

■ CONDITIONS THAT HINDER EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

J. William Pfeiffer

A person's interpersonal life is dependent on that person's facility for making his or her thoughts, feelings, and needs known to others and on that person's receptiveness to the attempts of others to share similar data with him or her. Communication, a multifaceted phenomenon, is the result of efforts by individuals toward this end. Communication can be considered in simplistic terms as the sending and receiving of messages, as both elements must be present for communication to take place. However, the fundamental transaction of message sent and received does not presuppose that communication has occurred. Often, it has only partially occurred or has been aborted entirely as a result of the circumstances surrounding the occasion when the communication attempt was made. These circumstances may be environmental, emotional, verbal-skill oriented, phenomenological, or resulting from a host of conditions present within the individuals who are attempting to relate.

An analogy may help to clarify the concept of the effect of circumstances on the effectiveness of sending and receiving messages. In the late afternoon when you observe a sunset, the sun often appears to be a deep red, larger and less intense than it seems at midday. This is due to the phenomenon of *refraction*, the bending of the light rays as they pass through the earth's atmosphere, and the higher density of dust in the air through which the light passes as the sun goes down. The sun has already moved below the horizon, but it is still in sight because its emissions are distorted by the conditions of the medium through which they must travel. In a similar way the messages that we send to one another are often refracted by intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental conditions that contribute to the atmosphere in which we are relating. I may distort my message to you by giving out mixed messages verbally and symbolically, and you may distort what you hear because of your own needs and experiences. The two of us may be located in an environment, physical and psychological, that contributes to the difficulty in clearly sharing what we intend. In an atmosphere of suspicion, for example, we may both become unduly cautious in our communication.

Although it is unlikely that totally nonrefracted communication is a possibility over time between any two people or with significant others with whom we must deal interpersonally, an awareness of conditions that block and alter the intention of sent and received messages may produce less refraction and better communication in the long run.

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Some of the conditions that cause refraction can be labeled and examined in light of their impact on effective communications:

- preoccupation
- emotional blocks
- hostility
- charisma
- past experiences
- hidden agendas
- inarticulateness
- stereotyping
- physical environment
- mind wandering
- defensiveness
- relationships
- status

1. *Preoccupation.* A person who is focusing on internal stimuli may listen in such a way that none of the message comes through or so little of it that he or she cannot grasp the message appropriately and may respond in such a way that the blocking of the message is apparent. A story is told of a columnist in New York who attended numerous cocktail parties and had come to believe that a certain socialite was so preoccupied with making an outstanding impression on her guests that she was unable to hear anything they were saying. To test his theory he came late to her next party; when he was greeted effusively at the door by the hostess, he said, "I'm sorry to be late, but I murdered my wife this evening and had a terrible time stuffing her body into the trunk of my car." The super-charming hostess beamed and replied, "Well, darling, the important thing is that you *have* arrived, and now the party can really begin!"

2. *Emotional blocks.* A second condition may be an emotional block to the direction that the message is taking. Words may have become charged with emotion for a person, possibly due to that person's conditioning in childhood or to current circumstances in his or her life at the time the communication attempt is made. An example might be of the well-intentioned but unaware adult white male, who, in speaking to an adult black male, makes reference to "you colored boys." Similarly, a woman who is having difficulty in conceiving a child may not be able to discuss Aunt Mary's comment, "Now that you and Bob have been settled for a few years, it would be nice to start a family"; or she may find herself responding irrationally to a lecture on population control.

3. *Hostility*. Hostility may create refraction of messages. This can occur when communicating with a person with whom you are angry, or it may be a carryover from a recent experience. It may also be the subject matter that arouses hostility. When two people are engaged in a hostile confrontation, each often distorts messages from the other in such a way that provides fuel for further venting of hostility. A husband and a wife may have the following type of exchange of messages: *He*: “I really thought I was helping you when I . . .” *She*: “Are you trying to tell me that I was incapable of . . .” *He*: “You aren’t capable of much of anything! Just look at the state of our finances.” The husband’s intended message was “I know I’ve made you angry by my action. Where did I go wrong?” The angry wife chose to interpret the word “help” as an accusation that she lacked the resources to handle the situation. Her message elicits further distortion and hostility from the husband. In another example, a woman may come home from just having had a confrontation with her boss and may carry over her hostility to her family by overreacting to her husband’s messages concerning the day’s irritations, or she may simply filter out all messages and respond in monosyllables to any attempts at communication. The subject matter being dealt with may engender hostility and thereby distort the message. A father may comment that his son should plan to have his hair trimmed for his sister’s wedding and find that his message has been refracted as an all-encompassing criticism of his son’s life style.

4. *Charisma*. The charisma of the sender of a message may affect how the message is received. Political candidates are often chosen more for their possession of this quality than for their other attributes. A charismatic person can often make tired, trivial messages seem new and important to the recipient; however, this too can become detrimental to communication, as the receiver of the message is less likely to question or ask for clarification of the message. How often have we come away enthusiastically from having heard a dynamic speaker, only to discover that we cannot actually remember the content of the speech? Conversely, a person who has something important and unique to say to us may not be able to hold our attention in such a fashion that we hear the message he or she is sending.

5. *Past experience*. Our experience can predispose us to refraction. If our weekly staff meetings have always been a waste of time, we may come into each succeeding meeting expecting not to give the messages that are sent much consideration or to hear them as having no relevant implications. Staff meetings may also nurture another kind of condition that may create message refraction.

