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LOGOTHERAPY AS A STRATEGY FOR ATTAINING MEANINGFUL ORGANIZATIONS AND MEANING AT WORK

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The purpose of this paper is to look at the applicability of logotherapy in addressing business and organization management.

According to statistics of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), we spend on average 30-40 hours working every week.² Morten Hansen and Dacher Keltner, in a recent column, wrote: "Beyond the paycheck, what does work give you? Few questions could be more important."¹⁰



In his book, *The Elephant and the Flea*, Charles Handy, an expert in organizational behavior, refers to a dialogue with his wife that enabled him to decide to give up his corporate role and take the risk to start his own business. This dialogue provides support for an interconnection between work and the meaning of life:

'Are you proud of your work?' [my wife] asked one evening.

'It's all right, as work goes.'

'What about the people you work with, are they special?'

'They're all right.'

'So, the company, ... , is it really a good organization doing good things?'

'I can't complain, it's all right.'

She looked hard at me, then said, 'I don't think I want to spend the rest of my life with someone who is prepared to settle for all right.'^{8, p.167-8}

Financial Times management columnist, Lucy Kellaway, is quoted as saying that, "It pays the mortgage and gets you up in the morning, but these days workers want more from a job – they want meaning."³

Nicholas Ind, in RSA (Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce) argued that: "Most organizations want their employees to engage. Most individuals want to contribute and to find meaning at work. Yet research suggests that more than two thirds of people are not engaged with how they spend their working hours."¹⁴ Maynard Brusman, President of an executive coaching firm and Professor of Counseling Psychology, wrote: "Technology companies have turnover rates of 12 to 17 percent."⁴ Companies "struggle with finding ways to foster loyalty and commitment."⁴

Today's Business/Organizational Issues

The industrial age is over and we are in a new age with new business and organizational issues, including:

- The ethos of profit making dominates business organizations.²³
- Corruption, greed, arrogance, and cheating are major problems of our times.^{20,22}
- The costs of poor leadership are large.²³
- Financial rewards alone are insufficient compensation.²³
- Employee absenteeism and low motivation are significant problems.
- Turbulent political and social events, the pace of technological advancements, globalization, and environmental issues challenge organizations to change.

Finding Resolutions to Issues

I conducted a literature survey and observed that the importance of the role of meaning/purpose in corporations and the workplace, as a resolution to current problems, has been addressed with an increasing pace. A sample of these efforts include:

- The company *NixonMcInnes* provides consultation on transforming companies into meaning organizations. According to the CEO, Will McInnes, a meaning organization is an organization that serves people, environment, community, society, and the world. Will McInnes declares that, while creating these meaning organizations, "we need to ask really deeply ... why are we doing this? What is the point of this beyond the profit?"¹⁵
- There is an annual organizational gathering called "Meaning Conference" for people who believe business can and must be better in 21st century.¹⁶
- Umair Haque, the Director of Havas Media Lab and the author of *The New Capitalist Manifesto*,¹² brought to marketing the concept of "meaningful brands." He notes that "a meaningful brand is a brand that matters to people, in human terms."¹¹ This includes: "nature, the future, society, one another, and [one's] own sense of purpose and well-being ..."¹¹
- The CEO of WorldBlu, Traci Fenton, promotes the idea that designing workplaces using "principles of freedom (rather than fear and control)" to "unleash human potential" allows organizations to "hear the voice of the people" to the benefit of both the organization and the employees.⁶

If work does not have such a higher purpose, are we doomed to meaninglessness? The answer is “no.” Pattakos quotes from Frankl that, “*I am convinced that, in the final analysis, there is no situation which does not contain the seed of a meaning.*”^{17, p.3} Pattakos elsewhere states: “There are some situations where maybe the work itself is pretty boring, but we [can] love the people that we work with, ... our customers, ... the community. ... If we don’t have a positive attitude, we will get stuck.”¹⁸ It is a matter of a positive attitude.

Finally, there is considerable study and publication on the topic of *meaning at work* ranging from top consultation research companies to Business School publications. A few examples include:

- The McKinsey & Company publication, *How Leaders Kill Meaning*, emphasizes the drawbacks of leaders focusing their major attention on creating strategy, optimizing processes, and emphasizing business results but ignoring work with people and the future.¹
- The *Harvard Business Review* publication by Ulrich and Ulrich states: “Those who succeed at creating meaning ... tend to work harder, more creatively, and with more tenacity ... it’s important for leaders to understand what makes an employee experience meaningful and what role they can play in this process.”²¹ They offer suggestions to the question: “how can leaders more systematically help employees find meaning at work?”²¹
- Ind comments that there is a “need to change the attitudes and behaviour of managers and employees. Both should recognise that work can create the opportunity for fulfillment, a concept that is distinct from satisfaction and happiness. Fulfillment is concerned with meaning ... commitment and ... extending ourselves beyond our boundaries.”¹⁴

Finding Meaning at Work, Even When Your Job Is Dull,⁹ *Career Coaching Secrets to Finding True Meaning at Work*,⁴ and *5 Ways to Develop Meaning at Work*,⁷ are other papers recommending ways to foster meaning at work. Most of them are based on eclectic knowledge and methods. However, Alex Pattakos’ book, *Prisoners of Our Thoughts*,¹⁷ is based directly on logotherapy principles. Also, Burger, Crous, and Roodt developed a methodology and tools for change management named “Logo-OD: The Applicability of Logotherapy as an Organizational Development Intervention.”⁵

Logotherapy as a Resolution

The present paper indicates that business and the workplace need to be humanized by incorporating meaning. Frankl’s logotherapy can contribute to establishing a methodology for attaining meaning in organizations and work. Such methodology should:

- Enable a philosophical framework for humanizing business and the workplace to create a meaningful workplace culture.
- Enable leaders and workers to understand what really motivates people as human beings.
- Enable emphasis upon meaning fulfillment over happiness or success.
- Enable management tools based on meaning rather than fear.
- Enable organizations to be progressive, purpose-driven, and community/people oriented.

Overall, my intent here is to generate an enthusiasm for establishing a coaching framework based on Frankl's logotherapy and existential analysis addressing organizational issues. This can be titled "Logo-Coaching @ Work." I believe that an organized effort and institutional representation are key success factors in establishing such a coaching modality. Useful components might include previous work such as Logo-Organizational Development by Burger et al.,⁵ Meaningful and Purposeful Goals by Hutzell and Eggert,¹³ and the Meaning in Life Recipe for a Motivated Staff by Schreiber.¹⁹

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