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Contemporary issues in managing



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Introduction

This free course provides you with a short introduction to three managerial approaches adopted by organisations currently. The course is divided into three sections that cover:

- 1. Managing through organisational culture
- 2. Managing through internal marketing
- 3. Managing through collective leadership.

You will start by thinking about the expectations that underpin the task of managing and explore the diverse and often conflicting aspects of these expectations in contemporary times. These will illustrate the importance of developing a comprehensive knowledge about what 'managing' means, together with why this topic has come to be so important. There are specific ways of thinking about management and managing that are sometimes positioned as though they are innate talent, but you will also reflect on the idea that managing (in common with most activities) is not simply impartial, neutral or benign. This is partly because the information, knowledge and behaviours relating to the activity are based firmly upon a historically and culturally specific way of deciding what counts as 'knowledge', as well as how the consequences of practising management (or managing) ripples out to affect a wide range of people and resources.

This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course B870 Managing in a changing world which looks at the different viewpoints surrounding the concept of management and managing.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this course, you should be able to:

- describe the nature of different types of managerial approaches adopted by organisations in contemporary time
- understand the purpose of different types of contemporary managerial approaches
- examine the different ways that organisations can implement these contemporary managerial approaches in the workplace.



Session 1: Managing through organisational culture

Organisational culture is defined by Cunliffe and Luhman (2013, p. 118) as 'the set of beliefs, values, assumptions, norms, stories, ceremonies, [artefacts], and symbols within the organisation, that influence the way employees behave and perform their jobs'. Clegg, Kornberger and Pitsis (2016, p. 612) extend this definition, stating 'organisational culture comprises the deep, basic assumptions and beliefs, and the shared values that define organisational membership, as well as the members' habitual ways of making decisions, and presenting themselves and their organisation to those who come into contact with it'. The signs, symbols and artefacts of organisational culture draw on all the senses to both interpret it and enact it. In other words, organisational culture is embodied and enacted by its members.



Figure 1 Office attire is a symbol of organisational culture

One example of the signs and symbols of organisational culture is what we wear at work, and how traditional ideas about work wear have evolved. Have you seen the television show *Mad Men*? The suits and ties, and the smart dresses worn in the show are indicative of a certain era (in this instance, America in the 1950s and '60s). Culturally, they signify things such as societal expectations and power relations. *Mad Men* represents the sort of traditional organisational culture common at that time in Western corporations – it was very formal, very gendered, very masculine. There are clear representations here of what it means to be male or female, for example, the shaping of hair into a particular style, in a culture where women are often sexualised in photographs. In comparison, men are in suits and are less sexualised than the women. It was also very white – this image does not represent any cultural difference.

Contemporary managers need to consider the pluralities of different individuals' lived experiences. So, understanding how to create and maintain an organisational culture that enables diverse people to function to the best of their abilities is fundamentally important to contemporary managing. Constructing appropriate organisational spaces is also important to engendering greater equality.



Activity 1 Learning to see organisational culture

Allow around 30 minutes for this activity

The aim of this activity is for you to understand how organisational spaces/settings can create a certain culture, and vice versa.

Part A

Watch the following TedTalks video, paying particular attention between 03:00 and 5:30 minutes (2:30 minutes in total) – but feel free to watch the entire video.

View at: youtube:01Y7qIPFpqw



Video 1 Igniting creativity to transform corporate culture

Part B

Look at this image of a workspace:



Figure 2 People working in a shared workspace

List and describe everything you see in the picture – the people, their interactions, the objects, the materials used in the space, and environmental factors such as light and space outside.

Provide your answer...

Feedback

Hopefully, you have a comprehensive list. As a starting point, you will probably have noticed that there are many people communicating and working in different ways, in a light and open workspace.

Whilst the activity illustrates how organizational culture is embedded in the workplace and helps us to start making sense of it, it does not show us how to search for it or interpret culture clues. A framework – *circuit of culture* – can help us to do that, and this is introduced in the next section.



1.1 The five major cultural practices

Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Madsen, Mackay and Negus (1997) identify five major cultural practices, which are interrelated by the articulations between them (see Figure 3). This is represented diagrammatically as five nodes (in no particular order) connected by arrows.

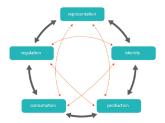


Figure 3 Circuit of culture

Articulations reflect how culture is produced and exchanged through movement between the five practices. In other words, we interact with each of these interrelated practices to produce and exchange meanings from them. Let's examine each practice in turn, using a straightforward organisational example of the monthly departmental meeting.

Representation

'Representation is the practice of constructing meaning through the use of signs and language' (Du Gay *et al.*, 1997, p.170). What is represented by a monthly departmental meeting? What does it signify? Beyond sharing information, it is an opportunity for departmental members to catch up and share stories. It is a formal, yet important regular event that represents shared understandings of what it means to work together.

Identity

Department members' identity practices at the monthly meeting are equally important and observable. Members will each identify themselves differently, taking on particular roles, such as the meeting chair, secretary, etc. Some might group together, while others sit alone. Some may be vocal and others less so.

Production

Production in a departmental meeting involves practices of disseminating information, making decisions and agreeing on future actions. How those are achieved in practice are cultural. Production, in this example, can be thought of in terms of how information is communicated, how decisions are made, and how actions are agreed.

Consumption

Consumption in this example is about the practices of how information is consumed by those present. Different departmental members will likely consume information differently, perhaps noting down and taking away only what they need to know.



Regulation

Finally, regulation involves the practices of formally (and informally) conducting the meeting. The departmental meeting will likely be required to be chaired by the manager or a senior member of the department and minuted for future reference. Less formal practices of regulating the meeting will likely follow particular traditional cultural norms built up by departmental members over time. For example, when a question is put to all members, perhaps junior members might wait for more experienced departmental members to answer first.

