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The Roles of Engagement

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Leadership Pulse Research Results for September, 2006 Pulse Dialogue

The Roles of Engagement

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Are your employees engaged in your organization? Do they focus on the non-core job behaviors that make for a successful firm?

Research on role theory research shows that companies succeed when their employees engage in “non-core job” role behaviors. We surveyed leaders to find out how they spend their time, and where they perceive gaps between the value of each role for their organization and for their personal success.

We found that employees (particularly high level executives) in successful companies spend less time than their peers focused on their particular job, and more time focused on the team, being innovative, and thinking strategically about their organization.

Table of Contents

The Roles of Engagement

Employers win when employees are engaged. Engagement means that employees go ‘above and beyond’ or ‘do whatever it takes’ to make the organization successful. Sounds good, but how do you identify and measure employee engagement in your own firm? In several earlier studies, Dr. Welbourne and her colleagues identified 5 “roles of engagement” that make a difference.

Successful companies have synergies that go beyond people doing their individual job or making a particular product. Competitors try, but never succeed, at emulating their successful peers by copying the exact product or organizational set-up. They fail because these copycats do not possess the same synergies -- the interactions between employees and the organization -- that are difficult to view from the outside.

These synergies can be captured by what Dr. Welbourne calls “role-based performance*[1],” a way of thinking about the different roles that people engage in at work. She has used role theory to understand the conditions under which employees are engaged or disengaged from their company, and has examined what happens under both conditions. In this process, she uncovered the following five work-related employee roles that exist within any company.

1. Job holder role – employees come to work and do the job that is listed in their job description.
2. Team member role – employees go “above and beyond” to help members of their team work toward common goals.
3. Innovator role – employees come up with new ideas and processes and try to get those ideas implemented.
4. Organization member role – employees do things that promote and help the company even if it is not part of their job or their team’s duties.
5. Career role – employees do things to enhance their career in the organization; they learn, they adapt new skills, and more.

Employees are highly engaged when they are doing the *non-core job* roles. Employees generally show up at work and do their *job* role, even when they are disengaged from the organization or frustrated with their employer. However, if your employees show up and only do their jobs, then you are not building organizational strength or long-term competitiveness through people because anyone can hire those same employees and duplicate what you are doing.

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[1] Welbourne, T.M., Johnson, D. & Erez, A. (1998). The role-based performance scale: Validity analysis of a theory-based measure of performance. Academy of Management Journal, 41(5), 540-555.; Welbourne, T.M. (1997). Pay for what performance? Lessons from firms using the role-based performance scale. Journal of Strategic Performance Management. 1(5), 13-20. Articles available on eePulse web site (www.eepulse.com) under Research: Compensation.

Focusing too closely on the job, and on the job description, also puts the career of the employee at risk. Promotions, particularly at higher levels, often occur because employees have been able to show that they understand the organization and have gone above and beyond their job.

As one respondent described:

> *Your job description may speak about your primary role, but it's a dangerous assumption to assume that is all of your role because you get left behind if you don't do these other things [referring to the non-job roles].*

The non-job roles are those that create the synergies for competitive advantage. These roles mean that people are working together and gathering creative ideas – the roles that lead to long-term wealth creation. These synergies, these "above and beyond" behaviors, provide *tangible* evidence of employee engagement.

The Roles Leadership Pulse Dialogue™

The September Leadership Pulse focused on five work-related roles (job, team, innovator, organization, career) and whether these roles are associated with successful companies and engaged employees. In September, we asked participants to respond to the following three questions for each of these roles.

1. In the average work week, what percentage of your time is spent in this role?
2. How important do you think this role is to the long-term success of your *company*?
3. How important do you think this role is to your own personal career success?

Through these questions, and subsequent interviews with several participants, we examined the importance of each role for the individual and for the company.

Who responded to the Pulse Dialogue?

