How To Be A Positive Leader Through Building High Quality Connections

Jane E. Dutton
Robert L. Kahn Distinguished University Professor of Business Administration and Psychology

October 2, 2014
I Love Winners
Co-founder of Center for Positive Organizations

- We study how leaders create conditions for sustained winning in work organizations

- “Winning in work organizations” means people and the organization are flourishing
What Do I Mean by Flourishing?
Markers of Flourishing

- Growing/Thriving
- Learning
- Creating/Innovating
- Engaged/Committed
- Generous/productive
- Caring/compassionate
- Healthy

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2 Core Claims

- More **high quality connections** between people during the day fosters individual, team and collective flourishing.

- Positive leaders create more high quality connections for themselves and others.
Goals for the Talk

- Define and elaborate what HQCs are
- Convince why they matter
- Identify high impact actions for leaders
Continuum of Connections with Other People

- Low Quality Connection
- Neutral Connections
+ High Quality Connections

Positively Deviant Interactions

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Think over the last 48 hours

Turn to your neighbor

Share a story of a high quality connection (HQC)

What do the HQCs have in common?
So What Do I Mean by a High Quality Connection (HQC)?

HQC = short term interactions in which both people experience

+++ Vitality
+++ Positive regard
+++ Mutuality

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Core Assertion

High quality connections BUILD strength and capacity in individuals, teams and organizations

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3 Compelling Facts about HQCs

- HQCs increase your capacity to think and create (e.g., Carmeli, Dutton & Hardin, 2015)

- HQCs increase physiological health (e.g., Heaphy & Dutton, 2008)

- HQCs increase your capacity to adapt and be resilient (Stephens, Carmeli Heaphy, Spreitzer & Dutton, 2013)
Explanation of HOW HQCs Strengthen

- Greater emotional carrying capacity (carries more + and – emotions)
- Greater tensility (capacity to bend)
  - Greater openness
Example at the Unit Level

Shorter stays  
More satis  
Reduced joint pain and  
Increased functioning

http://relationalcoordination.org/content/rc/findings.html

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900 patients  
300 care providers
IF SO POWERFUL, HOW DO WE BUILD HQCS?
HQC-building Challenge!

One minute challenge!

Pair up with a person you do not know.

Decide who will lead. When I say GO

Build a high-quality connection to them.

Take turns.

Reflection: What worked? (What didn’t work?)
4 Pathways to Building HQCs

- **Respectful Engagement**
  - Engaging the other in a way that sends a message of value and worth

- **Playing**
  - Participating in a game with another where goal is to have fun

- **Task Enabling**
  - Helping/facilitating another person’s successful performance

- **Trusting**
  - Conveying to other person that we believe they will meet our expectations and are dependable

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As an Individual Leader:
HQC Self-Assessment

How often and how well do I help others succeed?

• Encourage?
• Provide resources?
• Coach?

How often and how well do I send others messages of their value and worth?

• Presence?
• Communicate affirmation?
• Listen?
• Responsive?

How often and how well do I trust others?

• See as reliable, consistent, competent?
• Vulnerable?

How often and how well do I play with others?

• Available for play?
• Engage in real play?
HOW TO LEADERS INSTITUTIONALIZE CONDITIONS FOR HQCS?
Increase Task Enabling: IDEO

- Belief that helping has to be inspired not forced (encouraging both help-seeking and help-giving)

- In survey – 89% of employees identified as effective helpers

- Leadership conviction (Tom Brown, CEO "The more complex the problem, more help you need")

- Collective belief that all projects and people require help

- Collective value: Make others successful

- Brainstorming processes, design reviews, informal lunches

- Explicit helping roles: project teams have senior designers assigned as helpers

- Slack in schedules for serendipitous help

From T. Amabile, C. Fischer and J. Pillmer

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Increase Respectful Engagement and Build Trusting: Plante Moran

- **Values and Beliefs:**
  - Golden Rule
  - “Kindness is candor”  
    (Frank Moran)

- **Practices**
  - Hire based on integrity, ability to be trusted, and will always have others’ best interests in mind
  - Buddy system from day 1
  - Flexible schedules for all
  - Hire for interpersonal ability and train around “No jerks workplace”

70% of employees cite culture as the reason they chose and stay at Plante Moran.
Foster Play: Jackson Community Hospital’s Physician’s Billing Department

- Physical space/adornment
- Elaborate squirt-gun fights
- Lucy the goose
- Play as enabling “life in connection”
SO WHAT IS YOUR ORGANIZATION’S HQC CAPABILITY?

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## HQC Scorecard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree of presence in your organization?</th>
<th>How central to strategic success?</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Selection practices involve employees and select on relational skills</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socialization practices that provide multiple, substantive connecting opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rewarding based on collective performance</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Rewarding for enabling others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent formal and informal recognition of contributions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal facilitation of helping and informal norms for helping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared values: Teams and teamwork Respect and dignity Employee development Whole person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is one action you could take to foster more high quality connections in your work organization?

_____________________
_____________________
_____________________
_____________________

Leaving this session........
Take-aways

- HQCs are key resources for positive leadership: they strengthen individuals, dyads, teams and whole organizations!

- Organizational and leadership practices and culture enable/disable HQCs

- Questions to ask yourself:
  - Self-competence in building HQCs?
  - Organizational-competence in building HQCs?
Need more information?
References

- Carmeli, A. Brueller and J. Dutton.2009 Linking High-Quality Interpersonal Relationships, Psychological Safety and Learning Behaviors in the Workplace, Systems Research and Behavioral Science, Vol. 26, 81-98,
- See my website at http://webuser.bus.umich.edu/janedut/