

Why Normative Leadership?

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When an individual earns or is given the title of “leader” within a group or organization, there is an assumption that the individual has power and knows how to lead others. However, just because one has a title of “leader” doesn’t necessarily mean the individual is a leader.

History has documented the lives of many individuals who have lead civilizations, countries, organizations and groups. Some left a legacy that made the world a better place, whereas others left a path of hurt and destruction. Although we have learned many valuable lessons from history, unfortunately, we seem to continue to repeat its’ mistakes rather than learn from them.

Today we are paying the price for the out of balance cultures that leaders have sanctioned over the years in our organizations. Poor academic performance and violence plague our schools. In an effort to stay in business and make a profit in todays’ economy, businesses have down-sized, cut corners on the quality of their goods and/or services to customers, and some have used unethical business practices which gave rise to a culture of corruption, collusion and “me-ism.” In the face of continual funding cuts and rising costs, our human service organizations struggle to provide quality service delivery to clients. In sports, coaches spend more time dealing with the increase of negative, on and off the field behaviors that reflect the social “baggage” that athletes bring with them to their teams. In government, a culture of waste, corruption, cronyism, fiscal irresponsibility, political correctness and a lack of accountability, unfortunately prevails.

In seeking solutions to fix these organizational ills during these tough economic times, there are many strategies that the “leaders” and/or “experts” tout as the panacea. With all of the knowledge and experience we have gained over the years in the field of management and organizational development, we have somehow missed the mark in addressing the real problem. The culprit? - ***the organizational culture.***

While experts talk about the importance of understanding the organizational or *normative culture*, few know how to manage it. After working in the field of organizational culture change for over 36 years, I would like to offer my thoughts on why my ***Normative Leadership model*** can provide you with the knowledge and skills necessary for fixing the culture within your organization and why, despite the tough economic conditions, it is an excellent time to use this model in building, or re-building your organizational culture. So, let’s begin with building a foundation for understanding the organization’s normative culture.

In every organization there are two organizations operating simultaneously. The formal organization is what is committed to writing: policy and procedure manuals, job descriptions, memos that flow throughout the organization, etc. In essence, it is what is *supposed to happen*. The informal, or normative organization, is *what really happens*. This is a collection of informal, expected behaviors that make up the “culture,” or “the way we do things around here.” These behaviors are called *group norms*. These norms, both positive and/or negative, are either sanctioned or challenged by the group through varying degrees of *peer pressure* that is exerted on individuals to insure conformity. Sometimes, the culture is in direct opposition to what is supposed to happen. This creates a *norm gap*, or the distance that exists between the formal and informal organizations. The larger the gap, the greater the negative impact the culture has on areas such as, pride, teamwork/communications, accountability, profitability and service delivery. While most leaders might understand this dynamic, their commitment to closing the gap will be influenced by variables such as, their ability, leadership style, the organizational politics and their own political or personal agendas. Thus, as the leader goes, so goes the group - and the culture. When the cultures are out of balance, a myriad of problems will arise.

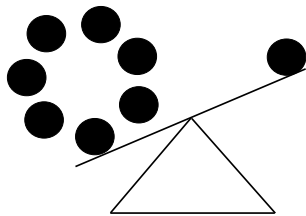
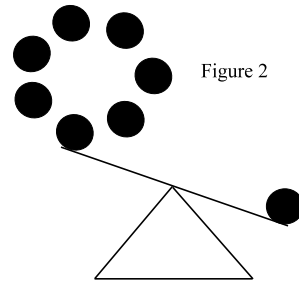


Figure 1

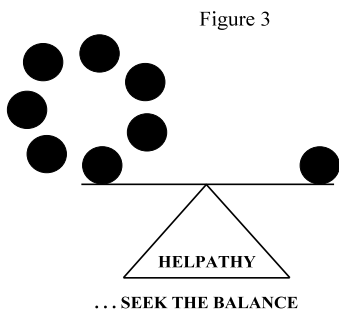
In the culture in figure 1, *the needs of the group are more important than those of the individual*. The “we know what is best for you” mentality prevails. Individualism is frowned upon by those who lead the group. Those who strive to use their God-given talent to improve themselves through hard work and sacrifice, must share the fruits of their labors with those who are unwilling, for a variety of reasons, to use their talents. Consequently, members embrace an “entitlement” mentality and feel they are owed something for nothing. This destroys initiative and creativity is stifled. In this culture, the norm is to reinforce the status quo and adopt a normative expectation that forces members to conform to lower standards of productivity and accountability.

