

Belonging is More Than Membership

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In the last issue I wrote about the Order's shift from "merely" recruiting to recruitment. Recall I wrote that while recruitment includes signing people up as new members, importantly, it also refers to ensuring they are given actual jobs or positions in their chapter. As much as anything, facilitating involvement generates a deep sense of belonging and mission success.

In her article, "The Importance of Creating a Sense of Belonging in Organizations," Anne Dranitsaris, Ph.D, wrote:

People need to feel a sense of belonging in order to find meaning in their work and to engage the power of their emotions. The more [people] ... discover links between personal ideals, a meaningful organizational mission or intention, and larger social values, the greater their commitment to their goals. They need to be able to connect their own identity to the organization's intrinsic identity in order to feel a part of the collective. This provides them with a mechanism for the expression of caring about the organization they belong to.

Along complementary lines, in Shawn Murphy's article, "Why Belonging Is Key in Today's Workplace," he observed, "The need to belong is powerful, [but] the need to belong is often overlooked in the workplace." He says organizations often don't do enough to connect to its people and they often field structures, etc., that tend to alienate and promote divisiveness. This results in the debilitating "us vs. them" or "you vs. me" construct.

Murphy also asserts, "The impact of failing to create a sense of belonging ... not only affects how much they enjoy their work; it [also] has a significant effect on their ability to be productive." He says this can result in toxic behaviors, e.g., cynicism, gossiping, cliques, information hoarding, and stovepiped-thinking. He says, "Many of these behaviors are rooted in [a person's] ... drive to create their own sense of belonging (generally by excluding others,) and indicate the lack of a strong identification with the organization." However, he adds, when members feel a sense of belonging and identification with the organization, they are naturally motivated to help it succeed. He offers several suggestions:

- Lead with an inspirational mission and purpose that aligns and creates an emotional connection.
- Live by a strong set of values that guide both business and interpersonal behaviors. Emphasize things like respect, collaboration and fun.
- Train leaders to be champions of your purpose and values. Teach them how to be open and inclusive.
- Immediately and decisively deal with behavior not in line with your values—especially in key positions.
- Know and respect all as complete individuals with their own relationships, interests and challenges.
- Communicate openly and inclusively, particularly regarding business or organizational issues that have the potential to adversely affect members.
- Encourage positive social connection..
- Provide opportunities for all to have a voice.

Meisha Rouser, an organization and leadership consultant, builds on this in her blog, "Create a Sense of Belonging for Employees."

Building a sense of belonging and loyalty can be accomplished when [people feel] the work they do is valued, makes a difference and contributes to the overall team or organization. In addition, the work environment needs to foster relationships and collaboration.

She also offered tips: welcome newcomers; build organization-wide camaraderie; respect, trust and value each other; build a shared vision; share the ownership; foster two-way communications; show appreciation; invest in people's development, and; incubate relationships.

In closing, we have a great opportunity to increase our membership by greater recruiting while also achieving greater fulfillment through involvement and belonging. These things directly contribute to a "deep leadership bench" and a stronger Companion team—both being vital to MOWW's future. To paraphrase a question PCINC COL St Amant asked years ago, *Will we all be working Companions?* ★

