

## Symposium on Public Service Motivation Research

**Laurie E. Paarlberg** is an assistant professor in the public administration program at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, where she teaches courses in nonprofit management and public administration. Her research focuses on the changing paradigms of management in public and nonprofit organizations, and has appeared in *International Public Management Journal*, *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*, and *Public Administration Review*.  
**E-mail:** paarlberg@uncw.edu

**Bob Lavigna** is vice president of research for the Partnership for Public Service. He also served as administrator of the Wisconsin civil service system, and with the U.S. Government Accountability Office. He is a former Public Official of the Year (*Governing* magazine), and past president of the International Public Management Association for Human Resources and the American Society for Public Administration Section on Personnel. He holds a bachelor's degree in public affairs from George Washington University and a master's degree in human resources from Cornell University.  
**E-mail:** rlavigna@ourpublicservice.org

**Laurie E. Paarlberg**  
University of North Carolina–Wilmington  
**Bob Lavigna**  
Partnership for Public Service

# Transformational Leadership and Public Service Motivation: Driving Individual and Organizational Performance

*Despite growing evidence about prosocial motivations and their effects on employee behavior, how can new public service motivation research translate into more effective management practices—which, so far, regrettably remain underdeveloped? Increasingly, public service motivation studies have moved from understanding what motivates public servants to exploring how public service motives influence performance. Similarly, greater attention is now paid to the practices of transformational leadership. Drawing on concepts from transformational leadership, this essay explores how managers can harness the positive aspects of public service motivation to enhance employee and organizational performance and outlines strategies that can help managers incorporate public service motivation values across management systems.*

Ongoing changes in the nature of work and the characteristics of the labor pool, as well as declining resources, are pushing government agencies across the globe to become better at attracting, retaining, and motivating employees (Perry, Mesch, and Paarlberg 2006). Despite growing evidence that individuals are motivated to make a difference in the lives of others and that such prosocial motivations positively influence employee performance, many efforts to reform human resource management, particularly in government organizations, have taken the opposite approach—focusing on increasing financial rewards and strengthening bureaucratic control systems (Perry, Engbers, and Jun 2009). Such economic responses to managing employee behavior in the public sector may actually have limited or even negative impacts on employee performance.

This article presents an alternative framework of public value management based on concepts from transformational leadership theory and practice. We begin by making the case for what motivates public-serving employees. We then draw on

concepts from transformational leadership to describe a framework of values-based management. Drawing on diverse theoretical concepts that have been used to explore the process of transformational leadership, we identify practices that reinforce and strengthen the value systems that motivate individuals to engage in public service behaviors. Our model moves away from management practices that are based largely on assumptions of self-interest and proposes an alternative logic that is based on linking leadership practices to a broad range of public service motivations. What we propose is not meant to be exhaustive or definitive, but instead to illustrate how a motivational logic based on public service values can be applied.

## The Logic of Applying the Research on Value-Based Motivations

A growing body of research on motivation suggests that while some individuals are self-interested and motivated by material concerns, many people are motivated by experiences and identities that are “other regarding.” That is, employees across sectors are strongly motivated to make a significant difference in the lives of others or to influence a cause to which they are strongly committed (Frey and Osterloh 2005; Ghoshal 2005; Grant 2007). Such other-regarding orientations are embodied in a broad range of concepts, such as altruism, affective organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behavior, and prosocial motivations, which cut across a variety of disciplines (Grant 2007; Koehler and Rainey 2008). Public administration has a long tradition of recognizing the unique, other-regarding motivational bases of public service (Perry and Wise 1990; Rainey 1982). Public service motivations can be broadly defined as

the beliefs, values, and attitudes that go beyond self-interest and organizational interest to energize employees to do good for others and contribute to the well-being of organizations and society (Perry and Hondeghem 2008).

---

This article presents an alternative framework of public value management based on concepts from transformational leadership theory and practice.

---

Traditional human resource practices based on assumptions of managing employee self-interest have largely focused on transactional acts of management in which those in charge exchange rewards for desired employee performance, seeking to align the self-interest of employee and manager. However, these transactional approaches are often in conflict with the other-regarding values of many employees. Furthermore, these approaches are increasingly ill suited to the changing work environment, which requires attracting and encouraging a diverse and transient workforce for jobs that often require high levels of creativity, initiative, and personal interactions.

One perspective that inherently responds to the authentic wants and needs, aspirations, and values of followers (Burns 1978, 4) is transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is a value-based framework. Over the last two decades, a growing body of research has supported a positive relationship between transformational leadership and various measures of employee performance and satisfaction in both private (Jung and Avolio 2000) and public organizations (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2009; Park and Rainey 2008; Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang 2008).

However, value-based leadership is not new. As Selznick observed, “The art of the creative leader is the art of institution building, the reworking of human and technological materials to fashion an organism that embodies new and enduring values” (1957, 152–53). What is new is the move to understand the processes by which leaders “develop, share and sustain a vision to elevate follower motivation to higher levels of performance” (Jung and Avolio 2000, 949). Similarly, the research on public service motivation is increasingly focusing on the processes by which management practices influence employee behavior. The intersection of these two inherently value-based perspectives may provide a framework for understanding how leadership practices harness prosocial motives to positively influence performance, a question of growing importance in the public administration literature.

### **Transformational Leadership: Communicating, Empowering, and Modeling Public Service Motivation**

In research conducted by the Partnership for Public Service (2009), leadership has consistently been shown to be the most important driver of employee satisfaction in the federal government.<sup>1</sup> Transformational leadership is a process that motivates employees by appealing to their higher ideals and moral values (Tracey and Hinkin 1998). Transformational leaders influence followers by elevating their goals beyond their own self-interest and providing them with the confidence to achieve their goals (Dvir et al. 2002).

