



In the Loop

Discovering the Virtuous Cycle

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Have you ever noticed how everything seems to be revolving on these metaphorical carousels? History repeats itself, as the old cliché goes. The natural cycles of the seasons and water aren't unlike those we may observe elsewhere. Unlike the natural cycles, those occurring within our collective history, like our history as individuals, is more connected to thoughts, feelings, hopes and dreams: they're human. Most of the time, there's a perceived positive or negative connection to these uniquely human cycles, the coming and going around a carousel that can be dreamlike, or, at times, may seem more like a nightmare.

A virtuous cycle, as defined by the Marriam-Webster dictionary, is "a chain of events in which one desirable occurrence leads to another which further promotes the first occurrence and so on, resulting in a continuous process of improvement." A vicious cycle produces the opposite effect. We've all experienced both. The positive and negative cycles occurring within us, much like those occurring within a workplace or

team, may be controlled or guided through the practical application of willpower or energy. Getting ourselves and our teams within a positive feedback loop instead of a negative one is always within our grasp, but it takes consistent effort. Each part of these feedback loops is interconnected and, as we may have observed, feed off one another. Like a carousel powered by vibes, intentions, and values, how well the ride is going really depends on us, and who is onboard with us.

RECRUITMENT, INTERVIEWING & HIRING

Before we hire anyone, we can try to determine if they fit, or if they have the potential to fit. Determining someone's values or what they find to be gratifying in their roles, takes more than your average interview questions. But it's not that complicated. Using situational questions or ones we deem worthy of ascertaining a person's value and culture alignment to your department, club, or workplace can be achieved through planning and collaboration with your leadership team.

The culmination of a selection process can ultimately gauge a person's trustworthiness, a quality that's directly linked to the attitude or persona that an individual projects. If we can't trust someone, they could be a liability for a multitude of different reasons. Therefore, if more important than any other factor, including past experience or future performance, metrics for gauging trustworthiness should be developed over time. In addition to gauging values, we can also measure the consistency at which an individual projects themselves and answers situational questions:

- Do they act the way they say they will?
- Will they continue to act the way they say they will?

This could be considered as an ongoing selection process; people change – just because we've determined an individual's suitability when we hire them doesn't mean they'll always remain suitable.

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

After determining an individual's suitability, we must acclimate them into the culture and value system we've deemed them suitable for. It's imperative to deliver a high-level orientation and training. It should be deliberately planned and a reflection of the vision, mission, and values of the organization and the department. Whether they're a veteran staff member or it's their first day, beginning each year with an orientation and "basic training" is an essential part of powering the loop. Depending on how well or unwell an individual or group performs throughout the year, more retraining along with performance appraisals can help keep the carousel moving in the right direction.

QUALITY CONTROL & EVALUATIONS

Another key part of creating a virtuous cycle for our teams is scheduling regimented quality control checks and performance evaluations. Like the other parts of the loop, it takes dedication and ongoing planning to accomplish successfully. Going into each new

season, there should be scheduled times for individuals to perform quality control checks. Yes, it's an ongoing process and something all the members of the leadership team should be doing all the time, but sometimes there isn't enough time. Oversites are often the result. Designating quality control check managers or supervisors for the week is one example of how we could accomplish more regimented quality control.

Like the effort required to consistently ensure that work standards are being met, we should also ensure that we're giving ongoing feedback to our staff. Apart from daily reminders, training and retraining, it may also be important to have formalized evaluations.

After an individual's given a road map of their past performances and the expectations for future improvement, they can better understand the whys for everything we do and how they're a key contributor to those whys. If we've completed all the other steps to continuing our way around our virtuous cycle, all there's left to do is celebrate.

CELEBRATIONS & REWARDS

The last step in producing a virtuous cycle is arguably the most important one. If we're not willing to celebrate and reward our team and the individuals that make it, then we're missing a fundamental truth of human nature; happiness is a choice and adopting an attitude of gratitude is an essential part of making that choice. If we aren't showing a level of gratitude, that is, one that's in accordance with the standards and ongoing level of excellence that we expect from our team, then we may find ourselves entering into a vicious cycle instead of a virtuous one. You get what you pay for, another cliché.

The rewards of discovering your team's unique virtuous cycle are limitless. Getting our team in this continuous feedback loop driven by success and positivity has to begin with getting ourselves in one. So, starting with yourself, get in the loop and then don't be afraid to bring everyone else along with you. ■



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