HERO Forum24

Change at the Speed of Trust: Belongingness as the Gateway to a Healthier Culture

The Renaissance Baltimore Harborplace Hotel, Baltimore, Maryland
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Enabling and supporting individual and organizational change is fundamental to the creation of healthy organizations and vibrant, sustainable cultures. If there is one constant in business, it is, paradoxically, change. Organizations must change by innovating and improving to survive. People need to adapt to thrive. Most people understand and appreciate that adapting to an ever-changing environment takes trust and teamwork. Still, we resist change if we don't feel an abiding connection to a place, its people, or its purpose. On the other hand, that sense of organizational belongingness grows when our values are aligned behind a purpose that excites us. And when we trust in the intentions and actions of those we work with, any change seems possible.

Researchers interested in understanding human flourishing have pointed to belonging and trust as key factors impacting mental and physical health, life satisfaction, and finding meaning in work. But how can trust in business and other institutions be preserved when civic engagement is declining, public discourse is polarized, and loneliness has become an epidemic? Business leader Stephen Covey posited that as much as trust is today's newest currency, it remains the most overlooked driver of worker and business performance. In describing the strength that comes from trusting relationships, Brené Brown writes: "Connection is the energy that exists between people when they feel seen, heard and valued."

HERO Forum24 examines whether organizations that actively invest in the currencies of trust and belongingness are earning dividends in their capacity to change and grow. To answer this question, we will explore if, how, and when that sense of workplace community has endured or eroded in the new era of hybrid work. We will ask how organizations are responding with *sustainable* solutions to tougher issues such as deaths of despair, the #MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, and widespread turnover and burnout. We plan to address why there is a growing gap between company leaders' perceptions of their responsiveness to these issues and reports from employees that businesses could do better by doing good on behalf of under-supported or overlooked workers. And we will ask how organizations can dampen the trust-terminating noise of social media echo chambers and, instead, amplify the voices and concerns of employees.

As always at the HERO Forum, our sessions will feature a balance of business leaders, organizational change experts, and health and well-being scientists who all share a passion for creating cultures of health. Our presenters will be challenged to bring time-honored, evidence-informed best practices that have been shown to improve social cohesion. We also will invite innovative ideas for how organizations can help surface traits that deepen work relationships such as gratitude, forgiveness, vulnerability, generosity, and community service. In particular, we will be featuring the initiatives, methods, and tools successful organizations are using to create authentic connections. This Forum will recognize and celebrate case studies that have captured the value of uplifting employees for sharing who they are and what they believe. In so doing, we are confident that HERO Forum participants will leave well-equipped to serve as agents for changing organizations at the speed of trust.

Educational and Interactive Breakout Session Tracks

1. **Best Practices and Organizational Change Management**. This track invites presentations on the design, development, and implementation of well-being program initiatives that adhere to evidence-informed best practices as well as those that are testing new ideas and approaches. At HERO Forum, we think the best learning occurs when you share your stories, warts and all. What worked? What didn't work? What have you learned that contributes to continuous improvement? We are particularly interested in examples where an organization's health and well-being initiatives are well integrated into their overall systems change strategies and/or process improvement initiatives.

2. **Work Redesign and *Total Worker Health*®**. The workplace well-being movement has long been steeped in demonstrating how improving personal health improves work and productivity. This learning track asks how the work itself and the work environment are affecting employee health and well-being. We also want to feature the benefits of deeper integration between worksite wellness and safety initiatives. Consistent with *Total Worker Health*® principles, we invite examples of the power of engaging the views of employees in the design and execution of well-being initiatives and worksite wellness programs.

3. **Belongingness and DEI Version 2.0**. What worked and what needs improving to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion at work? George Floyd and Black Lives Matter strengthened investments in DEI and stimulated dialogue about trust, teamwork, and inclusion; nevertheless, like other employee training and benefits initiatives, such investments wax and wane. This track invites an exploration into what is needed to make investments in the social cohesion of organizations sustainable.

4. **Measures that Matter *to Employers AND Employees***. As always, the HERO Forum features a track where HR Leaders, researchers, and policy wonks can share best practices in assessment and evaluation of health and well-being initiatives. Given our Forum themes of change, trust, and belongingness, we invite presentations that highlight results from all kinds of well-being initiatives and that also feature ways to capture and amplify the voice of the employee in program assessments.