Case Studies in Fear Free what about me a soap approach for using psychological safety in the workplace

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Learning objective

- Know the effects of changing workplace culture
- Know how to assess a workplace problem using a SOAP approach for psychological safety
- Walk through two cases where outcomes were different based on the application of psychological safety

Toxic Work Culture

In one study, workers said a toxic workplace influenced attrition 10 times more than compensation. Job insecurity or the fears that come with a reorganization were the next largest driver at 3.5 times.

Source: Sull, Donald, Charles Sull, and Ben Zweig. "Toxic Culture Is Driving the Great Resignation."

Harvard Business School | Working Knowledge

TED MCKINNEY
Leadership & Organizational Consulting

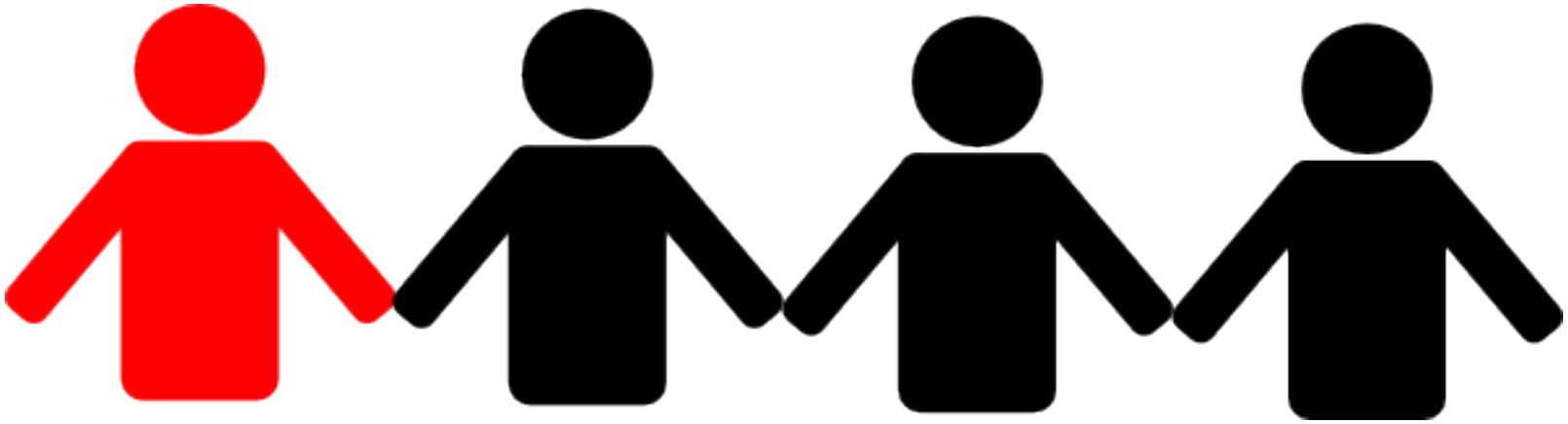
Behavior parallel – patient behavior drives care

- Agitated/aggressive patients are difficult to examine – take more time

- Low–stress veterinary care improves financial performance

- DVM 360 article (1) – increased revenue, increased patient visits, improved workplace safety, and PR for clinic

Tipping point for culture change



“When the size of a minority committed to social change reached just one-quarter of the group,
it was consistently able to establish a new norm in the larger group,
a finding with implications for behavior in the workplace, online, and in our communities.”

https://penntoday.upenn.edu/news/damon-centola-tipping-point-large-scale-social-change

Case studies from real practices

- Real-life situations where psychological safety was high and low

- Time to discuss the steps of each case – your input and questions are welcome now. What would you do – what would your staff do in similar situations?

- No answer or comment is completely right or wrong – this is a time to learn from each other

Soap approach to practice culture for positivity

- **Subjective :** what you observe about staff behaviors – body language, communication level, emotional state
- **Objective** : the facts of the problem – #/ week of problem, $$ cost, client satisfaction rates.
- **Assessment:** What needs to change based on staff input, leadership, and values to reduce or the problem?
- **Plan** – What are the specific steps to implement and how will progress be monitored?

Case 1 Dr. Foote's wake up call

- History : All staff mandated to change handling to Low Stress only – all licensed CVT - mild staff resistance to change
- Dr Foote found that all textbooks demonstrated force handling

Dr Foote approached the staff informally and asked about how they were taught in their CVT program.

