

## Quality of working life research: IV. Cooperation with colleagues and management

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**Abstract:** The job has become the modern man's bridge to the world. It is, first and foremost, our joining an organization (company) that provides man with actions that confront us with the outer world. There is enormous potential in the development of the joint energy of an organization and of groups. The groups that manage to handle all conflicts and conflicting interests turn into regular small combat units that perform miracles none would ever think of. Fellowship is something in life that contains immense potential, and fellowship is the third aspect of working life quality besides quality of life, mastery and creating real value. If you open up and let things happen, a group may turn into an incredibly intense and creative unit. Cooperation and management gradually disappear in favor of group members' increasing ability to act intuitively and directly. Much time is wasted and valuable energy lost in internal disputes. Instead of fighting our personal limitations and ourselves, many of us fight others. A section of a company may end up being unproductive and without profit if the classical pattern of complaints, envy, cliques, and arguments prevails. Through this article we shall have a look at what creates and builds fellowship, the role of the leader and the workers.

**Keywords:** Quality of Life, QOL, quality of working life, QWL, philosophy, human development, public health

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### INTRODUCTION

The brilliant leader does not acquire his or her dominance and power by obstructing the employees. Rather, the brilliance of leadership originates from the leader's ability to inspire the group. A group has a natural leader, who may be characterized as the person who most clearly is able to understand the common objective as well as to express the collective intention and will of the group. His or her task is to secure the group's common interests. This includes being authorized by the group to organize the work so that everybody contributes his best efforts to solve the group's common task. You not only have a right to, you have an obligation to enter into dialogue with your superior, if you disagree with him or her.

In this article, we shall have a further look at cooperation, management, and public relations (public or private) as an entity. Ideally, these three aspects converge into an overarching entity uniting employees

and managers in a sense of fellowship within the organization - in order to carry out its goals.

### COOPERATION WITH COLLEAGUES AND MANAGEMENT

#### Bad cooperation

Anders does not thrive at work. He often feels exploited when asked to carry out extra work. He rarely benefits from doing this. He is not particularly proud of working for this company. The manager and the chief executives decide and define which tasks are to be carried out. Whether the company sells its products and survives, Anders sees merely as a management problem. 'It can never be my problem if the company is doing badly', he thinks, 'I am not the one who makes more money when the company has a high turnover.'

When they speak about him, his colleagues sometimes adopt quite an acrimonious and sarcastic tone. For his part, Anders considers them idiots in

varying degrees. Anders does not think highly of the head of the section, since Anders is not 'understood'. Actually, Anders tries to work as little as possible, to get as much money as possible and to avoid his superiors and colleagues to the greatest possible extent.

#### **Normal cooperation**

Thomas feels all right at work. He gets on well with his colleagues at lunchtime, but when he works he minds his own business and rarely notices the presence of his colleagues. He is in good standing with his superior and they communicate politely. The head of section knows best and Thomas is confident in leaving his superior with all the administrative and planning matters. Thomas has no real reasons to complain although he is not very content and Thomas does not feel any true commitment to his company. He might as well be employed by a competitor. He considers it a coincidence that he is working for this firm and not another.

#### **Good cooperation**

Bjarne has a good feeling each morning on arriving at the company's main entrance. He feels good here. He is always happy to meet his colleagues and he is highly regarded by his superior. He feels embraced by his section. Even when he is a bit tired and worn out after a period of long working hours and lack of sleep, he likes to join his team for ten minutes in the morning to make plans for the day.

Bjarne considers the company his own even though he is not a partner. The management does its best to back him up as well as to support his development. He experiences his company as a good opportunity to make a valuable contribution to his surroundings. He does not distinguish strictly between work and spare time, since he considers his work meaningful and more than his money's worth. The work is also done for the sake of his pleasure and personal development. If he were to become redundant, which is most unlikely, he would continue with something similar.

Bjarne is a very loyal and conscientious employee. He works late if needed and gives of his best all round including in his relationship with colleagues, managers and customers. Management appreciates his efforts and considers him a future key person in the company.

