Frameworks and Practices for Cultivating a Healthy Workplace

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Agenda

- Why This Matters

- Four Climate Dimensions:
  - Belonging
  - Psychological Safety
  - Engagement
  - Organizational Trust

- Taking Action

Why This Matters

- In knowledge-driven environments, climate isn't peripheral—it's a core driver of outcomes.

- Traditional hierarchical structures in higher education are increasingly strained when it comes to managing crisis, anticipating organizational needs and identifying leadership talent.

- Generational differences and suggest relationships with work will continue evolving over time:
  - Decision-making
  - Authenticity
  - Values alignment

Belonging

Belonging

A human need to consistently feel accepted, valued, supported and included by within a group or environment.

Why It Matters	Torchbearers	What Works	What Doesn't Work
• It is the dimension felt most personally, and the one most tied to our emotional lives.	• Local teams, peers	• Intentionally create relational touchpoints • Invest in localized belonging • Recognize how operations and emotions intersect	• Belonging as one-size-fits-all • Not recognizing belonging as both peace and protection • Diversity alone is not belonging

Psychological Safety

Psychological Safety

A belief that one will not be punished or humiliated for speaking up with ideas, questions, concerns or mistakes.

Why It Matters	Torchbearers	What Works	What Doesn't Work
• Prerequisite condition that makes all other dimensions possible.	• Supervisors	• Leadership comfort with "I don't know" • Reward contributions • Consider disparities	• Oversimplifying silence as positive and conflict/challenge as negative • Expecting full contribution without safety

Engagement

Engagement

A positive, fulfilling state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption in one's work or role.

Why It Matters

- Most direct and visible driver of productivity. Engagement is climate in action.

Torchbearers

- Supervisors

What Works

- Effectively manage workload both in terms of volume and areas of expertise
- Recognize examples of success

What Doesn't Work

- Oversimplifying engagement as productivity without considering what informs it
- Conflating critique with disengagement

Organizational Trust

Organizational Trust

Employees' belief that leaders, colleagues and the institution will act with integrity, competence, and concern—even in situations where outcomes are uncertain.

Why It Matters	Torchbearers	What Works	What Doesn't Work
• This dimension's proximity to power (i.e. hiring, policy) has a cascading effect across the organization.	• Senior leaders	• Power sharing (i.e. input, community-informed decisions) • Being honest • Aligning organizational commitments and actions	• Lack of transparency • Accountability for some • Demanding rather than earning trust

Taking Action

Taking Action

Co-define success	Data, data, data – no insight means no learning	"Flatten" or "shrink" large and/or complex organizations
• Consider what ideal state is in terms of measurable and/or observable behaviors	• Data can be quantitative, qualitative and informal.	• Hierarchies are necessary, but only to the extent they're helpful
• Identify and learn from exemplars	• Surveys are useful tools, but cannot replace critical discussion.	• Specialization is necessary, but only to the extent it leaves room for cross-functional interaction, collaboration etc.
• Align definition with operations and practices—we are what we incentivize	• Ideally, data is a magnifying glass, not a hammer.	• All levels of an organization can and should contribute to the four climate dimensions, but often not in the same way
	• Leadership must be primed for self-reflection and follow-up	

References and Suggested Readings

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