

“Micro-level Foundation Dynamics”: Strategic Leadership Management Solution to Enhance Employee Creativity

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Abstract. Despite strategic leadership plays the distinctive constructs to foster employee creativity in organizational research in recent decades. Few empirical understanding has captured the richness and the interdependence of the concept behind employee creativity, particularly, in the micro-level foundation. “Architectural Engagement” concept is proposed. It is the organizing of the micro-level foundation variable between leader and employee creativity. Architectural Engagement will become the optimum solution because it focuses on the design of face-to-face interaction system among individuals within corporate domains. The premise of this research is to advance our theoretical of leadership and employee creativity. Architecture engagement dynamics model is proposed toward the new execution landscape of leadership to enhance internal drive on employee creativity.

Keywords: Architectural Engagement, Micro-level foundations, Transformational Leadership, Absorptive Capacity, Employee Creativity

1. Introduction

Organizational researchers have increasingly begun to focus on the comprehensive models of employee creativity using micro-level foundation variables such as creative-self-efficacy, goal orientation, individual creativity psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, creative process engagement and (Tierney & Farmer, 2002; Hirst, Knippenberg & Zhou, 2009; Zhang & Bartol, 2010). Although this work has provided certain results regarding the determinants of creativity outcome, the roles of leadership has not been fully explored, particularly, the mechanism to enhance creativity. Recent models and studies of leadership on employee creativity focus on the leader actions-specifically, sharing power or empowering responsibility and autonomy to employee (Kirkman & Rosen, 1997; 1999) and employee’s response to empowerment through their motivation (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velhouse, 1990). My study builds on integration of these two perspectives by designing mechanisms through which transformational leadership could enhance and influence the employee creativity.

The purpose of the study is to advance our theoretical and empirical understanding of the micro-level foundation of employee creativity. A central premise of this research is to integrate the role of leader and their social interaction holds great promise as a new direction of understanding the driver of employee creativity. Understanding micro-level foundations that incorporate both individual-level and social interactional factors might explain the certain creativity. Thus, this research focused not only the psychological foundation of individual but also social interactional as well. In addition, individualized leadership theory implies that the influences of leadership vary for subordinates who differ on how they value the relationship between leader and their employee. Thus, examining the role of employee values in the relationship between transformational leadership and employee creativity is the key research objective.

In sum, I sought to contribute to the literature by explaining how transformational leadership is related to creativity. Moreover, micro-level foundation variables also integrate for the study through the well-designed architecture engagement dynamics model.

2. Literature Review

Considerable evidence of increasingly turbulent environments, heightened competition, and unpredictable technological change requires leader to foster their employees to be more creative (Shalley & Gilson, 2004). Recent research indicates that employee creativity can be fundamentally influenced by process innovation. Although the vast body of academic research and writing on innovation, few focuses on building the internal drive factors behind organizational process. Therefore, “architecture engagement ” is proposed.

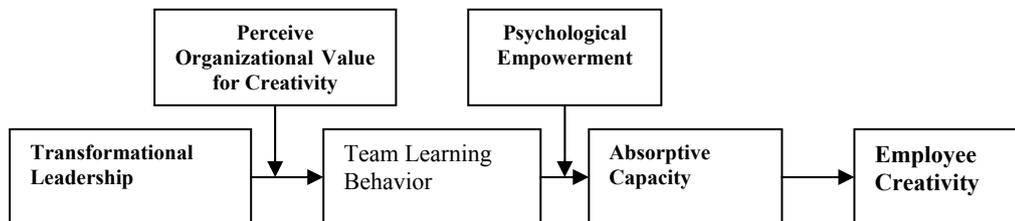
2.1. What is Architecture Engagement

“Enterprise architecture” is the concept of business management of IT (information technology) to enhance organizational effectiveness and good governance. This study stands to generate the potential contribution of this concept to management application. Thus, architecture engagement can be defined as the designed mechanisms that are used as a basis for energizing internal drive of existing resources and capabilities. The engagement process encompasses a variety of tasks, with a particular focus on management solution design based on micro-level foundation.

Recent research suggests that design mechanisms within an organization’s architecture become one of the most powerful strategic levers available to coup with the volatile competitive environment. However, we surprisingly understand little about the antecedents and consequences of those mechanisms, particularly on increasing employee creativity. By integrating insights from leadership and employee creativity research, I developed the architecture engagement dynamics model of employee creativity (Figure 1) in conjunction with the arguments presented below.

2.2. Model and Proposition Development

Figure 1: Architecture Engagement Dynamic Model



2.3. Transformational Leadership and Team Learning Behavior

To understand the antecedent and the consequence of architecture engagement process on employee creativity, it is important to understand what determines employee creativity. Driven by the assumption that employee creativity is beneficial for work outcomes, most scholars focus greater effort on transformational leadership (e.g. Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Shin & Zhou, 2003). Transformational leadership has been defined as influencing subordinates by “broadening and elevating followers’ goals and providing them with confidence to perform beyond the expectations specified in the implicit or explicit exchange agreement” (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002: 735). However, despite this type of leadership’s theoretical significance and potentially substantial enhancement of creativity, to date, the study that focused on how transformational leadership is related to team learning behavior still limited. Bass (1985) theorized that transformational leadership comprises four dimensions: intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, charisma, and inspirational motivation. All definition suggests that transformational leadership is positively related to follower creativity because it can boost the morality and motivation of team learning. More specifically, when leader provides inspirational motivation, teams are encourage to challenge the status quo and active to learn more.