6. *Hidden agendas*. A person with a special interest, that is, a hidden agenda, may hear all messages only in reference to his or her own needs or may not be able to hear messages that do not relate to his or her own interest. If the hidden agenda is in competition with the message of another employee, he or she may reject all suggestions made by that other employee or may attempt to manipulate others into distorting the other employee’s messages. The person with the hidden agenda might make such comments as “Of course, Chris has no real expertise in this area” or “We all know that

the administration will never buy that, Chris.” He or she may dismiss an excellent idea from someone with a fresh perspective.

7. *Inarticulateness*. Simple inarticulateness, or lack of verbal skill, may distort the intention of the sender. As clarity is essential for the true message to be received, a person may never be able to communicate effectively if he or she has never developed verbal skills. If the receiver of the message is unaware of the sender’s difficulty, he or she may dismiss the messages or distort them. Verbal patterns that are culturally determined may also hinder communication, as they could function as lack of skill when the message is received. A person from a minority culture may be quite articulate within his or her peer group but may fail to get messages through when speaking to a person from another culture. It is at this point that verbally administered standardized intelligence tests become invalid. An Appalachian child was once being tested by a psychometrist, who asked that the child name the seasons of the year. The child replied, “Deer season, possum season, fishing season . . .” The child showed an excellent grasp of seasonal variation throughout the year; but because his response was not the standard one, his score on the test was reduced.

8. *Stereotyping*. Culturally determined verbal patterns may lead to another type of communication distortion—stereotyping. Eliza Doolittle in the musical *My Fair Lady* was “heard” and understood as a charming, if unconventional, lady once her speech patterns had been altered from their original cockney flavor. However, Eliza had not changed her values or increased her worth as a person in changing her speech patterns; the only change was in her ability to send messages as a refined lady rather than as the stereotype of a thoroughly dismissable guttersnipe. Another type of stereotyping that causes adjustments in a person’s perceptual prism is that of the visual impact of the speaker. A very conventional person may “hear” all attempts at communication as radical if the speaker has an unconventional physical appearance. A conservative member of the faculty at an urban university in the United States may hear a bearded colleague say “Perhaps some of the experimental programs, such as the bachelor’s degree in general studies, would serve the needs of our particular group of students better than the traditional degree programs seem to do,” and may angrily dismiss the idea as an attempt to downgrade the “standards” of the university. Yet a colleague with a conservative appearance might make the identical proposal, and the faculty member might respond with “Yes, we need to have more flexibility for our particular student population.”

9. *Physical environment*. The environment alone may create conditions under which communication cannot take place effectively. A stuffy, warm room may make it impossible to send and receive messages accurately. A person’s physical state may also be detrimental to communication. Any teacher will expound at length on the decline in understanding on the part of students as summer approaches in a classroom that is not air conditioned. Physical environment may contribute to another condition that may get in the way of communications.

10. *Mind wandering.* This is a state to which all are susceptible. It distracts from the message sent in much the same way that preoccupation distracts, but the internal stimulus may never focus on any topic for more than a few seconds. This inability to focus for long on internal stimuli will generalize to the external stimulus of a sender's message.

11. *Defensiveness.* This leads to continual refraction of messages received. The insecurity of the person tends to distort questions into accusations and replies into justifications. A wife may ask her husband if he happened to pick up a loaf of bread on his way home from work. Her intention is informational, that is, she is planning to go out anyway and will pick up some bread at the same time, if he has not already bought some. The issue is duplication of effort. The insecure husband, however, may respond as if the issue were his ability to meet her needs. "No, I didn't. I can't think of everything, you know, when I'm busy with a huge project at work. I suppose you think my buying a loaf of bread is more important than concentrating on my job!"

12. *Relationships.* When we are attempting to communicate with another person, we are giving out two sets of messages simultaneously, content and relationship. The other person may be so preoccupied with hearing any cues about the latter that the content is lost or seriously refracted. For example, a boss tells her secretary that she has a set of instructions for her and that she wants her to be sure that she gets them right. If the secretary is insecure in her relationship with the boss, she may hear an implication that she is being evaluated negatively. Consequently, the secretary may distort her hearing of the boss's instructions.

13. *Status.* Perhaps the most difficult condition to overcome in communications is that of status, as it encompasses most of the elements that have already been discussed. A person in a position of high status may find communication difficult with most of the people with whom he or she must interact, as his or her perceived power differentially affects various people. One person may be preoccupied with impressing the source of power, while another may be defensive, feeling that his or her job or status is threatened by the powerful person. In addition, any high-status person must deal with the hostility of the envious, the stereotyping of the power worshiper, the past experiences with other high-status individuals that people may be generalizing from, and the emotional elements generated by all of these conditions.

The means of alleviating these conditions that interfere with the communication process are as varied as the people who must deal with them. The key, however, is in becoming aware of the conditions that are interfering with the process and attempting to modify behavior in such a way that messages are less often and less severely refracted.

■ THINKING AND FEELING

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Thinking and feeling are the two major ways by which we interact with our interpersonal environment. Both are essential to constructive communication. In general, thinking (“head talk”) leads to an *explanation* of the interactive situation, while feeling (“gut talk”) leads to an *understanding* of it. Head talk is the prose of communication; gut talk is the poetry.

“Think” statements refer to the denotative aspects of the environment. They attempt to define, assert, opine, rationalize, or make causal connections between environmental events. Think statements are bound by the rules of logic and scientific inquiry; they may be true or untrue. Many times a think statement can be proven or disproven. Think statements require words to be communicated.