- Subjective: Staff would question change, were slow to use new techniques. Dr. Foote realized the mandate was challenging their pride in their CVT credentials.
- Objective: Staff noted the number of hours, tests, and pride in the CVT degree based on traditional handling. They said the number of easier exams, satisfied clients, and how it made medical sense to use Low-Stress handling.

Case #1 continued

- Assessment: The staff was feeling an inner conflict about using Low-Stress techniques only and abandoning their training in handling from the CVT program. They supported change, and needed more time to adapt to new techniques.

- Plan: Dr. Foote and Staff acknowledged challenge to tradition,I thanked them for their candid input. Their knowledge was validated and expanded as CVT, and the plan was adjusted – within 1 year, we were 100% Low Stress Handling first certified in Illinois

Staff testimonial about the experience

- 1. Felt acknowledged and respected – knew I would not yell, or punish them for telling me why they thought Low Stress care was crazy (2009)
- Appreciated my transparency and humility
- Established an experience that was built upon over the years for improved culture and communication.

Case 2 – Dr. Ted

- Safety gone south
- History :

- Subjective
- Objective
- Assessment
- Plan

Using the SOAP on the macro level

- Practice wide problems that reflect poor culture
- Leaders use this approach to evaluate all aspects of the practice culture to create the plan
- What ever notes you want here

SOAP Framework: SUBJECTIVE

- Behavior
  - Body language
  - Tone of communication
- Client feedback
- Roundtable discussions
- Engagement and pulse surveys
- Past employee feedback: Glassdoor and Indeed
- MBWA
  - Observation and job shadowing
  - Informal interviews *

Informal Interview Examples

“There are several employees who frequently and openly create hostile working conditions. Management knows; it's been happening for a long time. They say it will not be tolerated, but it always is.”

“She has talked down to the CSRs, stating they are “just receptionists.” She seems to go on a power trip of being a doctor sometimes, and it makes the support staff feel less than about themselves.”

“CSRs and OPNs are afraid to ask doctors about seeing emergencies, fearing that they will get mad at them because they are overwhelmed.”

“I don’t want to work with Jill. She talks to me like I am stupid every day, and I don’t want to work at a place like that.”

SOAP Framework: OBJECTIVE

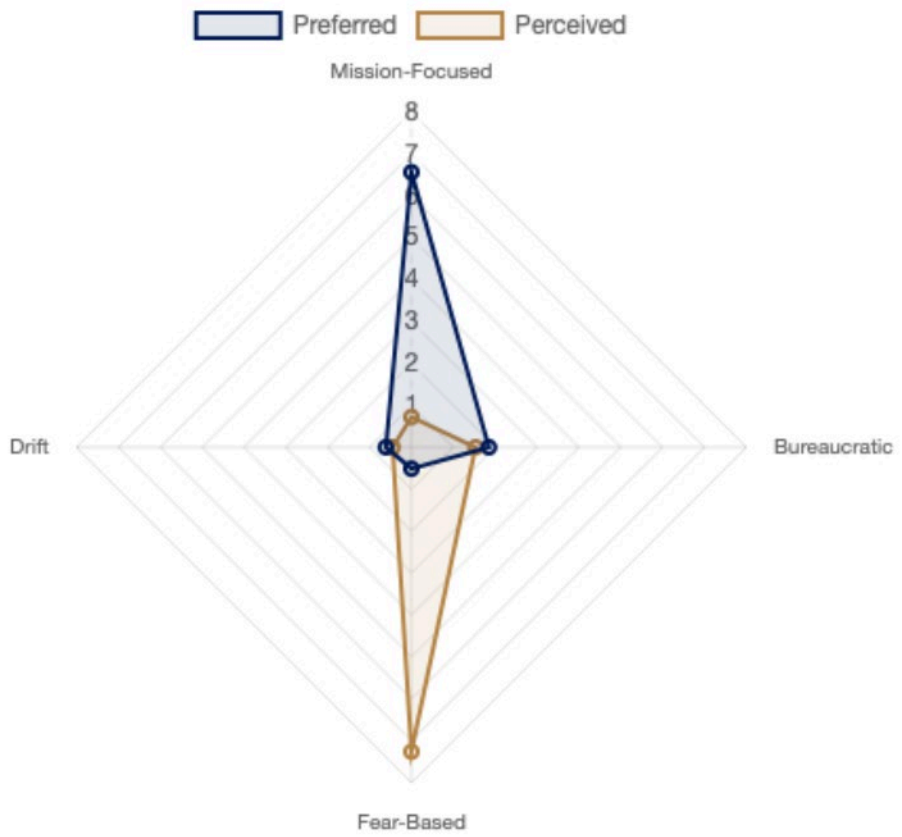
Metrics

- OSHA RIR
- Turnover rate
- Absenteeism
- Average tenure
- Time to fill open positions
- Engagement surveys

