



Where Do You Lead From?

by Frederic J. Gratto

In a profession as technical as facilities management all the hardware in the world can be a mighty force. Nonetheless, the software of management skill matters more than ever before. My observations about this are pretty simple...leaders have the biggest impact on any organization...employees tend to take on the characteristics of their leader. The world of sports, campus administrations, and facilities organizations provides many examples of people who have rescued teams, turned organizations around, and raised their performance to another level. They are able to do this because leaders set the tone of the workplace by putting a personal stamp on it. "Leadership means setting an example. When you find yourself in a position of leadership, people will follow your every move" (Maxwell 1998). People do follow the leader. In fact, employees ascend or tumble to the level of the leader. Therefore, it is important for leaders in facilities management to consider how their behavior, attitude, and level of job satisfaction impacts the work environment and the performance of the people in it, including themselves.

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Because the leader of a facilities organization impacts everything and everybody in it, I was interested in considering where we lead from...what's our perspective, attitude, disposition? It occurred to me that studying the relationship between organizational climate and job satisfaction for directors of physical plants would reveal important information. As part of my doctoral dissertation, a questionnaire measuring job satisfaction and organizational climate was electronically sent to directors of physical plants who were members of APPA as of July 2001.

The research posed four questions:

1. How do directors of physical plants perceive organizational climate at their respective institutions using a set of seven identified factors for climate?
2. Using the same seven climate factors as an index, how satisfied are directors of physical plants with the organizational climate of their respective institutions?

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3. How important are each of the eight identified job satisfaction variables to physical plant directors in the performance of their specific job responsibilities?
4. For each of the eight job satisfaction variables, is there a significant relationship between measures of job satisfaction and a set of seven measures of satisfaction with organizational climate, as reported by directors of physical plants?

Seven factors about the organizational climate were addressed by the survey instrument. The intent was to see how they related to the eight job satisfaction variables. Definitions for the seven organizational climate factors are shown below.

1. **Internal Communication.** The institution's formal and informal communication processes and styles.
2. **Organizational Structure.** The administrative operation of the institution or its hierarchical lines of authority and requirements for operating within that hierarchy.
3. **Political Climate.** The nature and complexity of the institution's internal politics or the degree to which an employee must operate within a political framework in order to accomplish a task.
4. **Professional Development Opportunities.** The opportunities for employees to pursue and participate in activities to enhance job performance.
5. **Evaluation.** The institution's procedure for evaluation through positive feedback intended to provide professional growth for the employee.
6. **Promotion.** The commitment of the institution to internal promotion and advancement within the organization.
7. **Regard for Personal Concern.** The institution's sensitivity to and regard for the personal concerns and well-being of the employee.

The eight job satisfaction variables used in this study were

- participation in decision making,
- autonomy, power, and control,
- relationship with peers,
- relationship with subordinates,
- relationship with superior,
- salary,
- benefits, and
- professional effectiveness.

Leaders today understand that people are every organization's most important resource. However, this has not always been our perspective...where we have led from. Only within the past 70 years or so have people begun to be interested in the topic of job satisfaction and its impact on organizations.

In the 1930s, when Elton Mayo and his associates observed experiments underway at the Western Electric Hawthorne plant near Chicago, job satisfaction became a popular topic for research because of the unanticipated findings of the study. The experiments were intended to determine the impact of illumination levels on worker productivity. The results were a surprise because they indicated there was no significant relationship between levels of illumination and the productivity of workers (Hersey & Blanchard 1996). This unexpected outcome caused the researchers to conclude that factors other than lighting levels must have affected worker productivity. They identified other variables that impacted productivity more than aspects of the physical environment. Two of these variables were the effect of informal work groups and the attitude of workers about the company. The researchers made two important conclusions. One was that human variability was a significant factor in determining worker productivity. The second one was that norms and expectations among workers had a greater impact on productivity than the work environment (Luenburg & Ornstein 1991).