Most of us have been trained to emit think statements exclusively. We are constantly engaged in cognitive work: observing, inferring, categorizing, generalizing, and summarizing; occasionally we report to others what goes on in our heads. Frequently we are asked for facts (“Where did you put the car keys?”), opinions (“Which tastes better, California or French wine?”), and speculation (“What happens when we achieve zero population growth?”). Sometimes we are simply asked “What are you thinking about?” Human beings like to think, and our ability to do it is usually on the short list of characteristics that distinguish us from orangutans.

Laboratory learning places great emphasis on feelings. Many participants in groups learn quickly that beginning sentences with “I think” is bad form, so they preface their remarks with “I feel” and go on to report thoughts. This bogus use of “I feel” often muddles communication.

1. “I feel like having a drink” is no expression of feeling but merely a shorthand way of saying “I’m thinking about having a drink, but I’m still undecided.” In this case “feel” is used to express an *indefinite thought*.
2. “I feel that Roger’s brashness is a cover for his insecurity” is not an expression of feeling. Rather, it is a *statement of opinion*, an offering of a hypothesis.
3. “I feel that all men are created equal.” An abstract principle cannot really be felt; this is a *statement of belief*, an expression of faith in someone or something. It is more accurate to say “I believe that all men are created equal.”

Watch yourself when you say “I feel *that*” Such phraseology is a clue that you are making a think statement with a feel prefix.

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“Feel” statements refer to the connotative aspects of the environment. They attempt to report our internal affective, immediate, nonrational, emotional, “gut” responses to environmental events. Usually, feel statements are personal and idiosyncratic in that they refer to inner states, what is happening inside of us. Feel statements, like dreams, cannot be true or false, or good or bad, but only honestly or dishonestly communicated. Feel statements may not require words at all; when they do, they usually take the form of “I feel (adjective)” or “I feel (adverb).”

Many of us have conditioned ourselves to screen out awareness of internal reactions. We may allow ourselves to report feeling “interested” or “uncomfortable,” but deny ourselves more intense or varied reactions. Laboratory learning emphasizes feeling states precisely because of this conditioning and denial. By getting in touch with our inner events, we enrich our experiences with the reality surrounding us.

Changes inside of us provide direct cues to the feelings we are experiencing. A change in bodily functioning—muscle tightness, restlessness, frowning, smiling, inability to stay with a conversation—tells us how we are reacting to what is happening. The sudden emergence of fantasies, impulses (“I want to go over and sit by Kathy”) or wishes (“I wish Tom would shut up”) into our consciousness can provide immediate entry into the rich and productive area of feeling communication if we can express them.

Sometimes we can also become aware of what is blocking our awareness of what we are experiencing. *Shame* is one kind of block, especially when the impulse sounds childish or regressive. *Fear* that if we communicate wishes, overt behavior will result is another problem. It is a leftover from the magical thinking of childhood. Often, we have a clear *expectation of judgment* from others if we dare to express ourselves. In a well-functioning group, these blocks do not correspond to reality. It can be truly liberating to express your feelings without shame, fear, or judgment.

PITFALLS IN DEALING WITH FEELINGS

Projection occurs when we deny our own feelings and attribute them to others. It is a common happening in groups and involves many distortions. Frequently, projections are made in an attempt to justify our own biases and prejudices.

Judging motives in others is guesswork that escalates misunderstanding. It is a sly way of focusing on another’s feelings instead of your own and an entry into the intriguing but time-wasting game of explaining *why* someone is feeling the way he or she does. If you want to read minds, start with your own.

Metafeelings are thoughts and feelings about feelings. Metafeelings garble communication. They are a way of distancing yourself from the immediate event, and they present the risk of intellectualizing a potentially rich feeling experience. Beware of exchanges that begin with phrases such as “I’m guessing that when I think I’m sort of feeling that . . .” You will get nowhere.

OWNING YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS

Effective communication occurs when the communicators take responsibility for their thoughts, feelings, and overt behavior—when they *own* what they do. Blaming and imputing motives are sneaky, dishonest attempts to be irresponsible. When you own your thoughts and feelings, the other person knows what you are experiencing and can respond more authentically to you.

You are entitled to have thoughts and feelings in your interpersonal environment. Being aware of them and the differences among them can improve your communications.

■ “DON’T YOU THINK THAT . . . ?”: AN EXPERIENTIAL LECTURE ON INDIRECT AND DIRECT COMMUNICATION

J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

This article attempts to set forth certain theoretical concepts concerning indirect and direct communication. In order to integrate theory with practice, six activities are interspersed throughout this article. These activities are designed to add the dimension of experiential learning to the theoretical concepts discussed.

Each of the six activities described is inserted at the exact point in the lecture at which the activity is designed to occur. Activity 1, for example, should take place before any theoretical concepts are introduced. The activities can accommodate an unlimited number of participants.

Activity 1

1. The participants form subgroups of four. No talking is allowed.
2. Each person in each subgroup writes down the first two things that he or she would communicate to each of the other people in the subgroup. Again, no talking is allowed.
3. The facilitator gathers and publishes information concerning how many of the twenty-four items generated in each subgroup are questions.
4. Participants are directed to “discard” the items they have generated; they will be asked to “communicate” later.

THEORETICAL CONCEPTS

One basic focus of the human relations movement is on the effective use of communication. Many people fear taking risks in interpersonal relationships; yet as they

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need to feel that they are articulate and adept at “communication,” they often engage in what we can call “pseudo communication.”

In reality, they try to direct the risk of interpersonal communication away from themselves. They are afraid to present their own opinions, ideas, feelings, and desires.

The individual who fears taking risks may want to manipulate others into fulfilling his or her own desires or expectations. Thus, this person would be saved from being rejected or from exposing his or her vulnerability to others. The person’s motive may also be to control others without apparently assuming authority.

