

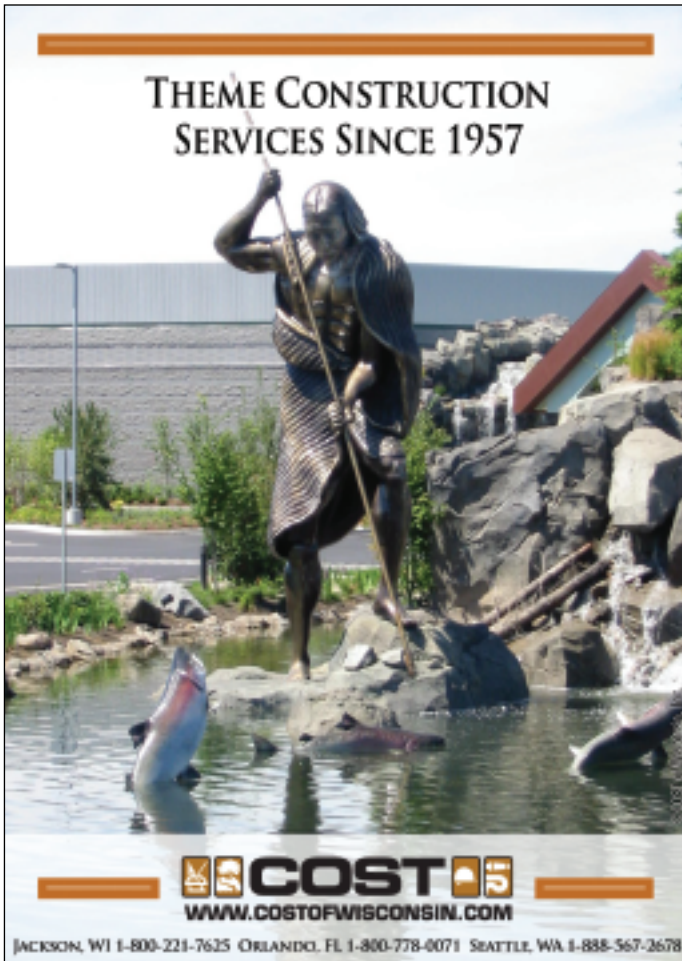


What Does the Human Brain Have to Do with Good Management Practices?

by Lynnea Brinkerhoff

For every ten workers in your organization, three will retire over the next ten years. Out of that same ten, three others are looking for new jobs even as you read this. And if you've hired younger "20-somethings," expect them to stay no longer than 18 months before moving on. What about the replacement cost when a skilled worker leaves? Estimates range from a few thousand to hundreds of thousands, depending on their position in the organization.

These statistics which were recently reported by retention specialist Greg Smith of Chart Your Course International, suggest that those who run organizations must discover new ways to engage their employees and retain them over the long-haul. Recent breakthroughs in neuroscience (the study of the brain) are beginning to offer scientific reasons to validate management theories in organizational and individual development.



Newly developed brain functional imaging technology enables researchers to observe areas with increased blood flow, thus indicating active areas of the brain. When confronted with different experiences at work, our brains are like colorful maps, demonstrating how we are processing the stimuli. In general, we tend to categorize experiences into those that force us to protect ourselves (activity will be indicated by a lighting up of the reptilian brain or brain stem, the oldest part of the brain). On the other hand, if the external environment is perceived as safe for us and thus open to creative solutions or positive dialogue with a colleague or client (the neo-cortex, the part of the brain responsible for processing experience and learning or in the limbic system will show increased blood flow).

Leaders often convey their emotions or ideas to their employees often without realizing the lasting impact. Daniel Goleman, in his book, *Primal Leadership*, compares dissonant leadership with resonant leadership, indicating that the inner state of the leader is contagious and ends up affecting individuals throughout the organization. In short, we, as human beings, are "wired to connect." It is our duty to decide moment to moment how to use that ability.

Dissonant leaders are those who create an atmosphere of watchfulness making it more likely that the employees will feel burn out, dispirited, angry, fearful, or apathetic; off-balance amid change or uncertainty, become dissatisfied and uncommitted and leave.

