Fostering Success through Goal-Focused Leadership
Sara Jansen Perry, PhD, Lars U. Johnson, PhD, L.A. Witt, PhD, and Daniel P. McDonald, PhD

How Screen Time Affects Sleep and Work Performance
Haiyang Liu, PhD, Yueting Ji, PhD, and Scott B. Dust, PhD

Reducing Social Anxiety to Boost Sales Performance
Bruno Lussier, PhD, Matthew Philp, PhD, Nathaniel N. Hartmann, PhD, and Heiko Wieland, PhD

Making the Brand-to-Customer Relationship Work
Claudio Alvarez, PhD, Danielle J. Brick, PhD, and Susan Fournier, PhD

INSIDER: Sales Secrets
Isabella Ip, MBA Candidate

INSIDER: Think Again: The Power of Knowing What You Don’t Know
Tyler O’Mary, MBA Candidate
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There are numerous styles of leadership that an individual may choose to implement depending on the type of job. One frequently used leadership style is goal-focused leadership. It places an emphasis on goal-setting and task achievements. A manager using this type of leadership implements clear processes, sets deadlines, delegates but oversees assignments, and provides guidance to help employees reach goals quickly. It is an extremely structured style and is often used when the job requires several tasks to be completed within a short timeframe and/or in hierarchical or bureaucratic environments. Due to the potentially demanding nature of this leadership style, emotional exhaustion can set in for employees, leading to lower productivity and poor results; however, studies show that goal-focused leadership can be beneficial if used within the appropriate conditions. As one example, when paired with a non-discriminating style and high cohesion among coworkers, these conditions can reduce the risk of emotional exhaustion.

Demands vs. Resources

Goal-focused leadership (GFL) is most prevalent in settings where job tasks are highly demanding. To discover if GFL is right for a certain job, the Job Demands-Resources Model can be helpful. This model compares the balance of demands and resources that are required and given in a certain role. Demands can include anything required in the job: long hours, conflicting roles, unclear expectations, or high levels of physical activity. Conversely, a resource can be anything that originates from within oneself or is given to an individual so that he or she can attain goals, protect well-being, and meet the demands of the job. Resources can include feelings (like a sense of accomplishment), clarity of expectations, time, or money. The more demands a job has, the more resources are required, but when resources are scarce, the more likely it is that symptoms of burnout, including emotional exhaustion, can set in. When resources are plentiful, however, some demands may be beneficial if they motivate an employee to perform at high levels. A manager can provide some of these resources for his or her employees, which in turn, can reduce the need for employees to expend unnecessary cognitive and emotional resources in completing tasks.

GFL can act as a demand or a resource, but two ways this type of leader can provide resources for employees is by prioritizing non-discriminatory behaviors and by encouraging coworker
cohesion. By fostering a culture where these resources are commonplace, employees can have a higher emotional exhaustion tolerance, leading to more productivity and, ultimately, more profit for the firm, even amid other highly demanding conditions.

**Leadership Behaviors and Cohesion**

A manager displays non-discriminatory behaviors by consistently avoiding unfair, discriminatory practices and by placing importance on inclusion, belonging, and welcoming input and involvement from all team members. Research suggests that displaying this type of behavior results in higher well-being, retention, productivity, and less stress.

Cohesion is the strength of the relationships among employees as they work together under the same leader. When a team is highly cohesive, their ability to accomplish tasks and endure stress is greater than when cohesion doesn’t exist. This type of team displays trust among members, and they are able to work together to increase productivity, well-being, and commitment. The goal of utilizing all three practices together—GFL, non-discriminating leadership, and cohesion—is to lower the emotional exhaustion of employees; however, when one of these is lacking, it undermines the potentially beneficial effects of the other two.

**Results**

Our study consisted of observing the relationship between GFL, non-discriminating leadership, and cohesion in a setting where GFL commonly occurs: the military. We analyzed levels of all three factors in two samples of deployed military personnel in non-combat zones to determine which combination was the most successful at lowering emotional exhaustion of employees. GFL paired with non-discriminatory behaviors had little effect on lowering emotional exhaustion of employees, as did GFL paired with cohesion among employees. However, all three together equipped employees to avoid emotional exhaustion, even as they work longer hours and face other demands. This means that in a highly demanding job setting such as real estate, GFL paired with a non-discriminatory leadership style and workplace cohesion may be a winning combination to foster favorable employee well-being.

**Real Estate Implications**

Real estate management often occurs under high levels of stress and performance pressure. Employees and agents can also feel the demands of the job, leading to burnout in the workplace. Due to competition and the time-sensitive nature of real estate, the goal of managers should be to make the team as productive and healthy as possible. Goal-focused leadership can be a tactic to ensuring that the team is meeting deadlines and accomplishing goals. Displaying non-discriminating behaviors to make sure every team member feels included will foster a culture of confidence, innovation, and productivity. Encouraging cohesion among the team members will allow one’s team to endure more demands and create trust among the team. The use of all three
practices together has been proven to lower emotional exhaustion of employees, which will likely lead to higher profitability in the long run.

**Recommended Reading**


**About the Authors**

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Dr. Sara Jansen Perry (PhD – University of Houston) teaches courses in HR Staffing & Employee Relations, as well as Negotiation & Conflict Resolution, and conducts research on stress at work, future work modes (such as remote and hybrid work), and leadership influences on these dynamics. In 2017, she won the Outstanding Scholarship Award for research productivity among tenure-track faculty at Baylor University and the Young Scholar Award in the Hankamer School of Business. She has published in several high-visibility journals, including *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Journal of Management*, in addition to a book published by Oxford University Press entitled *Organized Innovation: A Blueprint for Renewing America’s Prosperity*. She also serves on the editorial board for *Human Resource Management* and as a reviewer for *Journal of Management* and *Journal of Applied Psychology*, among others. She is a member of Academy of Management, Southern Management Association, and Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

**Lars U. Johnson, PhD, M.Ed.**
**Assistant Professor of Management, University of Texas at Arlington**
Dr. Lars Johnson (PhD – University of Houston) not only received his MA and PhD in IO psychology at the University of Houston, but he also received an M.Ed. in Educational Administration at Lamar University. At UTA, he teaches Human Resource Management and Staffing & Performance Management to undergraduate and graduate students. His research primarily focuses on leadership, well-being, and workplace diversity/inclusion issues. Additionally, he also runs a lab called LeadWell Research which focuses on the use of 360-degree feedback for leadership development, longitudinal employee performance, scale development, employee exhaustion, and more.

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Dr. Alan Witt (PhD – Tulane University) is a professor of Management & Leadership, Public Policy, and Psychology. He has authored over 400 journal articles, professional papers, and
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Dr. Daniel McDonald (PhD – the University of Central Florida) and his team developed, transitioned, and institutionalized the DEOMI Organizational Climate Assessment (DEOCS) and Assessment to Solutions process. DEOCS is now used by over 21,000 leaders and 3.6 million members of the Department of Defense. For this work, he received the DoD Medal for Exceptional Civilian Service, which is the highest honor a career civilian can receive. Prior to becoming a Director at DEOMI, Daniel worked as a Senior Research Psychologist for the Naval Air Warfare Center, Training Systems Division, and The Chief of Naval Personnel’s Human Performance Command. Since his arrival, he has attracted over 50 million of unprogrammed dollars to the institute through coordination with the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity and other agencies.