

Exploring Employee Experiences of Distributed Leadership in Consultancy SMEs

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Abstract : Despite a growth in literature on distributed leadership, the majority of studies are centred on large public organisations particularly within the health and education sectors. The purpose of this study is to fill the gap in the literature by exploring employee experiences of distributed leadership within two commercial consultancy SME businesses in the UK and USA. The aim of the study informed an exploratory method of research to gather qualitative data drawn from semi-structured interviews involving a sample of employees in each organisation. A series of broad, open questions were used to explore the employees' experiences; evidence of distributed leadership; and extant barriers and practices in each organisation. Whilst some of our findings aligned with patterns and practices in the existing literature, it importantly discovered some emergent themes that have not previously been recognised in the previous studies. Our investigation identified that whilst distributed leadership was in evidence in both organisations, the interviewees' experience reported that it was sporadic and inconsistent. Moreover, non-client focused projects were reported to be less important and distributed leadership was found to be inconsistent or non-existent.

Keywords : consultancy, distributed leadership, owner-manager, SME, entrepreneur

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