Perceived Supervisor Accessibility and its Effects on Authentic Leadership

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Perceived Supervisor Accessibility and its Effects on Authentic Leadership

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DR. ELIZABETH GORYUNOVA UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN MAINE: LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL STUDIES

Abstract
The present study explores Authentic leadership as it is experienced by remotely located employees versus on-site employees, in relation to the direct supervisor’s perceived accessibility. Data is sourced from two departments; Distribution, with predominantly on-site employees and leadership, and Facilities, with a relatively centralized leadership team, and remote employees located across several buildings and shifts.

Though both departments contain on-site and remote employees, as well as on-site and remote leaders. The survey compares the departments on several key variables using the internally validated by Walumba et. al (2008) Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, which measures; transparency, moral and ethics, balanced processing, self-awareness.

Building on the original ALQ, four questions relating to supervisor accessibility were added as a key variable. The sourced data within departments is split between on-site and remote employees, remote employees ranked their leader as more authentic, despite interacting less frequently in person, and more frequently via electronic means. This important finding suggests that for a leader to relate better to their employees, it is crucial to implement multiple modes of communication in addition to the traditional face-to-face interactions.

Methodology
- Two-part Survey
  - Part 1: Demographics and Leader/Employee communication questions
  - Part 2: Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumba et. al 2008) with the addition of 4 original Accessibility questions
- Facilities: 130 paper surveys distributed, 70 returned, 7 leader surveys
- Distribution: 198 paper surveys distributed, 52 returned, 3 leader surveys

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank my faculty advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Goryunova, as well as my peers for their invaluable input during the research process. I would also like to thank the following people for their continued professional support through this process; Jennifer McNulty, Stacy Cloutier, Andy Mayo and Patty Ames.

Research Question
Central Research Question: How does leadership proximity and perceived leadership accessibility affect the perception of Authentic Leadership in remote verses on-site employees at a Maine-based mid-size retailer?

Table 1
Leader/Employee Interactions by department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In person</th>
<th>Phone Call</th>
<th>Email/Video Conference</th>
<th>Text Message</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Leader</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>2.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Personnel</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Leader</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Personnel</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
Leader/Employee Interactions On-Site Leader vs. Off-Site Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>On-Site Leader</th>
<th>Off-Site Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Talk to my supervisor</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to face</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>2.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone call</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email/Video Conference</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>2.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text message</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1
Authentic Leadership Questionnaire Results

- On-Site Leaders: More accessible
  - Self-Awareness
  - Transparency
  - Balanced Processing
  - Moral/Ethical

- Off-Site Leaders: Outscoring on-site leaders in all measures
  - Exception Facilities Moral/Ethical

Table 3
Department ALQ Results Leadership & Personnel

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Transparency</th>
<th>Moral/Ethical</th>
<th>Balanced Processing</th>
<th>Self-Awareness</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Leader</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilities Personnel</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.89</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Leader</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Personnel</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4
ALQ Results On-Site Leader vs. Off-Site Leader

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>On-Site Leader</th>
<th>Off-Site Leader</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Leader</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution Personnel</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion
- Employees with an off-site leader reported communicating with their leaders less frequently than employees with on-site leaders.
- Despite less frequent communication, employees with an off-site leader rated their leader as more Authentic than employees with on-site leaders.
- Suggests that off-site employees have more quality interactions.
- Employees in the Facilities department are more likely to use technology to communicate.
- Subsequently, Facilities employees rated their leader higher on the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire.
- Suggests that using multiple forms of communication is the key to being considered an Authentic Leader.