Transformational leadership is characterized by idealized influence, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation (Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang 2008). Transformational leaders communicate a compelling vision that arouses strong emotions, and they serve as ethical and principled role models (Bass 1985; Burns 1978), raising followers’ consciousness about idealized goals and encouraging followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of larger, collective goals (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993). Although transformational leadership has long been associated with positive employee behaviors, including task performance and various measures of organizational citizenship behaviors (Podsakoff et al. 2000), there is increasing evidence that a variety of management

practices mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and positive employee performance (Purvanova, Bono, and Dzieweczynski 2006).

While much of the early research on transformational leadership focused on the attributes of the leader and the nature of the leader–follower relationship, further research on the behaviors of transformational leaders suggests that transformational leadership is mediated by the leader’s actions—the ability to create a shared vision, to articulate clear and meaningful goals, to empower employees, and to model ethical and trustworthy behavior (Kent, Crotts, and Azziz 2001; Purvanova, Bono, and Dzieweczynski 2006; Tracey and Hinkin 1998). This suggests a connection between value-based leadership, good management practices, and employee performance.

In the following sections, we identify key management practices and related theoretical concepts that previous research suggests allow leaders to harness employees’ values. We begin by discussing how transformational leaders create shared organizational value through inspirational communication, onboarding practices, setting meaningful goals, and designing significant work. We then review how transformational leaders empower employees to act on their values and serve as positive role models. Throughout our discussion, we draw on a broad body of value-based literature to explore the processes by which managerial actions shape employee behaviors. Table 1 summarizes the relationships between selected theoretical frameworks and their related management practices and various dimensions of employee performance.

### **Aligning Employee Values and Organizational Ideology**

The first characteristic of transformational leaders is their ability to elevate the interests of their employees, generate awareness and acceptance of the group mission, and look beyond their own self-interest to the greater good of the larger group (Bass 1990). Leaders who communicate a value-based organizational ideology—manifested through mission, vision, and strategy—positively influence employee behavior. Thompson and Bunderson (2003) propose an extension of the work on psychological contracts to propose that employees’ participation in an organization is dependent on the extent to which employees perceive that the organization provides opportunities to contribute to a larger cause or principle. As Barnard notes, “foresight, long purposes, high ideals, are the basis for the persistence of cooperation” (1938, 282). Leaders create an alignment between employee values and the organization’s ideology by articulating an organizational mission that clearly reflects individual prosocial values, using values to guide the onboarding process, setting clear and significant goals, and designing work in a way that maximizes social significance.

### **Communicating Inspirational Ideology**

As Burns (1978) notes, inspirational ideology is ideology that is authentic and focuses on higher end goals—such as social justice—that transforms individuals and their communities, states, and nations. Transformational leaders communicate values that raise followers’ consciousness about idealized goals and then get followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of larger goals (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993). In recent years, public organizations have increasingly been pushed to develop mission statements that describe the organization’s purpose and vision. In contrast to

**Table 1** Summary of Value-Based Management Practices

Value-Based Management Practice	Theoretical Concept	Relationship to Public Service Performance
Articulate an ideology (Bass 1985) that resonates with higher-level employee values (Paarlberg and Perry 2007)	<b>Transformational leadership:</b> A compelling vision arouses strong emotion (Bass 1985), which raises followers' consciousness about idealized goals and encourages followers to transcend their own self-interest for the sake of larger goals (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993)	Transformational leadership can encourage public service motivations (Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright 2009)
Create a picture of the future that connects to public service values (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993)		
Recruit and select candidates who hold, or are responsive to, public service values (Bright 2007; Mann 2006) using a variety of recruiting, assessment, and interviewing techniques, including structured interviews, situational tests, and realistic job previews	<b>Person–organization fit:</b> People are more likely to join, stay, and perform well in settings in which they perceive that the management practices and work of the organization reflect and support their individual values (Borman and Motowidlo 1997; Goodman and Syvanteck 1999; Sekiguchi 2007)	As the congruence between public sector employees' values and their organization's values increases, employees will perform better (Bright 2007) The relationship between public service motivation and job satisfaction is mediated by the extent to which employees perceive that their values are consistent with those espoused by the organization (Wright and Pandey 2008)
Develop a comprehensive and strategic socialization program that involves managers and supervisors, covers the new employee's entire first year, focuses on culture and mission, and incorporates measurable outcomes (Partnership for Public Service 2009)	<b>Socialization:</b> Socialization leads to increased affective commitment to the organization and job satisfaction	Socialization communicates to organizational newcomers the values that are a critical part of the organizational identity and how such values are translated into acceptable behavior (Brief and Motowidlo 1986; Chatman 1991)
Structure tasks in ways that allow employees to interact and communicate with service beneficiaries <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take steps to identify clearly the beneficiaries of organizational services</li> <li>• Create opportunities for direct contact between employee and service beneficiaries</li> <li>• Provide clear criteria and channels for beneficiaries to provide feedback on employee performance (Hackman and Oldham 1980)</li> </ul>	<b>Job design:</b> Employees are motivated to the extent to which they perceive that their job affects the well-being of others (Grant 2007; Hackman and Oldham 1980); this perspective redefines jobs as a collection of relationships as well as a collection of tasks	Positive relationships exist between customer orientation and public employees' job satisfaction, motivation, and support for organizational change (Lee, Cayer, and Lan 2006; Paarlberg 2007)
Set clear and challenging goals that are consistent with employees' public service values (Paarlberg and Perry 2007)	<b>Goal-setting theory:</b> Specific and challenging goals—defined as the object or aim of an action to attain a particular standard—are associated with higher levels of performance (Locke and Latham 2002)	Public employees are more motivated to perform well when they have clearly understood and challenging tasks (Wright 2007)
Explain what employees should do, but also why they should do so (Wright 2007) and how work tasks link to organization mission		The line of sight between job tasks and organization's mission is a key driver of job satisfaction (Partnership for Public Service 2009)
Provide opportunities for employees to discuss conflicts between organizational goals and personal values (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Vinzant 1998)	<b>Self-determination theory:</b> Delegating decision making, increasing employees' skills and access to information, and using self-managed teams increase employees' intrinsic motivations (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 1999) Empowerment allows employees to align organizational regulations with their own values (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993)	
Employ participatory management techniques that allow employees to participate in job-related decisions		Autonomy in the workplace enhances employees' public service motivation (Park and Rainey 2008)
Provide access to information, support and resources to learn and develop (Conger and Kanungo 1988)		Transformational leadership fosters PSM by empowering employees (Park and Rainey 2008)

specific work goals, compelling missions are broad, usually qualitative statements about the organization's purpose, rather than quantifiable production or financial measures. Employees respond to organizational mission statements and other strategic communications only to the extent that such documents communicate values that fall within the employee's zone of existing values (Paarlberg and Perry 2007). Employees may feel manipulated if they perceive that organizational values are being managed or are insincere.