#### **FELLOWSHIP**

The advantage of cooperation is that work may be divided up in a way that is tailor-made to suit each member of the group. Consequently, cooperation is a great advantage that makes for great achievement. Thus

things are done, which would have proved impossible the individual way.

A group needs a leader to promote unity and to coordinate individual contributions into a powerful whole. Think once more of your present perception of fellowship and your own cooperation by answering the following questions:

- Do you experience yourself as a perfect part of your group?
- How good is the cooperation?
- How good is management?
- Do you like your superior, your colleagues and your subordinates, or are your personal relations cool and formal?
- Have you chosen the right organization to work for?
- Are you comfortable with the organization's mission statement?
- Does your organization show proper values?
- Is the organization alive or is it 'half dead'?
- Is your heart and soul in it when you enter the company premises?
- Do you take any responsibility for the internal and external affairs of the organization?

Fellowship is something in life that contains immense potential. If you open up and let things happen, a group may turn into an incredibly intense and creative unit. Cooperation and management gradually disappear in favor of group members' increasing ability to act intuitively and directly.

There is enormous potential in the development of the joint energy of a group, and the groups that manage to handle all conflicts and conflicting interests turn into regular small combat units that perform miracles none would ever think of. Humans who join together in well functioning communities may experience a closeness and intensity that is hard to put into words for outsiders.

Unfortunately, joint energies are immensely vulnerable and experience shows that even the best groups do not survive for long. It may be that it is part of the essence of life that joint efforts for a collective purpose, a joint project or a united statement of objectives will survive only for as long as there is a reason to keep the group intact. Only a united challenge keeps the group together.

Although, for example, Danes see themselves essentially as friendly people, they often experience problems with regard to cooperation and a sense of community in their companies. Often there will be

considerable distance among the workers themselves and between management and the workers. Various professional groups may develop into factions or cliques and manifest considerable difficulty in adjusting to an overall sense of community in the company. Some people may be on friendly terms with a few colleagues, albeit very few, and it is a fact that people rarely establish friendships with their superiors. This is not really an astonishing feature in cultures where, (according to Quality-of-Life survey results), only one in two people has a close friend in whom they can confide and with whom they can discuss anything.

The fact that people are not as sociable at work as they could or should be might be considered a private matter. However, it is clear that organizations, departments, and companies will suffer in the long run as a result of imperfect communication. Much time is wasted and valuable energy lost in internal disputes. Instead of fighting our personal limitations and ourselves, many of us fight others. A section of a company may end up being unproductive and without profit if the classical pattern of complaints, envy, cliques, and arguments prevails.

#### **THE GOOD ORGANIZATION**

The job has become the modern man's bridge to the world. It is first and foremost our joining an organization (company) that provides man with actions that confront us with the outer world. It is difficult to define an organization, but basically it is about a group of people who join together for a common purpose.

In the good organization all employees solve their tasks efficiently and well. Management's objective is co-ordination of the work in order to maximize the value of the overall efficiency. In a good organization, the leader is part of the group. Even though he or she is authorized with the power to define tasks, to lay off some members and welcome others, the good leader does not serve his personal interest in doing this. Rather, he or she serves the overall objective of the organization.

In the good organization, the leader is considered a valuable and appreciated person who deserves to be held in high esteem. People live, thrive, and prosper in the organization. It operates efficiently and develops quality. It is, so to speak, an extension of life and does not function in opposition to life; it does not go against our nature as human beings. Unfortunately, the good organization is rare, but in principle it is not out of reach. There is no need for conflict between employee and manager or between people and their organizations.

The good organization provides us with oppor-

tunities to perform tasks that we are fit for. The organization sees to it that we develop within our professions, placing mastery within our reach. The good organization enables people to cooperate and make joint efforts to solve tasks that might otherwise be difficult to deal with alone. It is a natural thing for people to join this kind of community. This development dates back to when man started walking the earth. The organization is, at its best, a modern version of humankind's natural community. The deeper meaning of organizations, i.e. the reason for their existence, may be found in the diversity of humankind. Even though we are all provided with the same basic features and preferences with regard to food and drink, clothes and a place to live, love, friendship, community and togetherness with the world, nature and society, there are in our personalities a few quite distinctive diversities that shape our preferences.

