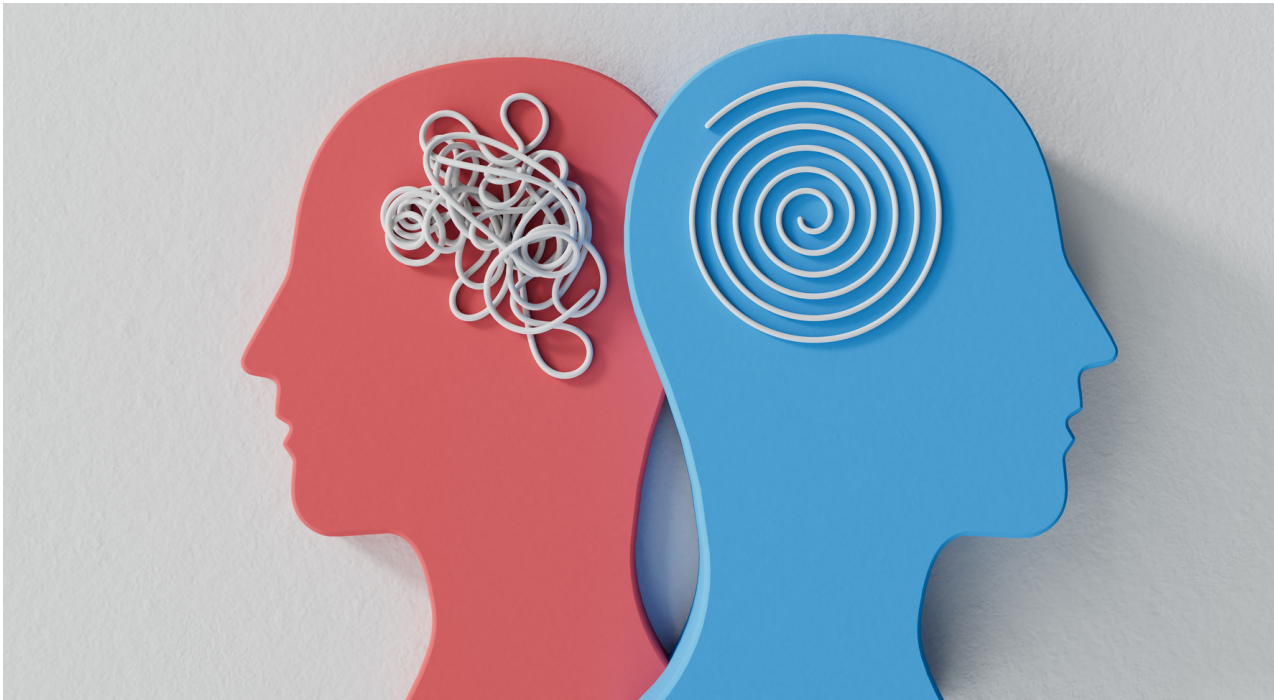


Facilities Managers and Psychological Safety

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Facility Managers, associated facilities team members and supporting third-party partners are the architects of establishing and integrating people, places, and processes within the built environment. The goal is to provide continuous improvement in people's quality of life and productivity in the core business. For continuous improvement to exist, all contributors must have the belief their opinions and ideas matter. This creates innovation which is critical to the continued success of the organization and its people. All of this is motivated by Psychological Safety.

Psychological safety is "A shared belief that team members are safe to take risks, share ideas and make mistakes without fear of negative consequences." My career in Facilities Management has given me the opportunity to experience different work cultures, leaders, management styles, and diverse teams. My first experience in a work environment that practiced psychological safety was a bit concerning to me. I was not used to the amount of collaboration, openness, and candor expressed by team members and I felt uncomfortable. We were always able to talk things out in a professional and respectful manner and get through each day with either a lesson learned, a good idea, or just general information for improvements. I also had a concern because of the number of problems or mistakes being openly reported to me. At the time it was my opinion the number of problems were too high. In both cases, I was wrong as the whole point of practicing this work culture is to make improvements, reduce risk, identify best practices, and generate innovative ideas.