While it is important that public service values be communicated directly and clearly, leaders also transmit values through informal means, such as organizational stories, myths, and symbols (DiIulio 1994; Trice and Beyer 1991). In describing how leaders infuse day-to-day behavior with meaning and purpose, Selznick describes the "elaboration of socially integrating myths" that use the language of "uplift and idealism" to describe what is distinctive about the aims and methods of the organization (1957, 151). Maynard-Moody and

Musheno (2003) describe how case reviews in staff meetings provided the context for social work staff and supervisors to use storytelling to discuss dilemmas and experiences in ways that heightened the possibility for responsible action. Leaders at Rocky Flats used visual images to make the goal of safe closure of the nuclear facility come alive, including before and after renditions of the closed plant to motivate employees as well as the demolition of key buildings to symbolize their mission as a closed facility (Cameron and Lavine 2006).

### **Creating Value Congruence through Onboarding**

Motivating employees to act on a shared vision is dependent on aligning followers' personal values with those of the collective (Jung and Avolio 2000; Shamir 1995). Person–organization fit (PO) theory suggests that performance is enhanced when an employee's values, skills, and goals match organizational goals, values, and culture. Such alignment often occurs through processes of selection

and socialization (i.e., onboarding). The Partnership for Public Service's (2008) comprehensive onboarding model starts when a new employee accepts a job offer and lasts throughout the new employee's first year. The model also connects the onboarding process to the strategic direction of the organization and actively engages all stakeholders in the organization, including the new hire.

A growing body of research finds that the selection of candidates who not only are task qualified, but also hold values that are consistent with the organization's mission and values is linked to job satisfaction, retention, organizational commitment, willingness to learn new skills, and task performance (Borman and Motowidlo 1997; Goodman and Syvanteck 1999; Sekiguchi 2007). Bright's (2007) research suggests that employees perform better as congruence between their values and the organization's increases. Similarly, Wright and Pandey (2008) found that the relationship between PSM and job satisfaction is strengthened when employees perceive that their values are consistent with the organization's.

The first step in managing public service values is selecting qualified candidates who hold, or are responsive to, public service values (Bright 2007; Mann 2006). A thorough selection process that includes structured face-to-face interviews, situational assessments, and realistic job previews will help both the organization and the candidate determine the fit between the applicant's values and the organization's practices (Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan 1991; Chatman 1991). Structured face-to-face interviews offer opportunities to discern values and preferences as well as characteristics that mesh with the organization (Chatman 1991). Higher-level candidates should interview not only with human resources and prospective supervisors, but also with potential coworkers and other employees (Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan 1991; Judge, Higgins, and Cable 2000). Similarly, past-oriented (behavioral description) interviews can provide important indicators of public service motivation (Bolino and Turnley 2003), on the assumption that past behavior is a likely indicator of future behavior. Employment interviews and realistic job previews enable job seekers to learn more about the culture and values of the organization and whether these values match their own (Bowen, Ledford, and Nathan 1991; Chatman 1991).

While it is unrealistic to expect that all employees will enter public service with strong public service motivations, socialization into public service values communicates critical organizational values and determines how such values are translated into acceptable behavior (Brief and Motowidlo 1986; Chatman 1991). Socialization should introduce new employees to the history, mission, goals, objectives, and norms of public organizations, and also demonstrate how the organization achieves public service goals (Cooper-Thomas and Anderson 2002; Klein and Weaver 2000). Formal training, orientations, and social events provide specific information about how role requirements and organizational context align with employees' values (Cooper-Thomas, Van Vianen, and Anderson 2004). Transformational leaders play key roles in socializing newcomers into the values of the organization and the way those values are reflected in

workplace behavior (Bass and Avolio 1993). Leadership involvement in socialization processes, such as mentoring, may mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and positive work attitudes and career expectations (Scandura and Williams 2004), allowing new employees to take their behavioral cues from experienced colleagues (Chatman 1991).

Finally, it is important to note that creating a workforce with shared public service values may limit the diversity of perspectives in an organization and can also create an environment in which employees

get lost in the collective or adopt values that are group-centric rather than public serving (Kreiner, Hollensbe, and Sheep 2006). Attention must be paid to ensuring that applicants represent diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds and that integrity and acceptance must be reinforced as shared values.

### ***Setting Clear and Important Public Service Goals***

Goal-setting theory posits that conscious and well-specified goals—defined as the object or aim of an action to attain a particular standard—that employees find meaningful

positively affect the actions of employees (Latham and Yukl 1975). Goal-setting research has consistently provided strong support that specific and challenging goals drive higher levels of performance (Locke and Latham 2002) by energizing behavior, encouraging persistence, and fostering problem solving. Consistent with goal-setting theory, Wright (2007) found that public employees are more motivated to perform their work when they have clearly understood and challenging tasks. However, employee commitment to goals will be influenced by the extent to which employees perceive that these goals are consistent with their interests and values—and are achievable.

While people generally try to do what they are asked to do (Locke, Latham, and Erez 1986), they may not accept assigned goals if these goals are seen as unimportant or inconsistent with their individual values (Steers and Porter 1974). In addition, government employees often work in jobs with diffuse goals (Chun and Rainey 2005) and long-term outcomes (Grant and Sumanth 2009). The complexity of tasks often makes it difficult to determine clear cause-and-effect relationships (Paarlberg, Perry, and Mesch 2006).