According to trait activation theory, team context may bring out the activeness when contextual influence in play is relevant to the disposition (Tett & Burnett, 2003; cf. Chen & Kanfer, 2006). Thus, the influence of process context is less evident when people have a lower dispositional inclination to display the behavior encouraged by the context than when they are more inclined to display the behavior. Therefore, team learning behavior encourages and facilitates individual learning.

Proposition 1: The greater leaders' transformational leadership, the higher team learning behavior.

2.4. Perceive Organizational Value for Creativity

In developing the micro-level foundation engagement by focused on process intensity, I further drew on a sense-making perspective, individual employee's decision to interest in recognize the value of external knowledge is preceded by the focus of organizational policy and strategy on competitive advantage (Drazin, Glynn, & Kazanjian, 1999). Perceived valuing of creativity is a key component of an organizational environment that supports the creativity development (Amabile, 1988). Therefore, applying this concept to learning process, I would expect that perceiving organizational value action modifies the extent to which transformational leadership will actually affect team learning behavior.

Proposition 2: Perceive organizational value for creativity strengthen the relationship between transformational leadership and team learning behavior.

2.5. Team Learning Behavior and Absorptive Capacity

To sustain competitive advantage, firm need to support and encourage employee to recognize new external knowledge, assimilate it, and apply it to commercial ends. This ability, referred to as absorptive capacity (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990), has emerged as an essential force in strategy and organizational innovation. Recent research addressed that firms increasingly rely on external knowledge to foster innovation and enhance their performance (Ireland, Hitt, & Vaidyanath, 2002; Zollo, Reuer, & Singh, 2002). However, many firms have experience strong difficulties to benefits from external knowledge. Because, absorptive capacity is the process-based learning. Integrating transformational leadership and architecture engagement process on team learning behavior will enhance absorptive capacity. Team learning behavior facilitates individual learning and is particularly relevant contextual factor for bringing about learning-oriented individuals' disposition to engage in learning. Conceptual research has suggested that team learning behavior that participates in decision making increases the quantity and quality of ideas or proposals. These results suggest that team learning behavior may increase absorptive capacity.

Proposition 3: The greater team learning behavior, the higher absorptive capacity.

2.6. Psychological Empowerment

The micro-level foundation engagement considering the role of psychological empowerment in facilitating team learning behavior on absorptive capacity. Thomas & Velthouse posited that psychological empowerment is "presumed to be proximal cause of intrinsic task motivation and satisfaction" (1990:668). Conger and Kanungo (1988) defined psychological empowerment as a process of heightening feeling of employee self-efficacy "through the identification of conditions that foster powerlessness and through their removal by both formal organizational practices and informal techniques of providing efficacy information" (1988: 474). Spreitzer (1995) defined empowerment as a process or psychological state manifested in four cognitions: meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact. Specifically, meaning concerns a sense of feeling that one's work is personally important. Competence refers to self-efficacy, or belief in one's ability to successfully perform tasks. Self-determination indicates perceptions of freedom to choose how to initiate and carry out task. Impact represents the degree to which one views one's behaviors as making a difference in work outcomes. Thus, psychological empowerment is seen as an enabling process that enhances an employee's task initiation and persistence which support and facilitate absorptive capacity (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Therefore, on the basis of theoretical arguments and previous studies demonstrating link between the elements of psychological empowerment, team learning behavior and absorptive capacity

Proposition 4: Psychological empowerment strengthen the relationship between team learning behavior and absorptive capacity.

2.7. Absorptive Capacity and Employee Creativity

As employee creativity is an important source of organizational innovation and competitive advantage (Amabile, 1988, 1996; Zhou, 2003). Organizations are increasingly seeking to foster individual creativity. Most organizations people work in team-basis, and individual creativity is often enacted in this context (Shalley, Zhou, & Oldham, 2004). However, enhancing creativity may require more on the external knowledge rather than knowledge within the organization. Given the importance of external knowledge to industrial innovation, absorptive capacity represents an important part of a firm's ability to be creative and be able to create. Unlike "learning-by-doing", which facilitate firms to do better than normally do, absorptive capacity provides firms to learn, transform and develop new knowledge. Absorptive capacity refers to one of the a firm's fundamental learning processes to be more innovative. Cohen and Levinthal (1990) introduced the term absorptive capacity to label the capabilities of the firm to innovate and, thus, to be dynamic. Absorptive capacity consists of the capabilities to recognize the value of new knowledge, to assimilate it, and to apply it to commercial ends. As mentioned previously, for creative to emerge, employee must engage in creative activities, creative learning behavior process, specifically which the strong support of architecture engagement process. Considerable evidence indicates that absorptive capacity is critical to employee in organizations. Accordingly, I proposed a proposition a direct impact of absorptive capacity on employee capacity.

Proposition 5: The greater absorptive capacity, the higher employee creativity.

3. Conclusions

Much has been written and discussed about the development of employee creativity, yet there is little to show for conceptual development in the micro-level foundation, particularly under organizational architecture on engagement. I correct this gap by proposing a theory of transformational leadership and absorptive capacity with the concept of architecture engagement represents an alternative and promising dynamics model for develop employee creativity in micro-level foundation perspectives. More generally, particularly attention should be given to the assumption underlying dynamics engagement mechanism between leader and follower to enhance distinctive creativity.

4. Implications for Future Research

This study has focused on the process-based learning between leader and employee. Thus, additional studies into the antecedents of the complementary learning are needed. These studies may help only the first step to identify sources of internal drive to energize employee creativity.

5. References

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