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# Building organizational citizenship

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## Keywords

Organizational effectiveness, Leadership, Management, Performance

## Abstract

Since every organization's success is built on the participation and good work of its staff, this article advises leaders to view their organization as a country, and frames their primary management challenge as creating "organizational citizenship", defined as a voluntary consistent commitment to the goals, methods, and ultimate success of the organization. Most leadership strategies are designed to create specific business results; their effectiveness will depend on the creation of a culture of patriotism throughout the organization.

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We have thousands of books on leadership, none on followership . . . We have long lists of the leader's requisites – he or she needs determination, focus, a clear goal, a sense of priorities, and so on. We easily forget the first and all encompassing need. The leader most needs followers (Wills, 1995).

The behavior of organization leaders is determined in part by their cognitive model of the system they are leading. A military model focuses on command and control. A factory model emphasizes inputs/outputs and error reduction. Learning models place a priority on information systems and process improvement.

Since every organization's success is built on the participation and good acts of its people, this article advises leaders to view their organization as a country, and frames their primary management challenge as creating "organizational citizenship", defined as a voluntary, consistent commitment to the goals, methods and ultimate success of the organization. Most leadership strategies are designed to create specific business results; their effectiveness will depend on the creation of a culture of patriotism throughout the organization.

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## How to fail with good intentions

Most organizations want to maximize professional commitment and contribution as they compete in the marketplace. Following are common examples of how organizations fail in their efforts to create citizenship:

- wait for a business crisis, then assign blame;
- focus on leadership and forget the troops;
- fault employees for expecting something good from management;
- conduct a one-time "morale" program and stop;
- ignore measurement and hope for the best;
- throw money at the problem, or try to do it on the cheap;
- offer "stress management" seminars;

- operate with inaccurate assumptions about human behavior/motivation;
- do plenty of "training" without letting people put their stamp on things; and
- tell people what they already know; do not ask questions.

Most organizations will experiment with these strategies in their initial attempts to improve professional performance. This article provides other approaches that can focus an organization's thinking and resources for real development of system-wide commitment.

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## Opportunities for success

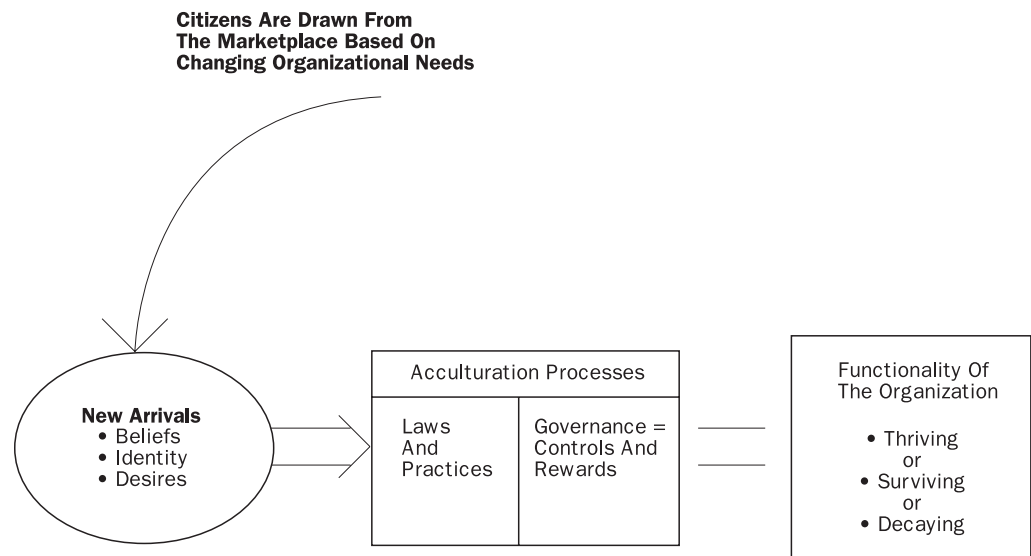
A variety of factors can either support or interfere with workplace citizenship and commitment to organizational success in the following important areas:

- *Citizenry*. Who your people are, what they believe, what they want.
- *Laws and practices*. Features of the organization that impact professional performance and commitment to organizational success.
- *Governance*. Who does what, who controls what, who gets what.