None of these five practices operates in isolation. The outcomes of the meeting will depend on the articulations between each of these cultural practices before, during and after that moment. Hence, every meeting will be different.

Activity 2 Learning to analyse organisational culture

Allow around 60 minutes for this activity

Part A

According to Du Gay, Hall, Janes, Madsen, Mackay and Negus (1997), there are five organisational culture practices:

- 1. Representation
- 2. Identity
- 3. Production
- 4. Consumption
- 5. Regulation

Using the circuit of culture that you have just learned about, drag and drop the cultural practice that you think fits each of the following questions/statements.

REPRESENTATION

PRODUCTION

IDENTITY

REGULATION

CONSUMPTION

Match each of the items above to an item below.

The cultural practice of what work looks and feels like in a workplace

The cultural practice of how things are communicated or analysed in a workplace

The cultural practice of the ways workers portray themselves in the workplace

The cultural practice of how space in a workplace is defined or divided up by the designer and how workers interact in it

The cultural practice of how workers use space in a workplace

Part B

Now, look at Figure 2 of a workspace again.





Figure 4 Figure 2 repeated: People working in a shared workspace

Based on your observations, how would you describe the culture of this workspace using the five culture practices (i.e. representation, identify, production, consumption and regulation)?

Representation:
Identity:
Production:
Consumption:
Regulation:
Too dhool:

Feedback

What did you observe? Here is one interpretation of the question:

- Representation: This space is light and airy. It looks like people can choose to use it in different ways, depending on what they need to do.
- Identity: The people are dressed casually. Each is engaged in what they are doing. Everyone seems to be focused, and some appear to be enjoying their work.
- Production: Most people are using laptops or smart devices; two are in conversation – probably having a meeting. The two people at the front seem engrossed in what they are doing. They might be checking email, working on a document, or analyzing some data. Production is, therefore, more likely to be focused on knowledge as it is not visible in a material sense; for example, if the photograph were of an assembly line, we would be able to see the output, such as chocolate bars.
- Consumption: People are using different areas in space. Some are working alone, others are having a meeting, and the two people at the back may be either working or taking a break.
- Regulation: Space is designed to provide different areas to work or take a break. It is an open plan and designed for sharing. There are comfortable chairs as well as desks. The balcony on the left may offer an alternative space to work.



Part C

So, based on your observations, how would you describe the culture of the workspace?

Provide your answer...

Feedback

Based on these observations, the culture of this workspace could be described as open, flexible, and inviting. It enables people to interact or work alone – a space where a diversity of people would feel comfortable working. The image can be summarised as a representation of a contemporary pluralistic organizational culture.

You have learned a straightforward way to analyse an image of organisational culture. You probably do this sort of thing every day instinctively, in a more taken-for-granted way. However, it is important to reflect on hidden complexities around what you might take for granted through observation. How much of what goes on in your day to day working practices are *not* visible? Representations of transparency can also be a mechanism for hiding a plurality of political realities and contradictions. Are there any private spaces to 'hide' in this workspace? What are the implications in terms of surveillance?

1.2 Organizational culture act as a mechanism of control

Organisational culture acts a mechanism for shaping attitudes and values which 'fit' with the espoused ideals of an organisation (Knights & Willmott, 2012). For example, there may be particular rhetoric or discourses around 'work hard, play hard', or the organisation may invoke the metaphor of being 'one big happy family' (Gabriel, 1999) – so, following this logic if you aren't happy then it is probably 'your fault'.

Knights and Willmott (2012) suggest that one outcome of management's preoccupation with the concept of culture might be as a means of controlling employees. More specifically, cultural control is one form of management control. It represents a managerial desire to enlist workers' cooperation, compliance, and commitment to create an esprit de corps with which to limit human recalcitrance at work. The rhetoric of control, coupled with a new vocabulary of teamwork, quality, flexibility, and learning organizations, constitutes culture management projects that seek to create culture as a mechanism of soft domination (Clegg, Kornberger & Pitsis, 2016).

Figure 5 below shows how the mechanisms of control in some organisations have moved from bureaucratic to cultural techniques. Although the techniques are different, the outcome is the same, but merely reproduced in a manner that is more subtle and implicit rather than explicit.



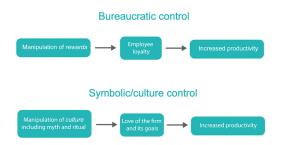


Figure 5 Mechanisms of control

Cunliffe and Luhman (2013) go so far as to suggest that such contemporary culture management is a form of social engineering – a large scale influencing of groups of people. Attempts to manage organisational culture are not just about telling or showing employees what they are expected to conform to, but also about shaping their hearts, minds and souls; and in the case of workplace health programs, it can also be about shaping their bodies (Zoller, 2003). Hence employees come to embody the organisational cultural ideals (James & Zoller, 2018), sometimes through intrusive practices.

1.3 Session 1 quiz

You have now looked at managing through organisational culture. To test your understanding of this managerial approach, have a go at the Session 1 quiz.

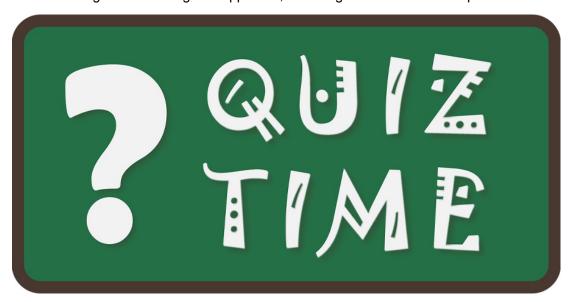


Figure 6 Quiz time

Activity 3 Session 1 quiz time

Allow around 20 minutes for this activity

- 1. Which of the following fit the descriptions of organisational culture?
 - □ a. Beliefs
 - □ b. Norms



