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ORGANIZATIONAL CLIMATE AND MORALE ISSUES

Posted on August 1, 2015

Many nonprofits suffer from poor faculty or staff morale that can affect overall constituent morale. Managing change and managing faculty and staff effectively are skills that are developed over time. Some heads and CEO's manage by making few or no decisions. Others manage by making too many decisions independently and too quickly.

High turnover of boards leads to high turnover of chairs. High chair turnover leads to a high turnover of heads of schools and CEO's. All of this turnover at the top can result in a power vacuum, often filled by the faculty or staff which may have the only institutional memory left. They may choose to exercise it in ways that most benefit themselves, but may not always be helpful to the school or organization as a whole.

A board anxious to retake decision-making authority for the administration may retain a new head or CEO who moves quickly on change initiatives. Faculty morale may plummet as a result, and the board may fire the very leader who was directed to take the actions that most upset the faculty or staff. A cycle of low morale and high turnover may develop and undermine the long-term health of the institution and its ability to execute its mission.

School and organizational culture is a product of past history, successes and failures, "lore" about teachers' or staff's real or perceived mistreatment at the hands of the board or administration, and of having little "voice" in decision making that affects them.

Independent school managers or CEO's are not oblivious to the extent of unhappiness in some schools or organizations, but they often avoid addressing it. It is easier and less confrontational to "lay low" with an angry culture than to take the risks associated with trying to improve it. Heads or CEO's are never sure if it is even possible to make such cultures more positive, or if tackling the issue is worth the risk.

Throughout the world, Littleford & Associates works with schools and organizations to help support "moral" cultures in healing old wounds and building new coalitions for positive change. Our Firm has more than 600 clients worldwide on this and related topics. The tool is a highly effective organizational climate workshop preceded by interviews with a cross-section of the faculty or staff and administration. One satisfied School Head noted:



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"When I reflect on all the internal and external evaluations and the accreditation visits and the emphasis schools place on professional development, none of these have touched the heart and soul of our school in such a significant and positive way... this work is invaluable and can increase the head's longevity and effectiveness. If a school is interested in:

- successful transition for a new head
- developing a culture of appreciation
- improving faculty morale
- and/or creating a professional learning community

Then I highly recommend this process."

Such changes do not occur overnight, but with prescribed follow up assignments that are outlined to members of the workshop group, this group is able to penetrate old behaviors and begin to modify and improve behaviors within the culture. These behaviors have developed over many years, yet can be modified within 18 months to three years in significant and often remarkable ways.

The ultimate beneficiaries of an improvement in faculty and staff morale are the constituents they serve.