

Leadership Strategies for Ego Depletion in Busy Culture

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Abstract

In the era of digital economy, faced with overwhelming information resources and ever-changing organizational environment, people generally fall into a very busy work state to deal with various emerging problems. The fast-paced lifestyle that comes with this busy culture often leads to ego depletion. Employees show signs of self-depletion, such as attention disorder and emotional anxiety. How leaders can effectively reduce the self-depletion of organization members is related to the future development of enterprises. Based on this, leaders can adjust the dynamic and static balance of employees through reasonable authorization, while improving the ability of empathy, helping them to clear emotional nodules, glow willpower, and reduce their ego depletion.

Keywords

Ego Depletion; Mental Energy; Autonomy Motivation; Reasonable Authorization; Empathy.

1. Introduction

Under the wave of digitalization, people's time is infinitely fine cut, refined to minutes and seconds. At the same time, information is artificially processed, cut, and packaged to meet the needs of fast-paced life, and the ubiquitous 10-second short videos, guided reading, and information streams allow us to receive everything happening in the world around us almost all the time. While this constant connection to the world keeps us from being cut off from the outside world, this hectic, fast-paced approach leaves more of us struggling to cope on a daily basis. Conscious self-control invisibly consumes a lot of people's energy, causing them to gradually lose focus, become forgetful, distracted, often anxious, and suffer great mental torture. This is essentially a phenomenon of self-depletion in psychology. Ego depletion greatly reduces the enthusiasm and motivation of employees. Leaders should reduce the negative effect of busy culture on employees' self-depletion through the two-way cooperation of external "authorization" and internal "empathy".

2. What is Ego Depletion?

In 1998, Baumeister and other scholars defined ego depletion for the first time, that is, the phenomenon of the temporary decline in the ability or willingness of the self to carry out volitic activities, including the decline in the ability or willingness to control the environment, control the self, make choices and initiate behaviors [1]. On this basis, Baumeister pointed out in 2000 that self-willed activity relies on a limited mental energy, and the mental energy consumption of the previous will activity will have a negative impact on the subsequent will activity [2].

To test this, Baumeister conducted a "radish and chocolate chip cookie" experiment. He placed a plate of chocolate chip cookies and a plate of radishes in a room, divided the participants into two groups, had them taste the food in front of them, and then solve the same mentally

demanding intellectual problem after they had all tasted it. The results showed that the group of participants who ate radishes gave up thinking about the problem after eight minutes, while the group of participants who ate chocolate chip cookies stopped trying after 19 minutes.

This simple experiment shows that we have only a limited amount of willpower, and that it decreases with the frequency of use[3]. The same room filled with the smell of chocolate, but can not satisfy the taste buds to enjoy, resist the sensory temptation at the same time also have a burning brain problem-solving game, will indeed make the radish eating group of people exhausted.

3. Busyness Culture: The Hidden Source of Ego Depletion

In the hustle and bustle of life, we are often blinded by the appearance of diligence, mistakenly thinking that as long as we keep working hard, we can reap fruitful results. However, this seemingly positive way of acting can become a huge source of internal friction in the inner world, silently depleting our energy and potential. What is more serious is the great wear and tear of low levels of diligence on the spiritual world. It is like an invisible wall that prevents us from recognizing our inner needs and true selves, causing us to be trapped in superficial achievements and unable to touch the deeper realization of value. In the long run, we will feel mentally tired, lose passion and motivation, and even have self-doubt and frustration, which will lead to a series of psychological pressure and emotional distress, and aggravate the process of ego depletion.

The busyness culture can also be seen everywhere in enterprise management, which is usually mainly manifested by inappropriate delegation behavior. The inappropriate authorization behavior of the leader often leads to two kinds of reactions: first, the psychological contract is broken and the sense of trust is weakened; The second is the role overload, mental pressure surge. When these two reactions are superimposed, employees will subconsciously reduce their work commitment, which will lead to emotional exhaustion and job burnout over time. For some individuals with low self-esteem in the organization, they are usually unable to perceive the value of their own existence, and are always in a state of unease, depression, helplessness and fear. They often ignore their own needs, and try their best to cater to others or even deliberately curry favor to avoid conflicts. Based on the social exchange theory and the pressure of face under collectivism, people with low self-esteem are more inclined to comply with the unreasonable requirements of "authority" rather than resist, but under the seemingly conformist and harmonious surface, their hearts are already anxious, making the positive energy constantly reduced. Therefore, when they face unreasonable authorization behavior of leaders for a long time, they are more likely to accumulate a large number of negative emotions, resulting in mental disorders and self-depletion.

4. The Expression of Ego Depletion under Busy Culture

Through the comparative analysis of previous studies, it is not difficult to find that after the occurrence of self-depletion, individuals are in a state of lack of mental energy and resources, which often causes a series of adverse after-effects, mainly reflected in the cognitive level, emotional response and behavioral performance.

