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Managing People During Stressful Times: The Psychologically Defensive Workplace

Seth Allcorn, Michael A. Diamond

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Allcorn and Diamond argue that the workplace has become ever more threatening to employees, and that they respond by creating psychological defenses that make the workplace ever more dysfunctional. To keep organizations competitive and sustain the value of their stock, management demands constant improvements in their employees' performance, but often the result is just the opposite of what management wants. Allcorn and Diamond explore this process in depth, and introduce a comprehensive and internally consistent, psychologically informed model of human development and behavior, one that explains for the first time the nature of the psychologically defensive workplace. In doing so, they challenge readers to think systematically about the psychological side of the workplace and to understand the importance of dealing effectively with employee defensiveness. The result is an authoritative study with valuable lessons and immediate benefits for corporate executives, and for scholars and researchers in organizational behavor in the academic community.

Allcorn and Diamond's model is applicable to understanding five aspects of the workplace: first, how individuals respond to its stresses and anxieties; second, the psychologically defensive nature of interpersonal relationships at work; third, what the psychologically defensive group processes are; fourth, the dynamics of psychological defenses; and fifth, how the model is used to understand the connection of all organizations to the larger society in which they are imbedded. The authors' goal is to help management understand what actually is going on in today's workplace, the consequence of downsizing and other cost-reduction initiatives, and how important it is for management for relieve the problems they cause.

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