The research done via the Leadership Pulse comes from a large sample of executives (over 4,000 to date) who have agreed to participate in short, Pulse Dialogues conducted every two months. We gather data on topics of strategic importance to leaders and then provide results to those who participate in this study. Our goal is to learn from data, create a dialogue around the subjects we study and help leaders continually learn and bring value to their organizations. The results presented in this report are from the dialogue that closed on September 30, 2005. A total of 379 people participated in the study.

Their jobs

Of those who responded, 38% were in C-core jobs (e.g., CEO, CFO, CIO, etc.), 23% were VP level, and 20% were at the Director level. The remaining responses came primarily from senior managers, managers, and non-managerial professionals. Eight respondents (2%) were external consultants.

Their industries
Participants represent a wide range of industries, including 20% from manufacturing, 6% from communications, 8% from finance, insurance and real estate, 7% from health care, 11% from consulting, and 11% from information technology.

Company size
Sixty percent of respondents came from companies with less than 500 employees. Twenty percent work at companies sized 500 to 5000 employees, and the remaining 20% work at firms with more than 5000 employees.

Financial performance
Respondents answered whether their firms were high or low performers compared to others in the same industry. Eleven percent of respondents said their firms were low performers, 33% rated their firm's performance as average, and 56% said that their firms were high performers compared to others in their industries.

Organizational Change
A full 79% of respondents said that their organizations were experiencing a high or very high rate of change. These firms all are ones that would benefit from the competitive advantage of these non-job synergies.

How do managers spend their time?
The analysis of time spent in each role comes from the answer to the first question asked regarding each role.

- In the average work week, what percentage of your time is spent in this role?

The table below shows the overall breakdown of time spent in each role. The job role takes up the most time – 45% of the average week.

Role	% time spent in this role
Job	45%
Innovator	19%
Team	16%
Organization	12%
Career	8%

Well, by themselves, are these numbers good or bad? Are they relevant to *your* industry? In the following section, we delve further into each role to see if there are differences among the various jobs, levels of company performance, industry, company size, and level of organizational change.

For each role, we provide an analysis of C-level executives in high performing organizations. These are the individuals to emulate, the ones that have successfully led their organizations to financial success.

Roles

In this section, we drill down into each of the five roles and discuss the findings based on company financial performance, size, job level of the respondent, amount of change in the firm, and industry.

The Job Role

Most people spend their time in their job role. Indeed, we found that respondents overall spend 45% of their week on tasks related directly to their core job. This percentage is more than double the 19% of time spent in the next largest role – the innovation role.

Job Role – Average time per week

Grouping	Category	%Time spent
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	44%
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	50%
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	43%
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	48%
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	39%
	VP or Director	47%
	Senior managers/Managers	50%
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	44%
	Low level of change in firm	47%
Industry	Health care	43%
	Information technology	44%
	Manufacturing	44%
	Services	45%
	Government or non-profit	50%

In the table above, the most striking difference occurs between the time spent in the job role in high performing firms (44%) compared to low performing firms (50%). This difference emphasizes Dr. Welbourne's finding that focusing too intently on one's core job may be detrimental to the organization as a whole.

C-level executives – less time in the job role equals higher financial performance
The table confirms that C-level executives spend less time in the job role (39%) than do lower level managers. C-level executives need to focus outside of the

immediate job, so they should spend more time than other employees away from the job role. An interesting finding within the grouping of C-level executives is that in *high performing* firms, C-level executives spend a mere 36% of their time in the job role, compared to 46% of time for C-level executives in low performing firms.

While the results of this financial performance analysis are most striking, other differences occur across these organizations in terms of where the job role consumes the most time. Firms that are smaller (<500 employees) and facing greater change have employees that spend less time in the job role. Additionally,

compared to corporate sector firms, government and non-profit employees spend more time in their job role. This result fits the stereotype of the bureaucrat focused on his/her job and trying to hold up overall organizational progress with red tape.

