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**Title - Developing Workplace Critical Thinking**

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## **Executive Summary**

This report will analysis the impact of beliefs, values and attitudes in the workplace and how these factors are utilised in the workplace including benefits and limitations. The report will include the importance of aligning personal values, beliefs and attitudes with those of the organisation. The report will also include management theories used by Amazon ensuring organisational productivity and high revenues. The report will conclude with a conclusion which will highlight all the major points discussed in the report followed by recommendations on how further strategies can be placed to enhance workplace success.

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## **1.0 Terms of Reference**

The purpose of this report is analyse in depth the impact of beliefs, attitudes and values within organisations. The aims and objectives of this report is to determine the effectiveness of values, beliefs and attitudes in organisations and management theories used. The researcher will be accessing textbooks, journals, articles and websites to compile its evidence. The report has been requested by UWTSD and to be submitted by 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2019.

## **1.2 Introduction**

The information contained within this report will help readers' understanding of workplace relationships. Organisational values aligning with those of an individual's create workplace success will be critically scrutinised to determine what processes work and what hinders. The researcher will be investigating the theories that are applied to the company Amazon and how they have benefitted in their success in global recognition.

The researcher will be using the RED model in investigating findings and framework arguments.

Pearson's RED critical thinking model is based on three principles. Davis (2013) suggests that organisations must continue to meet their mission, manage and motivate their teams in quest for success. Critical thinking skills must be utilised effectively through forms such as role play exercises. The clear connection, capability and ability to higher performance is via critical thinking skills and play a pivotal role in leadership and organisational performance. The effectiveness on the quality of thoughts of a leader can become distorted, biased and prejudiced if left unchecked. Critical thinking would improve the quality of their thinking which would take in to account a variety of possibilities and take in to consideration factors such as:

- Emotional
- Intellectual
- Psychological
- Cognitive.

## **Recognise Assumptions**

Assumptions are recognised as statements to be true without any proof. The absence of evidence to back a statement and to assume all the information to be true. The researcher will recognise and separate fact from opinion by sifting information which is credible.

## **Evaluate Arguments**

An argument is described as assertions in order to persuade someone to believe or act in a certain way. In order to analyse an argument objectively and accurately is a core part of critical thinking. The researcher will utilise the RED model to evaluate arguments by separating emotion which clouds objectivity such as one's prior beliefs.

### **Draw Conclusion**

The arrival to a logical conclusion from evidence provided. The researcher will conclude with information obtained by not generalising beyond facts and making 'good judgement' as this will characterise quality decision making.

## **3.0 Findings**

### **3.1 Beliefs, Values and Attitudes**

According to Talbot (2003), values is a concept that is universally understood within the organisation and ensures that everyone

- Aims for the same goals
- All are in unanimous in working to the same principles
- Are following the same standards
- Adhering to organisational morale
- Ensures organisation's reputation is protected
- Understands that the character of the organisation is determined.

According to Zimmerman (2018) belief is defined as an individuals' view and an understanding of one another. The idea that 'to believe' in something at a given time is to use the information as a guide in self-controlled activities using mind and brain. Belief is a structure that encodes information which shape actions by the state of mind or involving bodily functions. According to Douglas and Wykowski (2011), belief is represented as knowledge and to be assumed as true and is supported by the notion of evidence to support its existence. The actions taken on what is known rather than what is merely believed aligns what is done has proved beneficial in an organisation in terms of productivity such as patient care and educational outcomes. The beliefs held reflect one's individuality and diversity.

Attitude is described as an internal condition of an individual that is focused on objects that exists in their psychological world. An individual's behaviour is a collection of attitudes. In an organisation, employees have attitudes which are work related (Ranganayakulu, 2005).

'Your attitude to something is the way that you think and feel about it, especially when this shows in the way you behave' (Collins dictionary, 2019).

#### **3.1.1 Impact of Beliefs, Values and Attitudes in the Workplace**

### **3.1.2 Benefits**

Sullivan (et al 2001) states that a study led by Kotter and Heskett (reported in 1999) found that value led organisations have many benefits such as growth in revenue and outperform others. Another study led by Dearlove and Coomber (1999), resulted in findings of lower turnover whereby employees valued respect and teamwork. Sullivan also states that values led organisations attracts people of similar values and is good for recruitment as those people can be retained as they are fully committed. The motive behind commitment not only stems from their willingness of wanting good for the organisation but also for themselves. Clear values from the organisation that can be identified by individuals can be rewarding in terms of self-gratification.

