

Systemic Improvement in Quality of Work Life (SIQWL)

SIQWL is a model and framework for enhancing the Quality of Work Life in an Organization. SIQWL will result in happier staff, and increased productivity for your organization or Business.

Its author Anand Nicodemus presents this unique model here. At the Heart of the model is a "Maturity matrix" which helps you assess your current position, and guides you in making systemic improvements.

A. INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

SIQWL was developed to be part of a larger Business Transformation model. One of the dimensions of Transformation in my model is "**Transformational Leadership**". Let me start by defining Transformational Leadership.

TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP? To me, Transformational Leadership is the kind of Leadership that will cause significant and large amount of visible change that will be readily recognized and acknowledged by the Stakeholders – particularly customers of the organization. In my view, the Transformational Leader must:

1. Be sufficiently aware of Transformation firstly,
2. Build a Synergistic Management Team,
3. Develop a Shared Vision for the future,
4. Exercise Situational Leadership,
5. **And lastly, address the "Quality of Work Life" of employees.**

This Document deals with the Last aspect - Quality of Work Life.

If you observe successful companies, you will notice that a common thread runs through all of them. They will all have a Leader who has addressed Quality of Work Life. Most often than not, the CEO would have tried a variety of means to improve the Happiness of staff - often with limited success. However, it is difficult to chance upon a Organisational Leader who has addressed the need for Employee happiness in a Systemic and Structured manner. **SIQWL was developed to fill this gap.**

SIQWL stands for Systemic Improvement in Quality of Work Life, and is intended to support a Leader's desire to improve Happiness and Satisfaction amongst the employees and thus pave the way for Organisational Transformation.

SIQWL is a Breakthrough tool for systemic improvement. The effectiveness of the SIQWL Process is measured by Quantum of change in *Quality of Work Life*, not by any absolute measurement of Quality.

Definitions : In this document we use "*ORGANISATION*" to mean any Business Unit/Company/Non-profit organization. The word "*MEMBER*" is used to mean an employee or member of staff.

B. FOUNDATION AND BASIS FOR SIQWL

SIQWL addresses the fundamental need for “**Human Satisfaction**” as theorized by *Herzberg's Two Factor theory*. According to Herzberg's theory - what makes an employee unhappy is different from what makes him or her happy.

Let me try and explain this paradoxical condition:

Factors that make a person unhappy are:

- (a) Being dominated or “bossed” by the supervisor.
- (b) Poor pay and perks
- (c) Bad place of work ex, cooped up in a small, ill ventilated room
- (d) Bad living conditions., Ex., A bar on changing jobs, and the resulting undesirable bondage with the employer.

However, should these be removed , then will the person be happy ? NO, NOT AT ALL, according to Herzberg, **he will not be unhappy**.

Thus, factors that make a person happy are totally different. They are amongst many others:

- (a) Being appreciated for his or her good work.
- (b) Sense of ownership over the company
- (c) Close relationships and bonds with colleagues - community spirit.
- (d) Responsibilities and empowerment.

Question to ask. Have you as a business Leader been reducing unhappiness or have you moved to the phase of "making staff happy"? The Answer in most cases would be "Reducing Unhappiness is tough enough...".

Note : A little thought, and you will realize that Herzberg's Motivators relate to the three higher levels of Maslow's Needs Hierarchy.

Many authors and papers in the area of TQM have recognized the need for high levels of Employee Satisfaction, but few authors have prescribed or suggested “factors” for “human happiness and satisfaction” within a framework. I have further integrated a hitherto missing piece in the jigsaw puzzle - the Happiness that comes from knowing that the Organization is helping you meet your personal vision (A small deviation from *Locke's Value theory!*)

C. BENEFITS FROM SIQWL

To the Organization: SIQWL will result in happier staff, and increased productivity.