This article attempts to illustrate several common varieties of indirect, pseudo communication and to suggest some alternatives to these misdirected patterns of communication.

NONCOMMUNICATION

One way that people engage in noncommunicative discourse is by speaking as if they represented other people, in an attempt to get illegitimate support for their personal points of view. For example, a person who prefaces his or her remarks by saying, “I agree with Fred when he says . . .” or “I think I speak for the group when I say . . .” is not communicating. Instead, that person is simply attempting to borrow legitimacy.

PSEUDO QUESTIONS

Perhaps the most frequently misused communication pattern is the question. In fact, most questions are pseudo questions. The questioner is not really seeking information or an answer to the “question.” Rather, he or she is offering an opinion—a statement. But because the person does not want to risk having the idea rejected, he or she frames it as a question, hoping to force the other person to agree.

With few exceptions, we could eliminate *all* questions from our communications with others. As most questions are *indirect* forms of communication, they could be recast as statements, or direct communications. By replacing pseudo questions with genuine statements, we would come much closer to actual communication with one another.

Before we can achieve the aim of *direct* communication, however, we must be able to identify the varieties of pseudo questions that people tend to use. There are eight basic types of pseudo questions. Specific examples of each of these types of *indirect* communication are noted.

Co-optive Question

This pseudo question attempts to narrow or limit the possible responses of the other person. “Don’t you think that . . . ?” is a classic example of this type. Other examples are “Isn’t it true that . . . ?”; “Wouldn’t you rather . . . ?”; “Don’t you want to . . . ?”; and “You wouldn’t want that, would you?”

The questioner is attempting to elicit the response that he or she wants by building certain restrictions into the question.

Punitive Question

When the questioner uses a punitive question, he or she really wants to expose the other individual without appearing to do so directly. For example, a person may be proposing a new theoretical model in training; the listener, knowing that the theory has not been properly researched, may ask what the experimental evidence indicates. The purpose of the questioner is not to obtain information but to punish the speaker by putting him or her on the spot.

Hypothetical Question

In asking a hypothetical question, a person again resorts to a pseudo question: “If you were in charge of the meeting, wouldn’t you handle it differently?” This person does not actually want to know how the individual being questioned would handle it. Instead, the person may wish to criticize the meeting or may be indirectly probing for an answer to a question that he or she is afraid or reluctant to ask. Hypothetical questions typically begin with “If,” “What if,” or “How about.”

Imperative Question

Another type of pseudo question is the one that actually makes a demand. A question such as “Have you done anything about . . . ?” or “When are you going to . . . ?” is not asking for information. Rather it implies a command: “Do what you said you were going to do and do it soon.”

The questioner wants to impress the other person with the urgency or importance of his or her request (command).

Activity 2

1. The facilitator assigns one category of pseudo questions to each member of each subgroup. The subgroup is given five minutes to “communicate.” with each person restricted to initiating his or her assigned category of pseudo questions.
2. No processing time is allowed at this point.

Screened Question

The screened question is a very common variety of pseudo question. The questioner, afraid of simply stating a choice or preference, asks the other person what he or she likes or wants to do, hoping the choice will be what the questioner secretly wants.

For example, two acquaintances decide to go out to dinner together. One individual, afraid to take the risk of making a suggestion that he or she is not sure will be accepted, resorts to a screened question: “What kind of food do you prefer?” Secretly he or she hopes the other person will name the questioner’s favorite food, say Chinese. Or he or she frames the question in another way: “Would you like to have Chinese food?” Both questions screen an actual statement or choice, which the questioner fears to make: “I would like to have Chinese food.”

One result of the screened question is that the questioner may get information that he or she is not seeking. If the other person misinterprets the question about food, for example, he or she may tell the questioner about exotic varieties of food experienced in his or her travels—not what the questioner wanted to know at all.

On the other hand, the screened question may sorely frustrate the person being questioned, who is not sure how to give the “correct” response and feels under pressure to “guess” what that response might be.

The questioner, too, may find the results of a screened question frustrating. If the other person takes the question at face value, the questioner may be trapped into a choice (Italian food, for example) that he or she does not like but cannot escape. Worse, both individuals may be unable to “risk” a suggestion and end up eating Greek food, which neither likes.

In marriage, the screened question may be used by one partner to punish or control the other. One individual may seem generously to offer the other “first choice,” while he or she actually poses the question in such a way that the partner’s suggestions can be rejected and countered with a “compromise” consisting of what he or she wanted all along. Thus, the partner who offers the “compromise” gets what he or she wants by manipulating the other partner into the position of offering all the “wrong” choices.

Set-Up Question

This pseudo question maneuvers the other person into a vulnerable position, ready for the axe to fall. One example of the setup question is “Is it fair to say that you . . . ?” If the person being questioned agrees that it is fair, the questioner has him or her “set up” for the kill. Another way that set-up questions are introduced is by the phrase “Would you agree that . . . ?” The questioner is “leading the witness” in much the same way a skillful lawyer sets up a line of response in court.

Rhetorical Question

One of the simplest types of the pseudo question is the rhetorical question, which comes in many forms. The speaker may make a statement and immediately follow it with a positive phrase that assumes approval in advance: “Right?” or “O.K.?” or “You see?” or “You know?” He or she is not asking the other person to respond; indeed, he or she wishes to forestall a response because it may not be favorable. Often, an insecure person may acquire the habit of ending almost all statements with “Right?” as an attempted guarantee of agreement.

