

“Contribution of Organizational Development through Benevolence»

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This paper is an overview of the workshop on Contribution of Organizational development to be held during the 2010 IFSAM Meeting of July, 10-12th

In these times of worldwide crises, when malevolence is becoming an all-too-frequent problem, a peaceful social climax as well as the ongoing commitment and engagement of staff are crucial elements of sustainable performance and competitive advantage. In this context, a humanistic manner to manage people without neglecting profits is emerging in Human Resource Management (HRM) in line with the works of Lewin (1946), Alvesson and Willmott (1992), Pfeffer (1995), Mohapatra and Sharma (2008) or Van Fleet and Van Fleet (2010). Perhaps, it is time to look forward a benevolent approach of management compatible with economical constraints.

Basically, benevolence means a concern for the well-being of persons other than oneself. Both contrast with “beneficence,” which refers to actions that promote the welfare of others, independent of the motive behind them. Thus, the key issues of the paper can be expressed through the following questions: what does a benevolent approach of human resource management consulting (HRMC) mean? How is it possible to conduct a benevolent approach in HRMC, e.g., based on benevolent procedures, producing benevolence throughout companies, while still remaining profitable?

To shed light on these issues, the paper is focused on three case studies of benevolent approaches in HRMC.

1. Catherine Voynnet-Fourboul explains her benevolent approach as a consultant in the field of talents and high potentials management.
2. Laurent Cappelletti and Florence Noguera show how to evaluate skills and competencies through a benevolent HRMC approach.
3. Aline Scouarnec and Said Khalla introduce a benevolent approach in HRMC based on job prospective.

Toward a conceptual framework of benevolence in HRMC

The concern of benevolence cannot be in service of one's own interest, as when we help out another with the expectation that our doing so will result in greater benefit to ourselves. The concern must be directed toward the other - the consulted firm or staff - for its own sake, otherwise it is not altruism or benevolence. Altruism concerns not merely the results of action, but also the agent's motivation to engage in such action. Concern for others for their own sake does not require actual self-sacrifice, or, more moderately, a loss of personal well-being.

There is a view that it does may stem from the false belief that every situation presents us with a choice between fostering our own good and fostering the good of others. Benevolence is one of the self-transcendence values identified by Schwartz (1992) that shows the willingness to transcend selfish concerns for the benefit of others.

In the field of HRMC, benevolence can be seen as the preservation and the enhancement of the welfare of people with whom one is in frequent personal contact (helpful, forgiving, honest, loyal, responsible / opposite: malevolence). From the justice literature we know that managers can promote trust by showing concern for employees' needs and interests (Lind, 1997), by respecting others' rights, and by apologizing for unpleasant consequences (Greenberg, 1993; Konovsky, Pugh, 1994). Managers demonstrating concern also show that they "do good" for their employees, apart from any egocentric or opportunistic motives (Mayer et al., 1995; Mishra, 1996). That is, their behaviour connotes a genuine interest in an employee's welfare and may imply some attachment to the employees.

In contrast, malevolence concerns managers who could take advantage of their employees' vulnerability "stay their hand," choosing not to behave opportunistically (Bromiley, Cummings, 1995). For example, managers could use confidential or personal information about employees to their personal or organizational advantage, could present an employee's innovative idea as their own, or could engage in other similar "cunning" (Pettit, 1995) or "dark-side" (Kramer, Brewer, Hanna, 1996) behaviour that takes advantage of employees' vulnerability. Employees may not always observe managerial restraint, for it may involve the absence of action. However, if they are aware that their manager refrained from exploiting them, they are more likely to perceive their manager as trustworthy.

We assume that empathy and benevolence are connected in the field of HRMC. Proper empathetic engagement is supposed to help to understand and anticipate the behavior of the other. Some research suggests that people are more able and willing to empathize with those most similar to themselves. In particular, empathy increases with similarities in culture and living conditions. Empathy is more likely to occur between individuals whose interaction is more frequent. (See Levenson and Reuf 1997, and Hoffman 2000: 62). There are concerns that the empathizer's own emotional background may affect or distort what emotions they perceive in others (Goleman 1996: p. 104). Empathy is not a process that is likely to deliver certain judgments about the emotional states of others. It is a skill that is gradually developed throughout life, and which improves the more contact we have with the person with whom one empathizes. Accordingly, any knowledge gained of the emotions of the other must be revisable in light of further information.

A crucial question in HRMC: Does it pay to be benevolent and what does it cost not be?

Since worldwide crises of October 2008, reducing evilness, grid, harassment, stress, violence in the workplaces to avoid malevolence, while developing compassion, altruism, personal development to promote benevolence has become a key issue in HRM. Nevertheless, for many companies, the remaining issue is that of the compatibility between benevolence and profitability, which can be expressed through the two following questions: What does it cost to be malevolent? Does it pay to be benevolent?

