Innovative Work Groups

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Overview

- The problem we are trying to solve
- What is innovation
- Why does innovativeness of groups matter
- How climate and culture relate to innovativeness
- How do we change the climate?
Problem solving 101

• First, define the problem
• There is change, and there is innovation
• Compliance with change is one thing
• Innovativeness is another
Innovation, a definition

“the intentional introduction and application within a role, group or organization of ideas, processes or procedures, new to the relevant unit of adoption, designed to specifically benefit the individual, the group, the organization or wider society” (West & Farr, 1990)
The challenges we face

Many units face:
• Reduced staffing levels
• Salary freezes
• Low morale, high stress, uncertainty

Campus as a whole faces:
• Need to reduce total IT costs
Defining the problem

Developing work groups that support the adoption of ideas, processes, and procedures, that are novel and beneficial to the group and/or campus
What the research tells us

• Meta-analysis: climate **DOES** relate to innovative performance of groups
• Of 14 factors,
  • All factors had **some** degree of a positive relationship to innovative performance
  • But 3 factors were found to be **critical**
## Climate factors studied

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>14 CLIMATE FACTORS STUDIED</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive peer group</td>
<td>Intellectual stimulation</td>
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<td>Positive supervisor relations</td>
<td>Top management support</td>
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<td>Resources</td>
<td>Reward orientation</td>
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<td>Challenge</td>
<td>Flexibility and risk-taking</td>
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<td>Mission clarity</td>
<td>Product emphasis</td>
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<td>Autonomy</td>
<td>Participation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Positive interpersonal exchange</td>
<td>Organizational integration</td>
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Finding #1: the “Challenge” factor

**Challenge** – “... jobs and/or tasks are challenging, complex and interesting, not taxing or unduly overwhelming” (Hunter, et. al., 2003)
Finding #2: the “Positive interpersonal exchange” factor

Positive interpersonal exchange – “a sense of togetherness and cohesion in the organization. Little emotional conflict in the organization.” (Hunter, et. al., 2003)
Finding #3:
the “Intellectual stimulation” factor

Intellectual stimulation - “Debate and discussion of ideas (not persons) is encouraged and supported in the organization” (Hunter, et. al., 2003)
Can we change climate?

- Climate = perception
- Managers and other group leaders have major influence on perceptions held by group members
- What can one manager or group leader do to support “a climate for innovation” in group
How to get people to change

• Limits of behaviorism (carrot and stick)
• Limits of humanism (overly empathic)
• Neuroscience and leadership: promising
It’s all about focus

“Perhaps any behavior change brought about by leaders, managers, therapists, trainers, or coaches is primarily a function of their ability to induce others to focus their attention on specific ideas, closely enough, often enough, and for a long enough time.” (Schwartz & Rock, 2010)
Solutions pt 1

• Neuroscience shows what we know: that change is hard on people

• Helping your group to focus and build “attention density” around powerful ideas will change the climate over time

• Key ingredients for successful change in climate: focus group on specific powerful/engaging ideas through repetition over long term (Schwartz & Rock, 2010)
Solutions pt 2

- Group leader as role model
- Encourage
  - “debate”
  - “positive interpersonal exchange”
  - “challenge”

Through modeling
Discussion

If you were to take one idea from this presentation, and try it out, which one would you try?

Open discussion on how we can help our respective groups deal with change in a constructive and engaging way.