To maintain this type of environment, leaders direct their enforcers to use intimidation and other strong-arm tactics to control the members. The flow of information is closely monitored and the leaders’ “spin-doctors” twist the facts to make them fit the message they want to report. Individuals who “see through” the deception and have the courage to question these “facts” receive varying degrees of peer pressure to conform to the norms. This pressure is manifested in things such as: isolation from the group, character assassination, the loss of status or a job, personal, professional and/or financial ruin, and in some cases, death. This philosophy can be seen in political ideologies such as socialism and fascism. Unions adopt this group mentality which unfortunately, stifles individual initiative, reinforces sub-par performance standards and protects workers who perform at a levels far below their potential. Gangs and cults are other examples of cultures where individuals sacrifice their individuality in order to conform to the whims of the leader/group. Although this model is out of balance, it can be useful to a leader.

A leader who is charged with turning around a negative culture in a group or organization will initially use this model to bring order, discipline and structure to the group. The needs of the group will supercede the needs of the individual in the early phase of the group's development. This phase is called the **control phase**. While this approach is out of balance, it is a necessary, strategic move by the leader in order to set the normative expectations of the group because the group is incapable to doing so for itself. The other extreme in organizational cultures can be seen in Figure 2.



Here, *the needs of the individual are more important than the group*. In this environment, there is little to no teamwork. "Looking out for #1" is the expected behavior. Sometimes the "superstar" syndrome evolves where individuals believe they are more important than the team. Although they are part of a team, it's all about *them*. Self-centeredness and/or self-survival is the primary objective. *I want what I want - even if it is at your expense* is the attitude. In this culture, too, individuals who are sub-par to poor performers, can avoid accountability by asserting their "rights" by filing a grievance or discrimination charges against an individual, management or the organization. An accountability issue now becomes a gender, racial or some other "legal" issue that can be very disruptive to the ability of the organization to fulfill its' mission.



The Normative Leadership model emphasizes an organizational culture where *the needs of the group and the individual are in a state of balance with one another*. (Figure 3) Here, you can retain your individuality and still be a member of a group or team. In this culture, there is strong teamwork and accountability. Peer pressure is applied by the group to bring individuals to higher levels of self awareness, performance and growth. The norm is to be **supportive, yet challenging** of ourselves and one another in order to maximize the group and individual potential.

Additionally, there is a strong sense of integrity and ownership over individual behavior. All strive to "do the right thing." Everyone understands the normative expectations of the organizational culture and strives to model and reinforce them. When conflict or team issues arise on a daily basis, the **Normative Leadership** knowledge and skills serve as a frame of reference for "how to" constructively resolve them. Those who attempt to cover up or "spin" the truth to avoid accountability for their actions, find they have no where to hide when the Normative Leader uses

his/her skills to logically, professionally and confidently, peel away the symptomatic layers of political rhetoric to uncover the facts and truth in addressing the real problem. This is both the blessing and the curse of following the *Normative Leadership* model.

Achieving an organizational culture as seen in Figure 3 is a very difficult, and sometimes, dangerous undertaking for a leader. However, this model increases your chances of creating a more successful, positive culture by providing a simple, but powerful system which incorporates: a) a *leadership operating system*; b) solid *people skills* and, c) a *philosophy*.

A. *The Leadership Operating System*: The leadership operating system offers a frame of reference that a leader (and followers) can use in addressing and managing the day to day issues that surface in the work place. The system is presented in the four core courses within the program. They are:

❶ **Introduction to Normative Cultures** - This program sets the foundation for understanding the organizational culture and provides skills for closing the gap between what is supposed to happen and what really happens.

❷ **Leadership Management** - This course helps leaders to gain insight into their leadership style and how it contributes to the development of the organizational culture. Additionally, participants learn how to facilitate a more effective 1-1 meeting with employees/colleagues, etc.

❸ **Building a Team** - Here participants learn to understand group dynamics and are able to apply the concepts in resolving interpersonal conflict and building trust within the team.

❹ **Performance Assessment** - This program offers a simple performance assessment system for building employee accountability via individualized job descriptions with responsibility areas and measurable standards of performance.

