Research
Pods©
Series

How Leader Integrity Can Make Employee Voice Stronger

Giving voice to opinions and suggestions can be risky for employees risky but beneficial to an organisation. Prof. HE PENG of School of Management Fudan University analyses what makes employees go silent and how leader behavioural integrity can break that silence.

Related research paper:
Peng, H., Wei, F. *How and When Does Leader Behavioral Integrity Influence Employee Voice? The Roles of Team Independence Climate and Corporate Ethical Values.* Journal of Business Ethics, 2020, 166(3), 505-521.

An alliance with a purpose

THE 3 Ps IN A CoBS POD

PERCEIVE
with a set of key takeaways

PROJECT
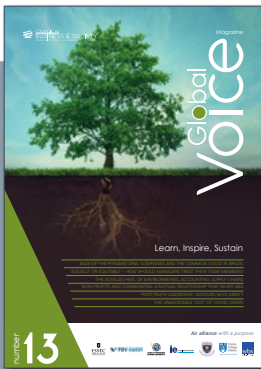with food for thought: on yourself, your organisation and the wider context

PERFORM
by putting it all into practice using action tips

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PERCEIVE
with a set of key takeaways

- Employee voice influences creativity and effectiveness at the individual team and organisational level, improves effective decision-making, organisational learning, the implementation of new practices and organisational innovation.

- Employees often withhold suggestions or advice when they have ideas, concerns or opinions because they are unsure of management's reaction and organisational expectations.

- Employee voice requires honesty and as such may amount to risky behaviour.

- Leader behavioural integrity is when leaders' actions are aligned with their words. When leaders have a high degree of behavioural integrity, they create trust and are seen as reliable. This encourages employee voice.

- Employee voice is encouraged in a climate where the norm within the team is to follow their own personal ethical beliefs.

- A shared ethical perception of what is right or wrong helps create a team climate conducive to employee voice.

- When highly emphasised, corporate ethical values also encourage employee voice.

Read the full feature article and others in Global Voice #13:
https://cutt.ly/lkzMdk1

PROJECT
with food for thought

- To what extent are employees empowered to speak their minds in your team and your organisation?

- How do management and leadership in your organisation react upon hearing feedback?

- What types of sanction or encouragement occur when employees speak up?

- What is the level of trustworthiness and credibility that leadership enjoys within the organisation in the eyes of you and your fellow colleagues?

- In your opinion, are there any subjects or decisions that employees shouldn't be encouraged to comment on? If yes, which?

Thoughts

PERFORM
by putting it all into practice

CHECKLIST

☐ **1. Emphasise corporate ethical values** through a code of conduct and communication drives which help to establish and maintain basic behavioural standards about what things are right to do and what things are worth doing.

☐ **2. Ensure that leaders at every level** are aligned with these values, send clear signals about what is and isn't acceptable, and walk the talk. Use the code of conduct as a guideline and reference.

☐ **3. Revise your company's recruitment** by recruiting leaders with high behavioural integrity and add principled values such as moral integrity into your employee selection criteria.

☐ **4. Use employee training sessions/workshops** to help instil beliefs that are conducive to employees being able to voice their own independent moral judgements.

☐ **5. Provide employees with the latitude to make decisions** in the interest of justice, morality and respect for human rights, regardless of organisational context. If necessary, list and display a key set of higher "universal" values.

☐ **6. Lead by personal example** by simply adhering to designated ethical values in addition to establishing reasonable systems of incentives and sanctions to help encourage and maintain positive attitudes and behaviours demonstrative of the team's ethical values.

☐ **7. Tie in incentives for leaders** to encourage employee voice (i.e. annual appraisal scoring) and a company-wide incentive/award for teams coming up with innovations, improvements and taking on new practices.

Getting involved

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