



The Inverted Pyramid - A Key to Productivity and Engagement

Inverted leadership pyramids put more focus on employees who directly add value to the customer's happiness with the company. The idea behind this is that customer-employee interaction is ultimately what decides whether the customer continues to do business with the company.

Corporate Culture and Productivity



Inverting the Pyramid:

- Empowers Front Line Employees (FLEs)
- Increases Engagement
- Happy FLEs increase Client Retention
- Minimizes Micromanagement
- Increases Active Listening
- How can I help?
- More Innovation
- Support Organization
- What not How



It's time for businesses adopt an organizational model that puts workers on top.

Many companies follow a traditional organizational structure that has the CEO at the top of a pyramid, managers in the middle, and all other employees at the bottom. While this may be efficient for some matters, it may also stifle the flow of communication and creative ideas. In order to deal with this problem, some companies have chosen to completely flip the organizational structure in order to fully embrace the lean journey.

Inverting the leadership pyramid

The traditional leadership pyramid, with the CEO at the top and workers at the bottom, was created because it was believed that only a small number of people are capable of understanding the complexities that go along with large-scale management.

There was a belief that organizations would be more flexible and quick-thinking if decisions and ideas flowed from the top to the bottom. This mindset was also evident in the size of the paychecks people received. We know now that this form of company organization does not always yield the most success.



This works by flipping the pyramid so that employees are actually adding value to the organization. The idea is that this will increase the spread of ideas for improvement throughout the organization. Many organizations have now opted to flip their leadership pyramids in order to try to harness the full capacity of their workers. This lean management style completely abandons the traditional top-down approach.

Inverted leadership pyramids put more focus on employees who directly add value to the customer's happiness. Inverted leadership pyramids put more focus on employees who directly add value to the customer's happiness with the company. The idea behind this is that customer-employee interaction is ultimately what decides whether the customer continues to do business with the company. Quite simply, executive leadership is no longer the most important element within the organization.

It all begins with leadership

Executive teams that choose to adopt the inverted pyramid structure for their organizations must begin by modeling the ideal behavior they expect from their employees. They must set an example for employees to follow. This is important if they hope to create an environment where everyone is dedicated to staying committed and holding others accountable when needed.

It is also vital that executive leaders be clear about their intent and remain firm about their plan concerning leadership pyramid inversion. This often means keeping people on track through regular meetings or some other form of checking in. However, this also means that there should be some way to hold members of the leadership team accountable too.

The whole point of inverted leadership is to open up the paths of communication within an organization. In order to achieve this, traditional leadership pyramids must be forgotten. An environment that fosters mutual accountability ensures that everyone's voices are heard, whether they are high-level executives, managers or entry-level employees.

If anything, there is more pressure on managers to make sure that their employees are meeting expectations. If an employee is not, higher leadership may question whether the manager has given the employee the right tools to succeed. Inverted leadership underscores the importance of managers adequately coaching and supporting their direct reports.

Engage and empower employees

If leaders are able to provide employees with the right training, resources and tools to succeed, those employees will feel more prepared and more comfortable about making decisions on their own. Leadership must find the right balance of being both directive and supportive.



Successful companies that are rated as best places to work by their employees receive such ratings since they respect and care for their employees. With such treatment, employees deliver that same respect and care right back to the company.

For instance, Ritz-Carlton Hotels used to give each employee a \$2,000 budget that he or she could use, without checking with management, to solve a customer problem. By implementing this program, Ritz-Carlton was demonstrating the ultimate sign of respect for and trust in employees. It is this type of employee empowerment that makes inverted leadership pyramids so uniquely successful.

On the other hand, it should be noted that companies that use the words “employee empowerment” are not always actually empowering employees. Procedures, rules, and long employee handbooks are doing anything but empowering people. Employees should feel comfortable making decisions without consulting management about every little thing.

Difficulties in implementation

Fully committing to inverted leadership involves a complete restructuring of the organization, which is anything but easy. Companies that are considering inverted leadership must seriously consider their ability and willingness to completely deconstruct, then reconstruct, their business.

In the end, this type of restructuring, no matter how difficult, is the way of the future, and companies that hope to be a part of it must move toward inverted leadership.