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Leadership and Knowledge Worker Enablement
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Theorize the impact of leadership on knowledge worker productivity. What are some of the

success factors when managing knowledge workers, change and measurements of productivity?

Donovan McFarlane's discussion of knowledge management issues a challenge to any

organization that envisions itself as sustainably competitive. He writes, "Knowledge is the key to

organizational transformation and survival in the globally competitive arena" (McFarlane, 2008,

p. 6). He goes on to propose that perhaps the single biggest contribution to an organization's

ability to manage knowledge is its leadership, singling out leaders as those whose primary task is

to ensure the transference of knowledge (not just information) between individuals in such a way

that the organization's objective are more readily achieved (McFarlane, 2008). It is that leader's

intentional focus on the knowledge system, including business processes, talent management,

communication's processes and technology that will enable knowledge acquisition, distribution

and application. McFarlane quotes William Hasler's statement, "Creating and disseminating

knowledge is critically important to a firm's long-term productivity" (McFarlane, 2008, p. 2).

The role of the leader in impacting knowledge worker productivity is clearly one of support,

encouragement and enablement rather than control and domination (Al-Gharibeh, 2011). Al-

Gharibeh goes on to posit that the leader creates an environment that inspires the creation and

sharing of knowledge and he highlights seven attributes that accentuate the enablement process

(Al-Gharibeh, 2011). The environment, marked by enhanced trust, centralized knowledge

management and supporting technology makes for, what he terms, "help to reduce time and cost

that are needed for the knowledge creation process. . ." (Al-Gharibeh, 2011, p. 3).

I have always felt that an environment of trust and mutual respect was more conducive to

learning than one marked by hostile, adversarial relationships. In fact, I have personally seen more destruction emanate from competitive, high- rivalry environments than the increased productivity they were put in place to produce. NASTASE references work done by Viitala, indicating a logical link between knowledge sharing and an environment of trust and openness (NASTASE, 2009). However, NASTASE's own research presents an opposing and somewhat surprising view of conflict. Marian indicates that some leaders see conflict as a positive intervention, particularly as it pertains to knowledge management (NASTASE, 2009). In fact, there are indications that conflict is provoked by the leader and may be seen as a source of stimulation for enriched learning and competency development (NASTASE, 2009). I continue to contend that when an employee is busy watching his back, he is not watching your business.

References:

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