The Organizational Leadership Dynamics of Human Flourishing

Jamie Wright
New Mexico Military Institute
Roundtable: Organizational Leadership

Abstract

The structure of organizational leadership plays an imperative role in employees' lives, as well as in their mental health and stability within the workplace. This paper explores the following areas: the benefits of employee well-being, the culture of organizational leadership that supports human flourishing, positive reinforcement, self-belonging/inclusion, leadership and organizational identity, organizational commitment, professional development, growth, and job/career satisfaction. Each topic about organizational leadership and structure from a biblical perspective is thoroughly explained. Practical applications for improvement and how to reach your employees and help them be included in the growth process are provided.

Keywords: organizational leadership, professional development, human flourishing, biblical perspective, self-belonging

Introduction

These questions might come to your mind: How do people flourish within an organization? How can employees flourish? How can employers help their employees flourish? Northouse (2019) elaborated on the *skills approach*: "The skills approach takes a leader-centered perspective on leadership" (p. 44). Skills are what leaders can accomplish. Traits are what make leaders who they are. When looking at the organizational leadership dynamics of human flourishing, it is significant to use the three-skill approach: technical skills, human skills, and conceptual skills.

Technical Skills

According to Northouse (2019), "Technical skills are knowledge about and proficiency in a specific type of work or activity" (p. 44). Each person on this planet was created by

Christ in his image and granted different qualities and gifts. As an organizational leader, we must be able to identify employees' strengths and weaknesses. For example, I am called to teach. I would never want to weld. I would burn something up and should not operate a welding gun because I do not know how to use it. Am I teachable? Yes. But you never want to put someone in a position where they will fail. Employers must recognize their employees' strengths so they can flourish, grow, and move up the ladder—not down.

Human Skills

Northouse (2019) stated, "Human skills are knowledge about and ability to work with people" (p. 44). This means being able to work with individuals and on group projects, knowing how to work with followers, and can they be leaders. If they were given a task, could they accomplish the task and meet the organization's goals, or would they fail? Knowing an individual's human skills helps you place the employee on the right team, enables them to grow as a professional, and equips your company and them for success (Northouse, 2019, p. 44).

Conceptual Skills

Conceptual skills are knowing how to think outside the box. This means being innovative and using creative ideas to complete the task given. According to Northouse (2019), "Technical skills deal with *things* and human skills deal with *people*, conceptual skills involve working with *ideas*" (p. 45). Leaders who have conceptual skills are comfortable talking about their ideas, which enhances the organization's growth and helps ideas come to pass.

The Benefits of Employee Well-Being

I have worked in many places in my 41 years of life. Some were jobs to get me through college, some were jobs to get me experience, and some were jobs to help build up my career so I could land my dream job as a professor. It took many years and much sacrifice to get where I am today. But it was worth it all.

Employers often do not recognize the importance of the benefits of understanding the employees' well-being. Employees want to be appreciated, shown compassion and empathy, and recognized for a job well done; they deserve days of rest without interruption. In *Life-Changing Leadership Habits*, Jeff Doolittle (2023) elaborated on ways to increase transformational tools and exercises for loving followers (p. 48). I thought this was true. Following are a few examples to improve the well-being of your employees:

1. Practice what you preach as the leader. Do not expect the employee to follow through if you never do.
2. Serve your employees equally.
3. Serve your employees. Let them know their value and worth.
4. Be honest with your employees, and they will be honest with you.
5. Seek to build trust rather than insecurities within your employees.
6. Promote how valuable your employees are, be interested in their ideas, and be willing to listen.
7. Compensate over time and give them rest for the hours worked.
8. Understand family is important and valued.
9. Provide childcare for single parents.
10. Provide community and team-building exercises (Doolittle, 2023, pp. 48-49).

By doing some of these steps, your employee will find a work/life balance, feel valued, and want to come to work, rather than drag their feet. To flourish in an organization, one must take care of their employees and know their worth.

The Culture of Organizational Leadership that Supports Human Flourishing

Examine your own life and look at how far you have come. If I had to guess, I would imagine we have all grown from where we were 20 years ago. I know I have. I never thought I would be teaching college, because growing up, I hated school. I am dyslexic, and school was extremely hard for me. It was my grandmother who encouraged me to get an education because she never had the opportunity to go.

