Innovations and Sustainable Growth in Business Management Opportunities and Challenges

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The Effective Management Functions - A Tool For Developing Interpersonal Trust

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Abstract

The central aim of this article is to draw attention to ways that interpersonal trust between employer and employees can be developed through activities associated with the four functions of management. Interpersonal trust has received increasing attention as an important variable for effective management and the success of organizations. Further, managers serve an important role in promoting organizational success. Practical insights regarding activities that promote interpersonal trust within each of the four functions of management is briefly discussed. These insights are offered with the intent of encouraging a more deliberate focus on trust within the effective functions of management.

Keywords: Management; functions of management, management education

Introduction

The purpose of this article is to initiate a practical dialogue regarding the question of how the four core functions of management (i.e., planning, organizing, leading, and controlling) can be used to enhance interpersonal trust between supervisors and employees. Justification for framing the dialogue within the context of the four functions of management is based on the use of these functions as the foundation or core of most management education curricula and courses. For many, the exposure to managerial concepts in entry-level courses serves a formative role in influencing future

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management philosophies, values, and behavior. Surprisingly, however, the topic of trust is not covered consistently in management texts.

Management and leadership training programs also serve as potential catalysts influencing individual's perceptions, philosophies and approach to management. Nevertheless, a review of the management development and leadership development literature over the past several decades, suggests that while an understanding of trust may be a desired outcome of many management orleadership development programs, it is not clearly listed as a specific goal of the training or development process (c.f., Alexander, 1987; Cohn, 1988; Eddy, 2005; LaHote, Simonetti, & Longenecker, 1999; Shaffer, 1991; Shaw & Patterson, 1995; Tarley, 2002). Of the articles selected, the only one in which trust was specifically mentioned as a goal was that of Broderick and Pearce (2001), which was grounded in an Adventure Training approach which has its roots in the Outward Bound movement. Interestingly, the much -written-about management development program General Electric requires for future managers did not specifically address trust as an integral key to success (Tarley, 2002). Most training programs appear to be focused on knowledge content specific to the organization, as well as providing training or at least an understanding of issues such as communication, dealing with conflict, problem solving, teamwork, and leading change.

Trust is, of course, a desired outcome. Indeed, it is likely that the training programs and practices noted above?) should have or did result in a development of, or increase of trust between supervisors and employees. But that result is achieved only if those going through the training actually attempt to apply the training once they return to the workplace. But, when the training does not emphasize trust, the concern is whether the trainees will perceive both the need for and/or the opportunities to act in ways that enhanced interpersonal trust within the work place. Consequently, a discussion that emphasizes trust at this fundamental level has the potential to diffuse to other management practices, theories, and strategies predicated on the four functions of management.

Overview of Trust

From an applied or practical perspective, Sonnenberg (1994) described trust as something that must be a central part of organizations. Tzafrir (2005) provides additional support, stating that "Trust is a key component of organizational relationships, and management's approach to the issue of trust is of academic and practical significance" (p. 1600). Furthermore, trust is regarded as fundamental to the notion of the multiple social exchanges that occur within organizations (Cole, Schaninger, & Harris, 2002).

The implicit value of supervisor-employee interpersonal trust within the framework of the functions of management is important to recognize (at least in a general sense), since trust is known to be a salient factor in organizations (McCauley & Kuhnert, 1992). More specifically, the recognition that the behavior of managers is a relevant factor in the trust that develops within the management-employee dyad (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, & Werner, 1998). This importance is further reinforced through the observation that gaining the trust of individuals in the workplace is crucial to the success of contemporary organizations (Caldwell, Hayes, & Long, 2010). McDonald (2010) further emphasizes the significance of relationships by offering a compelling definition of management as, "a trusting work relationship with other human beings that produces sustainable, escalating value" (p. 629).

The Concept of Trust

Researchers acknowledge a growing interest in literature related to trust (e.g., Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Sendjaya & Pekerti, 2010). Trust is regarded as a dynamic, multifaceted phenomenon (McCauley& Kuhnert, 1992; Rousseau, Sitken, Burt, & Camerer, 1998) including, but not limited to essential components such as truth (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997), integrity (Tan & Tan, 2000; Whitener et al., 1998), and communication (Zeffane, Tipu, & Ryan, 2011). Trust is also recognized as something that must be earned (Mills & Ungson, 2003), representing an essential element in relational capital (Lennox, 2013), as well as social exchange (Mahajan, Bishop, & Scott, 2012). In an effort to promote conceptual clarity this article will adopt the definition of trust provided by Rousseau et al. (1998) who described the concept as, "... a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based on positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another" (p.395).

