A WEEK IN Learning

MEETING YOUR BASIC NEEDS
Brian Patterson, Learning and Development Sr. Consultant

In an effort to be productive, leaders often use an approach that considers workers as just parts of the overall machine. However, in today's workplace, there needs to be a different method and viewpoint. Team members have to be consistently present in their work, and be given the opportunity to be involved in a working system (not used as only a part). We cannot be productive with the approach that team members "should just do their job".

There are many leadership concepts out there that can be applied to team member challenges, such as being productive and engaged in the workplace. Several of these concepts discuss external factors as the culprit that drives the behaviors of a leader or team member. Today, I want to focus on an approach that actually looks closely at a team member's needs, and how a leader can foster an environment around them.

"The leader has the responsibility of creating a quality environment, where everyone is engaged and productive."

- **Brian Patterson**

In the book, *Choice Theory*, Dr. William Glasser describes that "basic needs" are hard-wired into us at birth. Although, he did not describe these needs in the same relationship, or order, as Maslow did in his Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs exhibit human needs as a stepping process, but in Choice Theory, we all have 5 basic needs that are present in everyone at differing levels. Glasser's 5 basic needs are **survival, love and belonging, power, freedom, and fun.**

So, how can Dr. Glasser's Basic Needs help shift a leader's viewpoint to better support their team members' engagement and productivity? For a worker to be consistently engaged, and work productively, the leader must create an environment and relationship in which the employee can adequately meet these basic needs – especially the ones they prioritize higher. Below, I will explain how these needs may be satisfied in the workplace for a team member.

1. **Survival** – Team members are paid adequately and they sense that the organization is protecting them from harm. This can be presented through sufficient pay, sick time, regular fire drills, and proper training.

GOODWILL

1. **Love and Belonging** - Teams regularly meet together and leaders ensure that everyone knows they are appreciated and belong in the group. Surveys throughout the US, Australia, and South Korea found that 60% of workers say this is the most important need.

2. **Power** – Team members need to have coaching and vicarious learning to increase their skills and sense of self-efficacy. Leaders must advocate and give plenty of opportunities for a team member to develop these areas.

3. **Freedom** - With this need, a team member requires some degree of autonomy in deciding how they will do the work. If there is a standard work process, they need to know that they have the freedom to express ideas for improvement.

4. **Fun** – Team members need a sense of enjoyment in the work they do, whether it is celebrating a new learned skill or simply a birthday/anniversary celebration. Comradery plays a large role in this need at work and can also be met through team building activities.

Having our basic needs satisfied impacts the workplace in a positive way. In these kinds of circumstances, employees show up for work, stay for a long time, and give creative effort to keep the environment positive. Most importantly, the leader has the responsibility of creating a quality environment where everyone is engaged and productive.

GOODWILL