Assessments are like point-of-care testing

- Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (Competing Values)
- The Culture Checkup by EOS Worldwide

SOAP Framework: OBJECTIVE

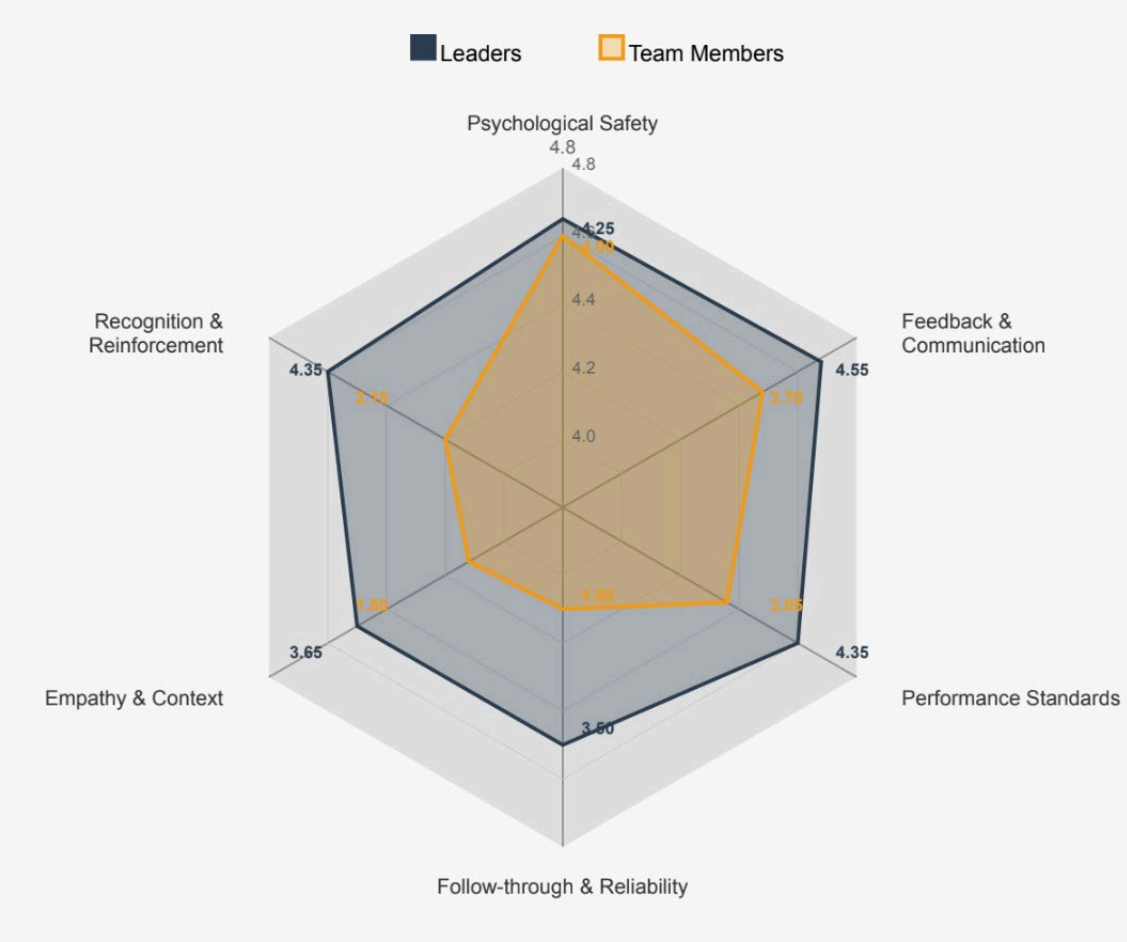


The Leadership Experience Survey is a team-based assessment that captures the behaviors employees desire from their leaders versus what they actually experience.