□ c. Stories □ d. Symbols
Answer a, b, c, d (all of the above). Organisational culture defines as 'the set of beliefs, values, assumptions, norms, stories, ceremonies, [artefacts], and symbols within the organisation, that influence the way employees behave and perform their jobs' (Cunliffe and Luhman, 2013, p. 118).
The primary cultural practices include (Tick all those where all options apply)
□ a. Representation, production, marketing
□ b. Identity, production, regulation
□ c. Marketing, operation, human resource management
□ d. Communication, production, marketing
□ e. Consumption, representation, regulation
Answer Answer: b and e. The five primary cultural practices are representation, identity, production, consumption, and regulation.
 3. The description of 'identity' cultural practice is a. The practice of constructing meaning through the use of signs and language b. The practice of disseminating information, making decisions and agreeing on future actions c. The practice of how information is consumed by those present d. The practice of positioning themselves and taking on a particular role when performing tasks.
Answer D. A – representation, B – production, C – consumption, D – regulation. 'Identity' is the cultural practice of positioning themselves and taking on a particular role when performing tasks. For example, during the departmental meeting, participants take on particular roles, such as the meeting chair, secretary, etc.
4. Which of the following explain how the 'regulation' of cultural practice takes place in a departmental meeting?
 a. The meeting is chaired by the manager or a senior member of the department
 b. Meeting follows a specific procedure c. When a question is put to all members, perhaps junior members might wait for more experienced departmental members to answer first
□ d. The meeting is required to be minuted for future reference
Answer Answer: a, b, c, d (all of the above). 'Regulation' cultural practice involves the practices of formally (and informally) conducting the meeting.

5. Which of the following statements is incorrect?



- □ a. Organisational culture is a mechanism to shape employees' attitudes and values which 'fit' with the espoused ideals of an organisation
- □ b. The underlying assumptions of organisational culture define organisational membership
- □ c. Organisational culture can stimulate employee loyalty by manipulating a reward system
- □ d. Organisational culture can affect employees' love of the organisation via influencing organisational myth and ritual.

Answer

c – Bureaucratic control can stimulate employee loyalty by manipulating a reward system.



Session 2: Managing through internal marketing

Employees who interact directly with the organisation's external customers can enjoy a satisfying and rewarding experience. However, responding to the often-varied requirements of external customers can also be highly stressful for customer-facing employees. Managing employees as a form of internal customer requires an understanding of the challenges that you and other employees encounter in day to day interactions with external customers.



Figure 7 Responding to the requirements of external customers can be stressful

Employees have been recognised as an essential focus for marketing theory and practice since Berry, Hensel and Burke (1976) introduced the term 'internal marketing' into marketing literature. There are many perspectives on the core features of an internal marketing approach. These include:

- the development of internal (employee, management and organisation) relationships
- an emphasis on communication and trust in these relationships
- the importance of knowledge sharing
- the role of leadership in creating a shared vision, values and organisational identification
- an emphasis on competence building through training and education.



Supporters of internal marketing highlight its potential to achieve organisational objectives, improving both customer and employee satisfaction. Grönroos (1981) distinguishes between strategic and tactical approaches to internal marketing. At a strategic level, this can include the adoption of supportive management styles, e.g. human resources policies and customer service training. At a tactical level, it can include ongoing training, e.g. the encouragement of formal and informal communications, such as newsletters; and internal segmentation.

Activity 4 Do employees have to be perfect?

Allow around 20 minutes for this activity

Watch the following video, which lasts around one and a half minutes:

Video 2 Dealing with difficult people

What do you think are the main messages in the video for managing customer–contact employees? Record your thoughts in the text box below.

Provide your answer...

Feedback

Factors which you might have recorded include:

- the degree of autonomy/control/flexibility afforded to staff in responding to customers
- the training needs of employees who deal with difficult customers
- the need for support for employees who deal with difficult customers.

The goals of internal marketing are both long term and qualitative. For example, these might include 'enhanced customer consciousness throughout the organisation' or 'improved market performance'. You would expect to have a number of objectives in order to achieve each goal. These would be shorter term, more specific and measurable. For example, for the former, this may include the number of customer-focused suggestions for process improvement from staff. For the latter, it might be 'X per cent increase in market share; X per cent increase in repeat purchase or customer satisfaction'.

In order to achieve the goal of 'successful' internal marketing, organisations need to come up with an internal marketing plan. It is this you will look at next.

2.1 Internal marketing plan

The main components of an internal marketing plan mirror those used for external marketing and are shown below (see Figure 8).



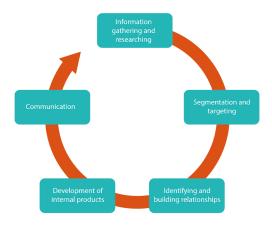


Figure 8

You will now look at each component of the internal marketing plan in turn.

Information gathering and researching

Both an external and internal marketing orientation requires research and insight into the behaviours, attitudes, values and norms of 'customers'.

Research is required to establish the barriers, costs, rewards and benefits as perceived by employees when changing their behaviour. As with external customers, this will inform the development of a 'value proposition' – a full mix of benefits upon which an organisation is positioned (Kotler & Armstrong, 2018). For employees, this would encourage them to 'buy into' the programme as well as determining the internal products which will need to be developed.

Segmentation and targeting

Segmentation in the internal marketing context is the process of grouping employees with similar characteristics, such as needs, wants, tasks and attitudes.

Segmentation can be based on surveys, observation or management appraisals. Often employees are segmented on basic criteria such as job role or department but other more sophisticated approaches may be used, such as psychographic or behavioural segmentation, which may be more appropriate; for example, readiness or willingness to change or become involved in initiatives.

Identifying and building a relationship

It is essential to identify the many 'buyer-seller' relationships which exist within the organisation and to develop these based on mutual understanding, recognition of mutual interdependencies, trust and shared values, and objectives.