Or the questioner may precede his or her statements or requests with such negative phrases as “Don’t you think . . . ?” or “Isn’t it true that . . . ?” or “Wouldn’t you like . . . ?” In either case, the person who fears risking his or her own opinion is trying to eliminate all alternatives by framing the “question” so that it elicits the response that he or she wants.

A supervisor may say to a staff member, “Don’t you think it would be a good idea to finish the report tonight and have it out of the way?” He or she phrases the question so as to make it appear that the decision to work late was a joint one. The staff member may not approve of the suggestion, but he or she has little or no alternative but to agree.

“Got’cha” Question

A “got’cha” question is derived from Eric Berne’s *Games People Play* (1964): “Now I got’cha, you so-and-so.” Related to the set-up question, a “got’cha” question might run something like this: “Weren’t you the one who . . . ?” or “Didn’t you say that . . . ?” or “Didn’t I see you . . . ?” The questioner’s joy in trapping the other person is nearly palpable. He or she is digging a pit for the respondent to fall into rather than inviting an answer to the “question.”

Activity 3

1. The process used with the first four types of pseudo questions is repeated with the second four types.
2. Five minutes is allowed to process the experience.
3. The facilitator has the participants infer the statements that lie behind the questions asked; participants test the accuracy of their inferences and then react to them.

CLICHÉS

Pseudo questions are one method of indirect communication; clichés are another. When people use clichés, they really do not want to communicate with another person—or they want to feel that they are “communicating” without sharing anything of significance. Thus, they resort to routinized, pat, standardized, stylized ways of responding to one another.

Examples of clichés abound in English, as in other languages: “You could hear a pin drop.” “If you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all.” “He hit the nail on the head.” “He took the bull by the horns.” “He has us over a barrel.” “We got our bid in just under the wire.” “It’s an open-and-shut case.” “He left no stone unturned in his search.” “Better late than never.” “The early bird gets the worm.” “He can’t see the forest for the trees.” “I’ve been racking my brains over the problem.” “His kind of person is few and far between.” “He is always up at the crack of dawn.” “Let’s get it over and done with.” “His mind is as sharp as a tack.” “Better safe than sorry.” “She’s as cute as a button.”

Activity 4

1. Participants write down as many clichés as they can in three minutes.
2. The facilitator has participants form pairs by moving to new partners.
3. The partners “communicate” with each other using only clichés.
4. Five minutes of processing time follows in groups of six (three pairs).

No one can avoid using clichés occasionally. But the frequent use of tired, worn-out phrases diminishes the effectiveness of communication.

EFFECTS OF INDIRECT COMMUNICATION

If, then, we have established that clichés and pseudo questions are forms of indirect (and, therefore, ineffective) communication, it is important to know some of the effects that such indirect communication has on dealings between people. We can note five major effects generated by indirect communication: guesswork, inaccuracy, inference of motives, game-playing behavior, and defensiveness.

Guesswork

Indirect communication encourages each person to make guesses about the other. Without direct, open patterns of communication, people cannot get to know each other successfully; if they do not know something, they will make guesses about it. Such “guessing games” further inhibit or obstruct true communication.

Inaccuracy

If one person is forced to guess about another, the guess may often be wrong. Yet the person who engaged in the guesswork communicates with the other person on the basis of an assumption, the accuracy of which he or she is unable to check. Obviously, communication based on inaccurate assumptions is not clear or direct.

Inference of Motives

Indirect communication also increases the probability that people will be forced to infer each other’s motives. They will try to determine each other’s motives: Why is he or she doing that? What is the intention behind that comment? By communicating through clichés and pseudo questions, we hide our true motivations.

Game-Playing Behavior

Indirect communication encourages people to “play games” with each other: to deceive, to be dishonest, not to be open or straightforward. Clearly, such behavior leads away

from the basic aims of human relations training. When the questioner is playing a “got’cha” game, for example, his or her behavior may be contagious.

Defensiveness

One of the surest effects of indirect communication is defensiveness. As there is an implied threat behind a great deal of indirect communication, people tend to become wary when faced with it. Their need to defend themselves only widens the gap of effective communication even further.

Defensiveness can be recognized in several different postures, all characteristic results of indirect communication: *displacement, denial, projection, attribution, and deflection.*

Activity 5

1. Participants form new subgroups of three.
2. The members of each subgroup communicate with one another for ten minutes without using questions or clichés.
3. Five minutes of processing time follows.

DIRECT (EFFECTIVE) COMMUNICATION

In contrast to indirect (ineffective) communication, direct (effective) communication is marked by the capacity for taking certain risks in order to understand and be understood.

Characteristics

Communication is effective when it has certain characteristics:

1. *It is two-way communication.* Ideas, opinions, values, attitudes, beliefs, and feelings flow freely from one person to another.
2. *It is marked by active listening.* People take responsibility for what they hear—accepting, clarifying, and checking the meaning, content, and intent of what the other person says.
3. *It utilizes effective feedback.* Each person not only listens actively, but also responds to the other person by telling that person what he or she is hearing. The process of feedback tests whether what was heard is what was intended.
4. *It is not stressful.* Communication is not effective if people are concerned that they are not communicating; when this happens, it is a key that the communication is not functioning properly.
5. *It is clear and unencumbered by mixed or contradictory messages.* Such messages, whether verbal, nonverbal, or symbolic, serve to confuse the content

of the communication. In other words, communication is effective when it is direct.

Any communication always carries two kinds of meanings: the content message and the relationship message. We hear not only *what* other people say to us, but also implications about our mutual relationship. If we are so preoccupied with detecting cues about the latter, we may distort the content message severely or lose it altogether. When communication is effective, both messages are clearly discernible; one does not confuse or distract the other.