People Management (2017) state that, in order to fully ignite core values in to the workplace and its employees', views of the employees' need to be sought and their feedback needs to be acted upon for them to feel valued. The organisation need to reinforce the values in processes such as appraisals, performance management, award programs and the language used when recruiting. The organisation can teach values through both onboarding processes and training and targeting those employees who have customer-facing roles who represent the externally.

According to Engage for Success (2018) five companies have brought values to life. From a compiled recent study, identified innovative ways that demonstrated values:

**Tom Shoes** – through the initiative of giving back to the community by matching every sale of a pair of shoes to a child in need demonstrates their community minded spirit and helping the less fortunate. This value motivates their employees thus creating a sense of purpose and loyalty.

**Jaguar Land Rover** – their acknowledgement in recognition of people's hard work is a powerful motivator. Creatively thinking about reward and recognition through the means of a visit or phone call directly from a leader at Land Rover has had a ripple effect throughout the workplace. The use of social media ensures the news is shared on a wider platform. This process has broken down barriers of hierarchy and ensured efforts are noticed.

**Morning Star** – The manufacturer of tomato products has maintained their philosophy of personal responsibility (self-management) for achieving company success. The companies flexible working hours through the Colleague Letter of Understanding (CLOU) which lets staff operate without formal hierarchy such as job titles and job descriptions and any organisational chart. By scheduling work commitments in the CLOU other team members are aware of each other's schedules and any amendments can be managed within their teams such as taking time off.

**Arup** – A creative engineering and design company who has designed buildings such as the Sydney Opera House has a culture which values innovation and creativity. Their employees work alongside stakeholders of a project which includes

artists, economists and even politicians. The collaboration of different skill sets, and personalities is the key to the company's strength.

**Zappos** – Their values revolve around individuality and actively encouraging their employees to be free in expressing themselves which results in engagement (active and social) and loyalty. A culture Book produced in 2014 uses insights from employees creating a visualisation of what culture really is. Their idea is to clarify and simplify what is accepted or expected from employees without compromising individuality.

### **3.1.3 Implications and Limitations**

Harvard Business Review (2018) state that possessing a set of core values can be like the “operating instructions” of the business. The consensus is to use the core values to inform, inspire and instruct the behaviours of the workforce. Though this is a good idea in principle, it does not work as these value sets do not have any uniqueness to its organisation. They state that research led by the Booz Allen Hamilton and Aspen Institute's Business and Society Program researchers, majority of organisation' values had similar trait vocabulary such as:

- Ethical behaviour (integrity) - 90%
- Commitment to customers - 88%
- Teamwork - 76%.

Practically all organisations now have core values that are similar or identical to each other. The five most common values that should be a common understanding amongst companies are as follows:

1. **Ethical-Integrity** - This should already be the foundation and organisations should already be operating ethically. Adding integrity to the values raises the question to why it is pointed out.
2. **Teamwork** - Employees should not need to be told that working together is a requirement and should be common sense when working in a company. Listing teamwork as a value will not ensure collaboration. Training and performance standards will help with teamwork.
3. **Authentic** - The only way authenticity can be claimed is if the organisation act in an authentic manner. Simply listing authenticity as a value is not enough.
4. **Customer Orientated** - Companies should strive to be customer centric as standard and focus on customer needs and wants. Developing a core value which enables customer engagement in a unique manner would be more meaningful.
5. **Fun** - Having to say that your organisation embraces fun begs the question, are they trying too hard to prove this point. Let action speak louder than words.

According to Harvard Business Review (2017) business leaders acknowledge that company value statements are nothing but a 'front' and this can have destructive consequences. Failing to grasp the culture lever, and their assumptions has led to resentment, cynicism and settlement of indifferences. Company values are regarded by people as sacrosanct. Failure to meet expectations contradicts the values portrayed. A major study in the U.S. concluded that many misused company values. The study resulted:

- Only 23% of employees strongly agreed that they have been applying company values to their daily work life
- Only 27 % of employees believed in the company values.

Values are the driving power in shaping meaningful performance and misuse can result in a toxic force. Three powerful forces for the greater good companies can hold as values are:

1. **Accountability** - selection of people through evaluation and train them to embody the organisation
2. **Self-honesty** - organisations' ownership of failures will demonstrate values
3. **Values statement** - this should be an ongoing continuous journey which is transformational.