Importance of Supervisor-Employee Interpersonal Trust

High quality relationships between supervisors and employees, in the form of leader-member-exchange, are recognized as important determinants of desirable organizational outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In their review of literature related to LMX over the preceding 25 years, Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) included studies linking the quality of the supervisor-employee relationship (i.e., LMX) with outcomes including, but not limited to performance, organizational citizenship behavior, and organizational commitment. There is considerable interest in understanding factors associated with effective management (e.g., Page, Wilson, Meyer, & Inkson, 2003), as well as the quality of the dyadic relationship between managers and employees (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). According to Pirson and Lawrence (2010, p. 553), "management theory and practice are facing unprecedented challenges." Admittedly, there are a variety of characteristics associated with effective management, with trust increasingly being recognized as an essential concept in management (e.g., Colquitt, Scott, & LePine, 2007; McAllister, 1995; McDonald, 2010).

Employee trust in supervisors is acutely needed (Simons, 1999). According to Covey (1989, p. 178), "Trust is the highest form of human motivation. It brings out the very best in people." This perspective is mirrored by others who have described trust as a fundamental need for organizations, contributing to commitment (Zeffane et al., 2011), enhancing innovative efforts (Tan & Tan, 2000), and promoting cohesion within the workplace (Duignan & Bhindi, 1997). The integrity, benevolent behavior, and ability of the manager are among the factors related to worker trust that have been identified (Knoll & Gill, 2011; Tan & Tan, 2000). A number of valuable outcomes are associated with employee trust. For example, a meta-analysis of trust in leaders conducted by Dirks and Ferrin (2002) listed a number of important outcomes associated with this referent form of trust including job related attitudes (i.e., job satisfaction and organizational commitment), organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and better performance of the employee's job.

Interpersonal Trust in the light of Management Functions

College courses on management are often grounded in the four functions of management that evolved from Fayol's (1916, trans. by Storr, as cited in Wren & Bedeian, 2009) writings on management theory and the practice of management. The essential content of these functions are intended to serve as a prescriptive overview of managerial responsibilities, and to provide a framework for what students (as future managers) should do in the practice of management. Fayol (1916, trans. by Storr, as cited in Wren & Bedeian, 2009) proposed five basic functions (planning, organizing, commanding, coordinating and controlling) with commanding and coordinating subsequently merged into the function of leading. He also proposed fourteen principles of management (1916, trans. by Storr, as cited in Wren & Bedeian, 2009). A review of these principles reveals no regard for the importance of employees' trust in supervisors. Fayol's writings were translated to English in the early 1900s and came at a time when Taylor's scientific management held sway (it, too, provided little room for a recognition of trust). Arguably, Fayol's theories, combined with principles embodied within Taylor's scientific management shaped the future of the study of management. In some respects, the mental models that evolved from their work remains firmly entrenched today: This sentiment is reflected in the philosophy, still present in some organizations today, that management's responsibility is to plan, organize, lead (within a framework of commanding), and control the organization.

Similarly, for employees it may also be argued: Follow the plan, within the framework of designed policies and procedures, do what you are told to do. Interestingly, this fits within McGregor's Theory X model. McGregor (1967) viewed this type of thinking as mechanistic. McGregor (1967, p.8) observed that "Managerial practice appears to reflect at least a tacit belief that motivating people to work is a 'mechanical' problem... [that] it requires the application of external forces to...motivate him to work." McGregor described this approach as Theory X (For him, Theory X reflected a belief about the nature of man that suggested employees could not function unless told what to do.). Such a belief would not be conducive to an orientation toward building interpersonal trust in the organization (Heil, Bennis, & Stephens, 2000). McGregor proposed a counter-belief called Theory Y which held a more organic view of man in that employees are oriented to work, to seek responsibility, to be creative in the workplace. McGregor (1967), referring to Maslow's need for self-actualization, argued that people have the capacity to grow and develop throughout life, and that management strategies can hinder or support growth. For McGregor, the self-actualized person is emergent in an organization grounded in a Theory Y belief. This emergence relies on mutual agreement, open communications, mutual trust, and mutual support (McGregor, 1967). Thus, for McGregor, the practice of effective management clearly requires the development of trust. Indeed, according to this theory, managers with a Theory Y perspective tend to trust employees (Smothers, 2011).

Having established a historical foundation, the focus shifts to more specific insights and dialogue regarding the implicit value of supervisor-employee interpersonal trust within the context of the functions of management.

Functions of Management

The four common functions of management include planning, organizing, leading and controlling (McDonald, 2010). Leung and Kleiner (2004) suggest that these four functions are necessary, but not sufficient in promulgating successful management, with strong emphasis placed on adopting practices that include a focus on employees within organizations.