Each of these domains contains a variety of leadership challenges which will impact on the energy and vitality of any organization (see Figure 1). The citizenry will judge how well those challenges are met, and will "vote" their judgment via the ballot of their work behavior. The results will be either a thriving organization (solid market share, citizens function as a collective whole based on common purpose, each part of the organization complements the rest, and people are energized with hope for future success), a surviving organization (losing ground slowly, citizens have split into partisan groups with conflicting agendas, militias form to protect sacred turf and win small battles, and emigration rates accelerate), or a declining organization (everyone works for "ME Inc." with their own agenda, market share is shrinking, decisions are not made on time, and the old guard and their loyalists hunker down in the executive suite to assign blame).



**Figure 1**  
Building organizational citizenship



### The constitution

People move to new countries/states that offer a vision of meaning and opportunity that matches their personal values. People commit and contribute when they find concrete ways to link their personal fortune with the larger enterprise. The citizenship of an organization, both its composition and its actions, will be significantly driven by its ideals (e.g. streets paved with gold, religious freedom, etc.).

#### Vignette: guiding principles at Kaiser Permanente

Kaiser Permanente provides healthcare to nearly 9 million members throughout the USA. As the healthcare financing and delivery system has undergone rapid and radical change over the past decade, one of the greatest challenges has been to help physicians understand and cope effectively with those changes to the practice of medicine.

The Mid-Atlantic Permanente Medical Group (MAPMG) has more than 750 member physicians serving nearly 530,000 members in the District of Columbia, Virginia and Maryland. To meet escalating market demands for higher quality of care at lower cost, MAPMG recently conducted a system-wide redesign of its governance structure, business operations, and primary/specialty care services. Recognizing that such dramatic change would trigger significant “resistance” among member physicians, the medical group’s leadership team proactively moved to align its redesign program with a set of core medical values and guiding operational principles.

Extensive input was obtained from the physician advisory council and other representative bodies, from which the following “guiding principles” were articulated to provide common ground during changing times:

- *Patient-centered care.* We will demonstrate that our members and their health are our first priority.
- *Excellence.* We will expect and deliver excellence in all our clinical and non-clinical endeavors.
- *Performance driven.* We will hold ourselves accountable to clearly defined expectations and performance measures.
- *Economic success.* We will use and manage our resources to ensure market success.
- *Innovation.* We will encourage innovation, strive for improvement in the delivery of care, and encourage risk taking.
- *Mutual commitment.* We will commit to the dignity, growth and development of our partners, and expect each physician to be an owner and partner in ensuring MAPMG’s success.
- *Teamwork.* We will distinguish ourselves by the coordinated, cooperative delivery of healthcare.

To avoid the tendency for organizational “values” to be inspirational in print but with limited impact on daily life, each of MAPMG’s guiding principles was anchored to concrete behaviors and clear expectations for both individual physicians and the medical group as a whole. For example, under patient-centered care and service, physicians could expect that the medical group would “create a climate where service is the number one priority and members

receive personalized care; enhance the doctor-patient relationship via providing individual feedback on 'bedside manner' and coaching for improvement as needed; develop and continuously improve patient care systems/processes to meet patient needs; hire and train support personnel for excellent performance". The medical group would expect that "individual physicians will enhance and coordinate patient care by ensuring adequate access, continuity and follow-up, and demonstrate to each patient that you are their personal physician by exhibiting caring, courteous and responsible behavior".

Again, these "values" were not simply written, framed, and dusted. They were implemented by providing necessary skills training and resources for successful translation into action. Physicians must complete a two-year, principles-based educational program in order to achieve full partnership status. Merit pay is based in part on ratings of the specific behaviors underlying each guiding principle, and the selection criteria for hiring new physicians were revised to incorporate those behaviors as well. By defining core values with broad physician support, and then operationalizing those values into everyday medical practice, MAPMG can deliver the highest quality care to every patient.

### Immigration and naturalization

Most countries require newcomers to apply for temporary work permits, to pass background checks, and define specific criteria and testing for permanent citizenship. The military has an extensive and very costly enlistment and basic training program designed to create citizenship and teamwork. College clubs initiate members to create group identification. Each stage in the process has its own rights and responsibilities, and the goal is to acculturate the "alien" to the norms of the group (see Figure 2).