4.1. Attention Disorder

When people take on multiple tasks at the same time, they switch their limited cognitive resources and attention back and forth between different tasks. For example, the boss arranges two tasks for you, you can obviously do A first, then do B, but you do the process of doing A interspersed with doing B, the task switch back and forth, the result is greatly reduced work efficiency.

4.2. Emotional Anxiety

Being stuck in a busy culture for a long time can make people feel tired, and sometimes feel like their energy is exhausted, and there is an endless list of things to do every day with no end in sight. The body and mind are in a state of high load for a long time, without relief and relaxation. Not only the body always feel uncomfortable, can not lift the strength, the mood has become very unstable, may be angry because of a little thing, the whole person is like a string that is about to break. In addition, if people can't get a sense of value or some kind of improvement from this busyness, they often fall into severe emotional anxiety and even into a cycle of self-doubt.

4.3. Impulsive and Aggressive Acts

Individuals have limited resources and abilities over a period of time. If individuals use self-control resources in the previous task, then in order to protect resources from additional loss, they will actively reduce self-control will in the next task, which often makes them lower trust in others, resulting in cooperation difficulties, and may induce impulsive behaviors, such as drug abuse, personal attacks, blind consumption, etc.

5. How Leaders Deal with Employees' Ego Depletion

The resource conservation theory points out that individuals, in order to maintain their current status, will acquire more high-value resources as much as possible, so as to consolidate their risk defense ability to cope with internal and external changes and enhance self-efficacy to deal with the situation of insufficient energy. Therefore, when the individual has self-depletion, it is more necessary to obtain resources from the outside. Leadership in enterprise organizations is one of the important sources for employees to obtain external resources, and leadership behavior can regulate employees' work pressure. In the era of busy culture, reasonable authorization behavior and empathy for subordinates of enterprise leaders can effectively provide employees with good organizational and psychological resources support, positively predict employees' active behavior, and reduce the impact of ego depletion.

5.1. Reasonable Authorization--Grasp the Balance of Dynamic and Static

Delegation is different from delegating power and tasks directly. It is about leadership. It is like flying a kite. However, under the pressure of scarce resources (materials, information, energy, etc.) and target pressure, some leaders blindly authorize, assign multiple tasks to subordinates at the same time, and limit the completion deadline, so that subordinates have to stay on standby and often work overtime to complete the task. This is not only bad for their physical and mental health, but also breaks the balance between work and rest.

Confucian culture emphasizes "the mean", that is, impartiality and just right. This is actually a reminder to people not to be too busy, to grasp the pace of life. Too busy, like a tight string, can break at any time. Therefore, scientific and rational delegation should be a compulsory course for every leader.

First, psychological empowerment is a prerequisite for authorization, that is, for employees to be able and willing to accept. According to the psychological empowerment theory, when authorized employees strongly perceive the meaning of the work and are full of confidence in themselves, they can generate a continuous drive to complete the work on their own initiative. Secondly, we should do what we can and implement differentiated authorization. If the task is complex and difficult, we should try to employ talented people to improve work efficiency. In short, leaders should determine the "degree" of authorization based on the work value, subordinates' willingness and ability, as well as the actual situation of the task and organizational resources, so as to avoid employees falling into long-term overload busy. Only by allowing employees to find a balance between movement and activity, to find their own

rhythm between busy and leisurely, can the future development of the company become sustainable.

5.2. Enhance Empathy -- Unclog Emotional Nodules

In the process of work promotion, leaders hope that the communication with subordinates can achieve good results. However, in actual communication, some leaders tend to make bureaucratic mistakes, can not really empathize, can not well put themselves in other people's shoes, resulting in poor communication with subordinates, and ultimately lead to subordinates spending several times of time to repeatedly solve the same problem, but also cause them emotional anxiety and depression of negative psychology. Therefore, leaders must develop their ability to empathize.

Empathy is a perception of the situation or emotions of others, reflecting the ability to resonate, including cognitive empathy and emotional empathy [4]. "Healing" leaders with high empathy tend to be more humane, more approachable, better able to communicate with employees, establish close and trusting relationships, and be able to timely understand the needs of employees and provide support to solve their problems. So how can leaders practice empathy? First, leaders should actively listen to the opinions and needs of their employees and respect their thoughts and feelings. Listening not only makes employees feel valued, it also helps leaders better understand the needs of their employees, provide timely support, and solve their problems. Secondly, trust is the cornerstone of an empathic relationship. Leaders should build and enhance employees' trust in themselves by being consistent with their words and deeds and keeping promises. When employees believe that leaders are worth counting on and relying on, they are more willing to work with them and more satisfied with their jobs. Finally, be generous with your compliments. When subordinates make improvements, leaders should give positive feedback in time to enhance their positive emotions and thoroughly stimulate and release their potential.

6. Conclusion

Busy culture often induces people's self-depletion, which is manifested as the adverse mental reaction of attention disorder and anxiety. Leaders can help employees balance dynamic work with static physical and mental rest by appropriately empowering them externally and enhancing their inner empathy, thereby channeling their emotional garbage so that they can navigate their work with ease, without hustle, and ultimately away from ego depletion.

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