A lack of teamwork is a key reason for employees' unwillingness or inability to deliver high service quality.





"It's simple, really. You're a team member when you want something. You're an employee when I want something."

CartoonStock.com

Figure 9 The rule of being a team member

Development of internal products

Central to internal marketing is the development of internal products (goods and services) based on the specific needs of the target audience – in this case, the employees. These may include practices, plans, structure, vision, mission and values as well as new performance measures, new ways of working, services and training courses, and the job itself (Ahmed, Rafiq & Saad, 2003).

Activity 5 Identifying internal product

Allow around 20 minutes for this activity

Just about anything that employees 'consume' or 'use' that shapes their working life and environment can be considered to be an internal product. A good example of internal product is 'an easily accessible and "customer friendly" complaints process'. Can you come up with three other internal products an organisation can use to engage

Can you come up with three other internal products an organisation can use to engage employees and enhance their job satisfaction?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

You might have come up with:

- clear plans, timescales, processes and procedures for dealing with customer complaints and achieving service recovery
- a support system for employees who deal with service failure and customer complaints
- training programmes for employees in dealing with customers and managing complaints
- clear guidelines on the scope and nature of employee responsibility and autonomy



 a process for integrating customer feedback into management decision-making and service redesign.

Communication

Internal marketing requires a communications campaign to build awareness, provide information or achieve other objectives. Corporate magazines and newsletters written for employees are common nowadays, and many larger organisations employ a staff intranet which can rapidly provide new information. These can be good methods of communication and provide an opportunity to promote market ideas, missions and strategies. Employees can see achievements and initiatives that encourage a sense of community within the organisation.



Figure 10

Activity 6 Developing internal communication

Allow around 20 minutes for this activity

This activity encourages you to reflect on your own experience in internal communication. Record your responses to the following questions:

- 1. What type(s) of internal communication have you experienced?
- 2. Do you find this/these internal communication(s) effective/ineffective? And why?

Provide your answer...

Feedback

Internal marketing is intended to encourage collaboration between functions and reduce interdepartmental conflict. Ballantyne (2003) describes 'border crossing' as a key component of successful internal marketing. This involves internal communications, and recognising that organisations usually have legitimate hierarchies but that these can often impinge on the flow of communication. It may be necessary to make internal changes that enable equal access to channels of communication and influence at all levels of the organisation.



2.2 Internal marketing cycle

Now that you have looked at the main elements of internal marketing and developed a plan for your organisation, how might this be implemented so as to achieve the goals and objectives? In other words, what process could be adopted? Very few studies provide guidance on the implementation process; one exception is Ballantyne (2003), who describes a four-stage process or internal marketing cycle (see Figure 11 below).

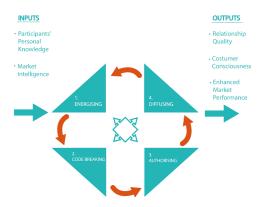


Figure 11 Internal marketing cycle

As you can see, the main inputs into the process relate to the knowledge of participants and market intelligence, emphasising the information gathering and research element of internal marketing. The outputs or objectives emphasise improvements in relationships and a focus on external customers leading to improvements in market performance (attracting and retaining customers). The four-stages of internal marketing are:

Energising – learning how to work together on useful market place goals that are broader than the bounds of any individual job description.

Code breaking – learning how to apply personal resources of 'know-how' in working together to solve customer problems, create new opportunities and change internal procedures.

Authorising – learning to make choices between options on a cost-benefit basis and gaining approval from the appropriate line authority.

Diffusing – learning how to circulate and share new knowledge across managerial domains in new ways.

Activity 7 Internal marketing process and criticisms

Allow around 60 minutes for this activity

You have now learned four main implementation stages of internal marketing. At each stage, implementers may encounter challenges such as resistance to the changes from managers and employees.

Part A

Below are the four types of practices that were implemented in a large Australian retail bank.

Can you drag each practice into the corresponding 'Stage' slot in the table below?



Three-day workshops for around 20 staff volunteers who worked on intractable service quality puzzles derived from formal market research inputs. Requires employee commitment.

Creative puzzle-solving task work organised around small teams. Access to specialist 'expert' departments was available to participants during this phase.

Proposals and recommendations were prepared for the decision-makers in various departments and decisions carefully negotiated.

New knowledge became new policies and procedures and training schedules prepared by the line management departments responsible with inputs from internal marketing groups.

Match each of the items above to an item below.

ENERGISING CODE BREAKING AUTHORISING DIFFUSING

Part B

As you have learned about internal marketing, you may have started to question:

- 1. Is internal marketing a marketing activity or human resource management activity?
- 2. Does internal marketing attempt to manipulate employees?



Figure 12

Reflect on your thoughts about these questions in the box below.

Provide your answer...



Feedback

According to the perspective taken in this session, internal marketing is an integrative concept involving a number of traditional management functions such as marketing and human resource management. Some will argue that the elements of an internal marketing approach are the province of human resource management and that marketers should not interfere in employee relations. This view does, however, fail to recognise the positive contribution which an internal marketing approach can bring, where the emphasis is on inter-functional co-operation rather than a usurping of human resource management's role.

As with many employee-oriented initiatives, proponents of internal marketing have been accused by some scholars as attempting to manipulate employees. Much internal marketing will depend on the prevailing culture within an organisation, and its success is directly attributable to the individuals involved and the ability of managers to inspire trust and commitment.

Generally, internal marketing is not a discrete activity, and formalising it may undermine its effectiveness. Typically, organisations prepare formal programmes, which are accompanied by a range of ad hoc initiatives. Internal marketing is more likely to be successful with a subtle approach that will lead to the development of 'shared vision' (within the organisation). Large organisations frequently spend vast sums of money on launching schemes to improve internal relationships, only for the programme to 'fizzle out' because of a lack of commitment throughout the organisation and employees failing to identify with the scheme.