This is why organizations and their employees need to be assisted in fulfilling their obligations under codes of conduct and even government regulations to reduce the risks of

any and all forms of malevolence that affect workers during the time they are carrying out their duties as employees. To summarize, HRMC researches need to be oriented in order to provide companies with:

- Concepts and methods to help managers understand and remember how malevolence builds and examine its rapid growth.
- Broader approach toward recognizing and dealing with the issue of workplace malevolence, including both internal and external causes as well as signs of impending acts of malevolence.
- Frameworks to identify and discuss the nature and complexity of malevolence and benevolence in a variety of workplaces.
- Tools for helping management to compare benevolent project costs with the immediate and direct costs plus the delayed and hidden costs of malevolent incidents at work; to develop an awareness of personal characteristics and work behaviours that build toward malevolent behaviour, so that timely intervention can perhaps develop benevolence; to establish a benevolent management team, an organizational benevolent plan and a benevolent intervention plan.

Benevolent approach in HRMC: Three case studies

To shed light on benevolence in the field of HRMC, case studies led in three different fields of HRM –talent management, skill evaluation and job prospective- are presented in the paper, as well as their theoretical background and procedures.

Case 1: Benevolent approach of managing talents and high potentials

To illustrate a benevolent approach in the field of talent management, the example of a consulting mission led in a company in the food industry will be taken. This company, with a family business governance, 20,000 employees, worldwide operations, called a consultant to investigate a problem of talent retention.

There were three broad objectives for this mission:

- 1- To evaluate the talents detection - development - retention processes of the company.
- 2- To compare the company's talent system to other more successful companies' talent systems.
- 3- To produce specific proposals in order to improve the talent system. The company wondered whether management tools were well received by their senior executives, middle managers, managers. The proposal as consultant was to proceed to a diagnosis to better understand both the motivations and expectations of its high potentials and talents and the strengths/weaknesses of the current organizational system.

This case study shows that benevolence on this particular area of consulting means developing a trustworthy attitude by:

- Conducting an interview in a very involving matter for the respondents
 - ✓ Behaving in such a way that help people to self disclosure (Morgan, 1986; Otani, 1989)
 - ✓ Using statements that facilitate empathy – developing a guideline with an appropriate phrasing
 - ✓ Listening not only what is said but what is meant (concentration, attention offered, clarification)
 - ✓ Being connected to inner, intuitive self
 - ✓ Caring as exemplified by Milton Erickson with the techniques of hypnotherapy: Showing genuine interest for the client, Observing the respondent
- Putting in practice self-ethics
 - ✓ to champion the respondents who trust you,
 - ✓ to preserve respondents from negative feed-back from company owners due to non conventional or not acceptable statements

Case 2: Benevolent approach for assessing skills and competencies

Assessing skills and competencies is a popular field of investigation in HRMC. However, skills and competencies remain a field of conflicts and malevolence within the firms, and particularly their assessment. As a matter of fact, promotions and wages are often connected with subjective and informal assessments of competencies. Thus, one of a big issue for HRMC in the field of skills management is to propose a method for assessing competencies on a consensual and benevolent manner.

To raise this issue, a tool called “the Competency Grid (CG)” will be presented, built by the ISEOR team of intervention-research (Lyon, France) and applied within 1200 companies since 1974. This tool belongs to the general framework of the SEAM approach of consulting (Savall, 1975; Buono, Savall, 2007). CG is a way for HRMC to evaluate and manage competencies in a benevolent manner.

The Competency Grid of a board of directors (abstract)

	EXISTING TASKS						
PERSONS	Building strategy	Making reports	Managing one's team	Piloting action plans	Encouraging staff	Mastering social conflicts	Processing budgets
Bill	■	■	■	■	■	■	□
John	■	■	■	■	■	■	□
Hilary	■	■	■	■	■	■	-
Peter	■	■	■	■	□	□	-

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- : Total mastery of the operation
- : Need assistance at times
- : Knowledge of principles without mastery
- : No practice or knowledge of the operation