Approaches

Five major approaches can foster direct communication:

1. *Confrontation*. Each person can learn to confront the other in a declarative rather than an interrogative manner. We can attempt to eliminate almost all our pseudo questions by formulating them into direct statements.
2. *Active listening*. This is a powerful antidote to indirect communication. We can learn to paraphrase, empathize, reflect feelings, test the accuracy of our inferences, and check our assumptions in order to produce clearer, more straightforward communication with others.
3. *Owning*. If people can learn to accept their legitimate feelings, data, attitudes, behavior, responsibility, and so on, then they can learn to reveal themselves more directly to others. Owning what we *are*, what we are *feeling*, and what *belongs* to us is a first step toward communicating more effectively.
4. *Locating*. This is a way of finding the context of a question. Some questions we cannot answer because we do not know their “environment,” so to speak. We need to learn to locate these questions before we can respond to them. Questions are usually more effective if they are preceded by an explanation of their contextual origins.
5. *Sharing* is the final, and perhaps most important, approach to direct communication. All communication is a sharing process: In attempting to communicate with others, we are sharing our views, beliefs, thoughts, values, observations, intentions, doubts, wants, interests, assumptions, strengths, and weaknesses.

For any of these five approaches to be useful, we must, as indicated earlier, be ready to take risks and to work toward a genuine sharing of a common meaning with the other person. If we are not prepared to risk, we will not attain successful, effective, and direct communication.

Activity 6

1. The participants form subgroups of six.
2. The learning of the experience is processed within each subgroup in terms of back-home applications.
3. Each participant contracts to find out what has happened with his or her spouse or significant other or with a fellow worker without using questions.

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■ HUMANISTIC NUMBERS

John E. Jones

A basic human tendency in our culture is to enumerate our experiences. Because people attempt to abstract those elements that they recognize as repeatable, they often end by describing their experiences in terms of “how much” or “how many.” This tendency to attach numbers to observations of everyday life, however, has some inherent dangers.

The tendency to oversimplify is one danger. Another is to imagine that experience can be accumulated, as if one experience is equal to another. Yet another danger occurs when we enumerate the characteristics and experiences of others. In other words, in describing other people numerically, we summarize their experiences, characteristics, and behaviors in terms of linear scales. A fourth danger is that we forget to look at human beings and look instead at quantities.

Numbers, best thought of as symbols or as abstract concepts, are a very useful device. When we assign a numerical value to some event, behavior, observation, or pattern of tick marks on an answer sheet, we are symbolically representing a human process. Counting may be done mechanically or electronically, but the schema is an extension of the thought process of some person or persons. Numbers can be talked about; manipulated statistically and arithmetically; and seen in an abstract, conceptual way. The primary value of numbers, then, is to extrapolate from and summarize human experience.

In practice, however, there is a tendency to assign more value to our numbering than to the quality of human interaction needed to solve social problems. The logic of numbers is not the syntax of human experience, even though ample evidence exists that we treat people as though they were numbers. People who feel that they are being subjected to such inhumanity are almost uniformly offended by it. When a person feels that he or she has been treated with less dignity than that accorded to punched cards, that person usually feels helplessness and bitterness. A few years ago a joke among college and university students was “I am an IBM card. Do not fold, spindle, or mutilate me.”

HUMANISTIC PRINCIPLES

The use of numbers in human relations—in organizational surveys, in instrumentation, in counting—is best carried out in ways that are consistent with humanistic values. The following principles are concerned with the relationship between using numbers in human relations and acknowledging the worth and dignity of individual people:

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1. *No number or array of numbers can capture the essence of a human being.* People do not experience numbers, but we do use numbers to abstract some principles or frequencies from what we see. The complexity of the individual human being far exceeds our ability to describe human traits, their interrelationships, or their patterns of interaction with the environment.
2. *It is possible and desirable to conceptualize experience both numerically and nonnumerically.* The traditional notion held by many psychometricians is that “If a thing exists, it exists in some amount. If you have not measured it, you do not know what you are talking about.”

In human relations, we are concerned with what could be termed “soft” variables, that is, those characteristics and interactions of human beings that cannot be described very precisely. For example, we often talk about such concepts as trust, openness, self-actualization, interdependence—concepts that are neither precisely defined nor accurately measured. While it is useful to posit these human characteristics in order to improve the ways in which people relate to one another, it is important for us to recognize that the attempts that have been made represent the crudest form of measurement. To say, for example, that a person who scores 8 on a 9-point synergy scale has an unusually high ability to see “the opposites of life as meaningfully related” is as indefensible as to say that unless we have mapped that characteristic of that person, we cannot discuss it with any usefulness.

3. *Numbers do not have meaning; only people experience meaning.* There are no inherent values in numbers. We impute, or assign, to these symbols meanings that may be idiosyncratic. Just as words are symbols, numbers are symbols used to simplify, arrange, and collect our experience. When we use them in communication, we have many of the same problems we have in using other symbols, such as words. People do not attach the same meanings to the same symbols, though we often assume that they do (Jones, 1972).
4. *There is no such thing as objectivity.* Far enough behind any set of numbers will be the subjective impressions, feelings, attitudes, theories, hunches, and assumptions of one or more human beings. It is self-deceiving to imagine that one can be objective in relation to oneself, other people, or even the physical universe. “Scientific” observations are inevitably clouded by our abilities to conceptualize experience and observations. In human relations it is important to accept that we are first, last, and always subjective. Thus, we need to accept responsibility for our biases, prejudices, and favorite ways of looking at the world.
5. *The most difficult number problem is counting.* A great many people experience anxiety with regard to numbers, arithmetic, and especially statistics. Many people are awed by the complexity of mathematical operations. It is almost as though these number systems had a reality to be discovered and mastered. The application of numerical processes, however, cannot be more useful than the

observations on which the processes are based. The manipulation of frequencies, or counts, does not *add* validity to the basic observations that are assigned numerical value.