Some people show a strong preference for acting and doing things; others prefer leadership and organizing. Some prefer knowledge and wisdom. Others take up the classical attitude of assisting and helping. Again, some people have preferences for science and technology whereas others cannot possibly take an interest in the periodic system or complicated software diagrams but instead concentrate on linguistic, communicative, and humanistic matters. Some people take an interest in selling and doing business. Others prefer to minimize the role of commercialism in their lives.

The above-mentioned diversities of preference are useful when we try to match them to our personalities in real life. An important symmetry of this kind is the relationship between the leader and the group members. Some people consider it a vocation to manage and spend all their energy on superior levels while others prefer to become absorbed in detail. These people appreciate a coordinated and overall direction of goals in order to make the details fit into the total context.

Some people prefer a tangible reality whereas power and the broad overview attract others. My point is that the brilliant leader has not acquired his or her dominance and power by obstructing the employees. Rather, the brilliance of leadership originates from the leader's ability really to inspire the group.

The company may suffer from lack of confidence in managers and immediate superiors in cases where the executives have been employed without paying adequate attention to the employees, their conditions and wishes. Instead of becoming the group's representative, the leader may end up being a stranger who never gets close to the group. This situation leads to a range of communication problems and conflicts between

managers and employees that could have been avoided. A manager who has no confidence in his associates easily creates a barrier to the individual initiative, freedom, and independence at work instead of supporting his associate in these respects.

Similarly, the associate who has no confidence in the leader will not accept his or her help and support.

In many large companies, there are several hierarchies of heads of sections and this may serve to slow down the work process as well as preventing greater efficiency. To avoid these effects, many large modern companies dismiss part of their managerial staff and develop a flatter organizational hierarchy. Inter-departmental projects that cut across traditional structures (e.g. affiliated sections) may strengthen the independence of the employees as well as more or less spontaneous group formations. Often the project group may choose its leader from the group. However, it is still not clear whether this type of solution has a great future - but the idea is good in theory.

#### **THE GOOD LEADER**

A group has a natural leader, who may be characterized as the person who most clearly is able to understand the common objective as well as to express the collective intention and will of the group.

His or her task is to secure the group's common interests. This includes being authorized by the group to organize the work so that everybody contributes his best efforts to solve the group's common task.

In this way, the leader takes a position vis-à-vis the individuals of the group. In other respects the leader subordinates himself to the group. The good leader abandons his or her personal interests, so to speak, in favor of servicing the unit and the community. The leader supports each individual member of the group and finds out the best way of combining the given tasks with the preferences and needs within the group. This joint task must be accomplished along with the personal and professional development of the members of the group.

To be a good leader requires a highly developed understanding of what is needed 'out there' - which means quite a cultivated sense of human potential as well as knowledge about the way it operates in life, including personal development.

Apart from insight into human or personal development, leadership requires knowledge about our complex society. The leader must be courageous and visionary. He or she must be able to articulate the group's project in comprehensible terms that can be agreed upon. A leader who gets no support for defined

projects does not have a chance. If he or she is unable to communicate the basic ideas to the employees and make them share the vision of the good values in future projects to be carried out by the group, the prospects are none too good.

The leader's duty is to collect all ideas, impressions and opinions for a clear and precisely expressed vision of the relevant project, be it the creation of a new product or a new way of servicing customers. The leader's vision and creative mind must guide the employees into collectively creating value. Not until the leader understands himself or herself as ultimately the primary and most important supporter of the employees will the organization flourish.

#### **GOOD COOPERATION**

When carrying out different tasks necessary for the organization to create its products or provide services, we are engaged in joint efforts with colleagues and management. Properly speaking, we cooperate.