To grow your organization, you must be willing to invest in your employees. This means the organization needs to support human flourishing in ways such as providing means to grow their knowledge, obtain professional development, and receive tuition reimbursement. One of my favorite professors who passed away during my doctoral program wrote in his book *The Light Prize*, "Discovery is the uncovering, identification, and recognition of a new concept, property, truth, or algorithm" (Oster, 2011, p. 20). One cannot flourish if one cannot uncover their true gifts or if their employer does not support their willingness to grow. If an organization does not support an employee, the employee will go elsewhere—where they can grow and flourish. Oster (2011) stated, "Rich or poor, educated or illiterate, friend or foe: all equally deserve our attention and service" (p. 133). Everyone in an organization deserves the opportunity to grow and flourish. If we are keeping our employees from growing, are we allowing our organization to grow?

Positive Reinforcement

Positive reinforcement within an organization is one of the best things an organization can do. As humans, we all make mistakes. We are also quick to point out faults but slow

to praise accomplishments. According to Amber Preston (2024), "Nonverbal communication is also important. Your body language, tone of voice, and facial expressions all contribute to how your message is received" (p. 31). Nonverbal communication resonates with positive reinforcement. Leadership is not always about pointing out the flaws; it is about finding the positive within an individual's work ethic, skills, drive, and motivation—finding their success. It is hard for a person to flourish if an organization cannot find the positive within the employee.

When looking at positive reinforcement, the top value within an organization should be prioritizing positive reinforcement, understanding how to help employees reach their full potential, creating a strategic plan to offer professional development, and encouraging employees to gain new skills, so they can be up to date with new technology and attend to gain more expertise in their career. It is significant to empower employees to do their best and help them to reach their full potential. We all know the 21st Century is filled with unexpected business. Organizations are overloading their exceptional employees because they know they are dependable, and resilient, and will not let them down. Preston (2024) wrote, "When we take the time to step back and identify what's truly important, we can cut through the noise and focus on the work that has the greatest impact" (p. 43). Prioritizing enables the organization to use the time and energy of their employees more efficiently, which will lead to success and less stress (Preston, 2024, p. 43). If the organization does not prioritize, employees will experience *burnout*.

In *The Lasting Impact of Positive Leadership*, Stan Toler (2019) explained the four aspects of coaching concerning a positive work environment:

1. *Leading*. If you want a good team, lead well. Your employees will follow the leader. Leadership is learned not taught (Toler, 2019, p. 43). I would imagine if we took a trip down memory lane, we all would have someone we admire or look up to. For me, it is my grandmother. She was a true leader as a follower of Christ. She taught me to pray, to always have compassion, and to not be a follower but a leader. She taught me not to go with the world but to always renew my mind with the Word of God. Imagine for a minute you are picking the person you want to be on your dream team. When you pick your team, you are helping the members grow and flourish and eventually take over your company. You do not want someone who is not willing to lead and be an example; you want someone always willing to grow and take the company to the next step. You teach them how to be successful, not how to fail.
2. *Mentoring*. Mentoring is taking time to invest in a person's life (Toler, 2019, p. 43). Going back to your dream team. Remember, you are raising the team to take over your company. Therefore, you want to be a great mentor to them. Lead them in the way you would want to be led. As a mentor, it is your job to

motivate your team to succeed with excellence. Excellence is earned—not given. According to Toler (2019), "Mentors are teachers. They relate and motivate by sharing knowledge" (p. 44). When you are forming your team, share your knowledge so that your employees can grow and be inspired by your vision and mission for the company.

3. *Relating*. If you want to create the best dream team, you have to be able to relate to your team. Be excited to see your team. Do not keep any secrets from your team. Be open and authentic with your agenda. Be loyal to your team. Be willing to set the stage for excellence; doing this means stepping out of your comfort zone and being willing to lead while relating to each team member (Toler, 2019, p. 46).

4. *Training*. Training is essential and significant when moving your dream team to success. It does not matter if your company is large or small, you cannot afford to miss out on training. This training can be discussing your strengths, weaknesses, and values or teaching interpersonal communication within the organization. What makes the best team? Training allows you to discuss where the organization is going. This allows your team to discuss moving forward, accomplishing goals, and setting new goals. What motivates your team? How are you going to get from Point A to Point B? Team planning is teaching your team to tell others to buy into what is being said or accomplished. If no one says anything, no one will buy into what is taking place (Toler, 2019, p. 50).

Self-Belonging/Inclusion: What does this mean in a workplace?

Each organization is filled with different types of dynamics. This means the organization will be filled with a diverse population of employees. The larger the organization, the more cliques you will have—there will be more outcasts, and people will be lost in the crowd. Keith (2024) stated, "People flourish when they are able to accomplish their personal goals and realize their potential" (p. 61). Organizations often do not want to hear from employees, nor do they even ask for their ideas. Keith wrote, "Greenleaf emphasized the importance of a unifying dream" (p. 63). A dream comes by having a mission or goal. Employees want to know their thoughts and dreams matter, this allows them to feel a sense of belonging, including them in the process. Including them in the mission makes them feel like they are making a difference and helping it flourish and grow.