### Vignette: transmitting culture at Sapient Corporation

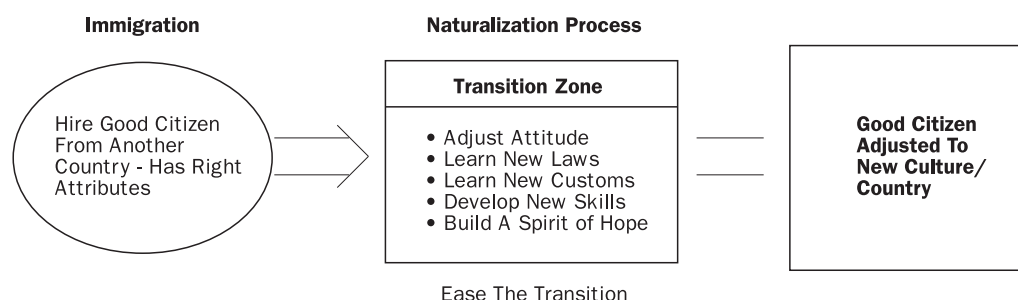
Sapient Corporation, an information technology consulting firm based in Cambridge MA, has experienced extraordinary growth since its founding less than a decade ago. Revenues over the past few years have been increasing by more than 75 per cent; net income and staff nearly doubled, and turnover rates are among the lowest in the industry. Sapient's workforce is young, entrepreneurial, and hard-working. In order to sustain company growth and performance over time, Sapient has committed to "invest substantial time, resources, and energy to create innovative strategies for finding and keeping the outstanding individuals we need to maintain the quality of our services".

A key concept at Sapient is ownership (which is close to our meaning of citizenship) which means taking responsibility for one's work and for living the organization's core values. It is a very patriotic company. Sapient believes that its success depends on the degree to which everyone understands and lives its five core values:

- 1 *Relationships*. Relate to clients and colleagues with understanding and respect.
- 2 *Openness*. Share information freely to build trust and commitment.
- 3 *Growth*. Develop people quickly, expect ownership/leadership, reward performance.
- 4 *Client-focused delivery*. Deliver high-value client solutions with speed and quality.
- 5 *Leadership*. Pursue goals with an inspiring vision that motivates others; take intelligent risks.

Sapient Corporation has developed finely orchestrated channels for communicating these core beliefs to all its citizens. At the front end of the employment cycle, its ambassadors travel to colleges and other recruitment environments where it sponsors special events (e.g. Super Saturdays) designed to communicate the challenge and excitement of working at Sapient. Many of its

**Figure 2**  
Immigration and naturalization



new hires are attracted by these events and the positive buzz from current employees ("We're different, we're smart").

Once hired, everyone attends a "bootcamp" program. The purpose of bootcamp is "to rapidly immerse new hires in Sapien's culture and to foster ownership in the company". This is accomplished by providing opportunities to learn and apply core cultural values, understand the "why" behind the way things are done, learn about Sapien Corporation (its history, clients, projects, compensation programs, etc.), and understand Sapien's vision for success and how each person can individually contribute to it. The week presents a guided experience through a microcosm of the company culture, offering each new hire the support they need for a successful transition.

Unlike traditional "orientation" programs ("today you will visit human resources and get your ID and keys"), each bootcamp's participants assume ownership of the program because they are responsible for producing the day's events. Culture team leaders provide the group with information, tools, guest speakers, and coaching along the way as needed. Thus, from day one, active citizenship is promoted by a process that demands leadership, forges openness and relationships, and promotes growth.

The bonding and group identity of the bootcamp is sustained when its members go to work. People are immediately integrated into values-driven project teams which have continuous access to consultation and training resources. Sapien uses modern communications media to keep its citizens informed, such as a daily intranet "newspaper" (all employees own stock, so the company's share price is published daily) and a monthly on-line magazine. Quarterly on-line "quality of work-life" assessments are conducted and acted upon. Team-sponsored events are common and combine social/recreational and work performance elements.

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## Education

People become contributing members of society when they learn what they need to know to achieve their goals by their good efforts. Quality education creates a satisfied middle class and brings stability to the country. Training and development programs are the school system of the organization. Organizational learning must be continuous: new people and technologies come on board, older citizens can forget what they knew, the bill of rights and responsibilities is revised. Training, education, and

coaching are key to helping citizens master a changing work environment, both new hires and old hands moving to a different organizational region. Organizations must invest up-front in training and education in order to close the skills gaps created by organizational change, and to prevent resistance/revolt due to citizens' fear of obsolescence.

### **Vignette: learning about service at Marriott International**

Marriott grew from a small, nine-seat root beer stand in 1927 to a global hospitality and food service industry leader by virtue of an unwavering commitment to employee development and guest satisfaction. Marriott International and affiliated companies combine for revenues in excess of \$13 billion.

