

Placing the Right People in the Right Seats in the Organization

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Collins (2001) used the metaphor of a bus as an organization to describe getting the right people with the right stuff in the right seats on the bus. He further stated that it was more important to get the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus before figuring out where to drive the bus. According to Geller (2005), great leaders put the right people in the right seats on the bus, and then drive the bus to the right locations. In other words, great leaders “help people apply their talents effectively and realize self-accountability and self-motivation” (p. 12). Kello (2006) identified three broad classes of skills that define the right stuff: (a) people skills, i.e. interpersonal, relationship-building skills; (b) self-management skills, i.e. intrapersonal skills including the ability to learn quickly, to focus on relevant details and filter out the rest, to engage in effective planning and prioritizing, to connect the dots, to be decisive and solve problems well; and (c) big picture skills, i.e. the ability to create an inspiring vision, to think strategically, and long-term (p. 21). How does an organization identify the right people with the right stuff? Winston (2009) pointed out that it is important to identify followers’ inherent motivational gifts listed in Romans 12 to ensure a proper fit in the right seat in the organization. It is important for organizational success that leaders understand their followers and have the right people in the organization doing the right job (Collins, Kello, Winston). Unlike Collins, I contend that it would be difficult to get the right people on the bus prior to knowing its final destination, therefore it would be important to identify followers’ unique motivational gift profile in order to assign them a seat on the bus or help them successfully get off the bus if there is no seat that fits. Thus, it is important to first define the organizational vision, mission, purpose and goals, so that exemplary followers (Kelley, 1992) can see how and where they fit in the organization. This paper examines the importance of aligning follower motivational gifts and organizational values in order to ensure a proper fit.

Romans 12 Motivational Gifts

People are never remembered for their successes but for the significant contributions they make with their lives (O'Shields, 2005). God has gifted each human being uniquely (I Corinthians 7:7, *New International Version*) to fulfill a unique purpose, and when individuals are expressing those gifts, they are positioned to make unique contributions with their lives. There are three categories of gifts: (a) manifestation gifts – the supernatural manifestations of the Holy Spirit at work in a believer (I Corinthians 12: 7-11); (b) ministry gifts – to equip believers to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13); and (c) motivational gifts – the inherent gifts that propel us to action (Romans 12:6-8). Here I focus on the motivational gifts as they are the ones that everyone has – regardless of culture, environment or religion – and according to Fortune and Fortune (1987), provide the motivating force for our lives as well as shape our personalities. They explained that (a) our gifts are to benefit others, (b) our gift was built into us when God formed us, (c) our gift can be observed in childhood, (d) we are not to neglect our gift, (e) our gift colors all we see (f) our gift gives only one perspective of the whole and (g) each gift is of equal value. Each of the motivational gifts is different and would operate differently in different people based on their unique gift profile.

The seven motivational gifts listed in Romans 12 are: (a) perceiving – the extraordinary ability to discern and proclaim truth (Winston, 2009); (b) serving – the ability to identify the unmet needs involved in a task and to make use of available resources to help meet those needs and help accomplish the desired goals (Winston); (c) teaching – the extraordinary ability to discern, analyze, and deliver information and truth so that others will learn (Winston); (d) encouraging – the ability to call forth the best in others through encouragement and motivation (Winston); (e) giving – the ability to manage one's resources of income, time, energy and skills to exceed what is considered to be a reasonable standard for giving (Bryant, 1991); (f) ruling, also referred to as administrative – the ability to set future long-term goals and communicate those goals in such a way that others will listen and work to achieve them (Winston); and (g) mercy, also referred to as compassion – the extraordinary ability to feel and to act upon genuine empathy for others who suffer distressing physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual pain (Bryant). Although each person has one or more of the gifts, they still need to be developed to be put to full use.

