



Local Government
Workplaces Initiative



UNC

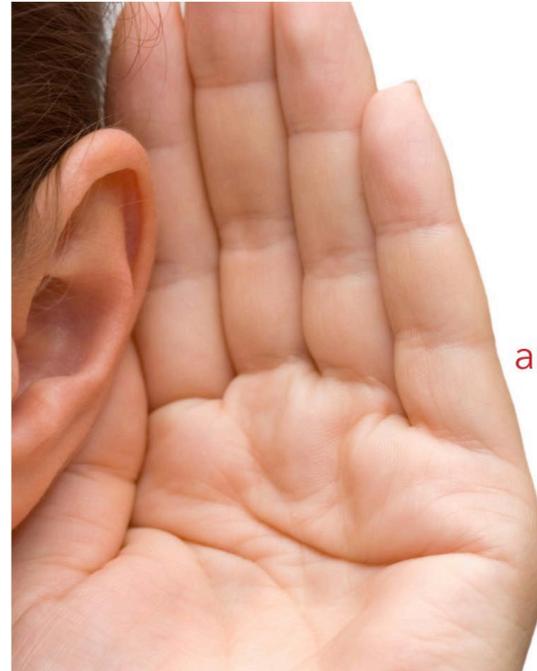
SCHOOL OF
GOVERNMENT

Creating Great Local Government Workplaces

Leisha DeHart-Davis, PhD

Local Government Workplaces Initiative

- A UNC School of Government applied research endeavor for helping cities/counties listen to employees
 - Employee surveys
 - Interviews
 - Focus groups
 - Secondary data analysis
 - Post-survey deep dives
 - organizational development workshops



When your people speak,
are you hearing them?

Workshop Objectives

- Spark thinking about what a great workplace looks like
- Ground you in theory and evidence for creating great workplaces
- Provide time and space for thinking about creating your own great workplaces



Great Workplaces Framework

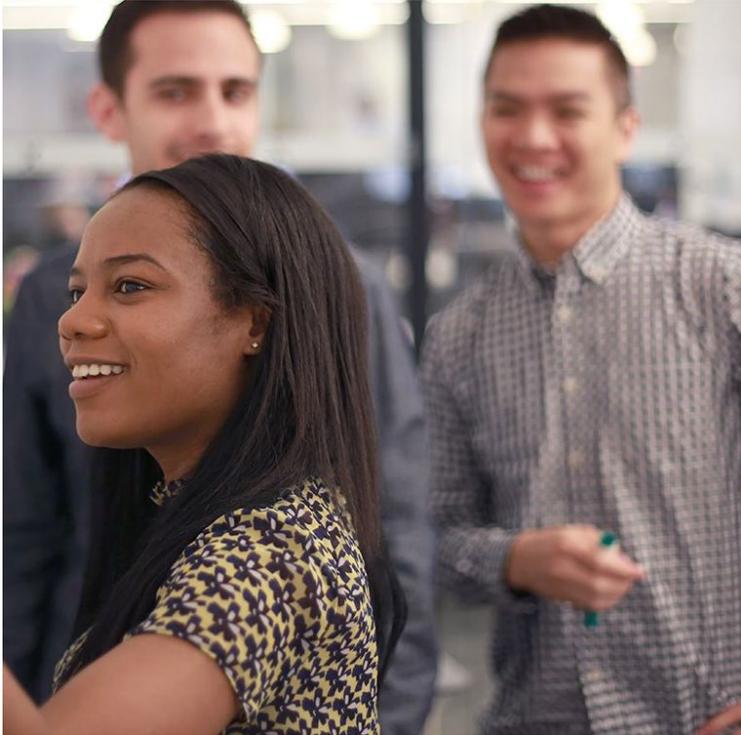


I never react to you, but to you-plus-me. Or, to be more accurate, it is I-plus-you reacting to you-plus-me.
Mary Parker Follett, 1924

- Based on theory and evidence
 - From private and public sector management literature
 - From Local Government Workplaces Initiative data (6000+ survey responses, eighteen organizations)
- Assumes that relationships— across employees and between employees & organization – drive organizational effectiveness
- Human relations school of thought
 - Scientific management viewed employees as cogs in a wheel
 - Human relations school view employees and managers as part of community

What do great workplaces look and feel like?