2.3 Session 2 quiz

You have now completed the session on managing through internal marketing. To test your understanding of this managerial approach, have a go at the Session 2 quiz.

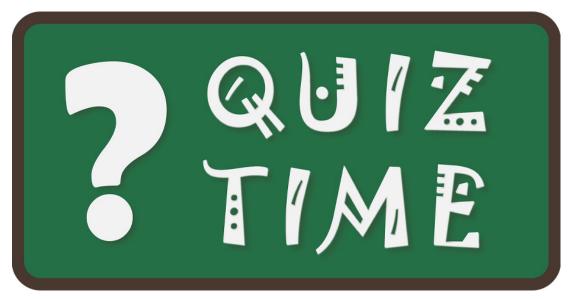


Figure 13 Quiz time

Activity 8 Session 2 quiz time Allow around 20 minutes for this activity	
The target audiences of internal marketing are a. Shoppers	
□ b. Politicians	
□ c. Employees	
d. Entrepreneurs	_
Answer c. Employees are the audience of internal marketing.	_
2. What are the core features of internal marketing approach?	
□ a. The development of internal (employee, management and organisation) relationships	
□ b. The manipulation of employees	
c. The creation of shared vision, values and organisational identificationd. An emphasis on competence building through training and education	
a, c, d. Proponents of internal marketing highlight its potential to achieve organisational objectives, improving both customer and employee satisfaction. At a tactical level, it can include: ongoing training; the encouragement of formal and informal communications, such as newsletters; and internal segmentation.	_
 3. The main components of an internal marketing plan are a. Information gathering and researching b. Discovering c. Segmentation and targeting d. Managing organisational politics 	
□ e. Communication	
Answer	-
a, c, e. The main components of an internal marketing plan are information gathering and researching, segmentation and targeting, and communication. Other important components are identifying and building a relationship, and the development of internal products and communication.	-
4. The definition of 'development of internal products' is	
 a. The process of grouping employees with similar characteristics b. To identify the many 'buyer-seller' relationships which exist within the organisation and to develop these based on mutual understanding, recognition of mutual interdependencies, trust and shared values, and objectives c. To build awareness, provide information or achieve other objectives 	1
 d. The development of goods and services based on the specific needs of the employees 	;



Answer

- d. Just about anything that employees 'consume' or 'use' that shapes their working life and environment can be considered an internal product. Central to internal marketing is the development of internal products (goods and services) based on the specific needs of the employees. These may include practices, plans, structure, vision, mission and values as well as new performance measures, new ways of working, services and training courses, and the job itself.
- 5. Which of the following are NOT one of the processes of the internal marketing cycle?
 - □ Energising
 - □ Diffusing
 - Authorising
 - □ Communication

Answer

The processes of the internal marketing cycle are energising, diffusing, authorising, and code-breaking.



Session 3: Managing through collective leadership

The third type of contemporary managerial approach adopted by organisations to influence employees' behaviours is through collective leadership. Traditional representations about leadership – the process of influencing followers – associate it with successful and charismatic individuals such as Steve Jobs or Winston Churchill. However, the realities of leadership practice also correspond to alternative views of collective leadership such as collaborating effectively on projects or collective decision-making processes.



Figure 14

One way of looking at collective leadership is through what is known as *distributed leadership*. Accordingly, the argument of Gronn (2002) is that leadership is distributed among at least two individuals. In some cases, this involves that all the members of an organisation are leaders at least at some point in time. Additionally, this means that individuals in an organisation can be leading at specific times, as opposed to it being a constant role. For example, Sergei Brin, Erik Schmidt and Larry Page lead Google and Alphabet collaboratively. (Alphabet is a holding company with a number of different organisations including Google, YouTube, etc. Google refers to the organisation taking care of the web browser.) From the beginning, Brin and Page had a more technological approach and had been friends since their studies at Stanford, whereas Schmidt brought his business experience as he had been already a CEO of another large organisation in the IT (information technology) industry.

Another way of looking at collective leadership is through the lens of *relational leadership*. From this perspective, leadership is not simply located in a variety of individuals – as is the case for distributed leadership. Rather, it is produced inside collectives through the interactions *between* individuals and 'processes by which certain understandings of leadership [are created]' (Uhl-Bien, 2006, p. 255). For instance, members work in a specific team that is supposed to perform a task, such as writing a consultancy report for a team of consultants. Relational leadership will be constituted through what they regard as an effective team process of writing a report. This might involve being able to collaborate effectively, meeting the deadline, being accurate in terms of facts, and providing a creative solution in terms of problem solving. If some of the team members have a totally different understanding of leading, or if the whole of the team does not agree that their interactions



constitute a form of leadership, it becomes impossible to say that leadership is being practised.

To put it simply, the distributed leadership approach focuses on multiple individual leaders, whereas a relational leadership approach sees leading as a practice emerging from the process of organisational collaboration.

Benefits of collective leadership

A first benefit of collective leadership is that it enables – at least in specific contexts – and enhances problem-solving to increase *organisational learning*, that is to say the ability for organisations to create and accumulate knowledge. This leads McHugh, Yammarino, Dionne, Serban, Sayama and Chatterjee (2016, p. 218) to argue that collective leadership would be better for learning than individuals working separately in a hierarchical organisation as it allows organisational members to bring different, complementary and plural expertise to the team.

A second benefit of collective leadership is that it seems to be the most effective way to think about *working in teams* (Paunova, 2015). Where there is a dynamic and relatively egalitarian process with strong bonds between members, teams seem to work more effectively.

Watch the following TedTalk video from 13:31 to 24:40 minutes – feel free to watch the entire video although this is not necessary.

View at: youtube:CHDEWDvCk0o



Video 3 Design – a question of creative and collective leadership

In this video, Professor Steven Kyffin discusses how collective leadership can contribute to creative invention. Collective leadership focuses on gathering people (stakeholders) with different knowledge and working together in creating value and solving pressing challenges. The success of this team depends on the leadership within the entire group rather than the skills of an individual member.