Top 5 Behaviors Employees Want but Don't Experience:

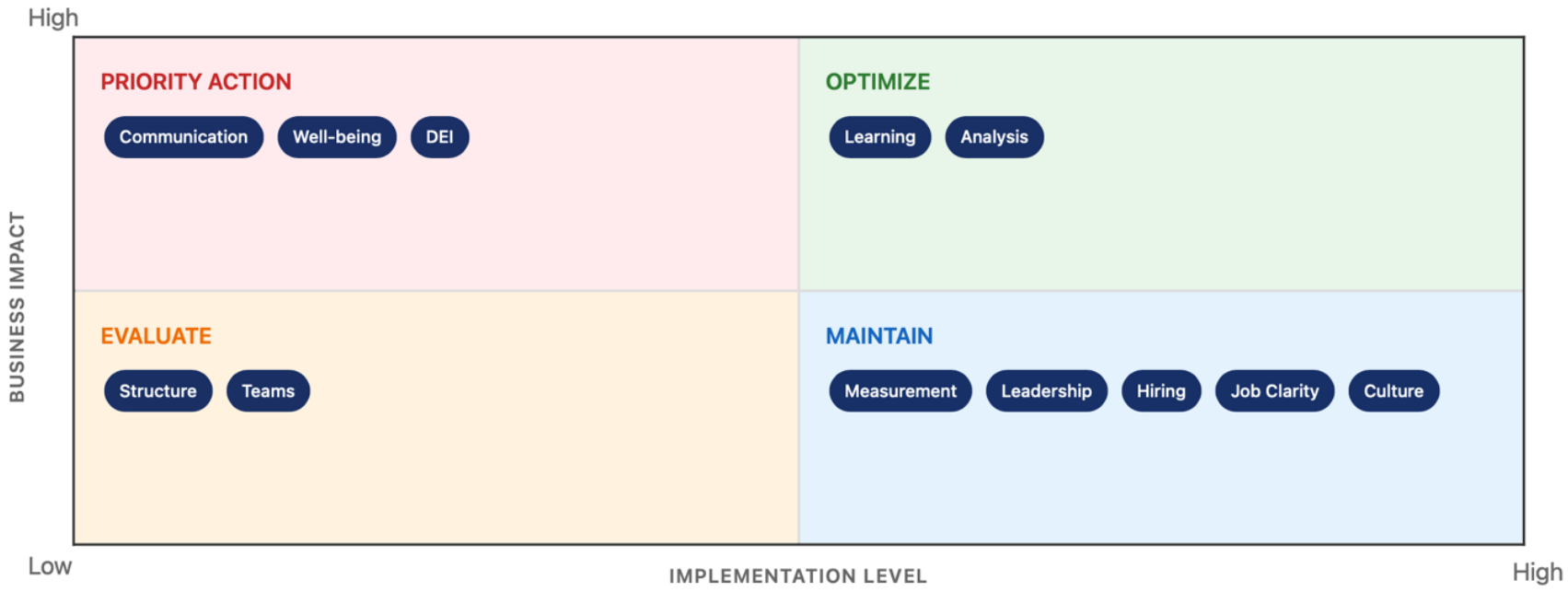
Leaders who share information openly and explain decisions (Want: 94%, Experience: 23%)
Leaders who encourage innovation and support calculated risks (Want: 91%, Experience: 19%)
Leaders who admit mistakes and model learning (Want: 89%, Experience: 21%)
Leaders who actively develop their people (Want: 88%, Experience: 26%)
Leaders who create psychological safety for speaking up (Want: 92%, Experience: 18%)