- Write your answer here:



Great Workplaces ...

- Inspire and guide action through clear compelling mission statements
- Give employees voice
- Create “green tape”, i.e., good rules that people follow
- Empower employees
- Relentlessly seek fairness



Inspire and guide action through clear compelling mission statements

- Statement of organizational identity
 - A vision and a statement of goals
 - A statement of mission and a self-definition
 - An organization's philosophy and values
- Seeks to
 - Provide coherence
 - Guide decision making
 - Give meaning
 - Inspire/motivate



Evidence on Mission Statements

Morale



- Financial performance (Desmidt, Prinzie, & Decramer, 2011)
- Organization effectiveness in hospitals Vandijck, Desmidt, and Buelens (2007)
- Morale (Kim and Lee (2007))
- Moderators
 - Organizational sincerity
 - Statement use and communication
 - Person-organization fit

From Local Government Workplaces Initiative

- Mission understanding strongly and significantly correlated with
 - Less self-reported rule bending
 - Stronger organizational identification
 - Lower turnover intentions



Incorporating Mission into Workplace

- Place front and center in strategic planning
- Reference in meetings
- Incorporate into performance evaluations
- Promote in posters around campus
- Laminate on back of employee ID cards
 - Examples
 - Town of Chapel Hill RESPECT
 - School of Government Improving the Lives of North Carolinians

Think on This



- Is it clear and easy to remember?
- Does it inspire?
- Is it up to date?
- How is it communicated?
- How is it used?

Great Workplaces Give Employees Voice

- When employees speak up
 - With or without permission
 - To influence organizational decision-making or change
- If sincerely encouraged and well-managed
 - A performance strategy



Why Care About Employee Voice?

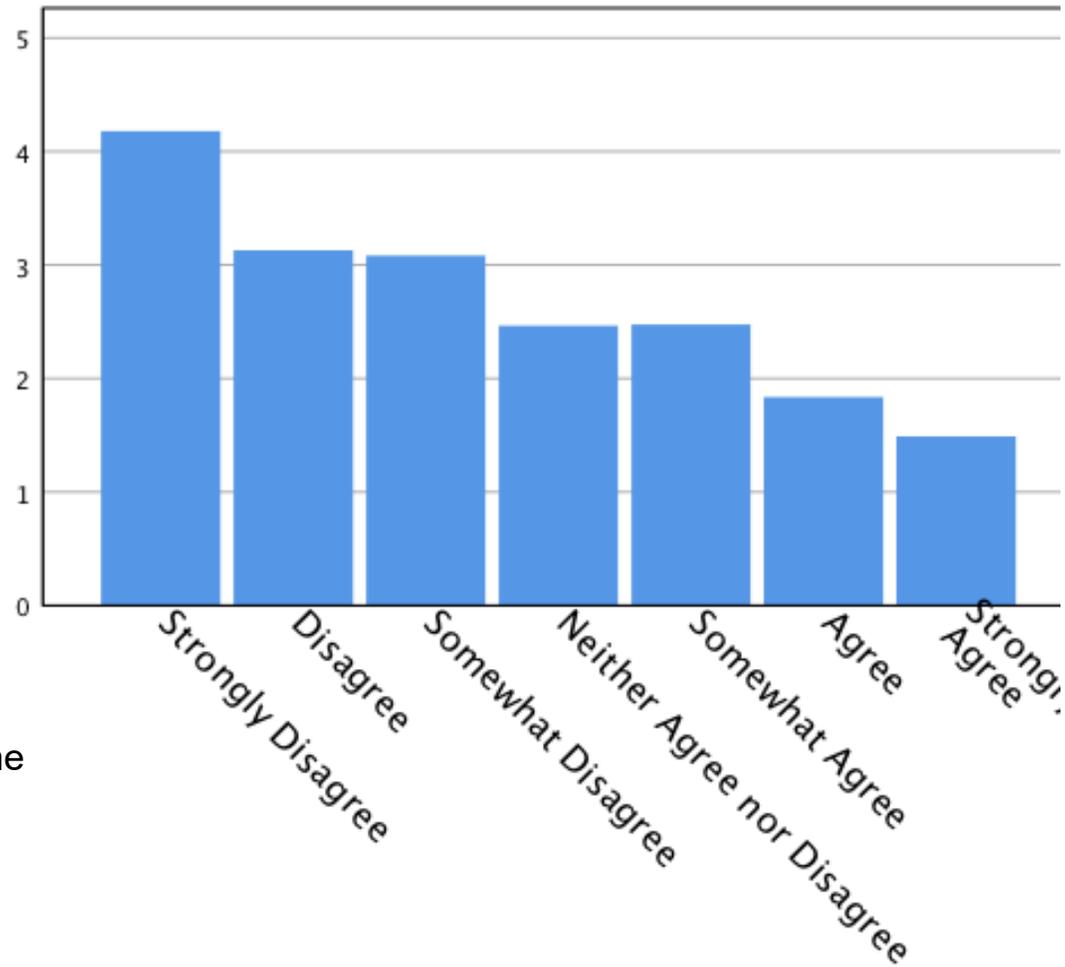
- At organizational level
 - Can improve group problem solving and decision quality
 - Can improve team performance
 - Lowers turnover
- At individual level
 - Stronger sense of belonging
 - Greater employee commitment to the organization
 - Improves individual productivity
 - Emotionally and physically healthier employees