While not immediately obvious, critical reflection on the nuances of these four functions of management highlights potential areas where trust may be enhanced through inclusion of intentional activities within each function (see Figure 1).

Moreover, recognizing the implicit value of supervisor-employee interpersonal trust that permeates each function may serve an integrative role in helping to facilitate more fluid and effective deployment of the respective functions.

Planning. Planning is typically where the direction of the organization is established through a variety of activities including the development of goals. As such, the planning function of management embodies various levels of decision making. Allowing employees to participate in making these decisions may generate additional ideas that offer valuable insights (Leung & Kleiner, 2004). These new ideas could, in turn, have a positive impact on the quality of the plan since employees have a variety of different experiences and skills. Of particular interest in the context of the current article are findings that employee involvement is linked to higher levels of trust (Mahajan et al., 2012). Whitener et al. (1998) also note that involving employees in decisions has symbolic value in conveying a sentiment of trust to employees, while Dirks and Ferrin (2002) discuss the implicit confidence associated with allowing employees to participate in decision making. Indeed, managerial trust is associated with increased levels of employee involvement in decision making (Tzafrir, 2004).

Two important elements of decision making are gathering and analyzing information. Employees offer valuable insights and assistance in regard to both of these elements. First, employees often engage directly with customers, suppliers and other stakeholders. As a result, they have first-hand knowledge of key information that can be useful in guiding the planning process. Asking employees to assist in gathering information may serve to validate their perceptions and add perceived credibility to the value of their observations/interactions with key stakeholders. This, in turn, fosters increased levels of trust. Likewise, allowing employees to participate in analyzing information sends the message to employees that they have valuable insights that offer unique perspectives on specific nuances of the information. A logical progression from collecting and analyzing information might be to include employees in developing and prioritizing goals resulting from this analysis. This involvement would then enhance employee buy-in related to the goals, as well as contribute to increased levels of employee trust in supervisors.

Organizing. The organizing function of management is comprised of numerous activities directly or indirectly related to the allocation of resources in ways that support the achievement of goals and plans that were developed in the planning function (Leung & Kleiner, 2004). Included within the organizing framework are numerous human resource management (HRM) related activities such as job design and the assignment of job duties. Since HRM practices serve such a critical role, it is important, first and foremost, that the organization develop transparent and effective employment practices. Transparency is needed to help employees gain a sense of being fully aware of how the organization promulgates employment practices. Effectiveness of these practices is necessary for employees to have confidence in the utility of these activities. In combination, employee perceptions of full awareness and confidence in practices/policies that impact employment decisions within the organization serve as powerful mechanisms fostering employee trust. A study by Vanhala and Ahteela (2011) examining posited relationships between six common (HRM) practices and organizational trust provides compelling evidence that employee trust in organizations is, indeed, influenced by common HRM practices. Additionally, human resource management highlights the attractiveness of companies to potential employees in part due to human resource practices that focus on tangibles (e.g., pay, benefits, etc.) and intangibles such as trust-based work climate (Daft & Marcic, 2011).

In regard to effective HRM practices, employee trust may also be promoted through the specific structure of their work assignments (job design). For example, the creation of enriched jobs may be interpreted by employees as an indication that the organization trusts the employees enough to give them some degree of authority, autonomy, or flexibility in performing their job assignments. Having received this, employees, then, may be inclined to reciprocate through increased levels of trust.

Another example of organizing and assigning work by a manger that fosters trust is through the structure of authority. A structure that relies on decentralized authority, as well as empowerment, allows employees to become more responsible for their jobs and decisions related to their jobs, contributing to heightened employee trust. Another example of a common method for assigning organizational tasks is the use of teams. The importance and prevalence of teams in organizations is increasing as more organizations become global and technology allows for the use of virtual teams. Trust is considered one of the team characteristics that differentiate an effective team from a dysfunctional team (Daft & Marcic, 2011). Trust has also been linked to team performance. De Jong and Elfring (2010), found that intra-team trust had a positive impact on team performance and suggest that "…to promote team performance, team supervisors need to actively engage in managing interpersonal relationships and fostering trust among team members" (p. 545). Trust has also been determined to provide a sense of psychological safety for team-members, one in which members are at ease with criticisms of their work, or discussing their mistakes (Edmondson, 1999).

