# ORGANIZATIONAL CITIZENSHIP BEHAVIOURS

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An organization struggles to succeed unless everyone routinely goes "above and beyond the call of duty" by contributing to the work of others. Small but important tasks fall by the wayside if workers refuse to put in the extra effort, cooperation, and care by simply invoking the excuse, "that's not my job."

*How can executives encourage employees to act as good **organizational citizens**? The challenge is that it is virtually impossible to track, evaluate, and reward such behaviours. Nonetheless, research from workplace psychologists reveals a great deal about what these behaviours are and how they can be encouraged (and discouraged).*
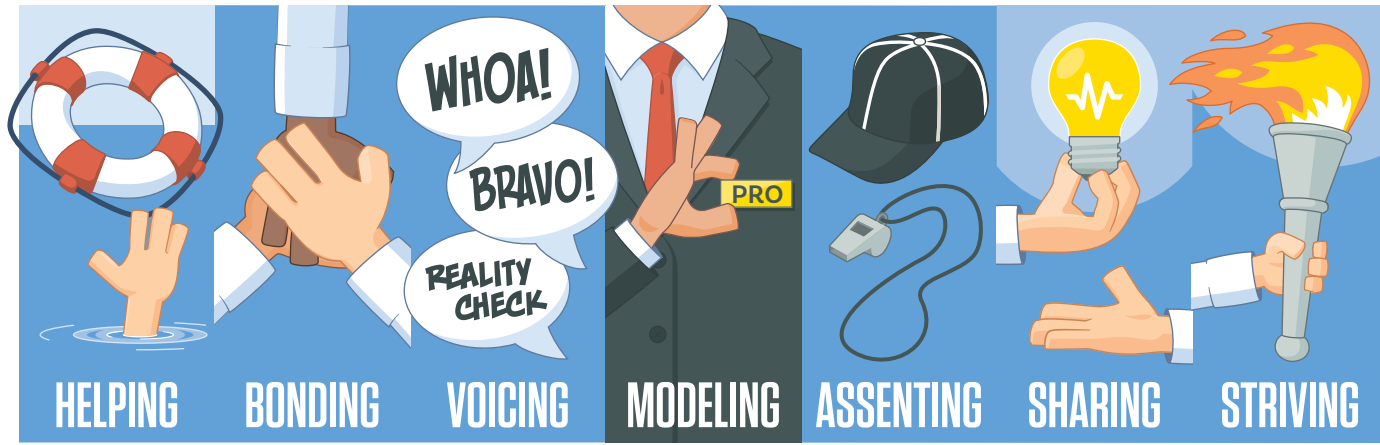
HELPING

Organizational citizens use their discretionary effort to assist others gladly, usually without being asked. That helping can include coaching and motivating others, as well as resolving conflicts.

BONDING

Workplace harmony is enhanced when people take a keen interest in each other as personal beings. A good citizen works hard at building a web of relationships and taking part in casual social activities.

VOICING

Organizations can get blindsided unless the courageous speak out about problems, risks, and opportunities. There is a skill to pointing out inconvenient truths constructively and diplomatically.

MODELING

Civic virtue is the demonstration of upstanding behaviour, such as considerateness, manners, maintaining a professional appearance, and eschewing a sense of entitlement.

ASSENTING

The workplace is full of disappointments, compromises, and setbacks. Citizens show patience and emotional resilience by accepting the bad with social grace, good humour, and a sporting attitude.

SHARING

Sharing knowledge and information is partly voluntary and requires extra effort, such as teaching. A good citizen spreads ideas and shares credit instead of hoarding in a self-interested way.

STRIVING

Organizational citizens exceed job requirements by investing extra effort and "going the extra mile" to solve problems for others. That includes minding the small but important details of work.

MAIN DRIVERS

The factors that promote and discourage organizational citizenship behaviours can be grouped into ten categories. Think about how each factor influences employee development and workplace culture. It helps to imagine the development path as having two tracks: an ideal path in which people flourish in a virtuous cycle of collaboration; and a nightmare scenario in which the behaviours are discouraged systematically.

START

NEGATIVE TRACK

POSITIVE TRACK

1 WORKLOAD

Heavy workloads sap energy, narrow attention, and limit the opportunities to contribute beyond the scope of basic work tasks. In contrast, those with some flexibility in their schedules are better able to marshal energies and devote part of their time to collective problem solving.