Batt et al. 2002; Hirschman 1970; Freeman and Medoff 1984; Marchington and Grugulis 2000; Egan, et al, 2007

From Local Government Workplaces Initiative Data, Two NC Local Governments

I am thinking about leaving my organization.



Decisions in the Manager's Office are often not made collaboratively despite the expectation that the rest of the organization do so. Often upper management is made aware of significant organizational changes when they are announced to the entire organization with no opportunity for input or comment.

—*Department Head*

I have opportunities to provide my opinion to upper management on workplace issues.

What Causes Employees To Speak Up or Not?

- Absence of formal mechanisms
- Fear of retaliation
- Sense of hope/futility
- Supervisor confidence level
- Supervisory demeanor
- Individual risk aversion
- Bystander effect
- Rigid hierarchies



Building a Culture for Employee Voice

- Recognize and reward managers and supervisors for effectively encouraging/managing voice
- Hold managers and supervisors accountable
 - Employee surveys that ask questions about managerial practice
- Incorporate voice into professional development (360° feedback)
- Train supervisors on giving and receiving of employee feedback



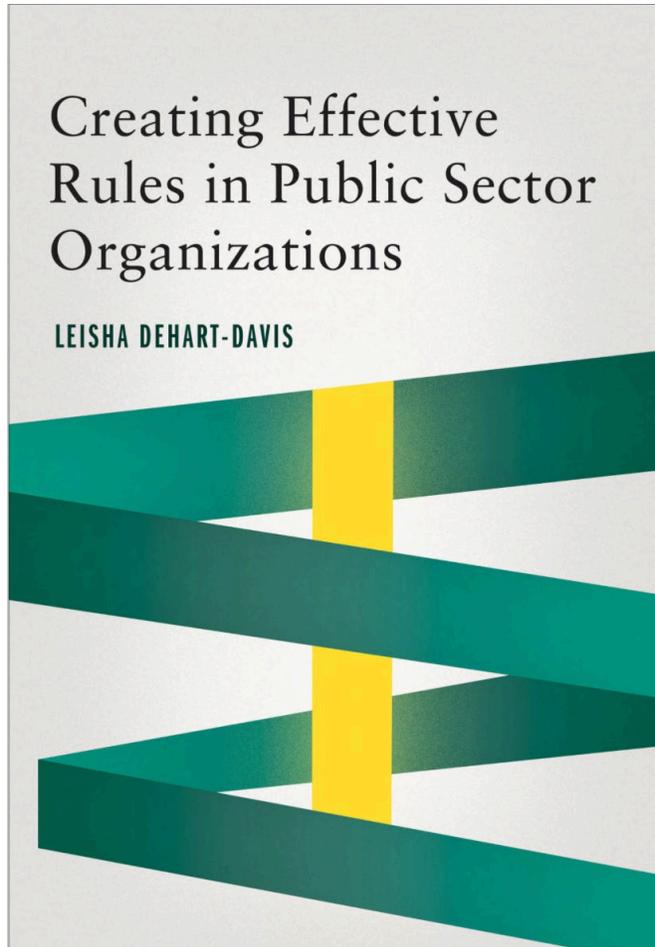
Mechanisms for Employee Voice

- Meetings
- Idea Systems
- Employee Advisory Initiatives (Forums, Task Forces, Committees, Problem Solving Groups)
- Employee Surveys
- Ombuds Office
- Open-Door Policy
- Process: solicit input, acknowledge, thank, followup

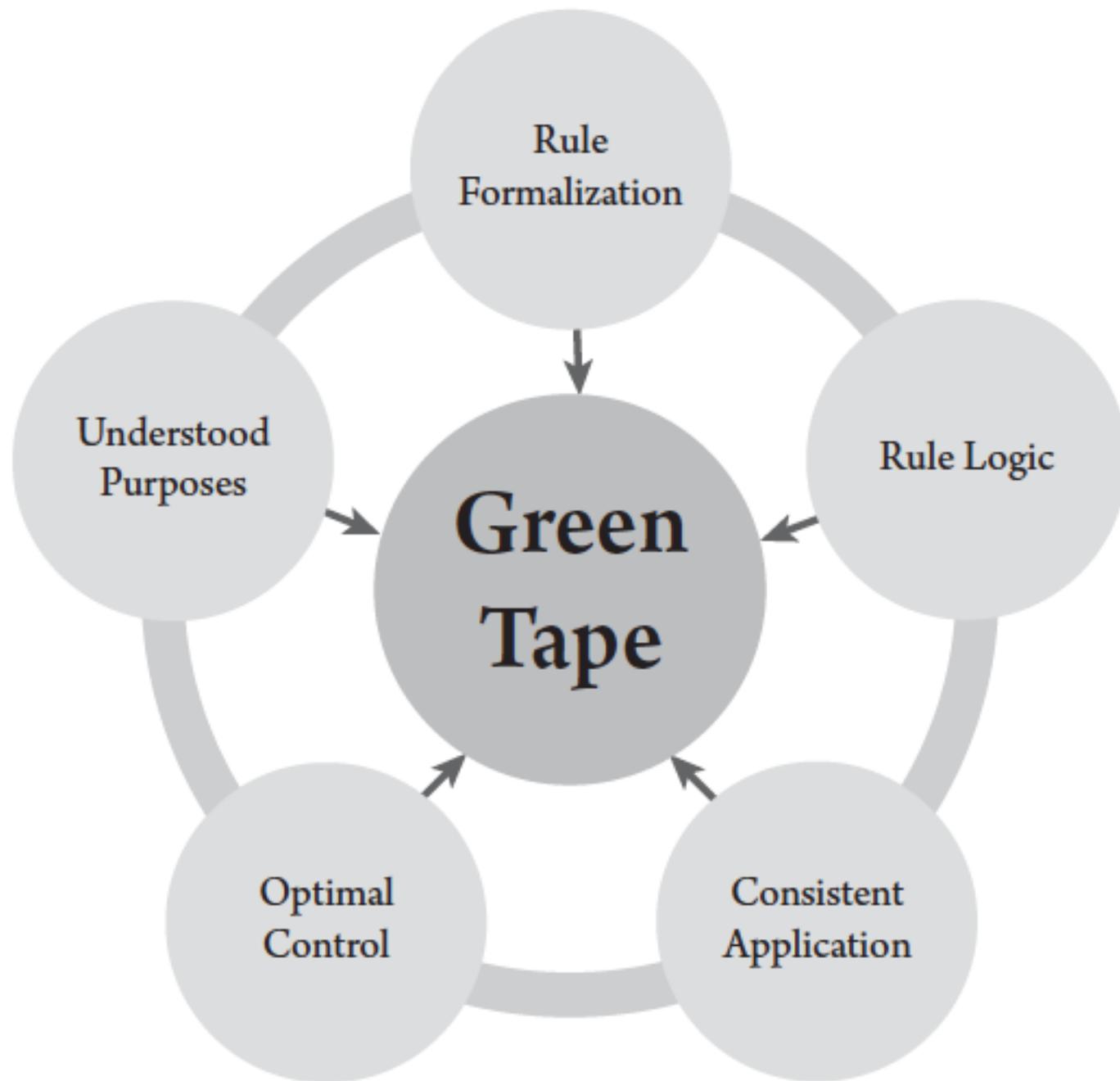
Think On This: How well does your organization provide employee voice?

