



CORPUS OPERIS

People Management Charter

Preamble

There is frequently a mismatch in power between employers and employees. The employer usually doesn't need any one employee, but an employee can face severe hardship if they lose their job. This imbalance in power can lead to unhappy outcomes.

This charter is a twenty-first century position on what employers should commit to doing for employees. It addresses the common areas of hardship, recognizes the need for organizational agility, and importantly provides auditable measures on whether the promises are being kept.

One challenge in a universal charter is that there are enormous differences in the preferences of individuals and the needs of different organizations. This charter attempts to deal with concepts at a deep enough way and with enough flexibility that it is relevant in organizations of all types, in all countries and for both permanent employees and contingent people.

The Eight Charter Promises

Termination Promise: Employment is not forever. When it makes sense to end the relationship we will not assess blame. We will handle the process with dignity and ensure the departing employee has an effective parachute.

Capability Promise: Every year you work with us you will develop your ability to contribute to an organization. This is one element of the parachute.

Work-life Promise: We will actively monitor stress levels and enable you to strike a work-life balance that is reasonable for you.

Valued Talent Promise: We will ensure people are treated well and that people treat each other with respect.

Engagement Promise: We will create high levels of engagement.

Good Citizen Promise: We will behave as a good citizen so that people can be proud of the organization. We will enable people to be good citizens.

Diversity Promise: We will actively encourage diversity in gender, ethnicity, culture and personal style so that people can feel free to be themselves in the workplace.

The Transparent Measurement Promise: We will measure how well these promises are being achieved and share the results publicly.



Understanding the Promises

Termination Principle: In a modern economy working relationships are not forever. The notion that either the organization or employee must be to 'blame' when it is time to end the relationship is out-dated.

Except in cases of serious ethical violations all termination should be considered 'no fault'. For this to work it's essential people have a sturdy safety-net so they are not thrown into serious hardship. The extent of that parachute varies greatly from person to person. The components of the parachute are:

- **Capability:** The individual must not have such stale or over specialized skills such they can't get work
- **Severance:** Individuals need a severance package the size of which will vary greatly. This may be best handled by some kind of insurance scheme jointly funded by employee and employer.
- **Financial Prudence:** Severance won't protect employees who take on excessive debt. Employers should train all employees to be financial prudent.
- **Realism:** Sometimes individuals 'hit-the-jackpot' with an unusually high paying job. People in unusually high paying jobs must realize that this is unlikely to last forever and should be ready to take a cut in pay to find a new job.

Measuring this promise requires a range of metrics including tracking the fate of employees who have been terminated and then doing 'stress tests' on what would happen if employees were terminated during a recession.

Capability Principle: When people develop new capabilities it keeps them motivated and allows them to provide more value to the organization. It is also a key part of the parachute. Capabilities may be skills, knowledge, or social capital.

People should be continually given opportunities to enhance their capability. Organizations should design jobs so that becoming stale or over-specialized is unlikely.

The Capability Promise can be measured by employee survey questions like "I have marketable skills that would allow me to get another job." and "I have been given opportunities to learn and develop in the last 6 months."

Work-life Principle: High stress environments, poor shift scheduling, too many hours, too few vacations, and too little flexibility can lead to an unhealthy work-life balance. While many jobs require long hours, and periods of high stress may be unavoidable, the organization should actively work to maintain sane work-life conditions. Reducing stress is good for the individual and the organization.

The Work-life Promise can be measured with survey questions such as "The stress levels in the job are reasonable."; "I have adequate leave and holidays." If the answers are poor then the organization will make changes to improve conditions.

BALANCE

Valued Talent Principle: There are too many ways managers can abuse people to list. There are many cases of organizations that provide unfair pay, an unsafe environment, or abusive managers. The organization should commit to treating people as valued talent. Abusive people should not be tolerated.

To measure the Valued Talent Promise a number of survey questions are needed. A high level question would be “Are you treated as a valued individual” Many more detailed questions could include “Is your manager abusive?” “Are your team mates abusive?” “Are working conditions safe?”

Engagement Principle: Engagement is important to organizational effectiveness and individual well-being, so it deserves a place on the Charter. If the Valued Talent Promise is to prevent bad things the Engagement Promise can be seen as a way to create good things.

The Engagement Promise can be measured using a variety of well-established survey instruments.

Good Citizen Principle: Organizations have a duty to society and the planet. People should have the opportunity to be part of an organization they are proud of (and certainly avoid being in one they are ashamed of). Also, organizations should be supportive of people’s wish to be good citizens themselves.

The Good Citizen Promise can be measured by the simple question “Are you proud to work in this organization?” and “Does the organization encourage you as an individual to be a good citizen?”

Diversity Principle: Humans naturally show bias against people whom they see as different. Organizations should explicitly work to counter this natural tendency both as a matter of effectiveness and fairness.

The Diversity Promise can be measured through questions such as “Do you think certain groups face discrimination in this organization?” and “Can you comfortably be yourself at this organization?” It can also be measured by looking at the numbers of various groups at various levels in the organization.

The Transparent Measurement Principle: It is easy to make vague promises, for the Charter to have meaning there need to be auditable measures as to whether the promises are being delivered. In the vast majority of cases the best measures are employee opinion measures because they can capture the intangible dimension of the promises and respect the great differences that exist between jobs and individuals. What counts as reasonable work life balance for a strategy consultant and an accounting clerk may be very different. The organization should seek to ensure people feel the situation is good for them rather than coming up with a fixed definition of what counts as good for everyone.

Survey measures are most auditable when they are done by a third party and the results are made public. The survey questions should be publicized as well.

PRINCIPLES

The Underlying Problems the Charter Addresses

1. People who are terminated can face hardship; fear of that hardship opens up the door to abuse by employers. *How does your organization ensure termination is not a hardship?*
2. People whose skills grow stale are of little value to the organization or society. *How does your organization ensure people's capabilities are always being enhanced?*
3. A poor work/life balance is bad for the individual, society and probably the organization too. *How does your organization ensure decent work-life?*
4. People are sometimes badly treated in the workplace. *How does your organization ensure decent people are treated as valued talent?*
5. Disengaged workers lead unfulfilled lives and are not productive. *How does your organization ensure people are engaged?*
6. Organizations often cause damage to society or the environment. *How does your organization ensure people can be proud of what they as members of the organization contribute?*
7. People from certain social groups suffer discrimination. *How does your organization counter the natural tendency of humans to be biased?*
8. Organizations make bold statements but often fail to live up to them. *How does your organization ensure it lives up to its principles?*

