BUSINESS

New leadership paradigm: promote 'relationship' people

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appiness at work was the focus of a workshop in The Bahamas last week, and one of the featured presenters – Alexander Kjerulf of Denmark – recently gave Guardian Business his prescription for a new leadership paradigm, suggesting that prevailing models of promotion in the workplace need to be re-examined.

Kjerulf was in The Bahamas to participate in the "Happiness at Work: Lessons From Festivals" seminar hosted by his fellow presenter, Roosevelt Finlayson. Finlayson is the creator of Festival in The Workplace, a curated experience designed to use Junkanoo principles to create a high-performing organization.

Speaking with Guardian Business following the seminar, Kjerulf pointed out that Finlayson's work on inculcating some of the Junkanoo "shack" principles into the workplace and his own field of happiness at work – Kjerulf styles himself "chief happiness officer" of his company Woohoo inc. mesh very well together.

New leadership paradigm

Kjerulf addressed the perennial problem of promoting a high-performing individual away from the thing they love to do and are so skilled at: the teacher who is "promoted" to administration, the software engineer who is "promoted" to management.

"What we need to realize is that we need to promote a different kind of leader, a different kind of person to leadership. Our model for what makes people happy at work



is that it's not really about the salary - as long as, of course, you're being paid fairly. What really makes us happy at work is results and relationships," he said.

"Results is about being good at what you do and relationships is about feeling like you belong in the workplace. We need both. What often happens in a workplace is that we promote the results-oriented people to leadership, and I think what we need to do is promote the relationship-oriented people to leadership, because they can relate to others, they can understand other people, they can make sure that their needs are met.

'They can make sure that those employees feel that they are seen, they are heard, they are valued, and this is

something a results-oriented person cannot do as well."

Kjerulf reported that in a number of Danish businesses there are two career tracks: management and specialist tracks. On the specialist track, for example, a software developer might become a senior software developer then software architect, then senior software architect and so on.

"In each of those steps there is a raise associated with it, there is a little more prestige, but more than that, there is the recognition of your professional skills, which is what really matters to a lot of these people. And also, they are allowed to do the work they like to do.

"This basic realization is that being a leader is not about the actual work, it's

about the people doing the work. We need leaders who are good at people, not good at the work, and that's not the same thing.

The new work

The changing nature of what is considered "work" the work day, the work week, the workplace, even the concept of a job - conmuch scholarly debate, and Kjerulf weighed in on the subject. He noted that what is considered work is by and large a product of the industrial revolution, prior to which people lived in a mostly agrarian model.

"There is a massive, massive shift happening," he said.

"As the nature of work changed and we got more and more creative jobs, more and more knowledge workers, our attitudes toward work have changed as well, and people have started investing more and more of their identity into their

Alexander Kjerulf.

job. I actually think that's a

very positive development,

because we spend so much

your life doing something

about, something in which

you see no meaning or pur-

sive negative effect on your

Kjerulf told Guardian Busi-

ness the shift in importance

people are placing on per-

sonal satisfaction in their

individual and corporate

work is "an incredibly posi-

tive movement", both at the

"Companies are saying

they are here to make mon-

ey, obviously. But if they can

actually run a happy work-

make more money ... My per-

sonal feeling is that the hap-

py workplaces are so much

more efficient and produc-

are going to out-compete the unhappy workplaces,"

tive and profitable that they

place, then they can also

pose...that just has a mas-

that you don't really care

"And if you spend most of

of our time at the work-

place.'

life."

levels.

he said.

Kjerulf agreed that empirical data is important to support assertions like the one he makes about happy workplaces outcompeting unhappy ones, and said it is "fairly well established by now that happy workplaces do make more money

"There are massive individual differences and some miserable workplaces are still really, really profitable, and happy workplaces can still lose money obviously, but on the whole statistically there is an effect, and there is actually quite a large effect depending on what industry you are in," he said.

Industries like hospitality are heavily affected by the level of happiness in the workplace, Kjerulf said, as are the creative workers - IT, designers, architects and the like. He added that some research is even suggesting that when a hospital is a happy place, people get better sooner.

"On a very fundamental level, there is some neurological research that looks at what happens to us in certain situations, and generally speaking, being happy feeling good, experiencing positive emotions - has some very positive effects on us," he said.

"For instance your mind is more open, so you're more likely to notice what's going on around you when you're in a good mood than when you're in a bad mood. You are more open to people, so you're more helpful, generous, empathetic and also you are more resilient to problems, setbacks and crises," he continued, adding that a good mood means more creativity, productivity and better communication.

'It is fairly well established that we feel better, and we do better work when we're happy. And we're better people overall when we're happy," Kjerulf said.



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