, the adoption of emotion-focused behaviour as an ongoing cyclical response may indicate an inability to manage emotions, because the employee avoids the

unpleasant emotion-evoking situation and, thus, is likely to be unable to resolve the unpleasant feelings he or she is experiencing (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

The first step in developing positive emotion-focused coping strategies is for the employee to assess the authenticity of his felt emotion and then to decide if the emotional reaction is reasonable under the circumstances. Ignoring these feelings can result in inappropriate strategies, such as avoidance or blaming. Acknowledging these feelings, however, allows the employee to engage in appropriate emotional management to overcome the emotions that the job insecurity has engendered.

Employees under stress are most likely to attempt to deal with stressful situations by adopting negative coping behaviours, whether problem focused or emotion focused. Lower organizational commitment and higher job-related tension lead to withdrawal from the organization. This suggests that a natural first reaction to stress and job insecurity is a defensive reaction. The consequence thus produces behaviours that are reactive, rather than proactive. This is the negative coping behaviour.

Also the total leadership process acts as moderator on the effects of job-related tension created by job insecurity. Total leadership as emotional intelligence helps to construct bridges between the manager and the colleagues and helps to better interpret and understand the negative coping for problem solving that normally occurs under these situations. The process established (Jordan, 2002) of perception, assimilation, understanding and management follows a cognition process which flows faster when total leadership attitudes have been developed. First stage of emotional perception matches with the knowledge we have about ourselves, how emotions come to us and the skills to distinguish between accurate and inaccurate expressions of emotions and between honest and dishonest expressions of emotions by others. Then the assimilation deals with the ability to adopt multiple perspectives to assess a problem from all sides. By adopting multiple perspectives, employees can determine the appropriate emotional state to facilitate the solution of the problem, or they can resolve the conflicting emotions they may be feeling. It will facilitate the solution of the problem. A third factor is the ability to understand complex emotions, such as a “double-bind”, or simultaneous feelings of loyalty or betrayal. It refers to the ability of individuals to recognize the likely transitions between emotions. Recognizing the sequence of emotions that flow from the employee perceptions is important to overcome negative response to emotions. Finally the regulation of emotions and the ability to connect with or disconnect from an emotion, depending on its usefulness in any given situation becomes the fourth factor. The four abilities encompassed by emotional intelligence and total leadership combine to create a moderating variable that enables prediction of employees behavioural and emotional responses to job insecurity.

Individuals with high level of emotional intelligence that have developed the total leadership skills will be able to ameliorate the effect of job insecurity on their affective commitment. The factors previously mentioned have a moderating influence. This is because employees need first to be aware of the emotions they are experiencing as a result of perception of job insecurity. Employees that have developed the emotional intelligence and that have been trained in the total leadership techniques can therefore be expected to be able to assess the emotions they are feeling to confirm if their perceptions are correct or not. They will be able to prioritize the information that is most important to their feelings of insecurity and then to adopt multiple perspectives to determine if their feelings are accurate and reasonable. Trained people are likely to foresee complex emotions emerging from those situations, including whether they have mixed feelings of loyalty and betrayal and how anxiety about their

insecurity may lead to feelings of frustration and anger. We conclude that individuals that have been trained in the total leadership techniques will reduce the effect of job insecurity on affective commitment. Employees not trained in those techniques will show lower affective commitment in front of job insecurity. Additionally the employees not trained in total leadership will experience higher dysfunctional job-related tension than those trained.

The essence of emotional intelligence and total leadership is not to ignore emotions but, rather, to be aware of emotions, being able to communicate with the counterparts, and to regulate these emotions in a way that facilitates the realization of valued outcomes.

High emotional intelligence employees may decide to reframe their perceptions of insecurity as an exciting challenge. Alternatively, they may control and redirect their anxiety into productive behaviour that will help to make their job more secure. This enables them to adopt multiple perspectives and to select from a range of coping strategies that result in amelioration of the emotional reactions to job security in the long term.

The ability to analyze and to understand others' emotional reactions to job insecurity may also allow the employees that have developed the total leadership techniques to assess a greater range of coping strategies.

The total leadership approach moderates the effect of affective commitment and job-related tension on negative coping behaviour. In the total leadership steps the interaction between the different domains and the process of sharing expectations becomes a significant help when job insecurity appears. The process of total leadership develops the skills of understanding and facilitating the perceptions of the employees involved and it avoids the negative coping behaviour as it will become natural to interact with the counterpart and to share the perspectives and way of behaving in conditions in which job insecurity has not taken part yet. Once the job insecurity takes place the individual has a previous experience in which job-related tension was not active and that enabled firstly to better understand the way the employee behaves. Additionally that previous process has given the employee or the supervisor different domains and tools to copy the problem-focused experiences. By this means the number of options and alternatives to face the situation looking for positive implications and correctly understanding and differentiating what is and what is alike will help to reach a successful or at least optimal situation to confront job insecurity and its implications.

4. Conclusion.

Total leadership abilities becomes a tool to manage working with appreciation and building positive future within organizations that takes special importance in the periods in which fast changing and uncertainty take place creating job insecurity perception. It becomes a critical facilitator not only when purpose is to clean negative perceptions but also when reality is tough and positive conclusions need to be developed from difficult and negative situations.

Reciprocally working with appreciation becomes a tool to enter into the total leadership techniques in which one sits in front of their stakeholders and builds a communication process trying to understand what is worth for the counterpart related to oneself, it means how an individual can align his interest with the other stakeholder.

Work domain as a leader combined with community and oneself domain can positively influence in the performance of working with appreciation from a managerial perspective and

impacting on partially mitigation the reactions caused by job insecurity. Doing homework in advance will strongly support the period in which job insecurity could come and the number of resources available to reduce impact of affective commitment and job-related tension will be much more and with a higher probability of success than if in the contrary it were not done previously.

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