Informal Leaders

It is apparent who formal leaders are within your organization, but identifying informal leaders can be more challenging. Every organization has people who influence others without relying on their title or formal position. They have impact over attitudes, change, rumor and conflict, and are naturally positioned to be a significant influence on an organization's culture and performance.

Informal leaders may have one or more of the following traits:

- They are a well-respected veteran within the organization and a hub for organizational knowledge.
- They often have strong peer relationships with clear insights into the pulse of the organization.
- They have a reputation for their ability to quickly grasp and implement new technologies or concepts.
- They are effective communicators.

Management can acknowledge an informal leaders' value by positioning them to represent the needs of their peers. This can be accomplished by asking them to represent and summarize feedback from their associates, acknowledge and show respect for their contribution, and respond with specifics or a plan of action. Provide coaching where necessary, and include them in appropriate planning and implementation discussions.

Be aware that too much of a spotlight might sacrifice their informal influence. Remember that one of the elements that gives informal leaders the ability to lead is their perceived independence from the formal authority structure. Do not ignore the fact that they can just as easily become a negative influence on the culture and performance of an organization, and you might need to intervene.

These challenges represent a great opportunity to seek counsel from HR consultants. Visiam currently offers free assessments as diagnostic tools that will expose development opportunities, and position you as the driving force in achieving improved performance outcomes.

Assessments or surveys that capture the interpersonal skills of employees and supervisors are a fundamental resource to measure the employee experience and their impact on organizational performance.