The LEAD Forward July Brief

Society is dividing – but not at work, right?

No matter where you stand on the political spectrum, these last European elections will probably have elicited some emotions for you. For your team, your company, friends – all of us, really. What Europe has shown us is a rising distrust in the democratic order as such, the status quo. The "this is how we do things". Something that political transformation research has predicted for us decades ago. The division has become palpable in many contexts.

What about the workplace? Whether remote or not, it is where we spend a big portion of our lives. Take a moment and think: Do you feel the divide here just as strongly as in other spheres of life?

In our work we find it turning up regularly in our clients' organizations, but in normalized ways. This may be because division is traditionally present in many forms and on many levels in companies: hierarchy, silos, paygrades, access to development, etc.

Considering the time people spend in contexts of work, the assumption that the tradition of division forms habits and thinking patterns in individuals doesn't seem farfetched.

And organizations have already recognized some of these spheres as problematic for their economic and cultural wellbeing. Our clients regularly bring up silos as an issue they want to resolve in their set-ups.

What is problematic about silos in an organization?

- Silos foster an us vs. them way of thinking, hindering collaboration
- Silos create restrictions in access to expert knowledge
- Silos isolate and heighten the threshold for learning from each other and the organization
- Silos foster competition within the organization and in competition someone always loses
- The more silos an organization has, the slower it can respond to changes in the market

Forming new traditions of togetherness

If we allow the status quo to change, to shift towards inclusion, togetherness and curiosity instead of judgment, competition and isolation, we have a really good chance that silos will just break up effortlessly, as a side effect. And not just that: what we learn and practice in the work world opens our eyes to things that happen in the outside world as well.

A simple yet deep truth we find confirmed time and time again in workshops with our clients: people crave togetherness more than anything else. If we can achieve it at work, we can achieve it elsewhere, too.

These practices have helped reduce silos and bridge divisions for our clients in the past:

- Hosting quarterly meetings with managers across functions and with updates and ownership from different areas each meeting

- Speed-dating formats or videos from departments/teams to introduce themselves, share operational and strategic priorities, and most important touchpoints within the company

- Radical collaboration sessions with a key business challenge topic placed in focus and key decision makers brought to the table to solve together with radical transparency

- Interactive polls for individuals to share what they are currently working on, where support is needed and from whom, and who they can offer support to across the company

- Host a company-wide Hackathon or Design Sprint where cross-functional/regional members can team up to hack or design a pressing business challenge together

- Create an Ambassador Program with people from across the organization and empower them in activities to help dissolve silos and other divisive structures

Where in your organization do you spot division? How might you open pathways into togetherness? We at LEAD Forward will be happy to explore this new perspective with you

Reach out to Ola Weintraub for a free 15-minute get-to-know-call under

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