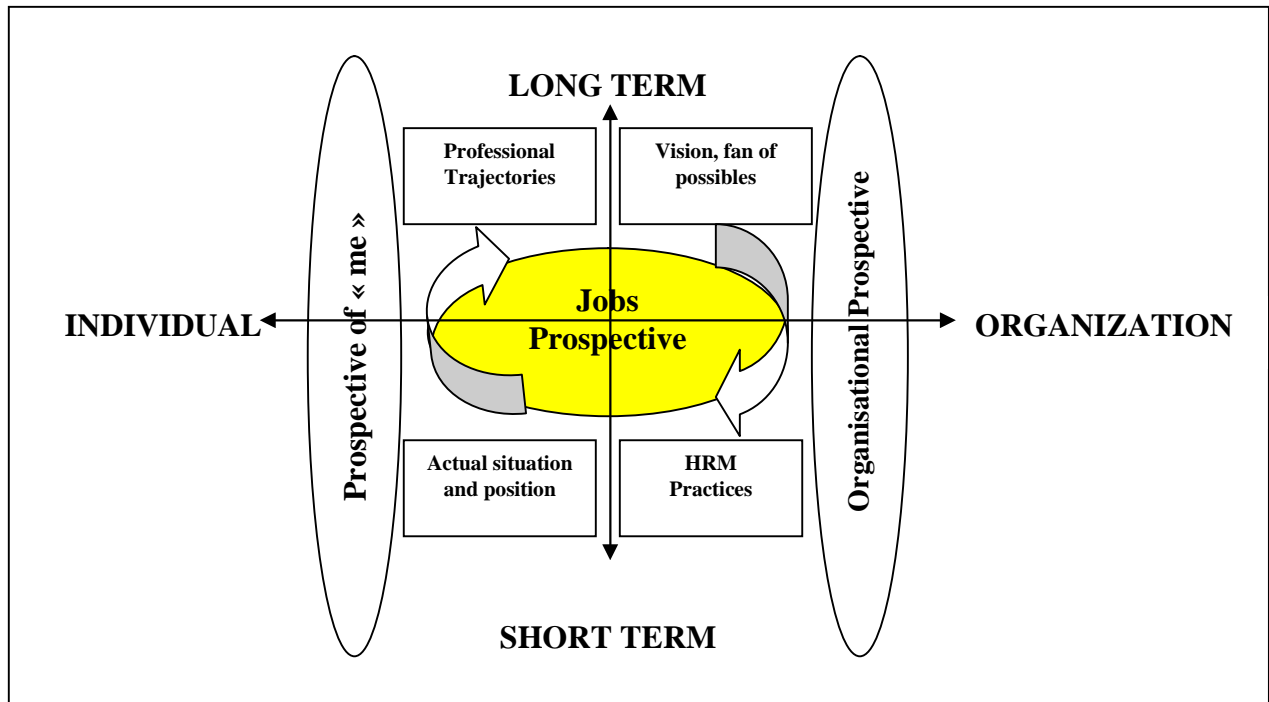
Through the case of a real CG of a board of directors stemming from a HRM mission, the two stages of the usage of CG will be described. It will explain on how MC interventions based on CG may be a benevolent process to assess competencies by being based on observation, confidence and dialogue between management, staff and consultant (Cappelletti, Noguera, 2010).

Example 3: Benevolent approach in MC based on job prospective

Prospective figures as a careful development of ideas on possible future case scenarios based on an appropriate methodology. It is a glance at future possibilities which clarify present actions. The contribution of prospective is to propose an analysis in terms of separation. One can understand that prospective is about anticipation, even though imperfect, of change, discontinuities and probabilities. The goal is not to describe the possible state of the most likely future, but to work out different paths or plausible developments according to the degrees of freedom of the major players. Exploring the prospective appears really as something multidisciplinary and contingent to the very action under consideration.

The key question in prospective seems to be that of the legitimacy of the method used. It is true that in prospective one distinguishes a multitude of tools stemming from the method of scenarios, strategic prospective workshops, competence trees, strategic analysis tools, strategic diagnosis etc. The way of conducting such a mission, especially the way of constructing with people the future of their organization, is a new way of thinking consulting based on benevolence. To demonstrate that, the results of a prospective mission led with social workers will be presented and especially changes initiated by our approach (Scouarnec, Khalla, 2010). In this way, HRMC methods are becoming benevolent: they help people of thinking of their future: the prospective of “me” and organization to construct benevolent HRM approaches, what we call organizational prospective.

This approach is benevolent because of the way of constructing with people the future of their organization. We observe that social workers and management teams are today especially becoming more benevolent of the way of making changes. The focus point is that, through this mission, social workers are aware of their self job prospective, what we call in France: “prospective of me” or “self prospective”. It is a good symbol of a benevolent approach which can help someone to anticipate his or her future and being consistent with his or her professional evolution in or out of the organization. That’s why we always defend a benevolent approach which makes a focus on the way we can listen to people who do the job and try to find scenarios which can match individual and organizational goals. We defend a humanist approach of prospective: Look ahead, think broad, thorough analysis, taking risks and thinking man (Berger, 1959). In this way, HRM methods are becoming benevolent: they help people of thinking of their future: the prospective of “me” and organization to construct benevolent HRM approaches, what we call organizational prospective. In this organization, this prospective exercise allowed organization to built HRM practices, especially in the field of training, communication and professional evolutions. It also allows people to be aware of their “possible” evolution. In this context, it was a “revolution” and now, people are more conscient of what they can become in or out of the organization. That’s why, job prospective can be considered as a benevolent approach in HRMC.



Discussions

The main objective of the paper is to provide HRM consultants with an overview of methods, stemming from different management fields, based on benevolent procedures and able to spread benevolence throughout companies. To do so, the participants of the workshop will be shown how to lead benevolent approach in HRMC within three different fields: job prospective, talent and high potential management, skill and competency management and assessment. Each example will be introduced by academics practicing MC interventions within companies half of their time, thus enabling the presentations being illustrated by case studies, examples of application, as well as conceptual guidelines.

HR consultants, practitioners and academics are often more focused on the effect of their methods towards business performances and client services than on the exploration of a new concept of investigation which could generate new debates and tools. As a result, new recent managerial concepts, such as Sustainability or Evidence-Based Management, stem merely from HRMC researches or practices, but rather from other disciplines such as strategy or OD. Therefore, exploring a new concept such as benevolence through HRMC methods, procedures and case studies may be valuable to HR specialists because it may help them to renew their research perspectives, and to enrich the exploitation of their practices.

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