The Future of Leadership

Scan Club output for September 2022

In September 2022, the Human Resources Innovation Foresight Team ("HRI") hosted its monthly Scan Club on "The Future of Leadership". Participants from across the Government of Canada participated in the hour and a half activity. HRI provided participants with three specific "Weak Signals":

- Continued Staff Turnover is a Result of Leadership Resistance to New Change

- Quiet Quitting

- B-Corp's Self-Managing Approach

Participants then discussed the importance of these signals and their potential impact on the Federal Public Service. The following infographics summarize each Weak Signal and organizes the participant's' insights and discussions into various areas of implications using a STEEPV framework.

Visit HRI at:

- GC-wiki: https://wiki.gccollab.ca/EDSC_Innovation_RH_-_HR_Innovation_ESDC

- GC-collab: https://gccollab.ca/groups/profile/928221/esdchuman-resources-innovation-innovation-en-ressourceshumaines-de-edsc

The Tech-Enabled Employee Experience
2022 Culture Report from Achievers Workforce Institute

Continued Staff Turnover is a Result of Leadership Resistance to New Change

A recent study by Achievers Workforce Institute found that companies where senior leaders accept remote work are 29% less likely to struggle with employee attraction and retention. The study found that better work flexibility, rather than career advancement or pay, was the main driver of job changes during the pandemic.

The C-suite, according to more than half (56%) of HR executives, is not aware of the changes taking place in the workplace. To implement policies that will entice, engage, and retain top talent, HR executives (45%) contend that they lack the support of the C-suite.

Impacted groups:

- Management
- Candidates and Applicants
- Employees

So what?
How might this impact us in the future?

Social + Cultural

- **Next Gen Leadership :** How will organizations foster the development of new leaders as employee-employer relationships change? As organizations see the value of unleashing employees, the concept of "leader" and their traditional hierarchical responsibilities may change to a more "empathetic/emotional" type leader or mentor, for example.

- **Cool Biz :** Organizations advertise leadership styles as a perk. "Be your own Manager".

- **New Leading Lingo :** Managers, Directors, Executives are bad words. Now, Mentors, Guides, Custodian, Advisor are new corporate titles. "Come work with us and you'll be free to choose your own pathways with help from our experienced Guides".

- **Parameter Paradigm Shift :** Trust is a fraught value in hierarchical structures. Misbehaviour or negligence assumed without oversight. A shift from rules for the individual to rules for an enterprise humanizes employees and redefines how the "worker" is perceived.

Values + Ethics

Policy + Government

- **Non-Traditional Organizational Values :** Business leaders are realizing that to attract, engage, and keep talent, companies must adapt. Successful leadership in the future could centre around the employees' well-being doing away with rigid structures and norms that maximize efficiency.

- **Freedom to the Employee :** Will leverage continue to swing towards the employee and what other values previously unattainable (privacy, flexibility, autonomy, etc.) will be offered as "perks"?

- **New Forms of Governance :** Should "leaders" be redesigned, there may become less of a need for traditional organizational structures (see Signal 3). Perhaps, a new organizational norm will arise in place.

Quiet quitting, however, has less to do with a worker's unwillingness to dedicate themselves to their work and more to do with the fact that they feel disenfranchised from their employers and unsupported by their managers. Or as the article states, "quiet quitting is usually less about an employee's willingness to work harder ... and more about a manager's ability to build a relationship with their employees..."

Impacted groups:

- Employees
- Managers
- Organizations

'Quiet quitting': Gen Z's take on work life balance

The phrase "quiet quitting ("QQ")" refers to employees choosing to do less at work in a silent form of protest. The term is somewhat misleading as they don't actually quit their jobs; rather, quiet quitters are giving up the hustle culture or, as a TikTok user said, "the idea of going above and beyond at work," to counterbalance their feeling of being overworked and underpaid.

This is one attempt by Gen Z and Millennial knowledge workers to change workplace rules and to create a work environment more forgiving of "normal" work culture.

