



Leadership and Culture: Get Their Juices Flowing, But Not Like Sepp Blatter

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Another excellent post from our regular guest contributor, Sigi Osagie, expert on effectiveness in Procurement & Supply Chain Management and author of "Procurement Mojo - Strengthening the Function and Raising its Profile." For more information visit

www.procurementmojo.com)

You wouldn't have thought it, would you? That Sepp Blatter offers us valuable lessons in leadership – but he does. His leadership of FIFA has repeatedly attracted significant negative sentiments in the global news media, and most ordinary folks detect a strong whiff of corruption and dubious practices.

Blatter's stewardship of FIFA illustrates how ineffective leadership creates sub-optimal outcomes for organisations – in effect, a manifestation of **leadership failure**. This is the exact opposite of what effective leadership should achieve, so there are lessons here for us all – on the importance of leadership effectiveness, whether we are in Procurement or any other function in the wider enterprise, and whether we are seasoned professionals or career starters.

Blatter must be a canny operator to have led FIFA for as long as he has. He probably knows a lot about leading organisations. But, sadly, he also exemplifies how leadership ability can be applied improperly with disastrous results; not least by fostering a culture of questionable gambits – in FIFA's case it seems all smoke and mirrors.

The relationship between leadership and an entity's ability to succeed applies as much to professional associations as to SMEs, multinationals, non-profit organisations and functional teams. Leadership is the glue that binds everything else together. It is the single most important factor affecting people's motivation and performance at work. And all organisations are about people.

Businesses that remain at the top of their game over the long term understand this. That's why they consistently ensure they have effective leaders. **Effective leadership is the keystone of organisational success, because a fish rots from the head down.**

Savvy business leaders recognise the vital importance of their own effectiveness, and they leverage this. They know that authentic leadership can't be taken forcefully; bully-boy leadership is rarely sustainable for true organisational success, neither is manipulation and other disingenuous approaches. Effective leaders know that their success is created by people being prepared to follow down a particular path. They focus time and energy on creating an environment where people feel part of something meaningful, an environment that fulfils their hungry spirit and gets their juices flowing – they foster a culture that is conducive to organisational success.

On many occasions in my career I've been asked how I inspire people and align them to my agenda of successful change. In truth, I don't have a little black book titled *How to Inspire and Motivate People* which I whip out of my pocket each time. And I don't deploy African voodoo spells either. Rather, I focus on a few key things, especially my own effectiveness and engaging people to nurture the right cultural climate.

If you're one of those old school types who favours Tayloristic management and thinks of organisational culture as "all that pink and fluffy stuff," think again. The culture in your organisation says more than any scorecard, strategy or business process. It reflects what your organisation is about - it's your organisational DNA.

Business leaders who've got more battle scars than me agree that culture is everything. In describing his transformation of Hilton Worldwide, Chris Nassetta, President & CEO, stressed, **"We needed to focus on aligning our culture and our organisation, first and foremost – that was foundational to being able to do anything else that we wanted to do."**

And Louis V. Gerstner, Jr., who saved IBM from extinction by driving its historic turnaround, emphasised, **"...culture isn't just one aspect of the game – it is the game. In the end, an organisation is nothing more than the collective capacity of its people to create value."**

If you're one of those leaders who blames the "lemons" in your team for poor organisational capacity or attributes deficient performance to "bad processes and tools," yet you've been in the job for a considerable time, then you're a bit like Sepp Blatter – he absolved himself of any accountability in the FIFA fiasco, yet he's been leading the organisation for over a decade.

So, whether you're in Procurement or another functional area, and whether you're the top dog in the big chair or you lead a small operational team, ask yourself this:

- Are you building a culture that augments your organisational success?
- Are you engaging and energising your people to unleash their true capabilities?
- Are you providing clarity of purpose and direction to your people?
- Is your leadership effort focussed at the right things?
- Are you an effective leader?

Being an effective leader isn't always easy. And it entails more than can be covered in this article. But effective leadership is not rocket science either. And it's as much about self-leadership as it is about managing or leading others. So start with yourself. To be an effective leader you must be clear on what you stand for; otherwise why should people follow you?