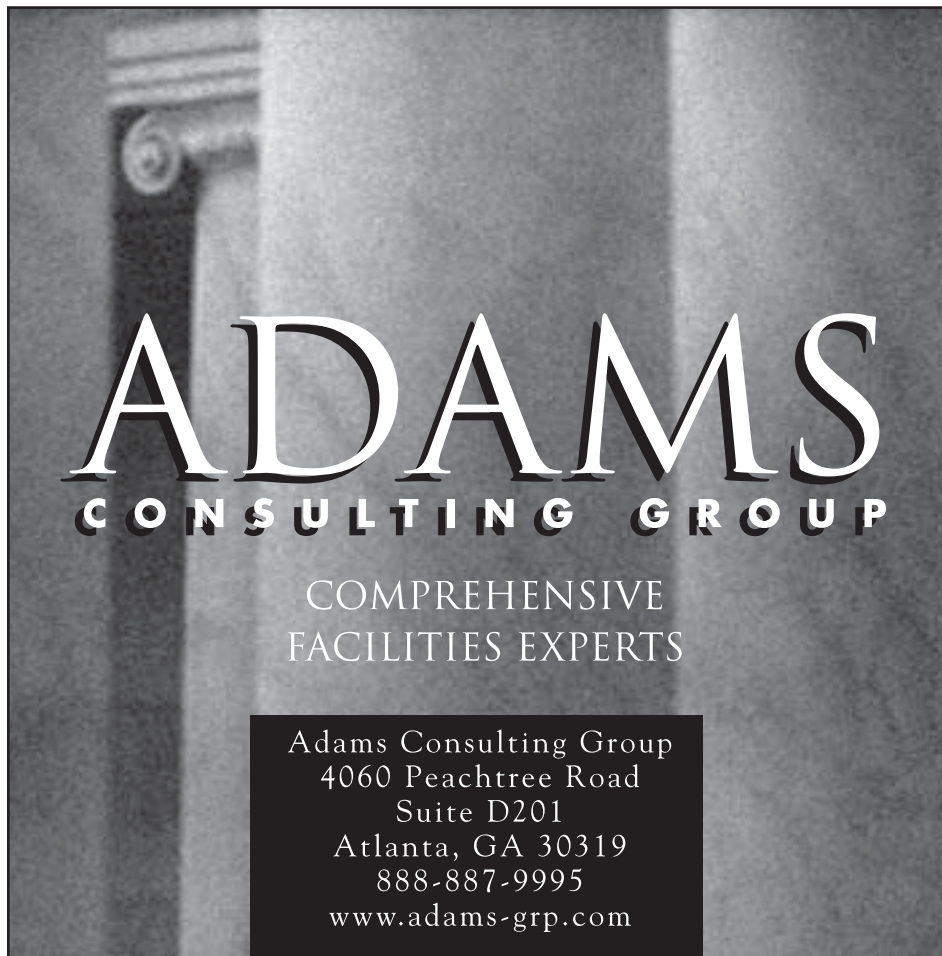
Prior to the Mayo studies, those who studied human relations considered motivation at work to be a rather straightforward matter. A person was either satisfied with his

or her job or not satisfied. But the research of Argyris (1962) led to a more comprehensive way to consider job satisfaction. The study set out to measure how well organizations worked with people rather than with things such as machinery. Studies considered the human climate, which was comprised of variables such as mutual understanding, mutual trust, self-esteem, openness, and internal commitment. Argyris found many factors that influenced job satisfaction. Some of these were administrative leadership, effectiveness of groups, formal organizational structure, and policies and practices. Interpersonal relationships and management's understanding of the social needs of the workers were found to impact factors such as conformity, organizational structure, and job satisfaction.

McMurray (1953) also considered the focus of organizations on things rather than on people during a time when business and industry emphasized production, research, accounting, engineering, sales, and financial matters. Because of the emphasis on these things, management had little interest in humanitarian considerations such as the needs of workers on the job. McMurray observed that while this focus resulted in a wonderful contribution to the national economy and tremendous improvement in the American standard of living, it came at a high cost to human well-being on the job.

McMurray concluded that many of the frictions and conflicts that plagued organizations could be attributed to the extent to which management was insensitive to the needs, problems, and anxieties of the people with whom they worked.