Marriott views the primary purpose of training as aligning people to the organization's goals in terms of both motivation and knowledge. From the first day's orientation for entry level service workers through management's "Foundations of leadership" and executive development programs, Marriott invests in a minimum of 40 hours of learning per year for every employee.

Training content and processes are based on extensive internal and external customer research on key quality drivers. A number of processes exist to capture guest feedback on an ongoing basis. These include brief daily questionnaires, monthly guest satisfaction surveys employing scientific random sampling procedures, and sophisticated customer focus groups. Marriott has always considered the employee a critical customer and the foundation of the success of the organization. In line with the philosophy of "take care of the associate and they will take care of the customer", bi-annual surveys of management and hourly employees are conducted. These data are continuously analyzed in relation to Marriott's financial performance targets. Knowledge and skill gaps (be they local, regional, or national) that interfere with successful performance are identified and appropriate learning remedies applied. Management incentive and bonus programs are tied directly to these leading indicators of organization performance.

To overcome the all too common management tendency to view training as an expense (and therefore to be contained or reduced), Marriott's training programs are expected to demonstrate an acceptable return on program investment. As in many sectors today, the brisk competition in the international hospitality industry requires increasing customer value at reasonable cost. As personnel levels are streamlined, managers are required to take on new responsibilities

which inevitably compete with some of their training and supervisory duties. In a sense, the "apprenticeship" model of training is being eroded as the old masters are re-deployed or disappear. If uncorrected, this trend could undermine the process by which new employees learn the rules and means to become fully-fledged citizens.

To meet this learning paradigm shift, Marriott Learning Services (MLS) was created to spearhead education reform. MLS invested heavily in interactive self-instructional technologies (computer, CD-ROM, etc.) to provide updated and accessible information sources, and to prevent a degradation of critical skills and organization memory. For instance, all new hires in one of Marriott's businesses receive 13 hours of self-paced CD-ROM instruction including Marriott's hallmark standards of customer service. The cost of prototype development, testing, and ongoing improvement of this program was more than offset by the approximately 50 per cent training time reduction compared to more labor-intensive training methods. Net savings over a three-year implementation cycle were in the millions of dollars, and were accompanied by simultaneous increases in both employee and guest satisfaction.

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### Local government

Departments and work teams are the states, cities, and localities of the organizational nation. They are subject to various constraints and entitled to certain resources and freedoms. The constituent parts of the union must understand what is expected in the bargain of statehood. Every group needs to understand this bargain in operational terms, so real team-building must involve more than communication skills and leadership training.

#### **Vignette: a world of teams at KPMG**

KPMG is one of the largest professional services firms in the world. Over 92,000 KPMG professionals provide accounting, tax, and consulting services in 157 countries. Founded in 1897, KPMG helped its clients prepare for the transition to the twentieth century and are currently helping clients prepare for the next millennium.

Organizational patriotism is communicated by KPMG's chairman in reference to the firm's overriding guiding principle, the "power of one", meaning everyone pulling together as one team, uniting behind the firm's goals and sharing in its success. The "power of one" concept ultimately provides

integrated market teams of the right people with the right skills, in the right place – where the client needs them.

For a large-scale, dynamic firm, this can be quite a challenge. To meet this challenge, KPMG has instituted core values that contain elements of team principles:

- boundarylessness;
- including everyone;
- leaders who serve;
- open, honest communication;
- personal accountability; and
- teamwork and collaboration.

KPMG employees are expected to conduct themselves in a way that supports these core values. They are the foundation for KPMG's performance management process, which is viewed as a "gate" through which each employee must pass before his or her performance against goals and salary increases, incentive compensation, promotions, and continued employment can be considered. Living these values at work is not only essential for advancement and compensation, but ultimately to remain a KPMG citizen.

The following are two illustrations of KPMG core values in action.

#### *Boundarylessness*

KPMG's core values are the gold standard for all citizen interactions between practices, specialties, and organizational levels. KPMG citizenship extends even beyond its current employee pool. When KPMG citizens decide to pursue career opportunities outside of KPMG, they are not considered traitors or defectors, rather they are considered lifelong ambassadors of KPMG citizenship. This is embraced as an opportunity for KPMG citizenship to permeate conference rooms, business teams, shop floors, and boardrooms of corporations and organizations worldwide. This is exemplified by the continued interaction with these citizens through maintaining an alumni directory and reporting alumni achievements in KPMG newsletters. KPMG holds frequent alumni reception events to foster an ongoing celebration of KPMG citizenship by employees and alumni.

