



## PROVIDE SELF-AWARE LEADERSHIP

By Rena M. Klein, FAIA

In the January 2013 edition of the CRAN Chronicle, I covered the importance of setting up systems and processes for routine work gears from operations to leadership and the subject of job satisfaction, one of the critical elements in determining the success of

In organizations populated by creative professionals, there is a strong reinforcing relationship between job satisfaction and the level of engagement. Engagement can do more toward motivating people to do their best than any financial reward. Excellence and enthusiasm are not built on the wellbeing of staff and owners alike. Firms that achieve a culture of mutuality, where people work hard because they are most resilient over time. For example, some owners might fear that if they provide professional development support to an employee, the person leaves the firm. However, providing professional development support is more likely to generate loyalty and voluntary career advancement in the firm is evident.

## JOB SATISFACTION FOR ARCHITECTS

Sociologist Judith Blau, in her landmark book, Architects and Firms: A Sociological Perspective of Architectural Practices, describes architects' job satisfaction and its influence on overall career contentment. This is important because in the midst of everyday practice, meaning and satisfaction in our work. Yet to make a firm sustainable, few things are more important.

Based on Blau's work and other sources, factors that promote satisfaction include:

- Opportunities to design interesting projects
- Autonomy, meaning control over one's own work
- Recognition by peers and public
- Optimal variety
- Challenge and learning opportunities
- Alignment of values and goals with that of leadership, co-workers, and clients
- Feeling respected and well-liked by co-workers, consultants, and clients

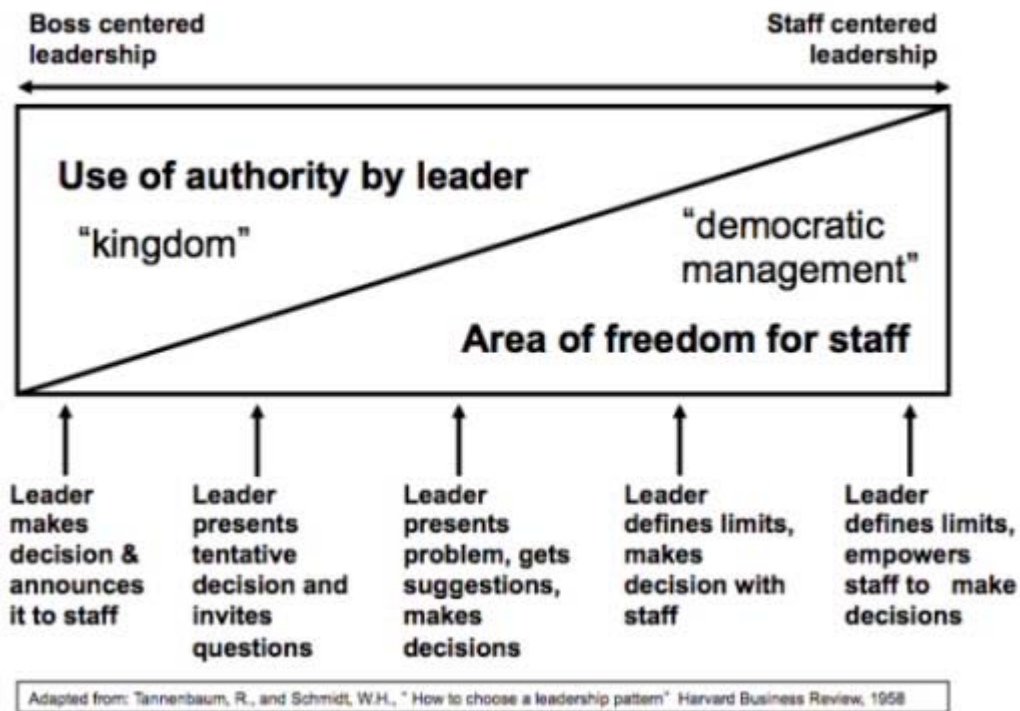
One of the jobs of firm leadership is to create an environment where people feel that their satisfaction is important and that this comes at a cost. This doesn't mean that everyone always gets what they want or that a firm must be run by consensus. However, if a firm is to get the best creative input from an intelligent and talented staff, that staff is a great asset.

## LEADERSHIP STYLE PREFERENCE

Self-awareness as a firm leader begins with an understanding of your personal comfort zone when it comes to empowering others. How comfortable are you with extending control and how much control do you need to feel secure? Your preference is likely to be a function of your personality, a hard thing to change. Figure 1 shows a continuum of leadership styles ranging from leaders who are comfortable empowering others to leaders who prefer to make most decisions on their own.

Many small firm founders like being completely in charge, which is not a bad thing as long as they are aware of that preference. They are likely to be happiest with a firm of seven people or less, the number most principals can manage alone.

If you want to grow your firm beyond six or seven, you will have to become comfortable with trusting others to be responsible ; decisions. Knowing where you fall on this leadership preference continuum will help you make good decisions about the size fi



**Figure 1: Where are you on this leadership style continuum?**

## KNOW YOURSELF

No matter where you are on this continuum, employees will imitate your behaviors. What is important to partners and principal the firm. How firm leaders behave will be how everyone behaves. When leaders "walk their talk," their values will permeate the not, their lack of integrity will also be imitated. Whether aware or not, leaders of small firms determine their firm's culture and : behavior consistent with their values, vision, and purpose.

Research in neuroscience has discovered the brain chemistry behind how leaders influence the feelings and actions of their follo Social Intelligence and the Biology of Leadership, scientists have identified cells known as mirror neurons, which are found thr *unknown class of brain cells operates as neural Wi-Fi, allowing us to navigate our social world. When we consciously or uncon emotions through their actions, our mirror neurons reproduce those emotions. Collectively, these neurons create an instant sens*

The importance of this discovery to small firm leaders is the recognition that you must be very aware of what you are doing and sending. If staff members continually behave in ways that displease you, either the staff doesn't understand what is expected and is mirroring your unintended or unconscious attitudes or behaviors.

For example, the research shows that the tone of delivery in giving feedback is actually more important that the content of the fi are positive, in a good-mood, and quick to smile are more likely to be more effective. As explained in the article cited above, "*their people, they should continue to be demanding but in ways that foster a positive mood in their teams. The old carrot-and-st neural sense; traditional incentive systems are simply not enough to get the best performance from followers.*"

Whether it is the result of brain chemistry or some other ways to influence, firm leaders can use their ability to model values, vi tool. Robert Haas, former CEO of Levi Strauss & Co., calls these "conceptual controls." It is the *ideas* of a business that are cor authority.

That said, it becomes even more important for firm leaders to be self-reflective—to mean what they say and say what they mean become a better leader for your firm:

Know yourself : be aware of your habits, tendencies, and leadership style

Know your values: think about what is really important to you, what would make you feel like your firm is successful

Know your purpose: examine why you are practicing, and what the most satisfying aspects of your work are. Are the people

Encourage knowledge sharing and continuing education: create a learning organization where everyone participates in acquiring knowledge from one another

Spend time coaching, teaching and mentoring: use frequent design pin-ups of ongoing projects as educational and involvement opportunities

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