SOAP Framework: **OBJECTIVE**



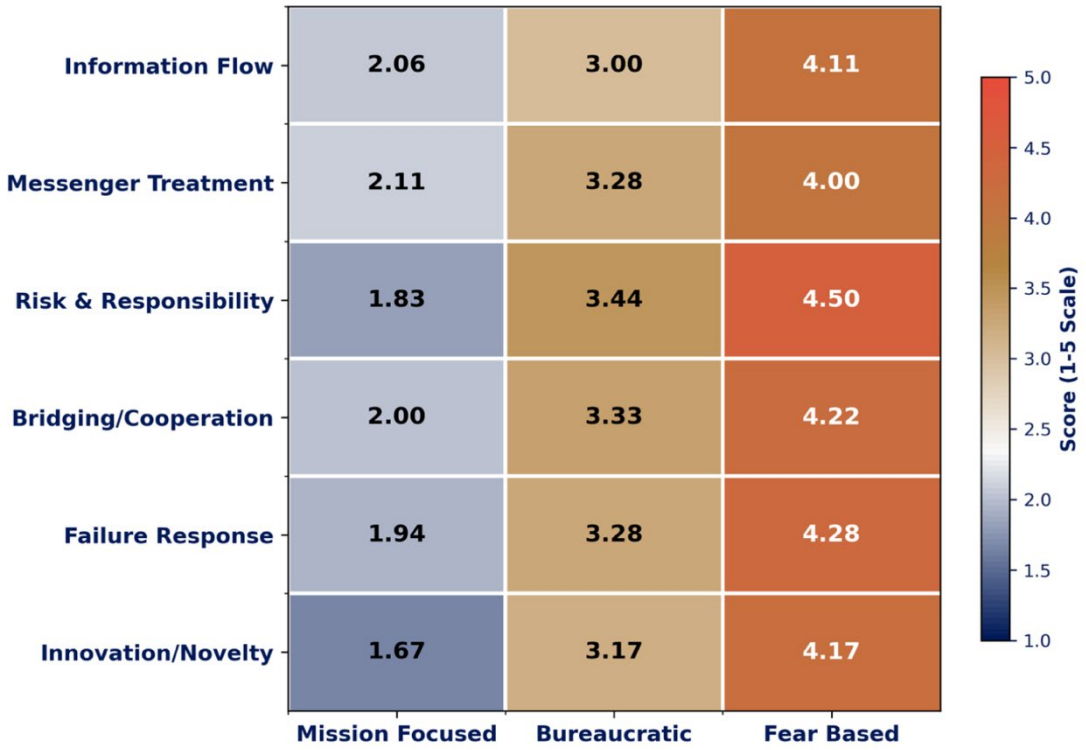
The Team Accountability Survey highlights leadership behavior disconnects within specific teams and provides actionable recommendations to close these **perception gaps**, improve accountability, and foster a healthier, more responsive team culture.

SOAP Framework: OBJECTIVE



The Organizational Systems Survey assesses 12 aspects that influence work culture and helps organizations determine where to focus their improvement efforts for the most significant impact.

SOAP Framework: ASSESSMENT



Fear-based: Control-oriented, reactive, and punitive leadership.

- This cultural pattern is characterized by:
- Information is often withheld or filtered before reaching decision-makers.
- People who bring concerning news may face negative consequences.
- Tendency to avoid taking responsibility when problems arise.
- Departments compete rather than collaborate effectively.
- Focus on finding blame when things go wrong.
- Innovation is seen as risky and potentially disruptive.

SOAP Framework: PLAN

Change

Negative

Positive

Retain

Eliminate

What negative elements do we need to remove from our culture?

- Lack of accountability
- Misaligned staff (values)
- Toxic behavior
- Personal agendas
- Fear of failure and the unknown

Create

What positive elements do we want to add to our culture?

- Clarity (role, structure, expectations, ind development plans)
- Collaboration
- Empowerment
- Communication
  - Feedback process
  - Scaling
- Strategy (directional clarity)
- Learning environment
- Psychological safety
- Enterprise mindset
- The schedule matches the census (resources)

Accept

What negative elements do we need to accept are part of our culture?

- Emergency medicine is stressful
- 24/7/365 schedule: nights, weekends, and holidays
- Dynamic, unpredictable workload
- Talent supply limited
- Decisions take time
- HAH does not have unlimited resources

Preserve

What positive elements do we want to keep or improve in our culture?

- Standard of care
- 24 x 7 access
- Mission
- Differentiate (unique model)
- Continuous improvement
- Employee benefits
- Leader availability (?)

SOAP Framework: **PLAN**

- **Organizational Strategy:** Clarifying the desired outcomes of a cultural transformation and identifying the systems to support them.
- **Leadership Development:** Developing programs that evaluate and improve executive performance and team unity.
- **Executive Coaching:** Offering personalized coaching to leaders seeking to align their personal values with organizational objectives.

In summary

- Using the SOAP approach for specific problems as well as broader issues provides a frame work for leadership and staff to stay psychologically safe
- Every experience using psychologically safe techniques builds upon a positive work culture – similar to Low-Stress Vet care

References

- 1. https://www.dvm360.com/view/using-fear-free-techniques-boosts-business-study-results-show
- Foote, S. Bite near bite job stress in veterinary medicine Journal of AVTE 2014 https://www.drsallyjfoote.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/bite-near-bite-avte-journal-article-scan-.pdf

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