The idea of cooperation is to supplement one another. In order to cooperate we need communication, including an open-minded and friendly way of speaking. It is important to take on the responsibility and to carry it through in the face of difficulties. You must also be able to cope with honest criticism of yourself and put up with your colleagues' strengths and weaknesses.

Experience shows that we all have our flaws and imperfections and these cause us to jar against each other and to collide with each other. The precondition of cooperation is that we manage to ignore each other's imperfect personalities and instead try to develop a more profound and basic confidence in and sympathy for other people. A prerequisite for cooperation is that we like each other. If we do not like each other, we cannot find a reasonable way of communicating. Criticism will be understood as unfriendly and manifestly hostile intentions rather than as assistance to improvement and development.

When joining in close teamwork people get to know each other intimately. It is always easier to find fault with your neighbor, which is why cooperative endeavors can lead to unpleasantness when a person's behavior is commented on. There are two ways to cope with criticism: One is to defend oneself and put a distance between oneself and one's critic, to take offence and put on a sour look. The other way, which is a far better one, is a more humble and open-minded attitude where criticism is not taken as an offence but rather as a mirroring of yourself. This way the critics show which points should be relevant for further

personal development.

The art of cooperation is particularly difficult when it is a matter of cooperating with your superior. If, for instance, you know that your colleague rarely meets an appointment on time, writing to the colleague instead of waiting for him in vain can solve the problem. If you know that your colleague is very good at accounting whereas you dislike this job, switching tasks might solve problems. To be able to say 'yes' and 'no' is essential for good teamwork. Unfortunately, in such situations most of us have trouble with emotions because they remind us of events in our personal life when we may have experienced the pain of rejection. In the old days the authoritarian executive style held sway. Nowadays, modern IT-companies cannot function without dialogue. Employees of the late 20th century must be well informed and conscious of what is going on. Thus modern employees tend to hold views that are fully valid vis-à-vis their superiors. You not only have a right to, you have an obligation to enter into dialogue with your superior if you disagree with him or her.

Only on very rare occasions will a competent modern chief executive force through his own point of view, as today it is of the utmost importance that we engage with each other properly and that all points of view are respected.

The employee may often be right and great value may be achieved, if the manager can overcome his or her pride and recognize this. In case of long-term problems with regard to teamwork, it is still not an acceptable solution to suppress a colleague's point of view. Here we are up against fundamental differences in points of view that ought to be sorted out. The disagreements might very well focus on views on the stated objectives and values of the organization, and this is the very situation where any modern leader should be particularly observant and attentive.

#### DISCUSSION

The largest challenge in creating a well-functioning organization is the development of the physical, mental and existential health of its employees. Most unfortunately, many people in the world today is in a state of chronic stress; it can be described as a state of severe psychoform and somatoform dissociation. The person is not really there; neither through mind or body can he or she be contacted. The behavior is often quite mechanical, and reflections are not deep, quality of life is often low, and ability of functioning in all areas from sexuality to social life are often low. Such people are in severe need of existential healing. But healing must

happen in a sound environment with full support and acceptance for the individual. A company culture with love, respect, and understanding is encouraging sub-environmental initiatives for creating groups and departments able to support its members and letting people heal and grow.

We human beings are social beings. We are all gifted with different talents (1-7) and only together can we do great and complicated things like sending men to the moon or developing science and technology. We need to see and acknowledge the talent in every person, and only when we can do that, and support each one and facilitate the need for personal development of talents and self-insight, can we create the company and the society, that provides us all with our needs and longings.

A company is in many ways like a living organism, where every employee and leader corresponds to a living cell. Only when all the cells are happy, healthy, oriented and fully informed about what is going on everywhere in the organization can do an optimal job. Only when everybody is connected to the world and giving their gift to the world through the work, can we have an optimal performance in an optimal organization.

The key to all this is fellowship, for only through fellowship can man be nourished and supported enough to grow and heal existentially. The team must support personal and professional growth. Only in the soil fertilized with human respect and unconditional love can geniuses and masters grow.

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