Despite the realities of goal ambiguity in many public organizations, Lee, Rainey, and Chun found that federal agencies have made significant progress in goal-setting skills and observe that “[p]eople in organizations of all types can engage in valuable efforts to clarify goals that are vague at the overall organizational level” (2010, 16). Establishing clear goals requires managers to explain not only what employees should do, but also why they should do it (Wright 2007). This includes how their actions contribute to organizational goals (Paarlberg and Perry 2007) and connect to the larger mission of the organization, thus reinforcing employees' public service motivations. Cascading broad ideological goals into job specific goals may make the connections between mission and task goals more evident (Paarlberg and Perry 2007). A key characteristic of transformational leaders is the communication of high

---

. . . it is important to note that creating a workforce with shared public service values may limit the diversity of perspectives in an organization and can also create an environment in which employees get lost in the collective or adopt values that are group centric rather than public serving.

---



expectations that inspire followers to become part of larger goals, stimulating them not only to change their own belief systems, but also to be creative problem solvers (Bass 1985). Moynihan, Pandey, and Wright (2009) posit that transformational leaders influence the employee's perceptions and understanding of broader organizational goals.

In some cases, however, there is clear conflict between employee values and their work. For example, the social value of the work may be controversial. In such situations, managers play important roles in helping workers transcend negative perceptions by infusing the work with positive values or emphasizing positive aspects over the negatives (Ashforth et al. 2007). For example, Gusterson describes how nuclear scientists emphasize that their work enhances rather than threatens world peace (cited in Ashforth et al. 2007). At other times, employees may experience clashes between public and organizational needs and individual values. For example, employees may experience conflict between bureaucratic pressures to close a case and their professional responsibilities to provide high-quality and responsive services (i.e., doing something right is not always the same as doing the right thing). In such situations, managers play important roles in encouraging employees to acknowledge and discuss these potential conflicts (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003; Vinzant 1998). This allows the individual to reframe his or her work in ways that can be consistent with personal and professional values.

#### ***Clarifying the "Line of Sight" between Work, Beneficiaries, and the Social Significance of the Job***

Job design principles focus on jobs as a collection of relationships as well as a collection of tasks, recognizing that employees are motivated to the extent to which they perceive that their jobs affect the well-being of others (Grant 2007; Hackman and Oldham 1980). The Partnership for Public Service's Best Places to Work in the Federal Government rankings (2009) provide additional evidence on how this "line of sight" between task and values can be a critical motivational link. The 2007 and 2009 rankings and analyses of more than 270 federal agencies, departments, and subcomponents show that one of the top three drivers of employee satisfaction is skill/mission match.<sup>2</sup>

Transformational leaders give meaning to jobs within the organization by energizing employees about the importance of their work and by linking employees' work to organizational goals and employees' values. Purvanova, Bono, and Dzieweczynski (2006) report that employees who work for transformational leaders are more likely to say that their jobs are more challenging, meaningful, and significant. This leads to a stronger relationship between helping behavior within the organization and their personal values. These findings support Salancik and Pfeffer's (1978) theory of social information processing, which holds that job characteristics are not always "objective" but are "created." Employees use information from their social context, such as workplace norms and values, to develop perceptions about the value and meaning of their work. Transformational leaders play important roles in shaping these perceptions. "For example, if a leader calls attention to the importance of the job to the organization and its mission or vision, employees' perceptions of task significance might increase" (Purvanova, Bono, and Dzieweczynski 2006, 7).

Job design strengthens the relationship between public service values and performance by enhancing employees' understanding of the social significance of their work and improving goal clarity (Scott and Pandey 2005). Both tactics may strengthen employees' existing public service values and enhance the relationship between such values and their behaviors (Grant 2007). Employees are particularly motivated by the extent to which their jobs affect the well-being of others (Hackman and Oldham 1980). As Grant observes, "many employees describe the purpose of their work in terms of making a positive difference in others' lives" (2007, 393). Many are attracted to government because of their desire to serve (Denhardt 1993). Studies across a variety of occupations demonstrate that public servants go to extraordinary lengths to respond to the needs of both specific service beneficiaries and the general public (Brehm and Gates 1997; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003).

The extent to which employees perceive their jobs to be meaningful may depend on how well they can "see" the impact they have on the people their work benefits (Grant 2007; Hackman and Oldham 1980). This approach redefines jobs as a collection of relationships as well as a collection of tasks. For example, in a longitudinal study of fund-raising callers, Grant (2008b) found that when callers met the fellowship students who benefited from their fund-raising, the callers significantly increased the amount of donations they raised.

This contact between employees and those who benefit from their work may also lead to enhanced persistence, performance, and productivity (Grant 2008a), thus increasing identification with beneficiaries, enhancing employee's empathy, and fostering service recipient "likeability" (Brief and Motowidlo 1986; Grant 2009 and Sumanth; Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). Brehm and Gates (1997) found that when government employees, such as social workers or police officers on the beat, came into regular contact with service recipients, the service recipients actually had more influence over employee behavior than supervisors. Studies of U.S. federal employees have found positive relationships between customer orientation and employee job satisfaction, motivation, and support for organizational change (Lee, Cayer, and Lan 2006; Paarlberg 2007).

Ultimately, contact with service beneficiaries may positively influence employee motivation by providing a face for employees' public service values, thereby translating abstract organizational goals into significant—and very practical—action (Paarlberg 2007). Hackman et al. (1975) encourage organizations to structure tasks in ways that allow employees to interact and communicate directly with service beneficiaries. They propose that organizations clearly identify the beneficiaries of organizational services, establish opportunities for direct contact between employees and beneficiaries, and provide clear criteria and channels for beneficiaries to provide feedback on employee performance. A good example of this is the World Bank's Grassroots Immersion Program, which allows young professionals to observe firsthand the everyday lives of the people the World Bank serves.

