



...SEEK THE BALANCE

Applied Organizational Concepts, Inc.

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Assessing Your Organizational Culture: The Team Assessment Exercise

Scenario: You have been given the responsibility of managing a new work team, department or organization. Your team is made up of people from diverse backgrounds, various levels of competence, experience and ability. Each also has a unique pattern of behavior which includes certain strengths, developmental areas and “personal baggage” which either contributes to, or interferes with, their ability to satisfactorily complete their job responsibilities. Your new team has had some performance problems and there are various agendas individuals have with one another. This has caused conflict and dissension within the team and has interfered with their ability to provide quality service delivery to customers. As the new leader, you must change the culture within the team to make it a more productive, team-oriented environment. How do you proceed with this task?

In the Normative Leadership model, there are many “tools” within the “Leadership Operating System” that you learn that can help you to address the above scenario. One tool, the Force Field, is a key tool for a leader to use in assessing, changing and managing the culture in the group, team or organization. It gives the leader the “bigger picture” regarding what is really happening “normatively” within the group so you can: 1) establish yourself as the leader, 2) outline behavioral parameters for your employees in order to gain control of your team, and 3) monitor the growth of your individual employees and the team as they evolve over time. Here’s how it works:

1. You must establish the behavioral parameters you want for your team. Therefore, identify the 10 behavioral characteristics that you, and all team members, should model, such as: *accountability, team-oriented, professionalism, customer-oriented, respect, integrity, sense of humor, flexible, common sense, creativity and sense of humor.*
2. Define what it means to model these characteristics on a daily basis. Write a short (3-5 sentence) comprehensive paragraph that outlines the specific behaviors associated with each characteristic. For instance:

Accountability, Team-oriented, Professionalism, Customer-oriented, Respect, Integrity, Initiative, Flexible, Creativity, Common Sense.
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Accountability: This characteristic means being responsible for your actions. It means owning your responsibility areas and following through with meeting commitments and deadlines. Accountability means asking questions such as, to whom? by when? how many?, to define measurable standards of performance when determining actions and outcomes.

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Team-oriented: This is the ability to work with others to accomplish a goal. It means doing the best you can individually, while supporting and challenging your peers to utilize their potential. It is seeking a healthy balance between the needs of the individual and the team.

Professionalism: This means acting in a consistent, high quality manner when executing the duties and responsibilities outlined in your job description. Professionalism is reflected in an employee's dress, quality of verbal and written communications, interactions with customers/clients, colleagues and supervisors, and in one's ability to stay focused and consistent while navigating through the tough times.

Integrity: This means doing the right thing, because it's the right thing to do. It means having an internal moral compass that guides your daily interactions with all that you encounter. It is protecting the organization's resources, reputation and information that flows through it daily. It means not turning a "blind eye" to the collusive acts of others. It is demonstrating the courage to seek the truth and not be afraid to question irregularities that hurt the organization or others.

Common Sense: This means making natural, logical decisions regarding an issue after a thorough examination of the facts and all other relevant data to support a simple conclusion. It means minimizing the impact of politics, self-serving agendas, cronyism and nepotism in decision-making. It challenges one to use 20/20 hindsight in the present and demonstrate a level of restraint in making solid decisions after examining the facts, potential obstacles, opportunities and consequences.

Initiative: This means thinking ahead and doing things before being asked. This characteristic demonstrates leadership in that employees constantly ask themselves, "What's wrong with this picture?" and "How can I fix it?" It means not just identifying problems, but offering solutions as well.

(Note: Sometimes, if the normative culture is more positive, you can facilitate the group to identify and define the characteristics. This gives them more ownership over the process and they will be more inclined to model the behaviors they have identified. As the leader, however, you always have the final say regarding the final product).

Once defined, this puts all employees, from top to bottom, on the same page regarding behaviors that all are expected to model. In an ideal world, if all employees consistently modeled these characteristics, the end result would be a highly productive and profitable organization. However, the reality of what really happens is much different. Here's where the Force Field is invaluable.

3. The Force Field is made up of five columns. Using your ten behavioral characteristics as the benchmark, place the name of each employee in the appropriate column that best describes the behavior he/she models on a consistent basis. The column criteria:

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Strength Column = Consistently models the behavioral characteristics; solid performer; a person you take with you if you started a new organization; will challenge others who model opportunity behavior.

Opportunity Column = Consistently models the *opposite* of the behavioral characteristics; a negative influence on others; can be a disruptive force in the team.

Developmental Column = Individuals who need extra attention/supervision in order to develop and utilize their full potential.

On the Line (Between Strength and Developmental) = This column indicates movement by individuals who are not solidly in the strength or developmental column; an arrow next to their name indicates which direction the individual is headed; improvement indicated by arrow toward strength and concern is indicated by an arrow toward developmental.

On the Line (Between Developmental and Opportunity) = Also indicates movement; arrow depicts which direction; improvement is indicated by an arrow toward developmental; concern is indicated by arrow toward opportunity.