Similarly, Golembiewski (1962) observed that the worker was a cog in the mechanical system of the organization and of interest only so far as he performed the expected functions. Whatever the individual brought to the workplace other than ability to do the job was largely irrelevant. Man was regarded as merely a performer of a particular function rather than as a complex entity. Golembiewski concluded that a lack of intimate friendly cooperation and understanding about the worth of people in the workplace was a detriment to job satisfaction. His findings indicated that when organizations considered the personal and social needs of people, they were more likely to have competent, committed, and fully functioning individuals. In contrast, Haire (1962) found that successful organizations created a structure and climate that focused on the strengths and interests of people and this enhanced productivity and satisfaction on the job. Similarly, the research findings of Stogdill (1965) indicated that



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The findings of this study have implications for leaders in any organization because work environments can be enhanced and job satisfaction enriched.

successful organizations considered worker morale and job satisfaction outputs of the workplace just as important as productivity.

Part of the changing character of American businesses was manifested in the climate of organizations. Steers and Porter (1975) studied climate and concluded that it could be considered the personality of the organization. That is an interesting definition. Climate was revealed by feelings of people and the comments they made about the place where they worked. The study of job satisfaction and organizational climate revealed that organizations gradually changed their perception and appreciation of workers. No longer were they considered mere cogs in the machinery of an organization. This perspective resulted in increased attention about how organizational climate and job satisfaction impacted institutional effectiveness.

Findings of the Study

Profile of the Director of Physical Plant

For the purpose of this study, the director of physical plant was defined as the chief facilities officer at an institution. The

average director of physical plant was a white male. However, every ethnic/gender combination was represented. The average respondent had been in his or her present job for 5.21 years. Most directors of physical plants (65%) served at public institutions. Almost half of the respondents (42.6%) worked at institutions that had 5,000-19,999 students.

Director of Physical Plant Perception of Organizational Climate

Those who responded to the survey instrument revealed the presence of all organizational climate factors at their respective institution. These were internal communication, organizational structure, political climate, professional development opportunities, evaluation, promotion, and regard for personal concerns. Three of these factors—regard for personal concerns, professional development opportunities, and internal communication—received the highest mean score ratings. These data indicated that directors of physical plants believed they worked in environments where concern was shown for people, opportunities for further training existed, and internal communication was effective.

Director of Physical Plant Satisfaction with Organizational Climate

The three highest satisfaction ratings regarding the organizational climate factors were regard for personal concerns,

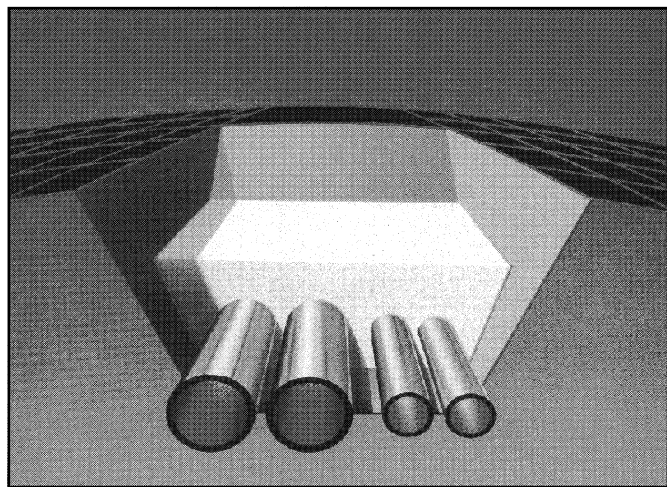
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professional development opportunities, and internal communication. Over 80 percent of directors of physical plants were satisfied with their positions on campus and almost 75 percent were satisfied with the overall operation of their college.

Physical plant director's satisfaction with regard for personal concerns was consistent with their perceptions about it. The overall perception of and satisfaction with regard for personal concerns were both above 80 percent. Similarly, the perception about professional development opportunities and satisfaction with them were consistent with each other. Most of the respondents (84.5%) perceived that there were ample opportunities for further training at their institution and that 81.8 percent were satisfied with these opportunities.

The mean scores revealed that the lowest level of satisfaction was with political climate. The data revealed that about half of the respondents (47.6%) were satisfied with the political climate while 52.4 percent were moderately satisfied or unsatisfied with the political climate on campus.

Importance of Job Satisfaction

All eight job satisfaction variables used in this study were important to directors of physical plants. Most important to them was the relationship with subordinates, relationship with superiors, relationship with peers, professional effectiveness, and benefits. Salary; autonomy, power, and control; and decision-making were less important to the respondents. These findings indicate that good relationships with others in work settings were most important to directors of physical plants. These findings supported the research of Jenkins (1999) and Medlin (1999) who stated that good relationships were the most important ingredient for success for managers of facilities. The fact that autonomy, power, and control as well as decision making were less important to directors of physical plants pointed out the significance of collaboration in the process of successful leadership.