The Team Role

Providing team support comprises 16% of these respondents' time in an average week. This rate is slightly higher for employees in larger firms (18%), lower in the smaller firms (16%). Teamwork also takes up a larger percentage of time in firms that are experiencing high levels of organizational change (17%), compared to firms with low change levels (15%). Regarding industry, the team role is strongest among health care and lowest in services. Health care workers must act as a team to care for patients – the individuals who make up a patient care team (or for that matter, work together to design a new drug) have different roles that must come together for effective care to occur. In contrast, many service workers act independently – financial advisors, stock analysts, consultants – these positions generally require direct contact between one employee and the customer, and teamwork needs may be less significant.

Team Role – Average time per week

Grouping	Category	%Time spent
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	17%
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	14%
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	16%
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	18%
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	16%
	VP or Director	17%
	Senior managers/Managers	17%
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	17%
	Low level of change in firm	15%
Industry	Health care	19%
	Information technology	16%
	Manufacturing	17%
	Services	15%
	Government or non-profit	18%

C-level executives in high performing firms spend more time on the team role. Surprisingly, while overall, C-level executives spend *less* time in the team role than other senior staff, they spend *more* time on the team role in high performing organizations. While not shown in the chart, C-level executives in the top performing organizations spend 18% of their time in the team role, compared to 16% of time for their peers in low performing firms. C-level executives set the example for the rest of the company, and if they feel it is important to support the team, other employees should see that and emulate those behaviors. A CEO who works to build a strong team will create synergies not easily copied by others. Teamwork is particularly important for the top management team. Top executives are busy people with little time. Like a finely tuned orchestra, a strong executive will work efficiently and effectively together and be able to anticipate each other's needs.

The Innovator Role

Fluctuation in the external environment requires that employees look for new and better ways of doing business. The innovator, or entrepreneur role, means that employees are thinking about how to do their job better and trying to find ways to bring new ideas in to the firm. Respondents say that on average, they spend 19% of their work week engaged in this role. As with the team role, there is a difference in the time spent on innovation by high performing firms (19%) compared to low performing firms (17%). These differences are even greater for organizational size. Employees in firms with less than 500 employees say they spend 20% of their time in the innovator role, compared to 17% of employees in larger firms.

Having opportunities to innovate is motivating to many employees, as described in this comment:

> I've often made recommendations that were either right at the edge of in advance of what the business was doing or right in line with things strategic business people were looking at already. That's where I feel most comfortable, and that's where I get the most intrinsic motivation.

C-level executives spend the most time in the innovator role (23%), with VPs at 17% and other managers at 16%. C-level positions do need to be constantly thinking of new ways to position the company and to create new ideas, so they would be expected to spend more time in this role than other managers.

Innovator Role – Average time per week

Grouping	CATEGORY	%Time spent
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	19%
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	17%
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	20%
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	17%
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	23%
	VP or Director	17%
	Senior managers/Managers	16%
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	18%
	Low level of change in firm	20%
Industry	Health care	19%
	Information technology	20%
	Manufacturing	18%
	Services	20%
	Government or non-profit	16%

Surprisingly, respondents in firms with a high level of change spend *less* time (18%) in the innovator role than respondents in firms with a low level of change (20%). Perhaps those managers facing change feel that they must concentrate on the core competencies of the firm in order to successfully navigate their fluctuating environment.

Industry differences were minimal. In general, government and non-profit organizations spend the least time in this innovator role, as fits with the stereotype of the bureaucratic worker that focuses on his/her own job and does not think of new ways to do work.

C-level executives in high performing firms spend more time innovating.
Once again, we find a difference between the amount of time spent in this role by C-level executives in high-performing firms (23%) and low performing firms (17%).

The Organization Role
As with the innovator role, the organization role provides firms with flexibility that help them meet new challenges. Aside from just thinking about how a product or a job could change, employees in the organization role are thinking actively about how to position the firm to take advantage of opportunities.