3.2 Drawbacks of collective leadership

Despite the benefits, if used in a non-adequate way, collective leadership can be at times problematic in terms of efficiency in the decision-making process.

For example, in a moment of crisis which requires a very quick and major decision, it can be more efficient to have one specific individual in charge. If a pilot has identified that they cannot land at an airport in an emergency, it is likely that the pilot will be best placed in terms of deciding where to land, rather than consulting with the rest of the crew. In 2009, this was illustrated by a former US Airforce pilot landing his 148-passenger jet on the Hudson river, when trying to make it back to LaGuardia would have meant certain death (Pilkington, 2009). Similarly, the Paris Notre-Dame fire in 2019 was stopped because the individual supervising the firefighting operation – General Gallet – decided to sacrifice the roof in order to concentrate on the South Tower to prevent the whole structure from



collapsing (Peltier, Glanz, Gröndahl, Cai, Nossiter & Alderman, 2019). If a collective had made this decision, perhaps the whole of the cathedral would have collapsed because it would have taken too much time. Sometimes, though, collective leadership actually works better, for instance if the operational leader is simply clueless about how to solve the crisis, or to prevent one individual making a mistake.

Furthermore, with collective leadership there is a danger of promoting a leaderist ideology that would help manipulate employees through telling them that if they are not leaders it is their responsibility (O'Reilly & Reed, 2010). In other words, organisations could make employees feel guilty if they are not leaders.

Music improvisation and Collective Leadership

The collective leadership places a great emphasis on people working together toward a shared objective. Each individual in the team will use their unique talents and skills to contribute to this objective. One place to study the realities and generic features of collective leadership is through the study of musical improvisation.

Activity 9 Collective leadership through improvisation

Allow around 30 minutes for this activity

In this activity, you are going to watch an illustration of collective leadership through an example of musical improvisation. It involves different musicians playing together without any score or detailed plan.

View at: youtube:stpH4ywM0R8



Video 4 Improvisation

How does this improvisation work? Based on your experience, how do you relate it to collective leadership in an organisational context?

Provide your answer...

Feedback

This is an example of jazz improvisation with Charlie Parker and Coleman Hawkins. Even though the musicians had not planned in detail what they would play before starting, as in any improvisation, they were able to come up with a coherent and beautiful piece of music. They were able to learn quickly from each other as they had no pre-established idea of what they would play. However, they did not start from nothing as both already knew each other and therefore had some idea about their musical styles and where they could go – each of them knew it was highly unlikely one of them would play any music totally disconnected from jazz which would have made the improvisation much more difficult. Additionally, they were both incredibly skilled in terms of a mastery of their musical instrument. Finally, they were able to listen to each other, build on what the other did, and were collaborative, as opposed to disrupting each other.



In summary, collective leadership corresponds to an emergent phenomenon going beyond formal roles in the music band. Although there was no clear hierarchy, a kind of harmonious order was produced through the musical performance.

The reality of collective leadership, as shown with the example of musical improvisation, can be found in everyday life. Leadership can, therefore, be collective. This contrasts with media representations that only associate leadership with specific individuals such as famous politicians or entrepreneurs.

3.3 Facilitating collective leadership

You will now explore ideas that would help facilitate collective leadership in an organisation. In particular, you will focus on space, listening and dialogue.

Space

Space corresponds to the way in which a specific organisation is spatially organised (Dale & Burrell, 2007). For example, traditional offices would provide an individual office for each employee. The individual office or desk symbolises how each employee is supposed to work, mainly on their own, and accordingly how they would also be evaluated individually. Traditionally, the office doors are closed in order to prevent co-workers from listening to conversations and being able to look inside them. This represents an 'exclusive' status symbol. This type of office space could be related to the fact that workers need to have confidential discussions, and this would make sense, for example, for doctors in a public organisation context who need to have confidential discussions with their patients. Collective leadership can be hindered by this type of spatial organisation because collaborative work is made more difficult.

It can be noted that a contemporary phenomenon such as digital space – the space created by interactions through digital technologies such as personal computers and the internet – can foster collective leadership by allowing employees to interact in a decentralised way through online meetings and emails.



Figure 15 An open-plan office environment

In contrast to individual office spaces, open-plan offices are supposed to facilitate collective leadership. These are more contemporary work spaces than traditional offices, which commonly used individual and separated offices.

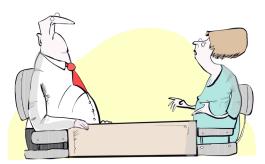


In open plan offices, it is easier to see if a co-worker is present or not and if they are busy. As a result, the intention is that workers are supposed to interact more on an everyday basis. Although it is not automatic, this can be one of the elements that facilitates collective leadership. Of course, it can have negative effects by creating a form of both distraction and peer surveillance.

An alternative illustration of the use of space is provided by co-working spaces in which a variety of workers – either self-employed or from different organisations come to work physically closely to each other, while not being affiliated to the same institution. This brings about a sense of collaboration or sharing (Butcher, 2018), for instance, through bringing about fruitful conversations between workers from different backgrounds. Sharing the same space should create the potential for more relations and innovative ideas to emerge through co-user interactions (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). It can be noted that co-working spaces tend to be associated with entrepreneurship, which mostly exists

in the private sector context, although there is also not-for-profit social entrepreneurship.

Listening



Great leadership is about listening to EVERYONE, not just the people who agree with you.

CartoonStock.con

Figure 16

The capacity for collective leadership on an everyday basis is related to listening. If individuals – including the ones in senior positions – are unable to listen to other members of the organisation, collaboration is impossible. This is because listening is not only about influencing followers and thereby using them instrumentally; it is also about being empathic and considering them as people. Alvesson and Sveningsson argue that listening and chatting are essential to leadership as:

People feel more respected, visible and less anonymous, and included in teamwork. Rather than certain acts being significant in themselves, it is their being done by managers that gives them a special, emotional value beyond their everyday significance. Leadership is conceptualized as the extraordinarization of the mundane.