While it may be impossible to directly connect all employees with direct service beneficiaries, sharing stories or vignettes that convey the social significance of their work may also positively impact employee's attitudes and behaviors (Grant 2008a). It is also important to remember that many public servants working in support

jobs do not deliver direct benefits to the broader public. In these situations, beneficiaries can be internal customers—coworkers and other agencies (Paarlberg 2007). Also, public employees often serve diverse stakeholders, who may have conflicting values and in some instances disagreeable values (Maynard-Moody and Musheno 2003). Once again, managers may play important roles in providing opportunities to explore these conflicts. Also, while we have focused on the service aspect of government employment, many employees are attracted to government service because they want to influence the broader public policy process. In such situations, employees benefit when they see how their actions have influenced the policy process (Leisink 2004). Therefore, providing direct evidence of the connection between an employee's policy efforts and policy outcomes can drive employee performance.

### ***Creating Work Structures That Empower Employee Participation***

Transformational leadership fosters public service motivation by empowering employees (Park and Rainey 2008). Bass and Avolio (1990) propose that transformational leaders enhance followers' abilities to think for themselves, take initiative, and question generally accepted ways of thinking. Centralized decision making may make it difficult for employees to see how their efforts contribute to the mission of the organization (Scott and Pandey 2005). In the federal government, data from the Office of Personnel Management show that federal workers are less satisfied than their private sector colleagues about the information they receive from management and their involvement in decision making. In the Best Places to Work in Government rankings (Partnership for Public Service 2009), the leader's empowerment of employee decision making was strongly related to employee satisfaction.

Perceptions of bureaucracy and red tape may frustrate employees' public service motivations (Moynihan and Pandey 2007). Even employees who enter government with strong public service motivations can become disinterested and hostile to public service as their motivations are frustrated by bureaucratic barriers to effective service. Centralized structures of decision making may also limit employee's participation in decisions that directly affect their ability to perform their jobs, reducing their sense of efficacy and motivation (Brewer, Selden, and Facer 2000). Consistent with concepts of expectancy theory, an individual's motivation to increase effort is related to the expectation that these efforts will lead to desired performance (Conger and Kanungo 1988). As Maynard-Moody and Musheno observe, in some cases, "workers [see] the rules and supervisors as obstacles to doing what was right and fair for their clients" (2003, 18).

Drawing on concepts of self-determination theory (Deci, Koestner, and Ryan 1999), Park and Rainey (2008) propose that autonomy in the workplace enhances employees' intrinsic motivations (i.e., PSM) by allowing employees to internalize organizational regulations and integrate rules with their own values. In a large study of federal employees, they found that empowerment fosters public service motivation—an intrinsic set of motivations. Government employees may also perceive that complex control and regulatory systems, although designed to improve monitoring employees' performance, may take

away from the "real" work of responding to citizens' needs (Schwab and Cummings 1976), leading them to believe that they are unable to act on their service motivations (Conger and Kanungo 1988).

Further, employee input into goal setting may encourage workers to find strategies that are more effective, energize behavior, and increase employees' perceptions that they can effectively accomplish their goals (Spector 1986; Staw and Boettger 1990). In a study of teacher empowerment, Dee, Henkin, and Duemer found that teachers on school governance teams were more likely to feel that their work had a significant impact on educational outcomes (2003, 271). Increased participation in workplace decision making aligns individual commitment with organizational tasks, provides a heightened sense of the importance of one's work, and instills the belief that work has a significant impact on the lives of others (Dee, Henkin, and Duemer 2003).

---

... while we have focused on the service aspect of government employment, many employees are attracted to government service because they want to influence the broader public policy process.

---

Empowering employees to participate in workplace decisions can take many forms. Leisink (2004) suggests it is important that employees be involved not just in technical decisions, but also in the core public-serving aspects of their job. Truly enabling employees to act on their service motivations requires empowering them to take action—by providing access to information, support, resources, and opportunities to learn and develop (Conger and Kanungo 1988).

Employee empowerment in government organizations may conflict with public values and mandates for accountability. However, concepts of tight/loose coupling suggest that within complex organizations, strong core ideologies allow employees to make decisions on their own while still acting consistently with organizational values (Collins and Porras 1994). Kaufmann (2006) provides a classic description of how field-level forest rangers scattered across remote sites uniformly implemented forest policy. Shared organizational history and professional training also place important bounds on employee behavior.

### ***Walking the Talk: Modeling Prosocial Behaviors***

It is not enough for transformational leaders to talk about values. Managers who attempt to lead based on strong values also run the risk of being accused of hypocrisy if employees perceive that managers are violating organization values (Cha and Edmondson 2006). Transformational leaders must also be prosocial role models (Shamir, House, and Arthur 1993). Managerial trustworthiness strengthens the relationship between prosocial motivation and performance (Grant and Sumanth 2009).

Wimbush and Shepard (1994) suggest that the behavior of organizational leaders and supervisors is the primary influence on employee behavior. Employees will do what they see their supervisors do, rather than what the policy manual dictates. Leaders who shape values within an organization do not necessarily have to be charismatic, but they should exhibit sincere and sustained commitment to values and channel their ambitions into the success of the organization and the people around them (Avolio and Gardner 2005). In a study of the performance of prosocially motivated employees, Grant and Sumanth (2009) found that in the absence of

direct contact with service beneficiaries, managers who are perceived as trustworthy will increase employees' perceptions of task significance. These findings suggest that leaders' important roles as "meaning makers" depend on whether employees perceive that managers themselves are "other regarding" and that they exhibit values of benevolence and integrity.

Transformational leaders also lead by example, by modeling transparent decision making, confidence, optimism, hope and resilience, and consistency between their words and deeds (Avolio and Gardner 2005, 326). By providing individualized treatment and offering respect and empathy for followers, as well as providing followers with the tools and skills to grow, transformational leaders develop expectations of reciprocity—others are also expected to exhibit these behaviors. Transformational leadership requires that organizations select leaders who exhibit values that transcend individual self interest, such as social justice, equality, benevolence, honesty, and loyalty (Avolio and Gardner 2005).