The Relationship between Measures of Organizational Climate and Measures of Job Satisfaction

Internal communication was found to be significantly related to all eight job satisfaction variables. Organizational structure was found to be significantly related to decision making; autonomy, power, and control; relationship with peers; relationship with supervisors; and professional effectiveness. Political climate was negatively related to decision making; autonomy, power, and control; and relationship with supervisor.

Professional development opportunities were found to be significantly related to decision making; autonomy, power, and control; relationships with peers; relationships with supervisors; salary; benefits; and professional effectiveness. Opportunities in an organization to learn more had a positive impact on directors of physical plants because it tended to increase decision making abilities and to enhance relationships with supervisors. Moreover, professional development

opportunities tended to have a positive impact on salary and benefits for directors of physical plants. These findings reinforced the studies of Galpin (1996) and Cain (2000), who asserted that learning on the job and further study were mutually beneficial to the organization and the employee.

Evaluation was found to be significantly related to five of the job satisfaction variables: decision making; autonomy, power, and control; relationships with peers; relationships with supervisor; and professional effectiveness. These findings indicate that a fair and accurate evaluation process had a positive impact on decision making, autonomy, and professional effectiveness for directors of physical plants. Furthermore, when directors of physical plants perceived that the evaluation process was fair and accurate, the relationship with supervisors was positively impacted as was professional effectiveness.

Promotional opportunities were found to have a significant relationship with seven of the eight job satisfaction variables: autonomy, power, and control; relationships with peers; relationships with subordinates; relationship with supervisor; salary, benefits; and professional effectiveness. These findings pointed out the positive consequences of developing relationships with others in the workplace and provide examples of what some of the benefits could be since promotional opportunities were significantly related to salaries and benefits.

Regard for personal concern was also found to be significantly related to seven of the eight job satisfaction variables: decision making; autonomy, power, and control; relationships with peers; relationship with supervisor; salary, benefits; and professional effectiveness. These findings indicated that an organization that fostered a high regard for the personal concerns of others had a positive impact on employees...in this case, directors of physical plants. These findings supported the research of Capodagli and Jackson (1999) and Harris (1996) who provided their versions of the golden rule.

Summary

The findings of this study have implications for leaders in any organization because work environments can be enhanced and job satisfaction enriched. In particular, these findings would be especially useful to administrators at institutions of higher learning, including directors of physical plants. These and other leaders interested in providing a positive organizational climate and helping people be satisfied on the job should recognize that it is important to consider the perspectives of those who do the work of the enterprise. For example, a demonstration of regard for the personal concerns of employees is necessary to have a successful caring organization that treats people as the most important resource.

Providing professional development opportunities is also an important and edifying component of organizational climate since it contributes to job satisfaction and ultimately to organizational success. Clear lines of internal communication are critical and an essential component of a positive organiza-

tional climate. They allow and help people to successfully interact so that the business of an organization can be effectively and efficiently accomplished. The perception that professional development opportunities exist is important to directors of physical plants. This feeling contributed to job satisfaction. A clear and fair process of evaluation was also important to these directors. Employees need to know organizational expectations and how well their performance is meeting these expectations.

Lastly, organizational structure is a major factor that impacts the success of people and ultimately the success of the organization itself. Just as the research of Kristof (1996) indicated, employees who have a comfortable fit within the organizational structure are more likely to be satisfied with it and more likely to be satisfied with their jobs.

The magnitude of the role that directors of physical plants have in the higher education enterprise was made clear by Ernest Boyer in a 1998 Carnegie Commission report: "One cannot be a core of excellence in higher education if you do not demonstrate a commitment to facilities. It is time to recognize that facilities provide the centerpiece around which all other functions in higher education take place" (Medlin 2000). Directors of physical plants have an important role in determining the quality of campus facilities and, consequently, the learning environment. Knowing more about the relationship between organizational climate and job satisfaction among these campus leaders could enhance the level of job satisfaction for directors of physical plants and positively impact their job performance. 🏢

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