Leadership and Organizational Identity

Understanding your leadership role within an organization can often be mind-boggling. Nowadays, everyone wants you to *stay in your lane*. Not many are willing to help share the load or to help others be successful. People are often jealous of success, envious of decisions, and not willing to help you achieve your goals. Peter K. Scheuermann (2023)

elaborated on where a leader can live out their values—begin to identify and define, both as an individual and within an organization, can live out their values and strengths within an organization, along with strengthening their weaknesses. The first step is to understand their values and achieve their goals. This includes both terminal and instrumental goals and how they are put together (Scheuermann, 2023, p. 43).

1. Understand your organization and your role as a leader. What are your values? Strengths? Vision? Do these values align with your vision as a leader?
2. Understand the culture. Does the culture create a safe place for you and others to grow as leaders? Is the organization supportive? Are you supported as an employee?
3. Do your visions align with the organization's values both internally and externally?
4. How will the organization help the leadership team and organizational identity be successful? How will the dream team become successful within the organization?

Answering these questions will help you to understand your role as a leader and help you to understand the organization's identity. If your values do not match up with those of the organization, you might be working in the wrong place and find yourself comprising your values, goals, and morals to meet the organization's standards before meeting your own.

Commitment to the Organization

When looking at commitment to the organization, this can go many ways. When interviewing a new employee, you may ask, how long do you plan to work here? Is this just a temporary job to get you to the next level? You may ask some really hard questions during the interview to discover if the person is qualified and committed to the organization. This is normal. We like to think people are going to invest in the organization and never leave.

To keep employees, we must be willing to meet them where they are. People do not leave their jobs, they leave leaders. If an employee is in a position where there is no room for growth, they will end up leaving in 6 months to a year for a better opportunity. Michael Berg (2020) stated, "In each vocation, the Christian is called to die to self and to live for others" (p. 8). Satan will always try and screw up our vocation. Satan will attack your mind with thoughts of improper pride and self-justification (Berg, 2020, p. 8). When Satan begins to attack, he attempts to change your mindset of your calling to self-justification (Berg, 2020, p. 8). This means that the vocation is all about *your* wants and needs. In the end, it is about the employees' wants and needs.

How can we serve them better? How can we help them grow and flourish in their calling? What can we do better to meet the needs of everyone who is in our care?

Professional Development, Growth, and Job/Career Satisfaction

Professional Development

Professional development is significant when moving up in a career/vocation. It helps you remain up to date on what is taking place in the classroom and new technology, and you are able to meet the needs of the next generation. We all know we get older and wiser, but as we grow into our careers, things change, and we need to be prepared to take the organization to the next level.

David A. Garvin and Michael A. Roberto (2011) stated, "A legacy of disappointment and distrust creates an environment in which employees automatically condemn the next turnaround champion to failure, assuming that he or she is 'just like all the others'" (p. 17). With professional development comes change. This means we need to find the strengths and weaknesses of the employees. Where do they need improvement? How can we help them grow? A great leader helps coach their team to success; they are not just going to rely on them to do it on their own. Garvin and Roberto advised, "Turnaround leaders must also gain trust by demonstrating through word and deed that they are the right leaders for the job and must convince employees that theirs is the correct plan for moving forward" (p. 18). If you believe what you say, your employees will believe what you say. Employees have to know you have a vision and mission for their success. If an employee is willing to grow, it is important to provide them with a strategic plan to reach their full potential.

Growth

It is normal to want to *grow* and *expand your knowledge* so you can advance in your career. With growth often comes growing pains. Growing pains are identifying your weaknesses, creating a plan, and moving forward to be successful. Take a glance at Joshua 11:15 where Moses and Joshua were focusing on their relationship. Joshua had taken the teachings of his mentor and accomplished more than Moses. Joshua was able to get God's people to the Promised Land. Joshua focused on four areas: teaching, training by repetition, training by example, and impartation. Then there was the result. Moses believed in Joshua and, therefore, reproduced himself in Joshua. Just like the people honored Moses, they honored Joshua (Garing, 2011, pp. 117-119).

As leaders, we are called to produce successors. We are to model the image for each follower and our organization and to help each employee reach their full potential. If you are not doing the right thing, like cheating and telling lies, would you want an organization full of people just like you? The answer is no! If it is yes, you need to check

your motives. To reach your full potential, you must be challenged to be better than you were yesterday.