## Conclusion

The concept of managing public service values is not new. More than 50 years ago, Selznick (1957) argued that "value building" is a key role of organization leadership. Despite growing evidence about the positive impact of value-based leadership and management practices, management practices often contradict our theoretical understanding of how to strengthen the relationships between public service values and performance (Mann 2006). Management practices that are designed to restrict or stimulate employee self-interest may actually frustrate employees' public service motivations (Ferraro, Pfeffer, and Sutton 2005; Frey and Osterloh 2005; Ghoshal 2005). Our paper has proposed a framework for how organizational leaders, using the principles of transformational leadership, can apply good management practices to harness the power of employee's public service motivations.

While linking transformational leadership and public service motivation theories to human resource practices will produce benefits, such an approach is not without challenges. No single tactic will abruptly and radically improve organizational outcomes. In other words, there is no silver bullet. Instead, we argue for a "silver buckshot" approach in which the identified tactics work collectively and reinforce one another. For example, recruiting and hiring employees with strong public service values will only work if the recruits perceive that their tasks are important and that they work in environments that enable them to act on their motivations. As noted earlier, people who join an organization with a strong commitment to service may become frustrated when their desire to serve is constrained by institutional and organizational rules (Moynihan and Pandey 2007). Therefore, effectively leveraging and managing public service motivations involves radical changes from past practice that can generate important benefits. But it also entails costs.

Despite these potential downsides, good management practices that harness prosocial motivations may be linked to a variety of positive outcomes (Ferraro, Pfeffer, and Sutton 2005; Frey and Osterloh

2005; Ghoshal 2005). Although we have drawn on a large and significant body of empirical research in suggesting a value-based management framework, we also believe our articulation of this model is a call for further research on the links between transformational leadership practices and public service motivations. This model is proposed in a spirit of experimentation. Our model is neither definitive nor exhaustive.

From a theory-building perspective, we challenge scholars to test our model and the relationships between public service motivations, transformational management practices, and individual and organizational outcomes. From a practitioner perspective, we encourage managers to draw on a diverse body of research on transformational leadership and values-based management to develop and apply management tools and processes that promote and build on public service values.

## Notes

1. This construct consists of employee responses to these statements: "I have a high level of respect for my organization's senior leaders"; "In my organization, leaders generate high levels of motivation and commitment in the workforce"; "My organization's leaders maintain high standards of honesty and integrity"; and "How satisfied are you with the information you receive from management on what's going on in your organization?"
2. The skill/mission match dimension is based on the following statements from the Federal Human Capital Survey: "My work gives me a feeling of personal accomplishment"; "I know how my work relates to the agency's goals and priorities"; "I like the kind of work I do"; "My talents are used well in the workplace"; and "The work I do is important."

## References

- Ashforth, Blake, Glen E. Kreiner, Mark A. Clark, and Mel Fugate. 2007. Normalizing Dirty Work: Managerial Tactics for Countering Occupational Taint. *Academy of Management Journal* 50(1): 149–74.
- Avolio, Bruce J., and William L. Gardner. 2005. Authentic Leadership Development: Getting to the Root of Positive Forms of Leadership. *Leadership Quarterly* 16(3): 315–38.
- Barnard, Chester I. 1938. *The Functions of the Executive*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bass, Bernard M. 1985. *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- . 1990. From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision. *Organizational Dynamics* 18(3): 19–31.
- Bass, Bernard M., and Bruce J. Avolio. 1990. The Implications of Transactional and Transformational Leadership for Individual, Team, and Organizational Development. In *Research in Organizational Change and Development*, vol. 4, edited by Richard W. Woodman and William A. Pasmore, 231–72. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- . 1993. Transformational Leadership and Organizational Culture. *Public Administration Quarterly* 17(1): 112–21.
- . 1993. Transformational Leadership: A Response to Critiques. In *Leadership Theory and Research: Perspectives and Directions*, edited by Martin M. Chemers and Roya Ayman, 49–88. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Bolino, Mark C., and William H. Turnley. 2003. Going the Extra Mile: Cultivating and Managing Employee Citizenship Behavior. *Academy of Management Executive* 17(3): 60–71.

---

No single tactic will abruptly and radically improve organizational outcomes. In other words, there is no silver bullet. Instead, we argue for a "silver buckshot" approach. . . .