The organization role is critical to organizational success, but our survey results show that overall, this role only captures 12% of employee time in a given week. Employees are busy, and getting busier. Organizational level tasks often are the first to lapse, since they usually do not need *immediate* attention from either the individual or the team. As one employee said:

There is such an emphasis on fewer people doing more work….to be able to manage your work and identify the organizational tasks you can do successfully… it's a lot of time management, prioritization and I think people are inundated… unless they are super organized and able to conquer the core tasks it's hard to go on to the organizational

Organization Role – Average time per week

Grouping	Category	%Time spent
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	12%
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	12%
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	13%
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	11%
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	15%
	VP or Director	11%
	Senior managers/Managers	10%
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	13%
	Low level of change in firm	12%
Industry	Health care	13%
	Information technology	14%
	Manufacturing	13%
	Services	11%
	Government or non-profit	9%

This percentage of time does not vary at all by firm performance. Only slight differences are found looking at company size and amount of change occurring in the company. Job level shows some differences, as C-level executives overall spend more time (15%) acting on organizational requirements, compared to 11% of VPs and 10% of other managers.

Differences across industries are few, with the exception of government/non-profit, where the amount of time spent in this role (9%) is less than that in other industries (averaging around 13%).

C-level executives in high performing firms are more likely to engage in organizational level behaviors.
C-level employees in high performing companies spend 16% of time inn the organization role, compared to 14% for C-level executives in low performing firms.

The Career Role
The career role receives the least time in our respondents' weeks. On average, 8% of their weekly work hours are spent on their career. This value is remarkably consistent, and does not vary much across organizational views. It is the one category where no differences are seen even across C-level executives in high versus low performing firms.

Career Role – Average time per week

Grouping	Category	%Time spent
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	7%
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	8%
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	8%
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	6%
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	8%
	VP or Director	8%
	Senior managers/Managers	8%
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	8%
	Low level of change in firm	7%
Industry	Health care	6%
	Information technology	7%
	Manufacturing	7%
	Services	9%
	Government or non-profit	7%

Response bias may factor into these low numbers – after all, it sounds selfish to say you spend more than 10% of your time furthering your career. But also, perhaps these employees believe that if the other roles are attended to, career should help to take care of itself.

Unfortunately, what is good for the organization as a whole does not always lead to personal career growth. Sometimes, actions or behaviors that are very beneficial on an organization level do not occur because the individual either is not recognized, or actually is penalized for taking this action. This mismatch is referred to as a *gap*. We asked survey respondents questions to identify where these gaps exist in each role, with the gap being equal to the difference between the role's value for the organization and the role's value for the individual.

Role Gaps

These role gaps were measured by viewing the responses to the 2nd and 3rd questions asked for each role:

- How important do you think this role is to the long-term success of your *company*?
- How important do you think this role is to your own *personal* career success?

By looking in tandem at the responses to these questions, we assessed this critical organizational gap. In other words, if I spend time in the team role, and it is critical for the success *of my organization,* but not critical for my *own personal career success*, a gap exists. I have very little incentive to put time into something that will not help me to succeed – even if it makes my organization more successful.

One respondent's comment is illustrative:

> *[High performing companies are ones] where they can align company objectives very well with the objectives of an individual at all levels, that if we do well you do well or if you do well, we do well together. Then, being able to communicate that.*

Questions used to assess these role gaps were measured on a 5 point scale—with "5" being most important and "1" being least important. The "gap" is the difference between how important the role is for the company compared to the importance of the role to the individual.

These gaps are reported as raw scores on a 5-point scale. For example, the overall "job" gap is 0.49 out of 5 points.

- A positive gap (as shown, for all roles except the career role) means that this role is more valuable for the company than it is for my own personal success.
- A negative gap (as shown, in the career role) means that this role is more valuable for my own personal success than it is for the success of my company.
- The closer the scores are to *zero*, the smaller the gap. Small gaps mean that priorities for the company's success are aligned with priorities for my own career success.
- Overall, career has the largest gap (-0.74), except that the negative sign means that this role is more important personally than its value to the company.
- Of the other roles, the largest gap is in the job role (0.49); the smallest gap is in the innovator role (0.22).