For the Gulf Region: The consistent and extensive use of this Model will create a large-scale change in the overall "job satisfaction" level leading to radical change in the way both expatriates and nationals feel about their capacity to contribute. Today unhappiness and dissatisfaction on the workplace, is widely recognized and acknowledged, but precious little is done about it. If unchecked, particularly in the private sector, it will have wide-ranging negative impact on the economy and society. If the new generations of Gulf Nationals entering into the workforce, do not enjoy the best "Quality of Work Life" **no Leverage can be expected from them** and all the efforts of the National Leaders will be compromised.

For the Social fabric: Undoubtedly, the societies of most developing countries are facing much trauma and stress from the rising dominance of the Juristic Person - and the Gulf is no exception. Clearly the application of SIQWL will re-establish a Humanistic awareness of the human being and possibly go some way in re-positioning him as a **person of value** in the grand scheme of "business" things.

D. SIQWL'S AREAS OF ASSESSMENT (OR ELEMENTS, IF YOU LIKE!)

Systemic improvement must focus on high leverage areas - in line with the concept of the vital few. The High Leverage areas are described as 17 elements – each of which will give **you significant returns should you make even a little effort.**

1. *Assessment of Member's learning needs and providing the training.*

Most staff members are keen to learn and enhance their personal productivity. The inability to enhance their personal productivity and contribute to the performance of your process is a source of frustration. To work with the least effort or to achieve mastery and control over what we do, is intrinsic to human nature. What do you do to help the member enhance his/her skills, knowledge and attitudes?

2. Appraisal of member's performance.

A self-assessment and feedback system permits a member to know precisely how he is performing. Members are uncomfortable when they do not have a precise idea of how they measure up *to meeting expectations within the processes they work.*

It helps to keep in mind that increasingly members play multiple roles in multiple organizational processes, and it is simply impossible in today's workplace to gauge performance accurately and objectively just by "feeling around".

3. Empowerment of the member in setting his performance target and claiming his reward.

Did you know that most members **have greater expectation of themselves than their Managers?** They would be happier and perform much better proposing their own performance targets, claiming their rewards, and being rewarded for achieving their targets.

4. Allowing a member to balance his personal needs with his contribution to the community.

Every human being is nagged by a need to contribute to the community. His enduring excuse for not doing so is the "workplace". Consider how a member's productivity and happiness can improve if you permit him in this "self actualization".

5. Enhancing member's Well-being.

Improvement in "life skills" is the key enhancing well-being and results in a highly "effective" employee. Life skills primarily help to manage a range of factors that contribute to effectiveness – Beliefs, habits, emotions, psychosomatic disorders, creative thinking etc) How do you enhance the effectiveness of people in your organization?

6. Maintain transparency in the Organization so that the member is able to understand the position of the Organization vis-a-vis the external environment.

Vexing thought it may seem to some Organizations, Ownership and transparency is almost inseparable. If you think people are not responsible and do not take ownership, review and reconsider the transparency in your organization? What do you think will happen if all the members were allowed to feel like the "shareholders" of the company ?

7. Contribution of the company in meeting the Personal Vision of the member.

Good that your Organization has a vision! This Vision can be a "shared" vision, or it can be simply a vision of the CEO. Do you want your Vision to be effective, and create a compelling desire in each member to see its realization? The greatest barrier is the **wall of organizational cynicism** created by your inability to listen and respond to the personal vision of the members. Achieve a breakthrough by contributing in meeting your member's personal vision!

8. Dissolving mental Blocks and helping the member to change his own attitudes.

In developing Organizational and team synergy, your greatest enemy will be the mental blocks and mental paradigms of your members. Help them dissolve debilitating mental blocks, restraining inhibitions, and long held references for unhelpful beliefs.

9. Facilitating a frank and open appraisal of Current position of employee/Dept/Organization, future vision and the steps in bridging the gap.

In many organizations, the vision may be loud and clear. However, the members cannot see the gap between "current reality" and the future that beckons. Often management tries to make it look like "*we are there*" or "*we have always been there*". This paradox will invariably result in cynicism and unhappiness amongst members. Especially front line staff will be constantly reminded by the world outside that they "do not deserve the vision".