According to Fortune and Fortune (1987), these gifts correspond to a part of the body (see Appendix A) and are subdivided into two categories: (a) speaking gifts – perceiver, exhorter, teacher and

administrator/ruler; and (b) serving gifts – compassion/mercy, giver and server. As the body needs each part to function well, an organization needs each part in the right position to function well.

Getting on the Bus

According to Scott and Hart (1990), abstract values translate into social, economic and political role expectations that govern individual behavior and attitudes. Values – i.e. beliefs about what is important in life – determine individuals' choices (Hultman & Gellerman, 2002), which should include where they work. Hultman and Gellerman explained that organizational values are shaped by the people in the organization and the values must be shared by the majority in order for the organization to be successful.

A follower is someone who acknowledges a leader as the primary source of guidance about work (Yukl, 2006). An exemplary follower goes beyond mere acknowledgment of, and perhaps even dependence on, the leader and exercises independent, critical thinking as well as active engagement with the work (Kelley, 1992). He pointed out that an exemplary follower is purposefully committed to something in addition to the core of their own life and adds value to the organization, not only by going above and beyond the call of duty but in being who they are, including their experiences, ideas and dreams. I contend that in order to fully and truly know who they are, the value they add to organizations, and to be fulfilled in life, exemplary followers need to discover and hone their motivational gifts.

There are many definitions of leadership, but the essential core includes influencing others in the organization to understand and achieve their common goal (Yukl, 2006; Northouse, 2007). Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified five practices of exemplary leaders: (a) model the way, (b) inspire a shared vision, (c) challenge the process, (d) enable others to act and (e) encourage the heart. They noted that part of modeling the way is clarifying values, both personal and organizational. Each organization has success as a major goal. Yet, without a reasonably high degree of shared values, an organization and the people will flounder and fail (Hultman & Gellerman, 2002). Among other things, profits are higher when personal and organizational values are aligned, organizations that consider the interests of employees, customers and stockholders greatly outperform those that do not, and values-based leadership increases job satisfaction and bottom-line performance (Hultman & Gellerman). Thus, it is important for leaders in defining organizational roles to understand their own and followers' values and gifts in order to determine how they fit into the organizational purpose.

To get the rights seats on the right bus, it is imperative for the leader first to define where the bus is going, i.e. the organization's vision, mission, purpose and goals. It is also important to clearly identify the core values desired for the organization. The leader should also have an understanding of the motivational gifts and where they would fit best in the organization. For instance, knowing that someone with a high gift of service, who is compelled to assist others through self physical labor or assignment of labor to others to help complete a task (Winston, 2009) may be well suited in a supportive role – such as an executive assistant, while someone with a high gift of ruling, who is compelled to understand the vision and goal as well as the way to achieve it and organize people, providing needed structure and guidance to achieve the objectives (Winston, 2009), may be more suited to a lead role. Followers, also understanding their personal values and gifts, could determine whether or not there is a fit between their values and gifts and the organization and particular position they seek to fill. People tend to look at work as a necessary evil, but work was designed to bring joy and satisfaction (Ecclesiastes 2:24). When a follower selects a position in an organization or a leader selects a person for a position based on their unique motivational gift profile and personal and organizational value alignment, it makes it easier to fulfill the commandment to do all work wholeheartedly as one working for God rather than men (Colossians 3:23).

Conclusion

Both leaders and followers are responsible for ensuring proper fit as they are partners and collaborators (Hopper, 2008). If a leader or follower finds out that an individual is in the wrong seat, or has widely differing values from the majority, it would be best for them to help that individual transition to a position better suited to his or her gifts and/or values. Although there are more than 2,000 possible gift profile combinations (Winston, 2009), it is imperative that they are given more attention in organizations when creating positions and placing individuals in them. In general, it would be beneficial for leaders to define positions in organizations based on the gift combinations needed to make them successful. This would help ensure that the best people for the position are attracted to it as it speaks to their inherent gifts, which creates a win-win situation (Covey, 1989) for everyone – the leader, the follower and ultimately the organization.

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