6. *More of a good thing may be too much; human relations are not necessarily linear.* One human tendency, especially in Western cultures, is to think of things as if they existed on a linear scale. For example, Westerners imagine intelligence (a desired quality) to be a linear trait. Thus, the more intelligence, the better. As openness in human relations is held to be desirable, Westerners have a tendency to think that their activities in relation to one another would be most profitable if they had completely open human interaction. It is useful, however, to think of extremes—such as being completely open or being completely closed—as equally dysfunctional (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1972).
7. *When numbers become labels for people, individuals begin to be seen as static.* Although we usually think of people as being dynamic and changing, we tend to oversimplify one another and to assume that our human characteristics are unchangeable. Assigning numbers to the amounts of our hypothesized traits strengthens this tendency. It is more useful, then, to consider numerical designations of observed human behavior as short-term indicators. In training we are interested in helping people to change their behavior. Using numbers in that context suggests that intra-individual dynamics are more important than characteristics that the individual cannot change.
8. *The things that can be measured precisely are relatively unimportant in human relations.* Physical characteristics, certain personality traits, and some aspects of the physical environment can be specified with considerable precision. These considerations, however, cannot adequately account for the wide individual differences in human interaction.

CONCLUSION

The dilemma in using numbers to foster human and organizational growth and development, then, is that we have to allow for our subjectivity while we are attempting to amass a reliable body of useful knowledge and information. In this process we should not omit the positive aspects of subjectivity.

People are not numbers, but their experiences can, nevertheless, to a degree, be collected, accumulated, and used as a basis for prediction. The important humanistic consideration is that in using numbers we not violate the integrity of the people whose human experience we are abstracting.

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■ CLARITY OF EXPRESSION IN INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

Myron R. Chartier

“Why can’t people get things straight?” is a question often asked when communication breaks down. Because many factors contribute to a lack of clarity in communication, no easy answers are available.

FAULTY ASSUMPTIONS

Misunderstandings between people can occur because of faulty assumptions that people make about communication. Two such faulty assumptions are (1) “*you*” always know what “*I*” mean and (2) “*I*” should always know what “*you*” mean. The premise seems to be that because people live or work together, they are or should be able to read one another’s minds. Some people believe that because they are transparent to themselves, they are transparent to others as well. “Because I exist, you should understand me,” they seem to be saying. People who make this assumption often presume that they communicate clearly if they simply say what they please. In fact, they often leave those listening confused and guessing about the message being communicated.

Misunderstanding is common because clarity of communication does not happen.

A third assumption often made is that communication happens naturally, like walking across a room. The communication process, however, is complex; achieving a correspondence between messages sent and messages received is difficult. Some people ascribe to a “conveyor-belt” theory of communication—meaning moves from one head to another with 100-percent accuracy. The shortcoming of a “conveyor-belt” theory of communication, however, is that it suggests that meanings are inherent in the words used or messages sent. However, the meaning one person has is never identical to that which another person has because meanings are in people’s minds, not in the words they use. Total accuracy in communication would require that two people have an identical history of shared experiences. Only then could they perceive exactly the same meaning for a given message. Given the reality of different life experiences, this is impossible.

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A DEFINITION OF CLARITY

“Getting things straight” is a difficult communication task; yet people must communicate clearly with each other in order to receive information to accomplish the mundane tasks of life and to experience the depths of dialogue with each other.

Fortunately, absolute clarity is unnecessary; *effective communication is accomplished when the amount of clarity or accuracy achieved is sufficient for handling each situation adequately*. According to information theorists, the purpose of communication is to reduce uncertainty. Total accuracy in communication would lead to an absence of uncertainty, but uncertainty can never be totally eliminated. Accurate or clear communication, then, is designed to reduce uncertainty in a given situation to a point at which necessary understanding can occur.

Certain practical principles and guidelines for reducing uncertainty and increasing the accuracy and clarity in interpersonal communication can be suggested. To achieve greater clarity in speaking, a person should have the desire to do so and should want to understand the communication process more completely. The communicator can try to analyze and shape his or her message according to the following factors: sending and receiving, the communication context, encoding a message, and communication channels. Of course, the degree of clarity achieved in a given situation is likely to result from the combined effects of several of these factors. As communication is a process, the factors being considered are interrelated, making it difficult to differentiate one from another.

SENDING AND RECEIVING

Several principles and guidelines are observable in any attempt to send a clear message from one person to another. These guidelines can be seen in terms of pictures, attitudes, skills, and the frame of reference.

Pictures

A person needs to have a clear picture of what he or she hopes to communicate to another. The preacher needs a proposition in order to know what he or she is trying to accomplish with a sermon. The teacher needs instructional objectives in order to know what he or she wants students to learn. The administrator needs both short and long-range objectives in order to plan organizational goals and interpret them to his or her colleagues. Well-stated goals or objectives aid the effective communicator in developing a clear picture of what he or she wants to say.

This first guideline is particularly valid when dealing with complex, ambiguous, or vague topics. If a topic or idea is unclear to the person sending the message, its lack of clarity is likely to be magnified by the person trying to understand it. Although there are times when a person may find interpersonal communication helpful in clarifying the pictures in his or her own head, it is imperative that the communicator first be clear

about ideas before he or she attempts to convince or influence others, give data, or share feelings.

