



The Perverse Organisation and its Deadly Sins

Susan Long

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There is evidence of a movement from 'a culture of narcissism' toward elements of a perverse culture. This book brings forth and examines the evidence as it reveals itself through one of the major institutions of our time: the work organisation. Corporations and organisations for work are major centers of social activity. In many senses they provide a critical source of identity for their members, just as do families and religions. The examination of corporations and organisations gives access to most of the dynamics operating within our society and reveals some of the deeper assumptions upon which our lives are based. To call them simply a reflection of human social organisation and proclivity, perhaps is to underrate the importance of themselves shaping today's psyche. To look at the formation of perverse practice, structure and culture within organisations is also to look at that development in society more broadly. The book first examines the nature of perversity and its presence in corporate and organisational life. Then, four chapters examine the 'corporate sins' of perverse pride, greed, envy and sloth, each taking case studies from major organisations suffering their effects. Finally, the book enquires into the nature of the consumer/provider pair as a centerpiece of the perverse cultural dynamics of current organisational life. The emphasis in the book is on perversity displayed by the organisation as such, rather than simply by its leaders, or other members, even though they may embody and manifest perverse primary symptoms to the extent that they at times engage in corrupt or criminal behaviours. What is explored is a group and organisation dynamic, more deeply embedded than conscious corruption. Within the perverese structure some roles become required to take up corrupt positions. They become part and parcel of the way things work. The person may condemn certain practices, but the role requires them. Tensions between person and role may mean that the person in role acts as they would not while in other roles. Such tensions may lead to the dynamics of perversity. This book is important reading for managers, consultants, and all who are interested in the dynamics propelling what seem to be the out-of-control dynamics within contemporary organisational life. It helps us understand how many people in positions of trust may end up abusing those positions. It looks at how we may be collectively perverse despite our individual attempts to be otherwise.

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