When the three conditions are not met, values can be misused in a few ways:

1. The failure to embed the values in to the business and when the organisation does not accept accountability, the values become a reason to punish. The alleged commitment to "values accountability" can result in penalisation of its employees i.e. statements such as "she's not aligned to the values of the organisation". To hold true accountability the organisation must utilise objective behavioural measures which is consistently applied throughout.
2. Genuine failure to grasp self-honesty can lead to misconduct. Chronic bad behaviours and scandals can lead organisations to amend values instead of their actions such as "diversity and inclusion" becomes a value after they are faced with discrimination lawsuits and "transparency" becomes a value when things need to be covered up. "Fixing" people should be embraced rather than declaring a new value.
3. To establish change, defining of the value statements should include transformation. Illusions of change that organisations demonstrate through workshops whereby executives tell stories about their journeys, videos watched and discussed by teams all play the perception of change and "all in together" mentality. Appearance of change can be deceiving. Organisations are better off developing a value rather than misuse an existing one. Culture can become a competitive advantage if the values reflect the uniqueness of the company. Process such as rewards and performance management must have consistent values underpinning them with both words and action.

### **3.2 Management Theory and Amazon**

Chartered Management Institute (2012) defines management style as the way in which managers handle their authority within the workplace and make sure that all objectives are met. The key criteria of management and leadership style are the attitudes and behaviours. Management refers to how managers organise the work in their field and how they deal with team members and colleagues.

According to Amazon (2019), Amazon has been recognised as a LinkedIn Top Company and their offices named as one of the best places to work in 2019. LinkedIn reviewed over 600+ million members with three pillars as the basis:

- Interest in company's jobs
- Interest in a company's brand and employees
- Employee retention.

Amazon have stated that they have teams from around the globe who are building innovative products/services and problem solving for customers such as:

- Speech scientists making Alexa smarter
- Technicians ensuring a reduction on additional packaging
- Associates ensuring the delivery of packages in a timely manner
- Robotic engineering to speed up delivery.

This style coincides with Rensis Likert's theory (Chartered Management Institute, 2012) where management style was primarily focused on behaviour and how authority was executed. Research undertaken by the University of Michigan in the 1950's identified four styles:

- Exploitative/authoritative - little or no trust/confidence in their employees and often uses fear and punishment as motivation
- Benevolent/authoritative - some trust/confidence in their workforce but are treated in a condescending manner
- Consultative – full trust/confidence in their workforce, seeks their opinions and ideas but retains any decision making
- Participative – full trust/confidence in the workforce, seeks and acts on the ideas of the employees and involves them in the goals.

The researcher can identify that Amazon (2019) have full trust in their employees and their capabilities which aligns with Likert's consultative style behaviour whereby leaders are showing trust in their workforce and seek their opinions and ideas. The other style the researcher has identified is the participative behaviour style whereby the leader has demonstrated trust in their employees and acts on their ideas and they are fully involved in goals. Likert's latter styles consultative and participative are known to be the most effective (Chartered Management Institute, 2012).

Amazon employs over 640,000 staff worldwide with an average of 337 people being hired a day in the last four years. The Vice president Jennifer Cast of specialty recruiting said,

"Millions of talented people apply every year to tens of thousands of roles across Amazon. They are excited to discuss Amazon Leadership Principles in action and are eager to join our customer-obsessed teams,"

"I'm constantly impressed by the broad range of experiences and depth of passion our candidates demonstrate."

(Amazon, 2019).

The statements made by Jennifer Cast demonstrates the eagerness of people wanting to join their company which can only mean that they are a good organisation. It also demonstrates the company's appreciation of the talented and innovative skills potential staff possess. The researcher can recognise this management style as Douglas McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (Health Knowledge 2017), whereby it is understood that management style is determined by the manager's assumptions:

- Theory X – employees having a dislike of work, avoid responsibility and need a sense of direction from managers to achieve objectives. This management style is paternalistic
- Theory Y – employees seeking responsibility and like to work as they gain satisfaction. Motivators include recognition and respect.

Amazon's management style coincides with the Theory Y as their employees are self-driven and have developed imagination and ingenuity. Their creativity is valued and recognised which aligns with Likert's behavioural style leading to consultative and participative management (Chartered Management Institute, 2012).

### **3.2.1 Advantages and Disadvantages of Likert's Behavioural Styles**

#### **Advantages**

- Likert's work has lots of alternatives and has more clarity between Theory X and Theory Y of McGregor
- Likert's work (Management Study Guide, 2019) helped quantify results of work done by group dynamics and facilitated the measurement of "soft" skills of management (communication and trust).

#### **Disadvantages**

- Not widely practiced by managers as Likert's work is based on theory than empirical practice.

### **3.2.2 Advantages and Disadvantages of McGregor's Theory x and Theory Y**

## **Advantages**

- Two main types of theory managers identify to consider motivating
- Theory Y management can produce high performance with motivation

## **Disadvantages**

- Only two extremes managerial behaviours is considered
- Theory X management could lead to low levels of performance (demotivation)

(HealthKnowledge, 2017).

