



DIRECTING ENERGY: LEADERSHIP AND STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Leadership makes a vital contribution to an organization's culture and climate. Our leaders are the influencers and guides who form the organization's overall strategy, hiring practices, and working systems (Tummers et al., 2021). They facilitate the formation of our goals and guide our efforts toward these shared outcomes. The influence of leaders has both a direct and indirect effect on how the resources and demands of work impact employee engagement and work performance quality (Tummers et al., 2021; Albrecht et al., 2018; Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018). Four facets that can help us understand how to better facilitate a positive climate around the direction of work are as follows: (1) **goal clarity & strategic alignment**; (2) **clear feedback & communication**; (3) **supportive leadership practices**; and (4) **human resources**.

1. Facilitate goal clarity & strategic alignment.

Leadership sets the vision, the strategy for how to get there, and what success will look like. A strong presence of shared goals fosters community and cooperation within the organization. Part of directing the work energy toward the vision is maintaining the visibility of the end goals (Rouleau, 2021). When employees feel strongly connected to the vision and can clearly see how their role aligns with the strategic priorities, they feel valued and are motivated to do well (Albrecht et al., 2018). One way to keep the goals visible is to communicate the vision clearly and consistently. Repeat it often and provide a rationale for how each task and assignment is an important part of the strategy to reach the goals (Albrecht et al., 2018; Forbes Panel, 2023). In addition, being specific about how roles connect to the organizational goals helps to clarify work expectations and provides a focus for the work (Rouleau, 2021; Forbes Panel, 2023).

2. Deliver clear feedback & communication.

Setting organizational strategies and goals is only as valuable as they are clearly communicated. Inconsistent or conflicting information about the strategic priorities and their connection to day-to-day activities can become a stressful demand on employee energy (Albrecht et al., 2018; Tummers et al., 2021). Likewise, feedback is one of the most foundational aspects of supervisor and staff relationships (Rouleau, 2021). Feedback delivered through safe and supportive protocols becomes an employee resource that bolsters their success (Tummers et al., 2021). Feedback is a tool for generating employee trust when it is provided frequently through a balanced approach and focused on professional growth (Forbes Panel, 2023; Tummers, 2021). Every communication is an opportunity to clarify expectations and scaffold employee achievement in alignment with the organizational goals (Forbes panel, 2023; Rouleau, 2021; Tummers et al., 2021).

3. Use supportive leadership practices.

Some leadership practices feel as if they add to work demands, while others become a resource that lightens the weight of those demands (Tummers et al., 2021). There are different ways that



leaders can be a supportive resource to their followers. One way is through motivating behaviors such as affirming professional growth and innovation, both in the organization and in individuals. This includes being flexible to context, challenging the status quo to meet a need, and involving those closest to the need in decision-making processes (Albrecht et al., 2018; Rouleau, 2021). In addition, leading the organization in collaborative goal setting and sharing assessment of goal progress builds a community of trust and investment (Albrecht et al., 2018; Rouleau, 2021; Forbes Panel, 2023). Another meaningful way that leaders support the work is by initiating structures and organizing the work process. This includes protecting staff time so they can focus on what matters, connecting resources, removing barriers, and managing timelines (Tummers et al., 2021; Rouleau, 2021). When leaders are competent in these areas and have built trust-filled relationships with their staff, performance effort and quality increase (Tummers et al., 2021).

4. Nurture human resources.

When employers invest in their employees' well-being and professional development, the employees feel committed; they are more highly engaged in their work; and they produce a higher quality of work (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018; Walden et al., 2017). Investments in hiring quality staff results in occupational self-esteem. Employees feel a sense of value in their place of work for having high standards. Investment in staff growth and competency results in employee confidence in their ability to do their job well and in feelings of goodwill toward leadership (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018; Rouleau, 2021). Altogether, human resource practices that nurture healthy growth in the staff generate physical, emotional, and cognitive well-being and positive energy, all of which are assets in reaching the organization's strategic goals (Ogbonnaya & Valizade, 2018).

References

- Albrecht, S., Breidahl, E., & Marty, A. (2018). Organizational resources, organizational engagement climate, and employee engagement. *The Career Development International, 23*(1), 67–85.
- Forbes Councils Expert Panel®. (2023, January 12). Council post: How to effectively communicate company goals with your employees. *Forbes*.
- Ogbonnaya, C., & Valizade, D. (2018). High performance work practices, employee outcomes and organizational performance: A 2-1-2 multilevel mediation analysis. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 29*(2), 239–259.
- Rouleau, K. (2021). Balanced leadership for student learning: A 2021 update of McREL's research-based school leadership development program. *McREL International*.
- Tummers, L. G., & Bakker, A. B. (2021). Leadership and job demands-resources theory: A systematic review. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.722080>
- Walden, J., Jung, E. H., & Westerman, C. Y. K. (2017). Employee communication, job engagement, and organizational commitment: A study of members of the Millennial Generation. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 29*(2-3), 73–89.