Role	**Gap (# points on a 1-5 scale) between how important this role is for my *firm's* success than to my *own personal* success)**
Job	0.49
Team	0.44
Organization	0.34
Innovator	0.22
Career	-0.74

The Job Gap

A job gap means that doing the tasks of 'my job' is more important for the success of the company than for my own personal success. The overall size of this gap (0.49 points on a 1-5 scale) indicates that these respondents feel that their jobs are very important for the success of the company, but that these tasks are not always recognized in assessing the value of the employee.

Indeed, hunkering down and doing one's job generally is considered something that the employee must do to keep their job – it isn't usually perceived as the best method for 'getting ahead.'

Job Gap –
Amount (on a 5 point scale) that this role benefits company performance more than my own personal career

Grouping	Category	Gap Size
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	0.42
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	0.53
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	0.43
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	0.48
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	0.58
	VP or Director	0.52
	Senior managers/Managers	0.33
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	0.46
	Low level of change in firm	0.57
Industry	Health care	0.47
	Information technology	0.51
	Manufacturing	0.54
	Services	0.51
	Government or non-profit	0.30

Looking at the job role gap according to various views of the data, smaller gaps are perceived in high performing firms and in smaller firms. Interestingly, C-level executives are more likely to perceive a gap between the value of the job role for the company and for their own success.

There is also a striking difference in the perceived job gap across firms with low organizational change (0.57) compared to firms with high organizational change (0.46). Perhaps in high-change companies, individuals perceive that their own job is not as important for the company as are other roles (such as team or organization).

The only strong industry gap occurs in government and non-profit jobs.

The Team Gap

A team gap means that the company benefits when I help my team, but I do not personally benefit from these actions. Typically, this role is where people tend to complain – individuals feel that they are 'pulling the weight' of their team, but not recognized for it, or they are concerned the company does not notice people at the individual level when their team has helped to further organizational goals.

Among all respondents, the average gap in the team role was 0.44.

Team Gap
Amount (on a 5 point scale) that this role benefits company performance more than my own personal career

Grouping	Category	Gap Size
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	0.42
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	0.43
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	0.57
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	0.27
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	0.60
	VP or Director	0.42
	Senior managers/Managers	0.11
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	0.43
	Low level of change in firm	0.46
Industry	Health care	0.33
	Information technology	0.66
	Manufacturing	0.33
	Services	0.46
	Government or non-profit	0.30

The team role gap does not differ by financial performance. There is a large difference, though, between small and large firms. Small firms report a much greater gap (0.57) compared to large ones (0.27).

Another large gap occurs between senior level managers (0.11) and other executives (0.60 for C-level, 0.42 for VP or director level). The team gap does not differ much according to the amount of organizational change.

However, large variation exists among industries. The largest team gap is in information technology. Perhaps IT workers are cognizant of the importance of teamwork for successful code writing and implementation, but feel that their companies do not recognize them for the amount of time taken up by this team work and planning.

One respondent in the IT field said she would like to have more time in the innovator role:

…in IT you need to be two corners turned in front of your customers. You need to know where you're going way in front of them and you need to do a lot of proof of concept testing - that very new technology that is not ready to be introduced to the public and that's what the innovator does.

The Innovator Gap

The innovation gap is the smallest role gap (0.22). Apparently, this role is perceived to hold equal importance for both personal and company success. Maybe people perceive that if they are able to be innovative and think of new ideas, the company will recognize and reward them for it.

Innovator Gap
Amount (on a 5 point scale) that this role benefits company performance *more* than my own personal career

Grouping	Category	Gap Size
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	0.18
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	0.21
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	0.25
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	0.20
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	0.32
	VP or Director	0.20
	Senior managers/Managers	0.19
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	0.17
	Low level of change in firm	0.31
Industry	Health care	0.39
	Information technology	0.22
	Manufacturing	0.20
	Services	0.14
	Government or non-profit	0.48

Some differences do exist across organizational characteristics, most notably job level, organizational change, and industry. C-level executives perceive a much greater gap than do other senior leadership.
Surprisingly, employees in firms with low levels of change perceive a larger gap (0.31) compared to high-change firms (0.17). It may be that in high-change environments, leadership has not figured a way to reward people for thinking of ways to adapt to the fluctuating environment.