KPMG further supports this climate of organizational wholeness that transcends geographic and practice boundaries by investing in an Internet/intranet based knowledge-sharing network that permits real-time contact and information sharing among its employees anywhere in the world.

#### *Teamwork and collaboration*

Effective teamwork and collaboration are essential to meet the daily challenges of delivering high quality professional services

in a fast paced, rapidly changing global business environment. A spirit of working together for the benefit of others is further leveraged and fine-tuned by providing high quality volunteer services to local communities worldwide during events such as KPMG's World of Spirit Day. During the last event, KPMG employees donated their time, talents, and collective strength on behalf of school children, the elderly, families in crisis, those without homes or food, and community and non-profit centers. KPMG volunteers undertook projects in the 130 US cities and communities that it serves. Examples of these services included:

- setting a single day record for sorting and packaging food at the Cleveland Food Bank;
- hosting a fall carnival for children with life threatening diseases at St Jude's Research Hospital in Memphis, Tennessee; and
- removing debris, power spraying ceilings and floors, and replacing plywood flooring at the flood-damaged Austin Sunshine Camp in Austin, Texas;

The "power of one" vision is enabling KPMG to create a global service delivery team to meet both the citizen and client needs of the next millennium.

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### **Waging the campaign**

Nations mobilize in the face of great threat (Pearl Harbor) and inspiring challenge (a man on the moon by the end of the decade). Strategic planning must bring the mobilizing vision into close contact with each level and person in the organization. When done well, the strategic planning process creates a role and purpose for every citizen and lets them know how they "fit in" to the grand scheme of events. It is the operations plan that helps the organization fight its battles and win the war.

#### **Vignette: transforming healthcare at CareGroup**

As the nation continues to demand better medical care at lower cost, healthcare providers and systems are forming strategic alliances for competitive advantage. In 1996, six tertiary and community hospitals in central and eastern Massachusetts came together to form CareGroup Inc., an integrated healthcare delivery system of hospitals, out-patient offices and physician groups. In its first full year of operation, CareGroup's roughly 13,000 employees delivered over 1 billion dollars of medical services through its provider contracts with the leading man-

aged care and health insurance plans in the region.

Once CareGroup had completed the constitutional task of forming this large federation, it moved rapidly to join the competitive battles faced by all US healthcare systems. CareGroup's leaders challenged their various (and at times competing) constituencies by defining a compelling common operational imperative:

We must improve profit margins by 20 per cent over the next three years in order to stay in business as we improve quality of care and advance our research and education mission.

This sharp business challenge was then linked to high cultural values in order to promote organizational excellence and commitment (these values translate into a behavioral "code of excellence" which is integrated into all HR activities, including hiring, orientation, performance evaluation, etc.):

- *Integrity.* We are honest and trustworthy in all that we do.
- *Respect.* We approach all of our work in a spirit of respect for our patients, their families, our colleagues, ourselves, and the communities we serve.
- *Compassion.* We make special efforts to treat patients, families, and all those with whom we work with patience, kindness, and understanding of the needs and concerns of each.
- *Excellence.* We are committed to the highest standards of performance in our work, and to monitoring, maintaining, and whenever possible improving our standards and our performance.
- *Community.* We value teamwork and collaboration, working together with the diverse communities we serve within and outside of CareGroup to achieve common goals.
- *Stewardship.* Individually and collectively we hold ourselves accountable for every precious resource available to us, including our heritage, our staff, our physical space and our financial assets as we build toward a sustainable future of excellence.
- *Service.* We are committed to patients, families, communities, students, and science. It is why we are here.