Team psychological safety promotes team members to engage with one another and management. It builds motivation because their thoughts and ideas matter to the organization and each contribution that is acted on and made part of a work process or policy is a remembrance of their ability to speak and collaborate without fear of retribution. This freedom to express oneself can lead to improved decision-making if everyone participates in voicing their diverse opinions and concerns. Once employees practice these open discussions on a routine basis a culture of continuous learning and improvement can be established. This is where team members feel comfortable informing management and others about mistakes being made at work, getting feedback on avoiding the mistake in the future, and learning from the incident. Once this culture is fully established the goal in providing continuous improvement in the quality of life of people and the productivity of the core business becomes easier to achieve.

I was not familiar with psychological safety when I was first introduced to a work culture that was attempting to establish this new way of managing a workforce. To help you and your team gauge where you are with practicing psychological safety, on the next page is a 7-item questionnaire composed by Amy Edmondson Harvard Business School Professor and author of, "The Fearless Organization" and she also established the phrase "team psychological safety." To get a basic reading on you and your team's perception of psychological safety answer each question.

To get a basic reading on you and your team's perception of psychological safety answer each question:

1. When you make a mistake on this team, is it held against you?
2. Are team members able to bring up problems and tough issues?
3. Do people on this team accept others for being different?
4. Is it safe to take risks on this team?
5. Is it easy to ask other members of this team for help?
6. Would anyone on this team deliberately act in a way that undermines your efforts?
7. Are your unique skills and talents valued and utilized when working with members of this team?

The point in answering these questions is to help a manager or team establish the variance between everyone to determine what could be changed to improve a team member's experience which then leads to what can be done to improve psychological safety. If you would like to create or improve psychological safety at your workplace some suggestions are:

- Begin a conversation in your next team or shop meeting with the importance of psychological safety and how it contributes to greater organizational innovation, team engagement, and inclusion of thought and ideas. Encourage team members to ask for help when needed and freely give help when asked. Discuss the behaviors you as a manager or team member want employees to display.
- It is not easy for someone to speak openly, show interest in listening to the team members, accept team member's candor and truthfulness, and always remain open-minded.
- Our work is demanding and challenging, do not act negatively towards reasonable risk-taking that may have led to a mistake. Discuss with the team members and look for opportunities to grow and learn from their mistakes. This will encourage innovation instead of hindering it.
- Promote sincere dialogue and constructive debate and work to resolve conflicts productively. Begin the incremental changes to team expectations in communicating concerns and the norms of managing conflicting perspectives.
- Create space for new ideas in all aspects. To begin setting the pace for innovative ideas first begin with considering proven and tested ideas that work and have been implement in other sites. Slowly transition into considering to attempting highly creative or out of the box ideas that are not yet well-formulated.

- Pay close attention to team members' individual perceptions of psychological safety, these may vary. You want the whole team to feel the same level of engagement and attention.
- Make an effort to promote dialogue. Encourage giving and receiving feedback from all team members. Provide opportunities to learn how to share constructive feedback to one another and what respectful responses sound and look like.
- Celebrate accomplishments and wins. Notice and acknowledge what's going well. Positive interactions and conversations are built on trust and mutual respect. Share the credit with team members and the collective success of the team.

Psychological Safety gives a looking-glass self of an organization's climate. It reveals the atmosphere of the built environment created by the attitudes, behaviors and values of management and team members. It outlines the overall mood or vibe of the workplace, and it impacts the organization's bottom line. Employee motivation, job satisfaction and productivity are impacted greatly by an organization's climate. Setting a goal to create psychological safety at work where team members can freely express their thoughts and concerns in a professional and respectable manner sets the stage to adapt to change. It allows them to understand challenges, to seek opportunities for improvement and to understand their role in making their organization more productive and successful. I hope this short article about my psychological safety experience and thoughts can motivate you as leaders to leverage your teams' talents, commitment, and innovative ideas.

Thanks, and take the time to thank your team for their contributions to your organization's success.

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