

Hope for the Self-Actualized Worker: The Conscious Organization

Commentary by John Renesch

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Thanks to all the corporate scandals making headlines these days, the public is keenly aware of how unethical behavior can be condoned in today's hallowed halls of capitalism. Any long-term observer of the workplace knows that organizations – particularly publicly-traded multinational corporations - continue to devolve as life-draining, bureaucratic places to work. It is harder and harder for vital and alive people to endure working in these large companies without some bit of co-opting or what many call the “selling of one's soul.”

In an ironic twist, as these large organizations become more and more dysfunctional, many individuals continue to evolve to higher levels of inner awareness. In the 1960s, motivation expert Abraham Maslow pointed to the need for humans to constantly grow toward self-actualization and, forty years later, researcher Paul Ray substantiated this in his work discovering the “Cultural Creatives” – tens of millions of people in the industrialized world who have forsaken both the modernist and the traditionalist mindsets and have adapted a more self-actualized worldview. And, the numbers are growing!

As more people join the ranks of the self-actualized, most large organizations are headed in the opposite direction. This disconnect between people and their work is what New York author Sally Helgesen calls “Frankenwork” – work we've created that is not compatible with the human experience. As people continue on their paths of self-actualization, the enterprises, institutions and companies where they work will need to change dramatically. If organizations do not adapt, the answer is simple: they will die.

Eventually, self-actualized people will refuse to work in dysfunctional organizations because they will be unwilling to sell their souls. As a result, dysfunctional organizations will become havens for people who are the least aware, the least healthy, the least ethical, and the most likely to enable even greater amounts of dysfunction – like dishonesty, market manipulation, criminal activity, and cover-ups.

So where will these growing numbers of self-actualized people work? The “Conscious Organization” is a term I've been using to describe an enterprise which possesses the collective will to be vigilant, the collective commitment to continuously evolve and grow, and the collective courage to act whenever it sees something out of whack. Once anyone recognizes a quality, procedure, or other element of its corporate culture which is not conscious, a rallying cry goes out and the organization's resources are marshaled toward “cleaning up” that area and making it more conscious.

Instead of being seen as traitors or disloyal employees, whistleblowers are seen as guardian angels of the corporate soul. They are welcomed and held in high esteem. Thanks to the whistleblower, the organization is able to flush out and eliminate things that suck life from the people working there and invigorate the organization!

Imagine all the energy that is freed up when people aren't gossiping, or keeping secrets, or wrestling with their consciences over one unethical thing or another. Imagine how creative and productive people can be when they feel aligned with the values of their organization and proud and invigorated about what they are doing every day. Everyone's energy can now be focused toward furthering the goal of the team – the purpose of the enterprise – resulting in more fun, greater productivity, a healthier workplace, and a much more effective organization. This is the promise of the Conscious Organization.

About the Author

John Renesch is an international keynote speaker, a business futurist, writer, commentator, and consultant-coach. He is a global expert in bridging the arenas of business and human consciousness. His latest book is *Getting to the Better Future: A Matter of Conscious Choosing*, which received a recent rave review by the world's leading strategic planning journal - *Long Range Planning*. For more information about his work, and the services he offers, visit www.Renesch.com. To contact him by email: John@Renesch.com ; or call 415-437-6974 in San Francisco.