10. Implementation of the infrastructure for collaborative work leading to "Synergy".

If you want to grow in leaps and bounds, the only way to do it is to achieve team and organizational synergy ie., $1+1=3$. You may not realize however, that in every man & woman is the intrinsic desire to be "functional & effective" as part of a group. Have you tried to make it possible for members to work together interdependently and synergistically, but yet rewarded each member for his unique contribution to creation of the synergy?

11. Feelings of Ownership, and the building of a Work place Community.

Any organization can be built into a community. Work sites can be places where people commune. Communities can be nurtured into productivity, and provide a supportive environment for individuals. Given today's pace of life and demands of the workplace, it may not be feasible for members to be part of any other separate community other than at the workplace.

12. Development of member's objectivity and "Inference management" abilities.

It is human to infer, but one of the greatest cause of unhappiness and non-productivity is the inability to be objective and manage "inferential thinking". Help members be objective and manage their "inferential thinking", and you can be almost guaranteed of a significant change in culture, sense of life of members, and overall productivity.

13. Encouraging contribution of the member to improvement of Business processes.

The real victims of dysfunctional business processes are in a way the members who work within the processes. They are targeted by frustrated customers of the process, stakeholders such as managers and owners who profit from the process **and incredibly enough have little or no role in improving the process.** It would not be wrong to assume that a high percentage of stress and anxiety is caused by actually working in processes you have no control over.

14. Creating an environment conducive for inter-dependency of members.

Specialists from the field of behavioral science tell us that an inter-dependent orientation is most desirable in a member. The fact is many members of your organization are trapped in a "reactive" orientation. Some of them may be proactive too, but it is the **inter-dependent orientation** that will really characterize a happy and productive workplace.

15. Job Design, Redesign, and Organizational structure changes to enhance Quality of Work Life.

How willing are you to redesign jobs and change your structure to facilitate improvement in *Quality of Work Life*? Many companies want their members to be happy with their work, but do not move to make Job/structural changes required.

16. Respect for Intellectual Capital

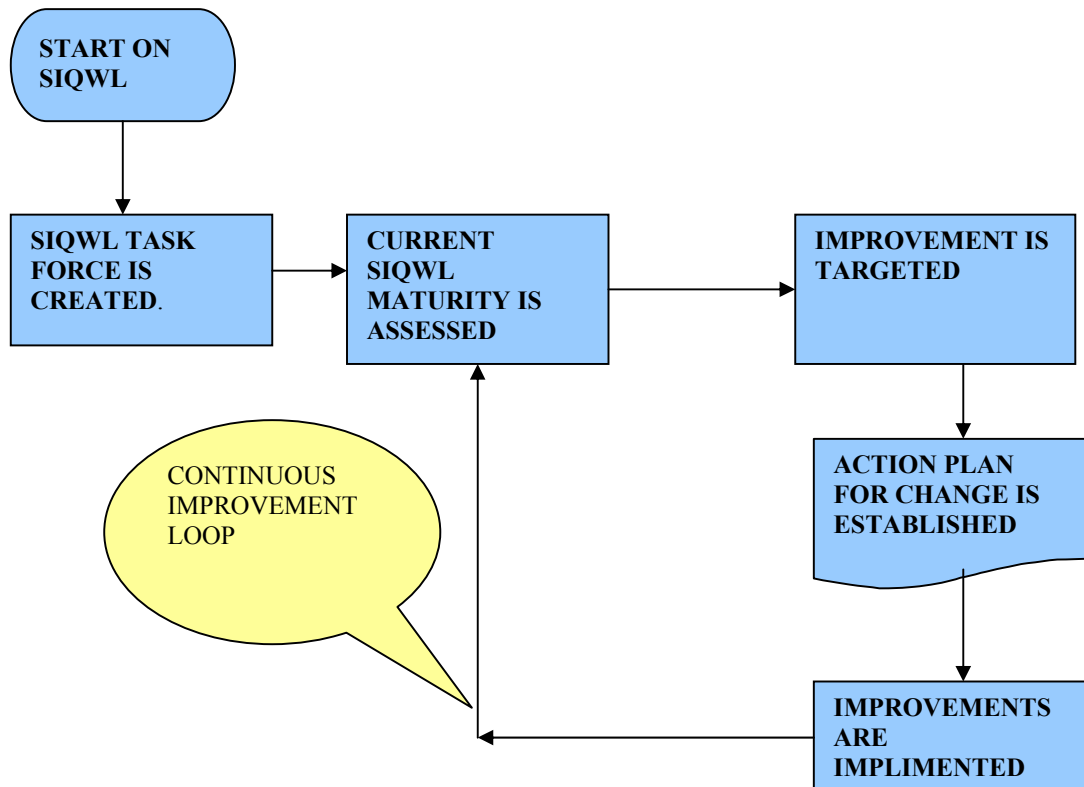
Your respect for intellectual capital demonstrates your respect for the members who build this capital. How your organization works to acquire, enhance, manage and even account for intellectual capital mirrors the "value and esteem" that members will accord to themselves in the context of your organization. **The lack of perceived "value and esteem" can mean employee turnover, unhappiness and low productivity.**