Leading. Dirks and Ferrin (2002) acknowledge that trust is embedded within a variety of leadership theories. The value and importance of trust cannot be overstated, regardless of the leadership style or philosophy of the leader. Leadership theories, such as consultative and transformational (Gillespie & Mann, 2004); authentic (Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004); servant (Sendjaya& Pekerti, 2010); and LMX (Brower, Schoorman, & Tan, 2000; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) provide support for trust as an essential management concept for leaders.

Leadership is a multi-dimensional process that includes motivation and influence of employees (Howell & Costley, 2006). As a part of this process of motivation and influence, exceptional leaders are typically skilled communicators (Blazey, 1997). Communication, in turn, is positively associated with trust (Zeffane et al., 2011). More importantly, the quality of supervisor communication has been linked to trust (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Unfortunately, however, the opposite may also be true with ineffective communication resulting in an erosion of trust (Spangenburg, 2012).

In the context of leadership, trust plays a valuable role in the job attitudes displayed by employees in the work environment. Recent research indicates different aspects of trust are related to higher levels of many of these job attitudes, to include perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment (Ferres, Connell, & Travaglione, 2004); organizational citizenship behaviors and job satisfaction (Lester & Brower, 2003); and employee satisfaction and loyalty (Matzler & Renzl, 2006).

The leading function of management can also include organizational change (Leung & Kleiner, 2004). This is important to consider since trust is of paramount importance in the context of major change (Chawla &

Kelloway, 2004). Change is ubiquitous in the current business environment, often accompanied by undesirable implications for employees (Yu, 2009). The level of employees' trust in their supervisors impacts their concomitant attitudes toward change (Devos, Buelens, & Bouckenooghe, 2007). For instance, Lines, Selart, Espedal, and Johansen (2005) found that the way in which changes are implemented either diminishes trust in management or increases trust in management. In an effort to tie this back to prior assertions that employee involvement and leadership communication contribute to employee trust, consider Beer's (1987) discussion of the change process in which the importance of open communication and employee participation in promoting trust is acknowledged.

In reality, the functions of management do not, necessarily, operate in a discrete manner. Instead, operationalizing the functions within the context of organizations often entails considerable overlap and fluidity between these dynamic functions. For example, leadership is commonly associated with creating a shared vision. Developing this shared vision, in turn, is considered important in framing the boundaries and direction of organizational efforts enacted by employees. While vision is indeed an important element of leadership, activities associated with this vision are also prevalent within the other three management functions. Specifically, the function of planning would be framed, to a large extent, by the vision of the organization. If employees are afforded an opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the vision and subsequent decision making within the planning function, interpersonal trust may be enhanced, thus creating the potential for improved deployment of the management functions.

Controlling. The fourth function of management, control, includes managerial efforts directed toward monitoring both organizational and employee performance and progress toward goals (Costa & Bijlsma-Frankema, 2007). Organizations and managers utilize a variety of strategies or methods related to control. These methodologies range from overt, highly restrictive, and assertive forms of control to more implicit, decentralized, indirect forms of control. The methodology may include the use of various management information systems, but has been manifested, in the past, by managers directing employees, telling them how to do their jobs, and by close monitoring of the employees' performance (Miles & Creed, 1995). This control strategy (use of systems, exercising of authority) has been deployed by managers attempting to reduce risk or uncertainty within an organization. While this approach may have been deemed adequate in the past, the complete reliance on formal controls is not sufficient in the contemporary business environment. Specifically, organizations face increased competition, not just locally, but globally; the pace of doing business has increased in speed requiring faster response time to change. To react to this new environment, one of the actions taken by top management has been to flatten organization structures, leading to wider spans of control, simultaneously adopting the use of teams in both in geographic and virtual environments.

In a practical sense, the traditional forms of control may still have some value, but are no longer sufficient. The fundamental problem for managers is how they can give up control without losing control (Spreitzer & Mishra, 1999). Management must necessarily rely on trusting its employees not to act opportunistically, but to make the right decisions and perform in a way to fulfill organizational goals (Jagd, 2010). At times, trust and control seem to be considered as opposite ends of a continuum or at least inversely related (Dekker, 2004; Knights, Noble, Vurdbakia, & Willmott, 2001; Sitkin & Roth, 1993). Costa and Bijlsma-Frankema (2007), argue that trust and control are alternative strategies to be used within the organization. The reality is that the relationship between control and trust is much more complex. Coletti, Sedatole, and Towry (2005) present evidence that rather than control and trust being an either-or dilemma for managers, control actually builds trust between parties, perhaps because control regulates a set of expectations, so that either party is comfortable that the other will not take advantage of them. Over time, the control systems can reinforce non-opportunistic behaviors, contributing to trust. As a result, controls may later be reduced because trust remains. Indeed, there is evidence that trust and control may complement each other (Bijlsma & van de Bunt, 2003; Knights et al., 2001 further reinforcing the potential value of trust related to effective management.