Often the impact of dissonant leadership is more profound and expansive due to the particular communication networks of an organization, consequently the impact multiplies. When resonant leadership is actively engaged, a positive work climate is promoted. Employees will work at their best, have more comprehension, be more flexible in their thinking, be more optimistic about achieving goals, and have a predisposition to being more helpful.

Whether your organizational challenges are high turnover, lack of forward thinking and planning, an anxious and unhappy workforce, waning customer satisfaction or struggling to incorporate tribal values into everyday business practices, leaders and managers may find that brain research is breathing new life into old adages, like:

- Manage with passion.
- Create life-long learners.
- Communicate clearly and often about the vision.
- Clarify people's roles and expectations for their positions.

- Offer positive feedback and regular praise.
- Give critical feedback in private, informally and frequently as opposed to springing it on them once a year.
- Hold company events that link the employee with the organization's mission and values and give them a sense of belonging.
- Encourage wellness and use of simple stress management techniques.
- Create and tailor reward systems that motivate all employees based on unique preferences and never assume that money will always be the answer to create loyalty and long-term productivity.

Brain Function Based on Fundamental Needs		
Brain Physiology	Function	Psychological Needs
Limbic System	Respond to emotions; interact and bond	Participation and connection, be part of something larger than ourselves
Pre-frontal lobes	Future-oriented; connect our emotions, values, goals	Purpose and meaning - bring value and benefit to others; to enhance life
Integration of right and left brain	Connect mind, emotions and body for action	Self-determination and choice
Neo-cortex	Process experience and learning	Growth and creativity - to expand who we know ourselves to be
Brain stem	Gatekeeper to cortical or limbic response and to higher processing	Respect, acceptance and access appreciation

Scientists at the Gallup Organization write that brain research helps managers understand why praise works: it boosts levels of dopamine, a chemical linked to joy (*Wall Street*

Journal, September 20th, 2007). When leaders learn to connect their behavior to the immediate physiological effects on their colleagues and employees, they will become better leaders. Leaders will understand that if they want employees to 'follow' them, they have to speak in a way that resonates with the employees such that productive action will ensue.

BLR Publishing indicated in their HR Daily Advisor on October 1st, 2007 that often employees do not leave their company, but instead leave managers who they feel have treated them unfairly or with whom they can't get along. It is common knowledge that the leader has the largest impact on the business climate and in turn, the business climate determines employee engagement and satisfaction. Given that much illness is stress-related and that stress is primarily based on our sense that the status quo has been altered, it is vital that leaders minimize negative impacts by managing in ways that reduce fear and increase safety.

Jane Nebelung's model in her book, *Leadership in Service to Life*, offers a clear link of brain function based on her research on the fundamental needs of all human beings (see chart above). The best leaders understand the powerful role emotions play in the workplace. Tangible impacts of this are: better business results, skilled talent retained longer. Intangible results are: higher morale, more motivation and commitment, better customer service.

As a leader and manager, if your goals are to realize greater return on investments through increased profits, a sustainable business and employee community, promoting tribal values and successful business operations, you may find the answer lies hidden in the depths of your brain that is only just beginning to be discovered and applied to Human Resource Development and Leadership in the 21st Century. ♣

Lynnea Brinkerhoff is Vice President of Flath & Associates Consulting, Inc. and is Co-Director of the Center for Human Resource Development and Leadership Studies at the University of New Haven in Connecticut. She can be reached by calling (203) 913-7398 or email lynneabrink@gmail.com

K/P Corporation

Want results?
 More first time guests?
 Increased repeat visits?
 Higher share of wallet per player visit?
 Greater overall lifetime value per player guest?

Specializing in measurable, relevant, integrated direct marketing programs that attain the results you're after!



Programs we produce:

- Innovative Executive Host Marketing Programs
- Launch a Postcard campaign in 24-hours!
- Exciting Campaigns to Capture Player Emails
- Unique Player Club Welcome Kits
- Reservation Confirmation Kits Designed to Reduce Cancellations!

Serving Gaming clients throughout the West

Contact us at (925) 766 6697 or hdroeger@kpcorp.com