---



- Borman, Walter C., and Stephan J. Motowidlo. 1997. Introduction: Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Contextual Performance. Special issue, *Human Performance* 10: 67–69.
- Bowen, David E., Gerald E. Ledford, Jr., and Barry R. Nathan. 1991. Hiring for the Organization, Not the Job. *Academy of Management Executive* 5(4): 35–51.
- Brehm, John, and Scott Gates. 1997. *Working, Shirking, and Sabotage: Bureaucratic Response to a Democratic Public*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Brewer, Gene A., Sally Coleman Selden, and Rex L. Facer II. 2000. Individual Conceptions of Public Service Motivation. *Public Administration Review* 60(3): 254–64.
- Brief, Arthur P., and Steven J. Motowidlo. 1986. Prosocial Organizational Behaviors. *Academy of Management Review* 11(4): 710–25.
- Bright, Leonard. 2007. Does Person–Organization Fit Mediate the Relationship between Public Service Motivation and the Job Performance of Public Employees? *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 27(4): 361–79.
- Burns, James MacGregor. 1978. *Leadership*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Cameron, Kim. S., and Marc Lavine. 2006. *Making the Impossible Possible: Leading Extraordinary Performance—The Rocky Flats Story*. San Francisco: Berrett Koehler.
- Cha, Sandra. E., and Amy Edmondson. 2006. When Values Backfire: Leadership, Attribution, and Disenchantment in a Values-Driven Organization. *Leadership Quarterly* 17(1): 57–78.
- Chatman, Jennifer A. 1991. Matching People and Organizations: Selection and Socialization in Public Accounting Firms. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 36(3): 459–84.
- Chun, Young H., and Hal G. Rainey. 2005. Goal Ambiguity and Organizational Performance in U.S. Federal Agencies. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 15(4): 529–57.
- Collins, Jim C., and Jerry I. Porras. 1994. *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*. New York: HarperBusiness.
- Conger, Jay A., and Rabindra Kanungo. 1988. The Empowerment Process: Integrating Theory and Practice. *Academy of Management Review* 13(3): 471–82.
- Cooper-Thomas, Helena D., and Neil Anderson. 2002. Newcomer Adjustment: The Relationship between Organizational Tactics, Information Acquisition and Attitudes. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology* 75(4): 423–37.
- Cooper-Thomas, Helena D., Annelies van Vianen, and Neil Anderson. 2004. Changes in Person–Organization Fit: The Impact of Socialization Tactics on Perceived and Actual P–O Fit. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 13(1): 52–78.
- Deci, Edward L., Richard Koestner, and Richard M. Ryan. 1999. A Meta-Analytic Review of Experiments Examining the Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation. *Psychological Bulletin* 125(6): 627–68.
- Dee, Jay R., Alan B. Henkin, and Lee Duemer. 2003. Structural Antecedents and Psychological Correlates of Teacher Empowerment. *Journal of Educational Administration* 41(3): 257–77.
- Denhardt, Robert B. 1993. *The Pursuit of Significance: Strategies for Managerial Success in Public Organizations*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Dilulio, John D., Jr. 1994. Principled Agents: The Cultural Bases of Behavior in a Federal Government Bureaucracy. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory* 4(3): 277–318.
- Dvir, Taly, Dov Eden, Bruce J. Avolio, and Boas Shamir. 2002. Impact of Transformational Leadership on Follower Development and Performance: A Field Experiment. *Academy of Management Journal* 45(4): 735–44.
- Ferraro, Fabrizio, Jeffrey Pfeffer, and Robert I. Sutton. 2005. Economic Language and Assumptions: How Theories Can Become Self-Fulfilling. *Academy of Management Review* 30(1): 8–24.
- Frey, Bruno S., and Margit Osterloh. 2005. Yes, Managers Should Be Paid Like Bureaucrats. *Journal of Management Inquiry* 14(1): 96–111.
- Ghoshal, Sumantra. 2005. Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices. *Academy of Management Learning and Education* 4(1): 75–91.
- Goodman, Scott A., and Daniel Syantek. 1999. Person–Organization Fit and Contextual Performance: Do Shared Values Matter? *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 55(2): 254–75.
- Grant, Adam. M. 2007. Relational Job Design and the Motivation to Make a Prosocial Difference. *Academy of Management Review* 32(2): 393–417.
- . 2008a. Does Intrinsic Motivation Fuel the Prosocial Fire? Motivational Synergy in Predicting Persistence, Performance and Productivity. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 93(1): 48–58.
- . 2008b. Employees without a Cause: The Motivational Effects of Prosocial Impact in Public Service. *International Public Management Journal* 11(1): 48–66.
- Grant, Adam M., and John J. Sumanth. 2009. Mission Possible? The Performance of Prosocially Motivated Employees Depends on Manager Trustworthiness. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94(4): 927–44.
- Hackman, Richard, and Greg R. Oldham. 1980. *Work Redesign*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Hackman, Richard J., Greg R. Oldham, Robert Janson, and Kenneth Purdy. 1975. A New Strategy for Job Enrichment. *California Management Review* 17(4): 57–71.
- Judge, Timothy A., Chad A. Higgins, and Daniel M. Cable. 2000. The Employment Interview: A Review of Recent Research and Recommendations for Future Research. *Human Resource Management Review* 10(4): 383–406.
- Jung, Dong I., and Bruce J. Avolio. 2000. Opening the Black Box: An Experimental Investigation of the Mediating Effects of Trust and Value Congruence on Transformational and Transactional Leadership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 21(8): 949–64.
- Kaufmann, Herbert. 2006. *The Forest Ranger: A Study in Administrative Behavior*. Reprint ed. Washington, DC: Resources for the Future.
- Kent, Thomas W., John C. Crotts, and Abdul Azziz. 2001. Four Factors of Transformational Leadership Behavior. *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 22(5): 221–29.
- Klein, Howard J., and Natasha A. Weaver. 2000. The Effectiveness of an Organizational-Level Orientation Training Program in the Socialization of New Hires. *Personnel Psychology* 53(1): 47–66.
- Koehler, Michael, and Hal G. Rainey. 2008. Interdisciplinary Foundations of Public Service Motivation. In *Motivation in Public Management: The Call of Public Service*, edited by James L. Perry and Annie Hondeghem, 33–55. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kreiner, Glen. E., Elaine C. Hollensbe, and Mathew L. Sheep. 2006. Where Is the “Me” among the “We”? Identity Work and the Search for Optimal Balance. *Academy of Management Journal* 49(5): 1031–57.
- Latham, Gary P., and Gary Yukl. 1975. A Review of Research on the Application of Goal Setting in Organizations. *Academy of Management Journal* 18(4): 824–45.