McDonald (2010) notes the central importance of coordination to the practice of management, emphasizing that coordination is not synonymous with the control. If the traditional form of command-and-control style of management is eroding as a result of emerging organizational trends, then a greater need for collaboration is apparent, as well as the use of teams to enable the organization to successfully compete in an environment of changing technology, increased globalization, and increased competition. Drucker (1999) noted that given the current business trends that organizations would need employees who were not only skilled but who possessed the ability to learn and adapt quickly to turbulent business environments. This seems consistent with increasing the active participation of employees in decision-making processes, as discussed earlier in the planning function of management. Ideally, in this type of environment, managers would believe that employees will not be opportunistic in their behaviors, and that employees would strive to make good decisions consistent with pursuing the vision, as well as goals of the organization. Thus, viewing trust and control not as opposites, but as complementary in nature, may be enlightening with both the manager and employee using the control systems in a collaborative fashion to achieve both the goals of the organization and the individual, trusting that each has the other's best interest at heart.

Other possible strategies for enhancing employee trust through activities within the controlling function of management may be worth considering. For example, control activities could be structured in ways that guide employee development and promote continuous improvement. As such, data gained through control activities would highlight employee areas that were strengths available to be leveraged by the organization for competitive advantage, while areas identified as needing improvement could be used for guidance in training and employee development programs. Used in this context, control measures may be viewed more positively by employees. The potential efficacy of control activities to foster increased trust can also be enhanced by ensuring that managers provide timely, accurate and information employee performance data to employees for feedback purposes.

Emerging Theories. Quite often, emerging theories related to management incorporate elements from the four functions of management, while also encapsulating dynamics associated with interpersonal trust. For example, Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) identified dynamics enacted through servant leadership theory (i.e, placing the needs of employees and others above those of the leader) as an antecedent of worker trust. In addition, key factors reflected in the theory of authentic leadership, such as effective communication, are recognized as an important component in worker trust (Wong&Cummings, 2009). Finally, trust has been found to be both an outcome of transformational leadership (Jung & Avolio, (2000) and as a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior, performance, and affective commitment (Goodwin, Whittington, Murray, & Nichols, 2011). In cases where trust is a componentin emerging theories, efforts to emphasize this might contribute to a better understanding the enduring importance of interpersonal trust within the context of management.

Conclusion

Organizations will continue to evolve and new management theories will continue to emerge. From a pedagogical perspective, fulfilling their role in preparing business students for successful careers in this dynamic environment will require that business schools remain vigilant in adapting curricula to meet these ever-changing needs. For traditional-aged students, exposure to management concepts is the first opportunity for many to develop an understanding of what it means to be an employee or manager and what one should strive to do to be successful. On the other hand, many non-traditional, older students may be employed, but not managers or supervisors. For them, exposure to management principles (either through college courses or management training programs) provides the opportunity for them to compare their own organizational experiences of how it is (what they experience) with how it could be (the ideal, if delivered effectively by the instructor and applied in the workplace). For both types of students, gaining this understanding of management, with an emphasis on trust, can lead to a transformed workplace if they have the opportunity to successfully apply what they have learned. Viewed from a practical perspective, organizations endeavoring to facilitate the development of their managers can benefit by helping these managers understand the fundamental implications that trust has on employees within the organization through their actions embodied with the functions they perform.

Managers typically perform the four overarching functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. This article has discussed ways in which that these four functions can be performed that will increase employee trust in their supervisors, which will, in turn, have positive implications for the organizations. By allowing employees to participate in the planning process, organizations can leverage new ideas, while also indicating, through this action, that employee input is valued. This, then, will have positive implications on employee trust levels. Similar benefits may ensue from allowing employees to get more fully engaged in the organizing function by allowing them to participate in planning tasks and activities related to their specific jobs. Specific HRM practices undertaken during the organizing function can also contribute to increased trust. In deploying the leadership function, managers can enhance employee trust by focusing on quality communication and the open exchange of information. The final function, controlling, can enhance employee trust in a number of ways including the fact the employees will receive more timely feedback if they are directly engaged in the control process.

In summary, management is an important concept to organizations and business schools. Since trust is espoused as a vital factor in organizations and management, college management courses, as well as management/leadership training programs might be improved through more intentional efforts to emphasize the implicit value of supervisor-employee interpersonal trust within the context of the management functions of planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Similarly, the overall performance of organizations might be improved if managers are more mindful of how their enactment of the four functions of management can be promulgated in ways that will have a positive impact on employee trust.

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