Job and Career Satisfaction

What does it mean to have satisfaction within your career/job? It means you are satisfied with where God has you, you are excited to go to work, and you help mentor others along your journey. I imagine that everyone has had a job where it was miserable to go to work. There was always someone trying to steal your joy or thunder. This person was shaking the entire building like an earthquake. It was like you were walking on eggshells. This is not job satisfaction. If you find yourself in this place, it might be time to move forward. We are all humans trying to find our destiny. No one is perfect and no job or career is perfect. There is always room for growth, change, and mentorship.

When evaluating job and career satisfaction, four strategies can make leaders more effective. This will help to improve growth vocation and career satisfaction within the organization.

- *Better decision-making*: Thinking strategically allows servant leaders to think of future challenges and opportunities for growth.
- *Being adaptable*: Prepare your employees to adapt to change. Knowing how to adapt to change will promote job satisfaction. Do not get stuck in your ways. Be willing to move forward.
- *Innovative ideas*: Encourage your employees to come up with innovative ideas to meet goals and standards within the organization.
- *Employee engagement and motivation*: Make sure your employees have a sense of belonging and a sense of purpose and they understand the direction of the organization. Allow input from employees and understand their vision for the organization. Including your team provides a place of belonging, along with understanding the vision of the organization so it can advance rather than diminish (Meade, 2023, pp. 57-58).

Conclusion

In conclusion, *the organizational leadership dynamics of human flourishing* help to create the organization of your dreams. When you understand the goals of the organization, you create a strategic plan of growth to help employees flourish and help the organization continue to grow. Investing in the organization along with your employees builds character and job satisfaction and creates a mentorship with both the employee and the organization.

Author's Biography

Dr. Jamie Wright has been teaching in academia since 2013. She has excelled in the career path she has chosen. Dr. Wright is an Associate Professor, with the speech faculty for New Mexico Military Institute, where she teaches Public Speaking, Intercultural Communication, Interpersonal Communication, and Introduction to Communication, and is in charge of the Ruppert-Burton Speech Contest. She is resilient, loved by her students and colleagues, and always goes the extra mile. She earned her Doctor of Strategic Leadership degree in May 2021 from Regent University in Virginia Beach, Virginia, where she was a Doctoral Fellow for the School of Communication. She is a 2017 graduate from Eastern New Mexico University where she obtained a Master of Arts in Communication. In 2012, she graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Psychology from West Virginia University of Parkersburg, West Virginia.

Dr. Wright has been extremely successful not only in her academic career but in her personal life as well. She loves to do research and edit scholarly papers and books for colleagues and former students. She enjoys spending time with her husband, Chris, and her two chocolate Labs—Biscuit and Beau Jangles. For fun, Jamie enjoys running marathons, traveling the world, serving in the community, attending sporting events, gardening, attending church, serving at church events, and spending time with friends and family. She has a love for the educational system, a passion for helping students thrive in and out of the classroom and mentoring students on the career path they have chosen. She is one of a kind and the best in my eyes. Even in her darkest hours, her hope was found in Jesus. Jesus has been her guide and continues to lead her on the path on which he has called her.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to: Dr. Jamie M. Wright, Email: jwright@nmmi.edu

References

Berg, M. (2020). *Vocation: Setting for human flourishing.* New Reformations Publications.

Doolittle, D. J. (2023). *Life-changing leadership habits.* Organizational Talent Consulting.

Garing, B. S. (2011). *Sheep, bell sheep, and sheep dogs.* Rock House Publishing.

Keith, K. M. (2024). *Servant leadership at work: Caring about people and getting extraordinary results.* Terrance Press.

Meade, C. P. (2023). *Servantology: The periodic elements of servant leadership.* Leadership Alive, Inc.

Northouse. (2019). *Leadership.* Sage Publications, Inc.

Oster, G. (2011). *The light prize.* Positive Signs Media.

Preston, A. (2024). *Leadership skills for managers: 7 practical skills to master the art of communication, enhance decision-making capabilities, and inspire high-performing teams.* Inner Vision Publishing.

Roberto, D. A. (2011). Change through persuasion. In L. 1. Reads, *On change management* (pp. 17-18). Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation.

Scheuermann, D. P. (2023). *The secret sauce of servant leadership: Seven ingredients that ignites the power of people.* Christian Faith Publishing.

Toler, S. (2019). *The lasting impact of positive leadership.* Harvest House Publishers.