2 LATITUDE

More important than the amount of work is how the work gets done. Those who are told how to perform tasks down to the smallest detail (without any say) lack the psychological empowerment to go beyond basic job requirements. Such people feel like less valued "drones." Those who have a say in role breadth and task performance tend to be more self-initiating and collaborative.
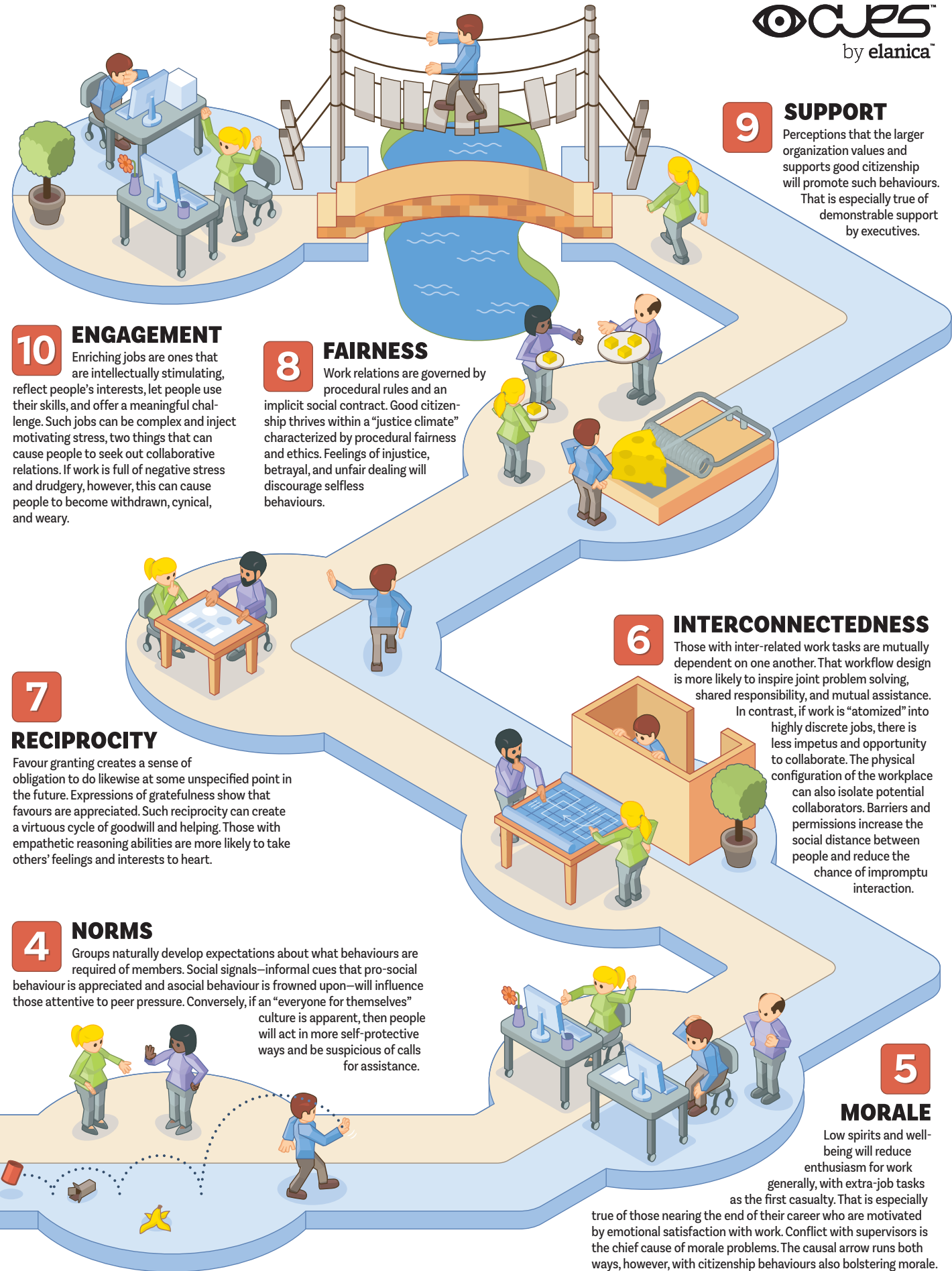
3 GROUP IDENTIFICATION

Those who identify with the larger organization or cause are more likely to apply themselves with a sense of larger purpose. An organization's internal branding and external reputation contribute to that sense. Having a similar outlook to supervisors is also a factor. Those with self-centred personalities, limited social interaction, and tenuous employment contracts are less likely to develop that *esprit de corps* and sense of the commonweal.

4 NORMS

Groups naturally develop expectations about what behaviours are required of members. Social signals—informal cues that pro-social behaviour is appreciated and asocial behaviour is frowned upon—will influence those attentive to peer pressure. Conversely, if an "everyone for themselves" culture is apparent, then people will act in more self-protective ways and be suspicious of calls for assistance.

5 MORALE

Low spirits and well-being will reduce enthusiasm for work generally, with extra-job tasks as the first casualty. That is especially true of those nearing the end of their career who are motivated by emotional satisfaction with work. Conflict with supervisors is the chief cause of morale problems. The causal arrow runs both ways, however, with citizenship behaviours also bolstering morale.

6 INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Those with inter-related work tasks are mutually dependent on one another. That workflow design is more likely to inspire joint problem solving, shared responsibility, and mutual assistance. In contrast, if work is "atomized" into highly discrete jobs, there is less impetus and opportunity to collaborate. The physical configuration of the workplace can also isolate potential collaborators. Barriers and permissions increase the social distance between people and reduce the chance of impromptu interaction.

7 RECIPROCITY

Favour granting creates a sense of obligation to do likewise at some unspecified point in the future. Expressions of gratefulness show that favours are appreciated. Such reciprocity can create a virtuous cycle of goodwill and helping. Those with empathetic reasoning abilities are more likely to take others' feelings and interests to heart.

8 FAIRNESS

Work relations are governed by procedural rules and an implicit social contract. Good citizenship thrives within a "justice climate" characterized by procedural fairness and ethics. Feelings of injustice, betrayal, and unfair dealing will discourage selfless behaviours.

9 SUPPORT

Perceptions that the larger organization values and supports good citizenship will promote such behaviours. That is especially true of demonstrable support by executives.

10 ENGAGEMENT

Enriching jobs are ones that are intellectually stimulating, reflect people's interests, let people use their skills, and offer a meaningful challenge. Such jobs can be complex and inject motivating stress, two things that can cause people to seek out collaborative relations. If work is full of negative stress and drudgery, however, this can cause people to become withdrawn, cynical, and weary.