

Seeking Fairness at Work: Cracking the New Code of Greater Employee Engagement, Retention & Satisfaction

H. Hasl-Kelchner

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Pithy and persuasive, Seeking Fairness at Work helps to make contemporary workplace issues feel tangible and easier to address.

H. Hasl-Kelchner's leadership guide *Seeking Fairness at Work* covers the unwritten company rules that determine workplace dynamics.

Aimed at addressing the postpandemic rates of high employee turnover and low satisfaction and engagement, this management-directed guide seeks to explain what millennial and Gen X employees expect from their employers. It names five foundations of workplace relationships said to foster good faith and fair dealing between employers and their employees. These are all about caring about employees' physical and mental health in order to mitigate business losses and encourage positive development for employees and employers alike.

In discussing the unspoken norms of employer-employee relationships in corporate American culture, taboos like power, trust, and fairness are centered. Managers, the book says, are too often unaware of or uninterested in their employees' viewpoints, while what may feel to a manager like light joking about an employee's work performance or paycheck can feel threatening to an employee.

A variety of techniques are used to illustrate such tensions. First, italic asides serve as the voice of the manager responding to employee requests for fairness and equity. The asides are snarky, exasperated, confused, frustrated, and reactive; the unwilling interlocutor emulates a know-it-all attitude that illustrates the book's points well. Further, the biochemical processes related to workplace stress are addressed with clarity, as with the role of cortisol in threats against an employee's livelihood.

The text is pithy and persuasive, as where it compares employees' responses to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which holds that physical needs (like a paycheck) ground psychological needs (like workplace esteem and belonging). Statistics and diagrams are also used to address relationships between employers and employees; their information is sequential, showing how all five foundations of workplace relationships (including mutual trust, accountability, and standardized structural safety nets) factor in. And the bullet-point lists at the end of each chapter sum up their takeaways well.

The book's advice is geared toward employers and managers, and its tone is quite direct. Its focus on corporate culture somewhat narrows the applicability of its guidance in other industries, though the underlying concepts—like nurturing workplace relationships, building a standardized workbook, and emotional regulation—are the same. In all, it does an able job of establishing the building blocks toward a healthy workplace culture wherein fairness abounds.

The leadership guide *Seeking Fairness at Work* champions employee health as a means of personal and company development.

ALEENA ORTIZ (October 15, 2024)

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