

Practical approaches to applying positive psychology for healthy, fully functioning employees

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Companies looking to build productive, distinctive organizations will find much of their competitive advantage in managing their human capital. It is a leadership skill to build healthy work environments where people can thrive and be at their best, and with practical training, skills can be improved. In the present paper, we will share our practical approach to designing positive organizational initiatives aimed at promoting healthy and fully functioning employees, with a particular focus on strength-based leadership.

Our business case is the Norwegian air craft company Widerøe, where we have ran different development projects. Firstly, leadership development programs for selected groups of managers aimed at implementing strength-based leadership. Secondly, we trained base managers and HR-personnel in communication and relational skills to follow up employees on sick-leave, with the aim of reducing sick-leave and increasing healthy and well functioning employees.

Our presentation will share elements from the practical application of the training done in the sick-leave project. The training was organized in a pre-defined structure of three steps: Step 1) Create shared mental models through *knowledge input* on theoretical and empirical foundation (e.g. positive psychology, JD-R model) and *knowledge creation* (e.g. active listening and strength-spotting). Several studies have revealed that shared mental models creates common expectations and understanding of working processes, increase knowledge sharing and improves problem solving (e.g., Xiang, Lu, & Gupta, 2013; Tjosvold, Yu, & Hui, 2004). Step 2) Facilitating, and teach how to facilitate, job crafting - a process of redefining and reimagining job designs in personally meaningful ways (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001). Step 3) Role play simulation on cases that captured the complexity of reasons and reactions of being on sick-leave. This process refers to an act of learning through (a) feedback, (b) taking others perspectives (i.e., the employees), (c) observation and reflection, and (d) exploration of opportunities. Studies have revealed that these elements may increase self-awareness (of own communication style), self-regulation, relationship management (Fullan, 2014; Goleman, 2017) and problem-solving skills (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

In addition to sharing how we conduct the practical training, we will discuss the challenges associated with converting research to practice, and some ideas on how to overcome these challenges.