### **3.2.3 Critical Analysis of Personal Values, Beliefs and Attitudes**

The researcher can express that Amazon's positive attitude in recruiting employees shows integrity in terms of valuing individual talent. This is in line with the researchers own attitudes as they feel that working in an environment whereby, they are valued and supported would lead them to a successful working life. Having won top place at LinkedIn Top Company (Amazon, 2019) just demonstrates how efficient they are in the corporate world in terms of allowing individuality to succeed.

The researcher can express the benefits of applying McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (HealthKnowledge, 2017) to themselves to develop and motivate themselves at work. Using the principles of Theory Y would be a great tool in recognising their strength and capabilities in achieving workplace success. The researcher can state in using Likert's theory (Chartered Management Institute, 2012) would help distinguish who they are working for and recognise the values of the organisation and do they cater for the needs in creating a harmonious environment. However, the researcher can also acknowledge how easily they can feel demotivated and lack purpose if they feel unstimulated and bored with repetitive and uninspiring tasks can lead to McGregor's Theory X where laziness can occur (HealthKnowledge, 2019). Similarly, with Likert's theory (HealthKnowledge, 2019) the researcher can recognise the attitudes of the superiors towards them in terms of how effective the communication is and does threat of punishment take centre stage in motivating the researcher (exploitative) or does their leader give them the means to participate in the organisation's goals. The latter two patterns consultative and participative are more suited to the researcher's personal attitudes as they thrive on teamwork and participation which they feel is good motivators.

## **4.0 Conclusion**

To conclude this report the researcher can identify the need of values, beliefs and attitudes in the workplace as this demonstrates ones' uniqueness. Values should be universally understood by all and having workplace values ensures all are in unanimous in working to the same principles as they are adhering to the same standards. This will ensure the protection of the companies' reputation (Talbot 2003). Beliefs can reflect one's diversity and individuality and can be demonstrated through

their behaviour at work via mind or bodily actions (Douglas and Wykowski 2011). Attitudes held by individuals are all held in the mind which impacts behaviour (Ranganayakulu 2005). Organisations that are values led have benefits such as growth in revenues and outperform other organisations (Sullivan et al 2001). Values impacted employee's commitment to work (lower turnover) and felt respected and a part of a team. People with similar personal values were drawn to organisations of similar values. Values lead to self-gratification. In order to ignite values, organisations need to take feedback from employees and act upon it (People Management 2017). (Harvard Business Review 2017) Values might not work (limitations) if they do not have uniqueness and if most organisations are using similar generic values. As standard organisations should adhere to be ethical and have integrity. Teamwork should be common knowledge. Companies should be authentic, fun and customer orientated as standard. Values is the driving power in shaping meaningful performance (Harvard Business Review 2017). To avoid misuse, accountability, self-honesty and value statement needs to be implemented.

Management style is effectively the way managers handle authority through attitudes and behaviours. This can be demonstrated through how work is organised and how they deal with team members (Chartered Management Institute 2012). Amazon have stated that they have specialised teams who are committed in their fields. This ensures delivery time scales are maintained and workplace efficiency (Amazon 2019). Rensis Lickert's theory coincides with Amazon's principles as it focuses on how authority is executed. Amazon's consultative and Participative approach shows their confidence in their workforce. Amazon's work ethic coincides with Douglas McGregor's Theory Y whereby their staff are self-driven and possess imagination and ingenuity.

## **5.0 Recommendations**

In terms of recommendations, businesses such as Amazon are required to provide opportunities and relevant training programs so that employees are aware of the standards that are expected from them in a work place. This can be done through a wide range of methods such as daily staff briefings, staff representatives and presentations.

In addition to the above as previously mentioned earlier on in the report, the importance of carrying through regular staff appraisals. This will improve staff performance as they will feel valued in a work place. This could be done through a small informal celebration, a note from a supervisor or even a card on their birthday.

A further recommendation the researcher would like to put forward is the use of Steven Covey's famous book (illacertus 2016), which highlights the 7 habits of highly effective people. This can benefit individuals as it educates people to change and grow in general life and not just limited to a specific workplace.

Another theory that can be applied to Amazon is the Elton Mayo Theory (Mistersimplify 2017) which demonstrated that money was not the only motivational factor but working conditions such as lighting and temperature. Employees' social needs to be met too via better communication and continuous feedback. Amazon need to ensure that they are interested in the welfare of the employees and not just productivity which can be deemed manipulative.

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