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Environment: Assessing the Climate

Organizational change can be unpredictable; with institutions/agencies doing community work, internal and external climates must focus frequently. In today's ever-changing world, it's tough for many to keep pace with the rate at which organizational changes occur in work environments. With more and more work environments interconnected today, a shortfall at one organization could very well trigger a domino effect, touching several other organizations which they have close business ties with, causing those companies just now affected to pass along the disharmony, creating an unstable atmosphere for more than just themselves.

When assessing an organization's environment to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges/threats (SWOT/C), it's important to understand that strengths and weaknesses are usually internal and refer to an organization's present capacity. Opportunities/threats are usually external and refer to future potential for sound or detrimental effects (Bryson & George, 2024, p. 155). Weick and Sutcliffe's (2015) work highlighted that "a major purpose of strategic planning is to instill the kind of "mindfulness" and support for sensemaking that prompts timely learning and action and prepares an organization to respond effectively to the outside world—either before a crisis emerges or when one cannot be avoided" Bryson & George, 2024, p. 156). It is necessary to have leadership in organizations to assess and navigate organizational structures through uncertain times. Chance (2009) notes that participative leadership is preferred when tasks are unclear and workers are highly involved in a task, independent of personality characteristics (Chance,

2009, p. 117). Community mental health work is very ambiguous, and often, leaders participate in the process at some point to achieve desired outcomes.

Assessing an organization's external environment can be challenging. Bryson and George (2024) describe the strategic planning process and factors that feed into it, including Forces and Trends, Key Resource Controllers, Policy Fields, Competitors, and Collaborators (Bryson & George, 2024, p. 43). Bryson and George (2024) go on to conclude that these three categories [(1) Forces and trends, (2) Key resource controllers, and (3) policy fields] represent the basic emphases for any effective external environment scanning system (p. 171). Bryson and George (2024) highlight Whittington et al. (2000), noting that forces and trends are split down into political, economic, social, technological, educational, environmental, and legal (PESTEEL) categories (p. 171). With all of these factors at play in the external environment of an organization, the need for effectiveness is paramount to be able to navigate these potential external challenges or threats that could arise.

Assessing both the internal and external environments of an organization is necessary for long-term survival. A good leader should be aware of the multiple factors that can be a potential threat to the organization while at the same time keeping a sharp eye out for opportunities for growth. This is another opportunity to practice mindful leadership and not get stuck in the past or in the future, forecasting either doom and gloom or success fantasies. Mindful leadership is a positive factor for successfully managing the organizational climate today.

References

Bryson, J. M. (John M. (2024). Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations : a guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement (Sixth edition.). Wiley.

Chance, P. L. (2009). Organizational Change: Reforming and Restructuring. In Introduction to Educational Leadership & Organizational Behavior (2nd ed., pp. 109-125). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315853932-10>