

HIGH PERFORMANCE WORK ORGANIZATION

Common to the several variants of a definition for “high performance work organization” is the notion of extra-ordinary outcomes of work being achieved through extra-ordinary contributions by PEOPLE. This notion is consistent with the slogan:

“EXCELLENCE is VOLUNTARY”!

This type of work organization differs from a more traditional emphasis on technological advantage, and the expectation by both labour and management that the standard for employees is *compliance* with work directives (as distinct from personal *commitment*).

A High Performance Work Organization* is one that is INTENTIONALLY DESIGNED to bring out THE BEST IN PEOPLE and thereby produces ORGANIZATION CAPABILITY that delivers sustainable LEADERSHIP BUSINESS RESULTS.

* Texas Center for Productivity and Quality of Work Life

Leadership results are a combination of:

- Superior Products or Services of Value to Customers,
- Adaptability to rapid changes in the business environment, and
- A rich Quality of Work Life for organizational members.

What people can contribute and what a High Performance Work Organization relies upon is a high degree of COMMITMENT, CREATIVITY, KNOWLEDGE, and SKILL.

The conditions that give rise to a High Performance Work Organization are numerous and inter-dependent. The greater the number of these elements that are developed within an organization, the greater the performance payoffs. Eight key elements were identified by Dr. Ray Marshall in a 1992 keynote address to the AFL-CIO *:

- Use of all organizational resources to achieve Continuous Improvement
- Acute concern for the Quality of products and services to satisfy the needs of a consumer-driven marketplace
- Participative, non-authoritarian Management style, in which workers are empowered to make decisions both at the point of production and at the point of customer contact
- Internal and external Flexibility to rapidly adjust work processes
- Positive Incentives that include policies which promote an appreciation of how the organization functions as an integrated whole
- Leading-edge Technology deployed in a manner that extends human capabilities
- Well-Trained, Well-Educated employees engaged in continuous learning
- An Independent source of power that protects employee interests in the workplace.

- “Changing Work: A Union Guide to Workplace Change”, AFL-CIO, 1995.

