

Means Efficacy: A Motivational Construct Whose Time Has Come

Dov Eden, PhD

Saltiel Professor Emeritus of Corporate Leadership and Social Responsibility

Faculty of Management

Tel Aviv University

Global efficacy is comprised of internal efficacy and external efficacy. Internal efficacy is self-efficacy. Means efficacy, a special type of external efficacy, refers to the individual's belief in the usefulness of the tools available for achieving successful job performance. As is the case for self-efficacy, it is hypothesized enhancing means efficacy raises performance expectations and motivates intensification of effort, culminating in improved performance. By strengthening means efficacy, field experimenters have been able to improve the productive utilization of computers among social-service workers and among students; to reduce turnover intentions among workers with disabilities; to reduce job stress among employees coping with new information technology; and to strengthen military trainees' mastery of their weapons and their motivation to use them. These effects of means efficacy were achieved with no concomitant changes in self-efficacy. Another variant of external efficacy is circumstantial efficacy, which refers to sources of performance expectations that are completely divorced from means, and rather derive from individuals' beliefs that external conditions (e.g., home-court advantage) favor or disfavor them. Field-experimental evidence shows that competitors led to believe that circumstances gave them an advantage were more likely to win the competition, whereas individuals led to believe that circumstances disadvantaged them were more likely to lose. Thus, augmenting external efficacy can produce valuable outcomes with no increase in investment of time or money. The future augurs appreciable payoff as leadership scholars weave external efficacy into new theories (e.g., authentic leadership theory) of how leader behavior can enhance followers' beliefs in themselves, in their tools, and in the circumstances, thereby boosting their performance. Reaping the benefits of external efficacy costs nothing; it requires only awareness of its role in motivating effort and mindful leadership actions to enhance it.