The Force Field

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CRITERIA:

Accountability, Team-oriented, Professionalism, Customer-oriented, Respect, Integrity, Initiative, Flexible, Creativity, Common Sense

STRENGTH	ON-THE-LINE	DEVELOPMENTAL	ON-THE-LINE	OPPORTUNITY
Bob. R ★ Janice T Robbie T ★ Rita L	< Kevin C ★ Stacie M > Frankie T > Olivia F >	Frances B. Bobbi K Ramone L. Angie H ★ Robert Y Bart Y Lucy S John S Maggie M Shelly T Juan O Marcus N	< Mary H. Alice H > Martin P. > < Amar K	Simeon H ★ Jacob T Rod K Bill E Mary E ★

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* **Note:** The term “opportunity” is used to define this column for the following reasons: First, even though individuals in this column are, in essence, modeling negative behavior, they have an opportunity to change their behavior and become more of a strength in the organization. Secondly, it is an opportunity for their supervisor and peers to be “supportive, yet challenging” in helping these individuals to change or modify their behaviors.

The above Force Field example now gives you insight into what is happening within the team. If most people are in the strength column, you have a good culture that is consistent with what you want as the leader. People see problems and try to fix them. They do the right thing and try to reinforce this with others. They also try to challenge those in the opportunity column regarding the unacceptable behaviors they are modeling. This can lead to interpersonal conflict which can lead to constructive change when handled correctly.

If most are in the opportunity column, most people are doing the opposite of what you want. Individuals in this group are doing things to overtly or covertly undermine you and your authority. They not only model negative behavior, but often encourage others to join their subgroup or apply varying degrees of peer pressure to make individuals to conform to what they want.

If you have a large number in the developmental column, this can be compared to the “silent majority” in society who do what is expected, see things that need to be addressed, but say nothing. They will voice their feelings outside of the formal arena with co-workers with whom they feel comfortable.

Those on the line are prime for extra supervisory interventions to help them to move further into the strength or developmental column, or deter them from moving backwards toward the developmental or opportunity columns. Supervisors could also enlist the aid of “strength” employees to use peer intervention/support with their colleagues in the opportunity column to help them move along the force field toward the strength column.

You are the formal leader of your team, and within your team, there are individuals who have “informal” status and leadership over their peers. By observing the dynamics of your team (who listens to whom, who has the power to influence the direction of the team, etc.) you can be more effective in establishing a strong, “strength-oriented” normative culture by working with, and through, your informal leaders. This is the 80/20 rule in operation. 80% of the time that you spend developing, changing or managing your team’s culture, will be spent on 20% of the individuals (leaders) on your team.

In the Force Field example above, you will notice two names in the strength column are highlighted in green, one in the “on line” column highlighted in black, one in the developmental column in blue and two in the opportunity column are highlighted in red. These individuals have informal leadership and power within the team. Quite simply, you want to reinforce what your strength leaders (**Bob** and **Robbie**) are doing and challenge what your opportunity leaders (**Simeon** and **Mary**) are doing. Additionally, you want to develop strategies to stop **Stacie** from slipping into the developmental column and work with **Angie** to move her into the “on line” column toward the strength column.

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4. As you begin to question/challenge the individuals who model the “opportunity” behaviors, conflict will inevitably arise. When you try to hold these individuals accountable for their work-related performance/behavior, they will resist and try to “spin” the issue and project it back onto you or someone else. When their “illogic” doesn’t work, they may shift to playing the discrimination, race, gender, legal, age, disability or whatever “card” they can play to try and bully you to back down. In a union shop, sometimes the “grievance” or threat of a grievance is used to avoid accountability. This is why it is important that you as the leader, address performance/behavior from a “normative” perspective. That is, it doesn’t matter what race, gender, creed, age, etc., one is, being part of the team requires adherence to the criteria identified and defined for the team by the leader and/or team. Once an individual deviates from the criteria, theoretically, the strength peers should question the change in order to help the individual (informally) to resolve whatever issues might be affecting the performance. If the peers are unsuccessful, (formal) supervisory intervention will be necessary.

Ideally, the best case scenario is to “manage” the opportunity leaders across the Force Field so they willingly change their behavior and become “strength” leaders. This will take time, patience and good 1-1 skills. However, in doing this, you will build trust and create strong allies who will use their influence constructively with their followers, and ultimately, bring them into the strength column. This makes for a stronger organizational culture. Opportunity leaders who choose to remain in the opportunity column despite your interventions, may need a more formal disposition such as suspension or termination. Remember, individuals make choices regarding their behavior, and with these choices come consequences. If the “opportunity” individuals fail to respond to your help, as the formal leader, you have an obligation to do what is best for the group and/or organization. You don’t fire individuals - they fire themselves!

The Force Field criteria serves as a logical, concrete frame of reference to address normative behavior and enables the leader to take a strong stand to insure consistency and fairness within the team. The informal opportunity leader on the team *cannot* be more powerful than you, the formal leader. If you do not gain normative control over your team, “the inmates will run the asylum,” and those employees in the developmental and strength columns will be at the mercy of the “bullies” in the opportunity column who are really running the organization. Consequently, good employees will be over worked and eventually “burn out,” teamwork will give way to “finger-pointing” and blaming others for mistakes, productivity will suffer and a culture of poor service delivery to your customers/clients will affect your profitability.

My Normative Leadership Program can help you to become a more effective CEO, manager, teacher, coach or leader, by providing you with an operating system, a philosophy and solid people skills for managing culture change within the work place. The Force Field is one of many tools within the program. By using the Force Field, you can choose to be the architect of your organizational culture instead of being enslaved by it. What does the Force Field look like within your team or group? Complete the Force Field exercise on the next page and find out.

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Criteria:

STRENGTH	On-the-Line	DEVELOPMENTAL	On-the-Line	OPPORTUNITY