(2003, p.1435)

This 'extra-ordinarization of the mundane' means that being listened to may enable followers to feel recognised by their managers as well as forming an emotional attachment to their work (arguably another way of culturally controlling employees). Accordingly, this allows them to feel that they have a value for the organisation and



thereby leads them to become more confident (and committed) on an everyday basis. Organisations can create a culture of listening, for instance, through consultations or other formal or informal ways for employees to share their views.

Dialogue



"That's two 'ayes', two 'nays' and one 'whatever'."

Figure 17

Facilitating collective leadership can be brought about by dialogue. Individual leaders listening to their followers can be beneficial but perhaps the most value lies when dialogue contributes to the creation of a leaderful organisation in which 'members determine together what needs to be done and how to do it' (Raelin, 2011, p. 204). The performing of dialogues involves disrupting hierarchical control for more fluid organisational processes, in which boundaries between managers and non-managers become blurred, at least at times.

Activity 10 Reflecting on collective leadership

Allow around 60 minutes for this activity

This activity will allow you to reflect on the realities that facilitate collective leadership. This is opposed to representations of leaders as being only a single person making all the decisions without listening to anyone else.

Part A

Describe your working environment in terms of space – including digital space (that is to say, the space constituted by online processes including platforms and online meetings) – and assess if it facilitates collective leadership. Use the text box to note your thoughts and then compare with the feedback provided.

Provide your answer...

Feedback

'I work in an open-plan office. I share my immediate spatial environment with two co-workers. This favours some interaction and collaboration on an everyday basis and therefore some sense of collective leadership. I do not share space in the same way with the rest of my co-workers as there are walls of around 1.8 metres around my immediate spatial work environment.



However, there is still a sense of interaction as I know if they are around, which might lead me to have a conversation in person instead of sending an email, for instance, or have a meeting in the café. The downside is the fact that in an open office noise circulates which makes concentration more difficult.'

Part B

Listening is another element that facilitates collective leadership as it is linked to dialogue. Provide an example of listening that facilitated collective leadership, either in your current organisation or in a past organisation you have worked for. If you cannot find such an example, describe a specific boundary to listening in your current organisation. Use the text box to note your thoughts and compare with the feedback provided.

Provide your answer...

Feedback

'In my previous organisation, I had to take an administrative leadership role which involved me learning new tasks, such as being able to understand a new organisational structure and explain it to other people. I shared the same office as the person who was formally in charge of this role. He was able to listen to all my questions about the role and helped me understand what I was supposed to do. Without the ability to listen to this co-worker, the organisational processes would have been disrupted as I would have been unable to effectively perform this leadership task.'

Part C

Can you recommend a way to improve dialogue in your organisation? Do you think it would be different in a not-for-profit organisation or charity? If you do not have any examples to draw from, search for relevant information on Oxfam or Greenpeace. Use the text box to note your thoughts and compare with the feedback provided.

Provide your answer...

Feedback

'In one of my previous organisations, senior managers took decisions without communicating about the decision-making process, which created distrust among employees. It would have been beneficial to create a situation of trust in order to take decisions collectively. Consultations could have been organised. Ideally, it would have been interesting to involve employees in strategic decisions through implementing the ideas coming from consultations. Realistically though, this would have required a change in the governance structure of the organisation, which had a formal hierarchy and limited accountability for senior managers. It is also necessary to create a culture of transparency and dialogue in such contexts.'



3.4 Using collective leadership for problem-solving

A complex problem for an organisation could consist of having to innovate in terms of processes and products, to be creative and think out of the box – all of which consist of learning. For instance, organisations in technology-intensive sectors such as artificial intelligence or robotics need to produce new knowledge and apply it in order to develop new services. Additionally, they have to do this within budget and time constraints.

Complex problems can relate to the fact that a solution is required urgently, despite the absence of an obvious and pre-existing answer. This involves a pluralist take on problem-solving; that is to say, being open to a different solution – as opposed to unitarist thinking as always looking for the same 'one' solution.

Teamwork, if used appropriately, is a way to be creative in terms of problem-solving in organisations as, firstly, it allows for the mobilising of the individual knowledge and skills of all the different team members, and secondly, it can create synergy through the interaction of the different team members.

Watch the following TedTalk video about teamwork.

View at: youtube:3boKz0Exros



Video 5 How to turn a group of strangers into a team

This is what happened in 1970 with 'the Apollo 13 mission when the team of astronauts and ground crew had to devise an innovative solution to filter the carbon dioxide out of the space module' so as to impede an imminent death for the astronauts (Crossan, 1998, p. 598). In the end, a solution was found within six hours and the Apollo 13 capsule was able to make it back safely to Earth. This is a good example of teamwork linked to leadership-as-practice. It was through the collaboration of different group members, for instance, the engineers of the ground crew for Apollo 13, that an innovative solution was found in order to respond to the emergency.





Figure 18 The Apollo 13 capsule after its safe landing

Collective leadership can bring about learning and contribute to transforming and creating learning organisations. Garvin, Edmondson and Gino (2008, p. 109) argue that a learning organisation entails that 'employees continually create, acquire, and transfer knowledge – helping their company adapt to the unpredictable faster than rivals can'. In other words, this is linked to teamwork but also to creating a broader culture of learning. However, a possible criticism of this approach is that it becomes difficult to differentiate collective leadership and teamwork.

Activity 11 The 'Valve' case study

Allow around 30 minutes for this activity

This activity will allow you to reflect on the articulation of collective leadership and learning through the example of Valve, a video game producer.