- Where would you rate your organization on giving employees voice, on a scale from 1 to 5 (no voice to maximum voice)
- Do you use any of the voice mechanisms listed on the previous page?

Great workplaces design and implement good rules that people will follow (AKA, green tape)



- Rules structure relationship between employees and organization
- Three things to consider
 - What is the organization trying to **achieve**?
 - What **behaviors** will this rule trigger
 - How will this rule **affect** my people?



When to Write a Rule



- You have an organizational issue
- The issue cannot go unresolved
- The issue involves more than one person
- You know what you want to achieve with the rule
- How to address the issue is reasonably clear

Think on This: Rules in Your Workplace

- Do you have rules in your workplace that need revising or designing?

Great Workplaces Empower Employees

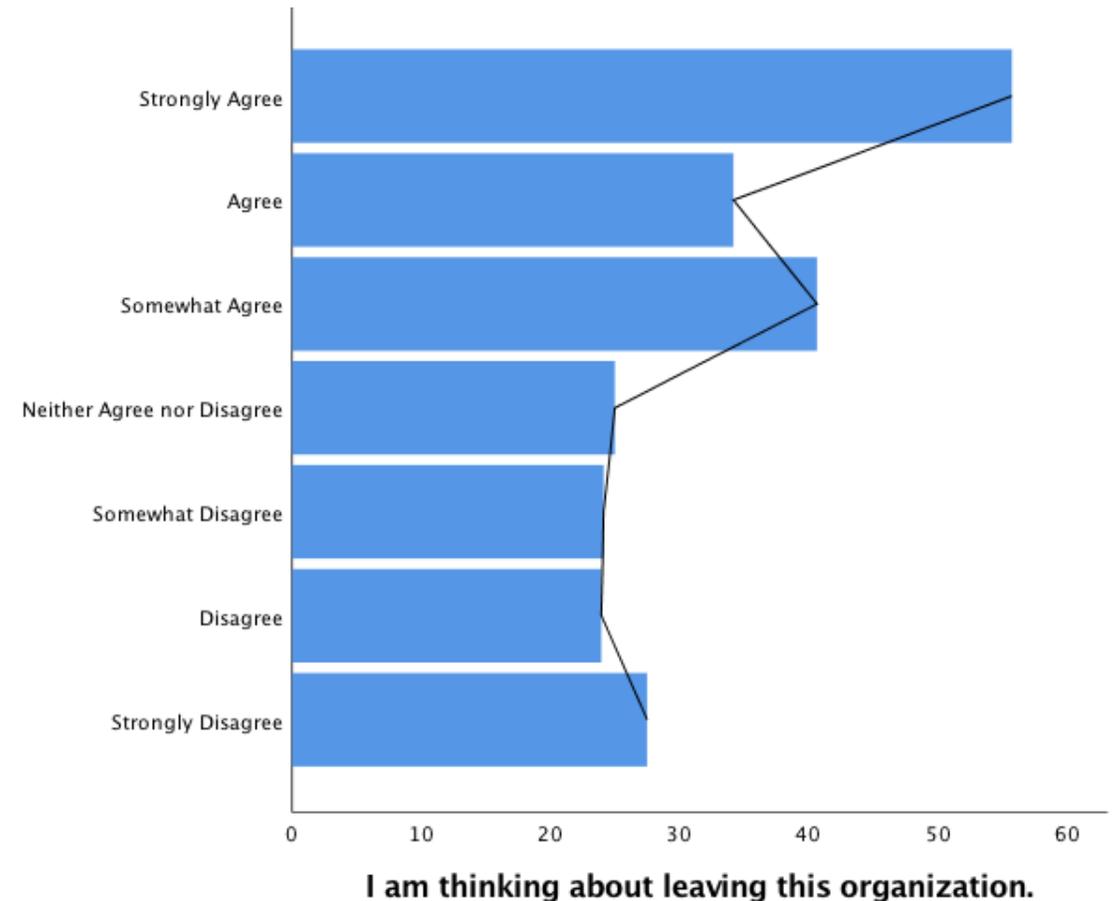
- Decentralization, pushing power down
- Decentralization associated with
 - Increased efficiency
 - Higher morale
 - Greater creativity and innovation
 - *Feeney and DeHart-Davis 2009*
- Example from LGWI Data
 - Employees in centralized workplaces are significantly and strongly less likely to want to spend the rest of the organization even when controlling for age and managerial status