Self-defeating competition between city-states was reduced by mandating an organizational equivalent of *e pluribus unum*:

CareGroup will make a transition from being a network of hospitals to operating as *one* patient-centered healthcare organization with integrated clinical, business and management/governance operations. All physicians, nurses, staff, management and trustees

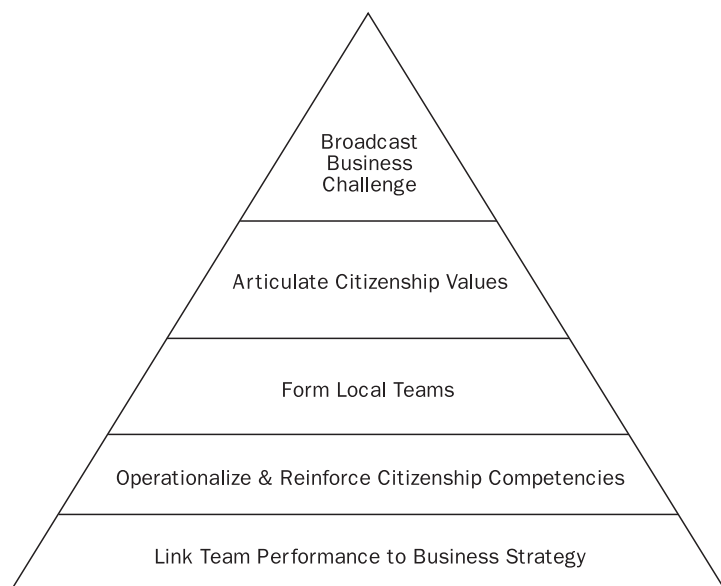
will view one another as CareGroup colleagues.

The following strategic plan was developed for increased competitiveness, profitability and quality, with fine-tuned iterations for each level of this large system so everyone would have marching orders they could understand and execute:

- *Federalize competing or redundant local functions* into core business operations (e.g. finance, human resources, information systems, plant and materials management, lab, etc.) based on guiding principles of accountability, span of control, alignment of incentives, cost savings, risk sharing, and efficient decision-making.
- *Create a seamless information flow* across localities via common patient point of entry (call center) and a system-wide patient database for best care, quality assessment/improvement, and performance management. Patient satisfaction/outcomes and financial performance data will drive decision-making.
- *Invest capital resources rationally* to produce increased market share, public trust, quality, profit and morale, or to produce decreased cost/risk.
- *Focus planning for future success* via creation of a “center for learning, quality and innovation” that defines benchmarks, develops/tests/broadcasts change initiatives, consults to localities for excellence, and alerts the organization to external threats and opportunities.

**Figure 3**

Core citizenship practices



By defining the market challenge/threat, trumpeting the correct values, strengthening the union, and communicating strategic focus at every level, CareGroup is successfully uniting its constituent hospitals and professionals into a world-class academic healthcare system that aims to be second to none.

## Conclusion

The industry leaders we studied for this article demonstrate a common set of core practices designed to build and maintain organizational citizenship (see Figure 3). These include:

- broadcasting a clear organizational mission based on a unifying business challenge/threat;
- articulating unifying citizenship values with high face validity and persuasive power – these tend to include performance excellence, business success, personal responsibility and service to clients/colleagues;
- creating behavioral models for these values/principles, and reinforce their day-to-day enactment via integration into all hiring, training, quality assessment/improvement, and evaluation/compensation processes;
- organizing people into functional teams with tight strategic alignment and continuous performance measurement/improvement; and
- translating all mission and values statements into detailed operational plans that clearly show each citizen in the organization how they will work to contribute to national success.

Developing organizational citizenship can prevent costly interventions downstream. Selection of the right citizens can reduce training, performance, and turnover costs. Good orientation and training improve quality and client satisfaction and reduce rework.

Cohesive work teams that employ solid performance measurement and management processes infuse high values into daily work. Wise planning and crisp implementation link mission, strategy, and performance into a seamless whole.

The citizenship model offers a variety of opportunities for future organizational research. It would be interesting to explore the common disagreements between managers and front-line employees regarding the meaning and creation of organizational commitment, and ways to effectively bridge those gaps. We will want to define the key

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ingredients of effective intervention programs that really work to create broad-based structural change in support of a citizenship model (as well as overcoming the inevitable resistance to those changes). Defining the citizenship-building processes that work best for start-up firms compared to mature firms facing new market competition or merger/takeover is a priority study area. Finally, we can ask how the concept and practice of citizenship-based governance has relative value in the for-profit vs. ersusal cultures in different parts of the world.

A focus on organizational citizenship can be a corrective to management's preoccupation with leadership, the equivalent of the "great man theory" of history. By defining good management as the creation of operational processes that reinforce broad-based commitment and contribution to success, leaders can harness the best talents of their people in the service of organizational priorities.

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### Application questions

- 1 How does your organization act as a good corporate citizen?
- 2 Does being a good citizen within an organization mean a loss of personal identity?