- Lee, Haksoo, N. Joseph Cayer, and G. Zhiyong Lan. 2006. Changing Federal Government Employee Attitudes since the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 26(1): 21–51.
- Lee, Jung Wook, Hal G. Rainey, and Young Han Chun. 2010. Goal Ambiguity, Work Complexity and Work Routineness in Federal Agencies. *American Review of Public Administration* 40(3): 284–308.
- Leisink, Peter. 2004. Do Public Personnel Policies Nourish Public Service Motivation? Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the European Group of Public Administration, September 1–4, Ljubljana, Slovenia.
- Locke, Edwin A., and Gary P. Latham. 2002. Building a Practically Useful Theory of Goal Setting and Task Motivation. *American Psychologist* 57(9): 705–17.
- Locke, Edwin A., Gary P. Latham, and Miriam Erez. 1986. The Determinants of Goal Commitment. *Academy of Management Review* 13(1): 23–39.
- Mann, Gregory A. 2006. A Motive to Service: Public Service Motivation in Human Resource Management and the Role of PSM in the Nonprofit Sector. *Public Personnel Management* 35(1): 33–48.
- Maynard-Moody, Steven, and Michael Musheno. 2003. *Cops, Teachers, Counselors: Stories from the Front Lines of Public Service*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Moynihan, Donald P., and Sanjay K. Pandey. 2007. The Role of Organizations in Fostering Public Service Motivation. *Public Administration Review* 67(1): 40–53.
- Moynihan, Donald P., Sanjay K. Pandey, and Bradley E. Wright. 2009. Pulling the Levers: Leadership, Public Service Motivation and Mission Valence. Paper presented at the International Public Service Motivation Research Conference, June 7–9, Bloomington, IN.
- Paarlberg, Laurie E. 2007. The Impact of Customer Orientation on Government Employee Performance. *International Public Management Journal* 10(2): 201–32.
- Paarlberg, Laurie E., and James L. Perry. 2007. Values Management: Aligning Individual Values and Organization Goals. *American Review of Public Administration* 37(4): 387–408.
- Park, Sung M., and Hal G. Rainey. 2008. Leadership and Public Service Motivation in U.S. Federal Agencies. *International Public Management Journal* 11(1): 109–42.
- Partnership for Public Service. 2008. Getting On Board: A Model for Integrating and Engaging New Employees. <http://www.ourpublicservice.org/OPS/publications/viewcontentdetails.php?id=128> [accessed June 11, 2010].
- . 2009. Best Places to Work in the Federal Government. <http://www.bestplacestowork.org> [accessed June 11, 2010].
- Perry, James L., Trent Engbers, and So Yun Jun. 2009. Back to the Future? Performance-Related Pay, Empirical Research, and the Perils of Persistence. *Public Administration Review* 69(1): 1–31.
- Perry, James L., and Annie Hondeghem, eds. 2008. *Motivation in Public Management: The Call of Public Service*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Perry, James L., Debra Mesch, and Laurie E. Paarlberg. 2006. Motivating Employees in a New Governance Era: The Performance Paradigm Revisited. *Public Administration Review* 66(4): 505–14.
- Perry, James L., and Lois Recascino Wise. 1990. The Motivational Bases of Public Service. *Public Administration Review* 50(3): 367–73.
- Podsakoff, Philip M., Scott B. MacKenzie, Julie B. Paine, and Daniel G. Bachrach. 2000. Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Critical Review of the Literature and Suggestions for Future Research. *Journal of Management* 26(3): 513–63.
- Purvanova, Radostina K., Joyce E. Bono, and Jessica Dzwieczynski. 2006. Transformational Leadership, Job Characteristics, and Organizational Citizenship Performance. *Human Performance* 19(1): 1–22.
- Rainey, Hal G. 1982. Reward Preferences Among Public and Private Managers: In Search of the Service Ethic. *American Review of Public Administration* 16(4): 288–302.
- Salancik, Gerald R., and Jeffrey Pfeffer. 1978. A Social Information Processing Approach to Job Attitudes and Task Design. *Administrative Science Quarterly* 23(2): 224–53.
- Scandura, Terry A., and Ethlyn A. Williams. 2004. Mentoring and Transformational Leadership: The Role of Supervisory Career Mentoring. *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 65(3): 448–68.
- Schwab, Donald P., and L. L. Cummings. 1976. A Theoretical Analysis of the Impact of Task Scope on Employee Performance. *Academy of Management Review* 1(2): 23–35.
- Scott, Patrick G., and Sanjay K. Pandey. 2005. Red Tape and Public Service Motivation: Findings from a National Survey of Managers in State Health and Human Service Organizations. *Review of Public Personnel Administration* 25(2): 155–80.
- Sekiguchi, Tomoki. 2007. A Contingency Perspective of the Importance of PJ Fit and PO Fit in Employee Selection. *Journal of Management Psychology* 22(2): 118–31.
- Selznick, Philip. 1957. *Leadership in Administration, A Sociological Interpretation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Shamir, Boas. 1995. Social Distance and Charisma: Theoretical Notes and an Exploratory Study. *Leadership Quarterly* 6(1): 19–47.
- Shamir, Boas, Robert J. House, and Michael B. Arthur. 1993. The Motivational Effects of Charismatic Leadership: A Self-Concept Based Theory. *Organization Science* 4(4): 577–94.
- Spector, Paul L. 1986. Perceived Control by Employees: A Meta-Analysis of Studies Concerning Autonomy and Participation at Work. *Human Relations* 39(11): 1005–16.
- Staw, Barry M., and Richard D. Boettger. 1990. Task Revision: A Neglected Form of Work Performance. *Academy of Management Journal* 33(3): 534–59.
- Steers, Richard M., and Lyman M. Porter. 1974. The Role of Task Goal Attributes in Employee Performance. *Psychological Bulletin* 81: 434–52.
- Thompson, Jeffery A., and Stuart J. Bunderson. 2003. Violations of Principle: Ideological Currency in the Psychological Contract. *Academy of Management Review* 28(4): 571–86.
- Tracey, J. Bruce, and Timothy R. Hinkin. 1998. Transformational Leadership or Effective Management Practices? *Group Organization Management* 23(3): 220–36.
- Trice, Harrison M., and Janice M. Beyer. 1991. Cultural Leadership in Organizations. *Organization Science* 2(2): 149–69.
- Trottier, Tracey, Montgomery Van Wart, and XiaoHu Wang. 2008. Examining the Nature and Significance of Leadership in Government Organizations. *Public Administration Review* 68(2): 319–33.
- Vinzant, Janet C. 1998. Where Values Collide: Motivation and Role Conflict in Child and Adult Protective Services. *American Review of Public Administration* 28(4): 347–66.
- Wimbush, James C., and Jon M. Shepard. 1994. Toward an Understanding of Ethical Climate: Its Relationship to Ethical Behavior and Supervisory Influence. *Journal of Business Ethics* 13(8): 637–47.
- Wright, Bradley E. 2007. Public Service and Motivation: Does Mission Matter? *Public Administration Review* 67(1): 54–64.
- Wright, Bradley E., and Sanjay K. Pandey. 2008. Public Service Motivation and the Assumption of Person-Organization Fit. *Administration & Society* 40(5): 502–21.