17. Building a culture with each member as a "building block"

Building a culture involves traditions, rituals, communication, stories etc., However, the **stories** that shape your company culture can be strongly influenced by workplace incidents. Do you have a system in place **that fosters positive incidents and limits negative ones?** This will help to shape your organizational culture?

E. OVERVIEW OF THE SIQWL PROCESS

The SIQWL process is simple and easy to practice. It can be used irrespective of size within both profit, non-profit and Public Sector. The only pre-condition is the motivation or desire to improve the Quality of Work Life.



The Steps recommended are:

1. Create a Task force (Think Tank) for SIQWL comprising the CEO and at least 3 key mangers of the Company.
2. Your **staff** will assess the company's SIQWL maturity by identifying the situation prevailing in your company for each of the Assessment areas. The SIQWL Maturity Worksheet is available in the "Practicing SIQWL" document. Note that it is important to assess the process that works in each area of assessment and not specific incidents, anecdotal narratives etc.,
3. The Practicing SIQWL Maturity Worksheet is a living document and will undergo change on account of the best practices/systems.
4. The Task force will deliberate on the Assessment and chalk out an action plan for changes to the Processes that impact the elements.
5. Improvements are implemented.
6. You continuously improve by repeating steps 2 to 5.

F. THE PRACTICE OF SIQWL - AN EXAMPLE:

The ABC Group of Companies believed that all employees must contribute to the Development and Improvement of their Business Processes.

BEFORE: Their existing system elicited suggestions from Staff members on how they could improve their processes. Suggestions, when received, were evaluated and forwarded to the QA Department, which acted in due course of time to implement the suggestion. However, the system elicited few suggestions and fewer still were implemented. Improvements could not be traced to the person who suggested it, and staff by and large did not think it was worthwhile making suggestions.

AFTER: The ABC GROUP has now made the following changes to their System:

1. Members are trained in Process Improvement techniques.
2. Each Member is part of a specific Process Improvement Team
3. Both contribution and non-contribution in any "quarter" is recorded.
4. Contributions attract a reward.
5. Business Process Maturity and Capability is assessed, and the rating of the process is transparent to all staff.
6. Performance problems cited by the staff member during "staff appraisal" are put up as "observations" for Corrective action. Thus there is a linkage between Performance of staff and the Process capability, ensuring that member is not victimized.

RESULT FROM CHANGING: Employees feel more in control of things on the workplace. Feeling of Ownership has increased substantially. Large number of very useful process improvement steps has been taken. Overall Productivity has improved.

G. STARTING ON SIQWL

In the interest of improvement in Quality of People's Life, SIQWL is free of cost and available to any Business or Organization. The "**Practicing SIQWL**" document comprises the maturity matrix and explains how your Organization should apply SIQWL.

You are encouraged at all times to consult an Organizational Behavior or Occupational Specialist, or other suitably qualified HR Consultants should you think it is necessary. The SIQWL framework/Model provides much needed guidance, but does not provide implementation details.

THANKS

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