Social + Cultural

- **No Incentive Linkage :** There is a broken line of logic between working hard and success. Neither promotion by merit nor pay by merit are driving as many people to "hustle". It could be that promotions and pay are not enough (I.E. there needs to be more incentives), that promotions and pay are not attainable, or that neither matter to an employee whose life suffers as a result of what is asked of them regardless of the compensation.

Technological + Infrastructural

- **Tech Solutions :** The Should certain technologies enhance an individual's efficiency and lighten the work burden, employees may be able to find the balance they're looking for if employers will it. However, as seen before, gains in market efficiencies are rerouted back into profit-driven initiatives (I.E: automated cashiers → less employees) not to employee wellbeing.

Values + Ethics

- **Why Quiet? :** The protest is unspoken. An indicator of a one-way power dynamic, an unbalanced dialogue, and a lack of clear alternatives.

- **Bottom line... :** QQ is another signal among many that while organizations are driven by consumer values – to some degree – workers' values also matter. The incentives (or threat) of salary is not enough to ensure dedication and obedience. Profiteering can no longer be what shareholders solely uphold otherwise they risk losing the best of the best.

Policy + Government

- **No One's Helping (Leadership) :** QQ is a silent, but explicit call for changes in organizational values and leadership qualities. A push towards empathy and patience. Leaders are stewards of staff not of projects. Yet, QQ demonstrates that individuals do not have faith in managers, directors, or C-Suite to fix what is wrong or to ask for support in finding meaning and balance in their work.

- **No One's Helping (HR) :** QQ is also an indication that HR is not serving their constituents well enough. Employees are choosing to QQ rather than bring a formal complaint to HR or request mediation.

- **No One's Helping (Unions) :** Unions also disempower both employees and employers. Employees bow to union rules and procedures, limiting nuance and risking inconvenience with less "serious" issues; employers want to avoid the conflict. QQ can be seen as taking matters into one's own hands.

LIVING BAREFOOT

BUILDING A SELF-MANAGING COMMUNITY AT VIVOBAREFOOT

A B-Corp's Self-Managing Community Approach

Vivobarefoot – a B-corporation shoe company – has swapped a vertical hierarchy of rigid teams for a more fluid network of autonomous "circles" formed around business needs: Home Circles, Project Circles, and Yin Circles.

Structurally, this means horizontal working, self-management, exchanging general principles of "control/manage" for "sense/respond", and prioritizing openness autonomy and authenticity.

Impacted groups:

- Shareholders
- Employees
- Managers
- Executive Leaders
- Consumers

So what?
How might this impact us in the future?

Social + Cultural

- **Thinning Lines :** The margin of separation between workplace and personal life is becoming more and more porous, each bleeding into one another.

- **Changing of the Guard :** With employees' values changing and businesses – particularly B-corporations – looking at non-profiteering incentives, the traditional organizational structure model is exposed for its stringency and imbalance in responsibility, compensation, and relationships.

Values + Ethics

- **More than Money :** B-corporations in and of themselves are reflections of changing cultural attitudes. Reorganizing internal structures to reflect both their employees' needs and worth and, likely, consumers' values suggests that there is a market and appetite for businesses that don't just make the cheapest product.

Policy + Government

- **Locus of Power :** Bureaucracy looks to the top for action. A permission-based system inherently slows processes. Autonomous decision-makers within the entire system could lead to faster, agile responses and better business models.

- **Circles versus Boxes + Lines :** Traditional pyramid-type leadership might not be sustainable any longer – or never was. Challenges are more complex and nuanced. Diversity is more valuable. Collective decision-making might be a more appropriate apparatus. From a community perspective (company/organization), there's an opportunity for more comprehensive and innovative responses; from an individual level, receiving recognition and seeing a demonstration of input can function as greater motivation.

*"The future is already here –
it's just not evenly distributed."*

— William Gibson