Part A

Read the following article:

How going boss-free empowered the games-maker (Kelion, 2013)



Part B

Based on your reading of the article, are the following statements true or false?

- 1. Teams are central in the functioning of Valve.
- o True
- o False

Answer

True. We form into teams based on need to complete a feature or complete a game, and then we disperse into new teams.

- 2. Valve teams are hierarchical.
- o True
- o False

Answer

False. We're a flat organisation, so I don't report to anybody and people don't report to me.

- 3. Valve teams are permanent.
- o True
- o False

Answer

False. We form into teams based on need to complete a feature or complete a game, and then we disperse into new teams.

- 4. Performance is decided collectively.
- o True
- o False

Answer

True. Staff working on the same project rank each other's technical skills, productivity, team-playing abilities and other contributions. The information is then used to create an overall leader-board which then helps determine who gets paid what.

Part C

In the box below, note down your thoughts onthe questions below.

- 1. How do Valve teams function in order to produce a learning culture?
- 2. Is there any downside for Valve's teamwork model?

Provide your answer...

Discussion

Valve is a successful start-up company in the video game industry, a contemporary type of industry that does not correspond to traditional types such as, for example, car manufacturing. It is vital for it to be innovative and creative and produce new video games that would appeal to gamers. Most workers are highly skilled, presumably including engineers and graphic designers among others.



Valve is able to create new knowledge as it is constantly designing new video games. This is linked to the fact that its employees feel empowered within the framework of collective leadership. Leadership is collaboratively brought about with teamwork, as opposed to just distributing it among a number of individual positions. Perhaps it would be more difficult to learn in a context of crisis.

Finally, a culture of learning is favoured by reinforcing relational ties between employees, for instance through going on holidays together. Teamwork is extremely flexible and functions through a flat organising of work. Individuals can move from one team to another as teams are not permanent, meaning there are no formal hierarchies in teams. Performance is collaboratively decided through collective appraisals. At the same time, there is a danger of burnout in a context of high level of team work – Valve's teamwork model might force employees to commit too much to their organisation and sacrifice their private life as a result.

3.5 Session 3 quiz

You have now completed the session on managing through collective leadership. To test your understanding of this managerial approach, have a go at the Session 3 quiz.

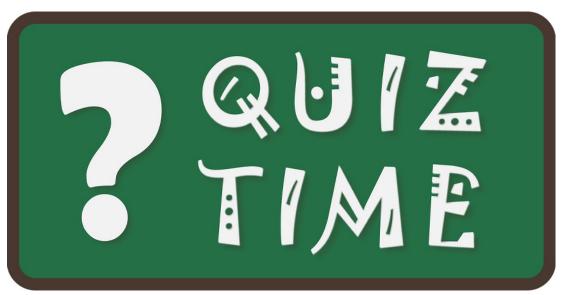


Figure 19 Quiz time

Activity 12 Session 3 quiz time

Allow around 20 minutes for this activity

- 1. Which of the following statements best fit the description of relational leadership?
 - □ a. Leadership distributed among at least two individuals
 - □ b. All the members of an organisation are leaders at least at some point in time
 - □ c. Individuals in a specific organisation can at times be leaders
 - d. Leadership is produced by interactions between individuals inside collectives

Answer

- d. Relational leadership is about acknowledging that leadership is a process that takes place through the relations of all the organisational members. In this perspective, leadership is not simply located in a variety of individuals. Rather, it is produced through the *interactions* between individuals inside collectives.
- 2. Which of the following statements best fit the description of distributed leadership?
 - □ a. Leadership is a process that takes place through the relations of all the organisational members
 - □ b. Leadership spreads out across the organisation
 - □ c. Leadership is related to how organisational members practise leading in a specific context
 - □ d. Sees leading practice in the process of organisational collaboration

Answer

- b. In the perspective of distributed leadership, leadership is distributed among at least two individuals within an organisation. All the members of an organisation are leaders at least at some point in time. Thus, leadership spreads out across the organisation.
- 3. Two of the core ideas of management that can help to facilitate collective leadership in an organisation are ____
 - □ a. Space
 - □ b. Structure
 - □ c. Reward
 - □ d. Dialogue

Answer

- a, d. The core ideas of management that can help to facilitate collective leadership in an organization are space (a) and (d) dialogue. The third is listening.
- 4. What kind(s) of 'space' help to facilitate collective leadership?
 - □ a. Open-plan offices
 - □ b. Individual office
 - □ c. Internal and digital technologies
 - □ d. Shared space (e.g. common room)

Answer

- a, c, d. Any kinds of space settings that enhance the interactions among employees can help to facilitate collective leadership.
- 5. Which of the following best fits the descriptions of 'learning organisation'?
 - □ a. Employees continually create, acquire and transfer knowledge
 - □ b. Employees help their organisation adapt to the unpredictable faster than rivals can
 - □ c. An organisation possessesing a culture of learning
 - □ d. Teamwork



Answer

a, b, c, d (all of the above). A complex problem for an organisation could consist of having to innovate in terms of processes and products, to be creative and think out of the box – all of which consist of learning. All of the above practices can help to facilitate learning.



Conclusion

We hope you have enjoyed this free course, *Contemporary issues in managing*. You should now have a clearer view of your pre-existing ideas and assumptions about 'managing' in contemporary time, which places an emphasis on promoting the ideas of work being like belonging to 'a family', where commitment is high, and when your identity becomes hugely dependant on 'loving your job'. You should also be able to see how this management style compares to the traditional supervision and regulation-based ones.

After completing this OpenLearn course, you should now be able to identify some of the core contemporary managerial approaches such as managing through organisational culture, managing through internal marketing and managing through collective leadership, and be able to apply them to practical examples.

If you are interested in learning more about managing, take a look at our <u>MBA modules</u>. This OpenLearn course is an adapted extract from the Open University course <u>B870 Managing in a changing world</u>.

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