About PF3: Clear Leadership & Expectations

What are Psychosocial Factors?

Psychosocial factors are elements that impact employees' psychological responses to work and work conditions, potentially causing psychological health problems. Psychosocial factors include the way work is carried out (deadlines, workload, work methods) and the context in which work occurs (including relationships and interactions with managers and supervisors, colleagues and coworkers, and clients or customers).

What is PF3: Clear Leadership & Expectations?

GM@W defines PF3: Clear Leadership & Expectations as present in a work environment where there is effective leadership and support that helps employees know what they need to do, how their work contributes to the organization, and whether there are impending changes. There are many types of leadership, each of which impacts psychosocial health and safety in different ways. The most widely accepted categorizations of leadership are instrumental, transactional and transformational. Of these, transformational leadership is considered the most powerful. Instrumental leadership focuses primarily on producing outcomes, with little attention paid to the 'big picture,' the psychosocial dynamics within the organization, and, unfortunately, the individual employees. Transformational leaders are seen as change agents who motivate their followers to do more than what is expected. They are concerned with long-term objectives and transmit a sense of mission, vision and purpose. They have charisma, give individualized consideration to their employees, stimulate intellectual capabilities in others, and inspire employees.

Why is Clear Leadership & Expectations important?

Leadership is the foundation of a health pyramid (see below)[1]. Effective leadership increases employee morale, resiliency and trust, and decreases employee frustration and conflict. Good leadership leads to individuals being 40% more likely to be in the highest category of job well-being, a 27% reduction of sick leave, and a 46% reduction in early retirements with disability pensions. A leader who demonstrates a commitment to maintaining his or her own physical and psychological health can influence the health of employees (sickness, presenteeism, absenteeism), as well as the health of the organization as a whole (vigour, vitality, productivity).
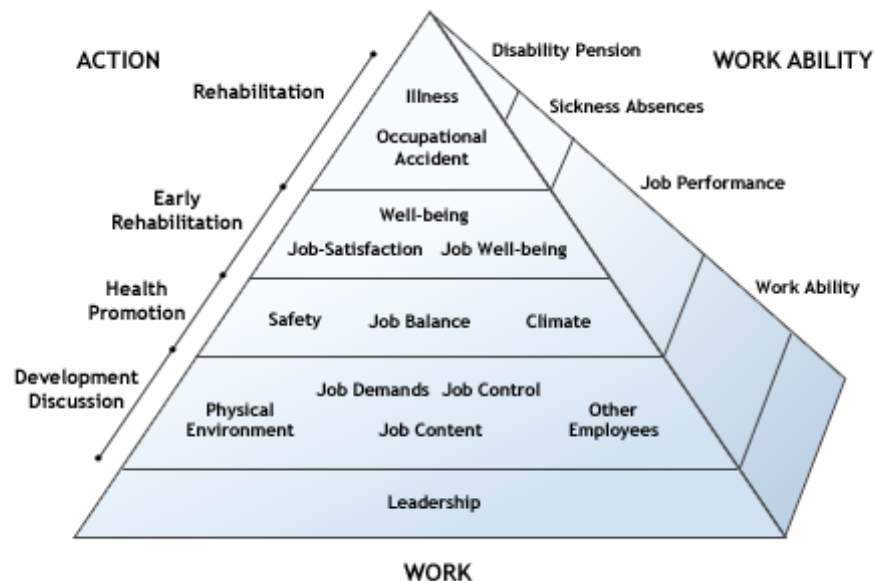
[1] The term "job well-being" used in the pyramid refers to health aspects that are related to work, such as burnout (Kuoppala et al., 2008).

What happens when clear leadership and expectations are lacking in the workplace?

Leaders who are more instrumental in their approach (rather than transformational) are more likely to find staff health complaints including general feelings of malaise, irritability and nervousness. Similarly, leaders who do not demonstrate visible concern for their own physical and psychological health set a negative example for their staff and can undermine the legitimacy of any organizational program, policy and/or service intended to support employees. Middle managers are at greater risk due to the fact that they must be leaders and be led simultaneously. This role conflict can lead to feelings of powerlessness and stress.

How can Clear Leadership & Expectations be improved?

Start by conducting the GM@W Organizational Review and/or the GM@W Survey and reviewing the results. If **Clear Leadership & Expectations** is identified as an area of concern or relative strength, refer to the GM@W Action Resources for a practical strategy and evidence-based and effective suggested actions that can improve **Clear Leadership & Expectations**. It is also important to discuss the findings with employees to gain a further understanding of the results and to obtain input into possible interventions. Furthermore, it is important to evaluate the undertaken interventions over time to ensure they are effective and to take corrective action where needed. Consider reviewing the resources below. Finally, refer back to the GM@W website on occasion for new ideas about how **Clear Leadership & Expectations** can be enhanced.

Further information about Clear Leadership & Expectations:

- Boumans, N. P. G., & Landeweerd, J. A. (1993). Leadership in the nursing unit: relationships with nurses' well-being. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 18*, 767-775. doi: http://dx.doi.org/10.1046/j.1365-2648.1993.18050767.x

- Gilbert, M. & Bilsker, D. (2012). *Psychological Health and Safety: An Action Guide for Employers*. Retrieved from http://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/SiteCollectionDocuments/Workforce/Workforce_Employers_Guide_ENG.pdf

- Health and Safety Executive. (2012). Work related stress–together we can tackle it. In *Guidance*. Retrieved from http://www.hse.gov.uk/stress/index.htm

- Howell, J., & Avolio, B. (1993). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, locus of control, and support for innovation: Key predictors of consolidated-business-unit performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 78*(6), 891-902. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.78.6.891

- Kuoppala, J., Lamminpää, A., Liira, J., & Vainio, H. (2008). Leadership, job well-being, and health effects: A systematic review and a meta-analysis. *Journal of Occupational & Environmental Medicine, 50*(8), 904-915. doi: 10.1097/JOM.0b013e31817e918d

- McConville, T., & Holden, L. (1999). The filling in the sandwich: HRM and middle managers in the health sector. *Personnel Review, 28*(5/6), 406-424. doi: 10.1108/00483489910286738

- Quick, J., Macik-Frey, M., & Cooper, C. (2007). Managerial dimensions of organizational health: The healthy leader at work. *Journal of Management Studies, 44*(2), 189-205. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-6486.2007.00684.x

- Stordeur, S., Vandenberghe, C., & D'hoore, W. (2001). On examining the moderators of leader behaviors in nursing: An investigation of substitutes for, and neutralizers and enhancers of, leadership. In J. de Jonge, P. Vlerick, A. Bussing & W. B. Schaufeli (Eds.), *Organizational psychology and health care at the start of a new millennium* (pp. 85-104). Munich, Germany: Rainer Hampp Verlag.

- The Great-West Life Assurance Company. (2012). PF3: Clear Leadership and Expectations. In *Centre Resources by GM@W Factor* and *On the Agenda*. Retrieved from http://www.workplacestrategiesformentalhealth.com

www.guardingmindsatwork.ca