The primary difference among industries is that both health care and government/non-profit workers perceive a greater gap than employees in other industries. This finding is logical – health care is bound by many rules and training hierarchies – innovation at the firm level could be life threatening. Most innovation in this field is driven by research that occurs outside of the company. Similarly, government work also is bound by strict rules and job definitions that are not easily changed – even when they make little sense.

The Organization Gap
This gap was the second smallest (0.34). Surprisingly though, large differences were found across the various views of the data. The gap was almost identical in high performing (0.34) and low performing (0.35) firms. Employees in smaller firms perceived a much larger organizational gap (0.42) compared to employees in larger firms (0.24). Employees in small companies have more opportunities to impact the overall organization than do employees in large companies, but they may not be rewarded for these actions.

Organization Gap –
Amount (on a 5 point scale) that this role benefits company performance *more* than my own personal career

Grouping	Category	Gap Size
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	0.34
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	0.35
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	0.42
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	0.24
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	0.35
	VP or Director	0.42
	Senior managers/Managers	0.08
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	0.41
	Low level of change in firm	0.30
Industry	Health care	0.17
	Information technology	0.37
	Manufacturing	0.43
	Services	0.30
	Government or non-profit	0.39

Another strong difference in the organizational role gap was found between VPs/Directors/C-level executives compared to all other managers. The group of senior managers/managers claimed an organizational role gap of 0.08, compared to 0.35 for C-level executives and 0.42 for VPs/Directors. The gap at these higher organizational levels is worrisome – if anyone is going to be rewarded for working towards organizational goals, it should be top leadership.

Another organizational gap occurs between employees in high change organizations (0.41) and low change organizations (0.30). High change organizations need employees to focus on the organizational role – employees realize the importance of this role, but they may not feel they are rewarded for these behaviors.

One respondent summed up the differences between small and large organizations (this employee's organization also is undergoing high change). This comment illustrates why it is so important to fill the organizational gap – because the organization role really is critical to firm success.

[In a small company]….If I don't understand where the organization is going, if I don't understand what we do, then I can't be a benefit to them. If you have a performance program in place it [the organization] needs to support that. If you have a bonus program in place it needs to support that. If you have benefits it needs…all of that has to support the organization's goals. It's not separate from one another.

Finally, some industry differences exist, primarily, that health care workers have a lower gap than other industries, with manufacturing being highest.

The Career Gap

Note that the direction for the career gap is *reversed.* In every case, respondents said that the career role is more important for their own career than it is for the success of the company.

Career Gap
Amount (on a 5 point scale) that this role benefits *my personal career success* more than company performance

Grouping	Category	Gap Size
Firm Performance	High performing firms (all jobs)	0.77
	Low performing firms (all jobs)	0.88
Firm Size	Small firms (less than 500 employees)	0.65
	Larger firms (greater than 500 employees)	0.88
Job Level	C-level executives (all)	0.40
	VP or Director	1.03
	Senior managers/Managers	0.69
Organizational Change	High level of change in firm	0.07
	Low level of change in firm	0.07
Industry	Health care	1.17
	Information technology	0.67
	Manufacturing	0.62
	Services	0.71
	Government or non-profit	0.96

Overall, the career role has the largest gap of any of the roles. On average, the size of the gap is 0.74 – so respondents have a perception that the career role is almost 1 full point more important to the career of the respondent than to the success of the company.

The career gap shows some striking differences across firms. High performing firms have smaller gaps, as seen for several other roles. The difference is much greater by firm size, with employees from smaller firms perceiving less of a career gap (0.65) than employees in larger firms (0.88). Likewise, the career gap is much larger (1.03) for VP/Director level jobs compared to either C-level executives (0.40) or senior managers (0.69). The career gap also differs by industry. Health care workers perceive the largest career gap, followed by government/non-profit workers and then by service industry employees.

