

New Work and Collaborative Cheating: Lessons from the VW Emission Scandal

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Abstract

Bergmann's (2019) vision of a New Work culture calls organizational hierarchies into question, emphasizes creating a purpose-driven (rather than a purely financially-driven) economy where workers come together, develop shared work identities that work from common goals toward bettering our society, and jointly pursue deeper meanings of their work. This vision stands in stark contrast to 'Old Work' culture, which emphasizes such things as a bottom-line mentality and prioritizing short-term increases in financial outcome (e.g., stock prices) above the concerns of other stakeholders (e.g., operating transparently, long-term stakeholder value). We see much merit to this vision in that work arrangements can serve deeper psychological and social needs (e.g., doing exciting work in a collaborative manner, focus attentioning on tasks that positively impact others, helping workers find build a sense of community and find a deeper purpose to their work). With this chapter, we highlight a provocative case of an organization that, for a significant period of time, can be characterized by the old work culture – Volkswagen (VW) – and use a recent scandal (i.e., the VW emissions scandal) to highlight lessons that New Work managers should consider if they are to apply New Work philosophy thoughtfully. We highlight the VW emissions scandal because, although New Work emphasizes such outcomes as strong identification and increased collaboration, the VW emissions scandal reveals a dark side to these phenomenon that managers should be explicit about managing. Our chapter,