Examples from Local Government Workplaces Initiative

- “The supervisor is not free to make decisions about anything before getting the approval of the program manager” --*Social Worker*

Even small matters have to be referred to someone higher up for a final answer.



Source: Local Government Workplaces Initiative Org 17, 2017-2018. n=473

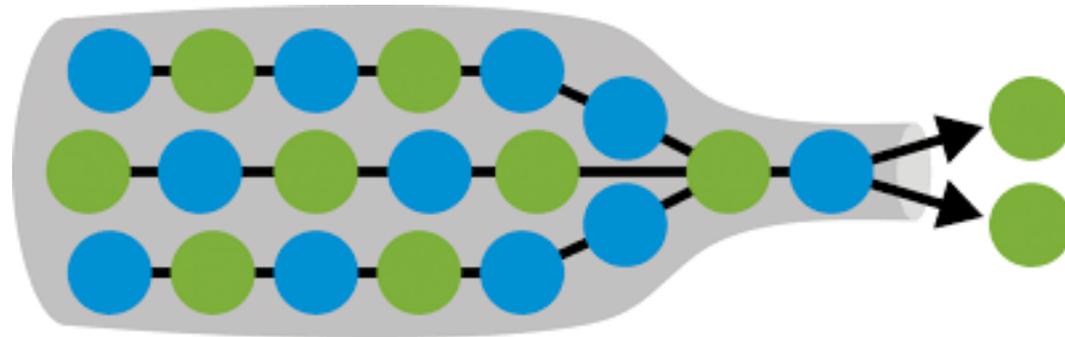
How to empower employees



- Use LGWI Organizational Development Process
 - Survey employees to assess departmental centralization
 - Small groups with employees to interpret survey results and identify decentralization opportunities
 - Re-survey in 18 to 24 months
- Ask for ideas to create efficiencies (if you have system in place for processing ideas)

Think on This: How centralized are your workplaces?

- Do employees complain of micromanagement?
- Do there seem to be workflow bottlenecks?



Great Workplaces Relentlessly Seek Fairness

- Fairness in processes (procedural fairness)*
- Fairness in outcomes (distributive fairness)
- Fairness in relationships between people (interactional fairness)



Procedural Fairness



- The fairness of processes for making decisions and allocating resources
 - Examples? (performance evaluation, hiring/firing, promotions, pay, pay studies)
- Characteristics (Leventhal 1980)
 - Consistency
 - Suppression of bias
 - Accuracy of information
 - Diverse perspectives
 - Correctability of bad decisions

Think on This: How Fair Are Your Processes

- Do you have processes that need work from a fairness perspective?

Wrapping Up

- Identify one area of great workplace design that you would like to work on within the next year
- What resources (knowledge, time, money) do you need to achieve this improvement?