High Performing Organizations

Although we have examined these role data in a variety of ways, a special focus must be given to differences in high and low performing organizations. Our results confirm that high performing organizations have employees who spend less time in their job role, and more time on their team and on being innovative.

In particular, the leaders in these companies do 'get it'. Results for C-level executives were stronger than for the other managers. C-level managers *in high performing firms*, spend less time in their job role and more time on the roles that drive organizational synergies. These companies are well-positioned for success. No matter the organizational practices or policies – without leadership as a role model, synergies are not sustainable.

Leadership also is critical because it is not enough for companies to encourage role behaviors, they must *reward* individual employees for paying attention to these non-job roles. In high performing firms, employees perceived a smaller gap between behaviors that are successful for the company and successful for themselves personally.

Interviews with several respondents illustrate these differences between high and low performing organizations. The interviewer asked each respondent to describe the roles that come to mind when picturing a high performance and a low performance organization. The results support role theory – that non-job behaviors are critical to organizational performance.

Sample comments:

For high performance firms:

> *…the high performing organization enables people to achieve their job role much more effectively and in a more timely manner. They don't bog the organization down getting the job role done so it leaves them some time for innovation and certainly some time for self development or career role. I think the high performing organization gets them involved from a whole company standpoint but you can't do that unless you can streamline the production of their routine job.*

> *[The most important roles are]…Probably team and probably…maybe because all of us are smarter than any of us… when the synergy of a team [comes together] where each us knows 20% …that is very special… I know when we sit at the table with someone, a synergist who draws from all of us; we create things that you could not create as a lone wolf.*

> *They are very focused on their employees and team member engagement, and they're extremely focused on having time in the community so there is a lot of support for employees to get involved in community activities.*

For low performance firms:

> *…people aren't really clear about what their roles are and they're not sure how their role contributes to the success of the business or the fact that the business isn't successful. And they're probably … doing what the formal job is without any sense of how that fits in and contributes to the bigger picture.*

> *I'm just doing my job. I'm here from 8 to 5. I will clock in, I will clock out. I will do exactly what's on my job description and if you ask me to do more…don't ….don't bother.*

> *I suspect that there [in low performing firms] is a significant lack of team role and the organizational role. I think there's a certain emphasis … on their own individual career to the detriment of the larger entity.*

Conclusion

At a time when all organizations are concerned with improving productivity, lowering costs, and getting the "most" out of our people, it is easy to lose sight of what's really important for the long-term competitive position of your organization. And frankly, we see many firms doing just that – losing focus and losing sight of what's really important.

Our research on leader energy and confidence shows that many leaders have been "de-energized" and are now burned out because they are focused on so much job content that they cannot even prioritize their own work. Firms have downsized, right sized, and continue to take on more work with no additional people. This type of "job loading" has the potential to cause permanent damage to many organizations because people, particularly leaders, need time for their non-core job work.

With all the talk about employee engagement and wanting our employees to go "above and beyond," we continue to find that many employers continue to not make time for the discretionary behaviors, and one reason may be their inability to define what that means. Melcrum Publishing recently finished a research report on employee engagement, and their #1 conclusion was that "no one can define it." We can't manage what we can't measure – or what we can't define.

The roles approach to understanding behavior at work provides a measurable and simple way to help organizations lead. We have used the role-based performance scale to help organizations simplify and improve their performance management systems, and we have used role-based measures to understand what drives firm performance. We continue to use the roles work to help organizations develop their people, do strategic planning, and more.

Roles provide a holistic and non-bureaucratic way to measure what matters and to communicate issues that are critical in organizations. Helping employees understand the right mix of core job and non-core job work can raise the level of awareness and performance in any organization.

Next Steps

The Research Consulting team at eePulse, with several academic colleagues, is working on a new application of the roles work called the "3-minute 360."

If you are interested in being part of this research, please contact Dr. Welbourne at theresa@eepulse.com.

If you are currently not part of the Leadership Pulse study group, and you wish to join (or sign up managers at your organization), you can register at: www.umbs.leadership.eepulse.com.