

## Transparency leadership and why it matters

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When asked which work themes are most important to them, most employees will place leadership transparency on the top of their list. Transparency has been seen as a way of empowering employees and improving the quality and speed of decision making. Open sharing of information has been seen to be beneficial and a good thing, unlike hoarding of information and secrecy.

According to an article by Glassdoor, when an organisation is transparent with their employees, they are likely to be successful in a number of areas i.e. they have increased employee engagement, stronger company culture, employees feel valued and it encourages creativity etc. In a survey conducted by the American Psychological Association it was found that only 52% of employees believed that their employer is transparent. Which shows that there is still a lot that needs to be done by leaders when it comes to issues of openness in the way they lead.

### What is transparency in leadership?

Glassdoor defines workplace transparency as “an organisation that operates in a way that creates openness between managers and employees”. Perucci (2020) defines transparency in leadership the ability of a leader to be open with their employees, sharing both the good and the bad, keeping employees up to date with things taking place within the organisation and the ability to welcome honest feedback from members of their team. Transparent leaders strive to practice what they preach, set clear expectations and communicate effectively with their team. There is no room for surprises, concerns or uncertainty when one is a transparent leader.

### The benefits of transparency in leadership

Besides the need for job security and career advancement, employees want to be part of an organisation that has a culture that values openness and honesty. Employees desire leaders who are proactive in sharing information about where the company is headed and what the future plans are for the organisation. This gives them a sense of security and comfort knowing where they fit in. Employees want to be able to relate to their leaders. They want to be able to feel and know that their leaders are aware of the problems they encounter. This means as leader there is a need for communicating less over email and through third-party communication and becoming more personally engaged with their employees via face-to-face and or video interaction and often. According to Forbes magazine, this helps build trust, but, more crucially, set a precedent that will be carried forward by the team(s) and establish a

new form of loyalty and attitude that will spread throughout the company.

Forbes Magazine lists the following as benefits of having a leader who is transparent:

1.

### **Faster way of solving problems**

There is better cohesion amongst employees when a leader is transparent. Employees are able to work better together and are able to solve problems faster as a team. A transparent leader must be able to clearly outline what they expect from their team, update the team on their performance, highlight challenges and be open in sharing information that can assist the team in performing effectively.

2.

### **Team building is made easier**

Transparency is a power tool in building and uniting teams. Team building through transparency happens when the leader of a team can openly discuss what he believes are the strengths and weaknesses of the team. This allows the team members to openly share the perceptions and ideas, creating a platform where the leaders strategically lead the team into achieving its goals. When leaders are transparent allows the group to mature together and find creative ways to achieve their performance expectations. Furthermore it helps in cultivating an entrepreneurial spirit amongst team members.

3.

### **Development of authentic relationships**

Transparency helps in bringing people together. It helps relationships to mature faster, as openness helps in avoiding potential misunderstandings and unnecessary tension that can arise when information is withheld or when there is uncertainty.

4.

## **People begin to trust more in their leader**

When a leader is open, their employees are likely to trust and respect them more, especially in cases where a leader is open about both the good and the bad. Employees may have trusted their leaders before, but when a leader becomes more transparent employees are more likely to encourage others to trust in their leader. This eliminates any biased judgments that others may have had of the leader.

With transparency as leader, you will be able to develop a foundation of trust and loyalty, by showing your employees how much you value their contributions and ideas, which fosters more employee advocacy and helps to build your employer brand.

5.

### **Increase in performance levels**

When a leader is transparent, employees are able to trust more, teams are able to work more effectively together, there is an authentic relationship amongst the leader and their team members and this all ultimately leads to better performance and productivity, which means a win-win situation for both the leader and the team. Furthermore employees are likely to perform better when they are clear of what is taking place within the organisation and what their leader expects of them.

## **How to become a Transparent Leader**

For one to become a more transparent leader requires some thoughtful changes to one's leadership style or approach. It may not happen instantly but the results will be worthwhile. The following are tips on how one can become a transparent leader:

- As an organisation there is need for a consistent policy for leader on how to be transparent regarding business decisions and developments that take place within the workplace.
- Hold regular meetings with the entire organisation to ensure that everyone is up to date on new developments, that clear expectations have been established, and that every person has the opportunity to participate.
- Encourage employees to give honest feedback about company policies and recent changes or announcements. The data can be gathered through surveys like employee satisfaction surveys
- Adopt an open-door policy and encourage other leaders within the organisation to do the same.
- As a leader take time to know and meet your employees especially on an one on one basis. Use

this time as an opportunity to form personal connections with employees and express your commitment as a leader to having an open and honest culture within the department and organisation.

True openness necessitates emotional intelligence, not only in terms of addressing employee concerns, but also in terms of having the guts to own one's own weaknesses and accept help. Leaders can create relationships with their employees and gather their support by admitting that they have no idea what will happen or what the impact of certain changes that may have taken place within the organisation i.e. in the case of the COVID 19 and its effect on organisations. Transparency in leadership starts with the personal commitment to change, and the results will surely follow.

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