B. *The People Skills*: A key variable that usually impedes the process of developing a balanced “culture” in a group or organization is *human nature*. Individuals are motivated by a combination of the three Ps: their pocketbook, power or their purpose. When they join groups and/or organizations, they bring with them their credentials, expertise and potential to use their skills in helping the organization to grow. They also bring their pattern of behavior and life’s “baggage” that has influenced the development of who they really are as opposed to who they may appear to be. These behaviors fuel the dynamics of the culture. The quality of each individual’s contribution is directly proportionate to the pattern of behavior they have developed. While some demonstrate a high degree of professionalism, initiative and competence, others exhibit a lack of professionalism, laziness and incompetence. When interpersonal/team conflict arises, the leader can apply the normative concepts to resolve issues through the use of solid *1-1 and group skills*.

C. *The Philosophy* - Normative skills without the right philosophy to guide the use of the skills presents a very dangerous situation as seen in the models above. *Helpathy* is the philosophy that helps to maintain the balance between the needs of the group and the individual. By definition, helpathy is an *attitude that exists within a group embodying trust, understanding, mutual respect and cooperation to encourage the individual and collective use of human*

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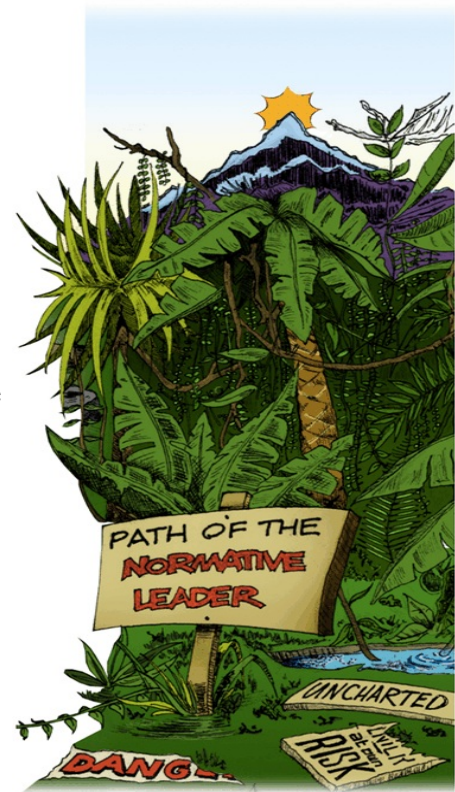
potential. It encourages everyone to be supportive, yet challenging, of themselves and each other. It also encourages employees to **STOP** before they act or react to a situation, and assess **Self, Task, Others** and **Process**, in order to use 20/20 hindsight in the present to constructively resolve problems. While colleagues might not agree with one another on issues, if they can reach a consensus (agree in part and support the decision) on issues and move forward as a group, the team will be stronger and more productive.

Normative behavior always has, and always will be, the key variable that determines the success or failure of the group. **Normative Leadership** provides the missing link that enables leaders to turn around the “out of balance” organizational cultures that have infected our schools, businesses, human service agencies and athletic teams.

We can no longer afford to turn a blind eye to the politics of the status quo while paying lip service to principles such as integrity, accountability, professionalism, quality customer/client service, teamwork, initiative and hard work. Leaders (and followers) must embrace change in order to survive in these tough economic times. However, in creating a new paradigm, they must be willing to take a hard, introspective look at themselves and their organizational culture, and be committed to consistently applying the normative skills to bring about real and lasting change.

The Path of the Normative Leader is a very difficult path to undertake. As a Normative Leader, you will see things that most people don't see - or want to ignore. You will have the knowledge and skills to fix the real problems in the work place and create the type of culture that you want. This will put you on a collision course with those on the Path of Least Resistance who want to maintain the status quo. However, the Normative Leadership system will enable you to devise and execute normative strategies for addressing the “bigger picture” task and people issues in a more confident manner and accomplish real change. The world needs more Normative Leaders. Are **you** willing to take the challenge?

I invite you to review the information on this website. Conduct a mini assessment of your organizational culture by completing the “Force Field” exercise from the “Read Me” menu on the home page. You will also find a sample chapter and other excerpts from my book, *Normative Leadership: Powerful Skills for Creating Your Path*, as well as products that can be used to reinforce the normative training in the work place.



Normative Leadership. Simple skills for Simply **POWERFUL RESULTS!**