Attitudes

Accuracy in communication varies with the attitudes of the communicators toward their topic. If a person's attitudes are very positive or very negative, the resulting communication tends to be less accurate. Indeed, people often organize data according to their biases.

Communication clarity is also influenced by the attitudes of communicators toward each other. It seems reasonable that communication between people who respect or love each other would be more accurate. However, research indicates that accuracy is inversely correlated with either positive or negative attitudes that the communicators hold toward each other. Thus, an analysis of the extent of one's positive or negative attitudes toward the topic and toward the listener is important for clarity and accuracy of communication.

Communication Skills

Clarity of communication is also influenced by the extent to which those who are listening and those who are sending are aware of their communication skills. It is possible to evaluate the assumptions that people hold about their ability to communicate messages. People with careless speech-communication habits are often convinced that they are successful communicators because they are able to open their mouths and utter a stream of words. Actual skills in interpersonal communication, however, are quite different. An accurate assessment of one's own communication weaknesses and strengths is important. Often strengths can be maximized and weaknesses improved. One person may have a sparkling personality that aids him or her in communication. Another may have a way with words. Yet another may be able to communicate in such a way that others feel he or she understands them.

The communicator should also try to assess the listening skills of the person receiving the message. Good "hearing" is not necessarily good "listening." As listening is an active rather than a passive process, people's poor listening habits often take the form of daydreaming, defensiveness, inattention, and so on.

Psychological Frame of Reference

Because communication is a function of shared or common meanings, meaning does not occur simply because words are spoken. Words have no meaning in and of themselves. Meaning is what people attribute to words; meanings lie within the experiences and feelings of people. Thus, meanings are within people.

Each person is unique. What a person is has been determined by individual experiences and choices in or with his or her family, friends, school, and culture. Each

person has his or her own set of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. This uniqueness has a profound impact on the success or failure of communication.

It is impossible to know what another person is sensing or feeling. Because a listener can only guess about the communicator's meaning, it is essential that the person speaking avoid basing his or her communication on unexamined assumptions about the listener.

To assess what he or she is communicating, the sending person needs to know the psychological frame of reference of the person who is receiving the message. How does the listener see, feel, and act with respect to others and the world? The psychological frame of reference of a child is quite different from that of an adult, just as people from Maine have a different viewpoint from Californians. People respond quite differently to the words they hear. One person may react warmly to the words "Jesus saves," while another person may become angry and hostile, and yet another may be indifferent and display no strong sentiment. Indeed, what is clear and rational to one person may seem vague and ridiculous to someone else.

A person can increase the clarity of his or her communication by constantly trying to place himself or herself inside the psychological framework of the other person—by trying to see the communicative situation from the listener's point of view. If the person communicating understands the other person, he or she can make the communication more relevant to the other's self-understanding and needs.

COMMUNICATION CONTEXT

A second set of factors affecting the clarity of communication is the context in which communication occurs. Is the setting an office, someone's home, or the golf course? Communicating with a professor in his or her office is altogether different from communicating with a friend at the bowling alley. The rules in the two situations are distinctly different.

The context of communication is important in determining the amount of accuracy needed or possible between people in a given situation. How much clarity can be achieved is somewhat determined by their communication skills, the nature of their relationship, the number of communication channels available to the person sending, and how much repetition he or she can incorporate into the message. Also, attempting to communicate with a person in another room presents more difficulties for the clarification process than does speaking face-to-face. In short, the speaker needs to develop a realistic expectation for the degree of clarity obtainable in a given context.

ENCODING A MESSAGE

In order to make ideas clear, an individual must encode his or her message in order to reduce the amount of uncertainty that the listener experiences in hearing that communication. Encoding is the process of translating ideas into a message appropriate

for delivery. Once ideas are encoded into messages, they become the potential information that can reduce ambiguity in the other person's mind and produce a clearer picture. There are seven principles for increasing the accuracy and clarity of the messages that people use to communicate.

1. Principle of Relevance

Make the message relevant in the terms of the listening party. The most difficult task related to encoding a message is to assemble it in such a way that the words used accurately reflect the picture one intends and, at the same time, fall within the other person's psychological frame of reference. To comprehend the sender's message, the listener must be able to relate the received information to what he or she already knows. Therefore, it is important that the message be presented in a context that says to the listener, "This is important and significant for you." This can be done by using the words of the listening person rather than one's own to encode a message. Such a strategy requires adaptability and flexibility in communication behavior. When a person possesses such adaptability and flexibility in communicating, he or she can employ appropriate behaviors for sending a clear message, whether the listener is a child, a teenager, an adult, or someone from a different cultural or subcultural background.

Just as the encoding of a message should be relevant to the listener, so should it be appropriate to the situation or the context. The content of a conversation in the privacy of a home is not necessarily appropriate for a discussion at a church-committee meeting. Even if the topic were the same in both situations, the message would very likely be encoded quite differently.

2. Principle of Simplicity

Reduce ideas to the simplest possible terms. The communicator should employ as few words as possible to communicate his or her ideas to a listener. Simplicity of language and economy of words are helpful in facilitating clarity of communication. Generally, the simpler the words, the more likely they are to be understood. However, simplicity really relates to the experience of the person receiving the message. What is simple to one person is complex to another. The effective communicator calculates the extent to which material must be simplified if it is to be understood by those listening, and he or she uses the principle of simplicity to enhance the probability of success in sending a message.

3. Principle of Definition

Define before developing; explain before amplifying. Even simple terms can be unclear. Where would a person go, for example, if someone said, "I'll meet you at the side of the building"? Terms more complicated than "side" increase the need for definition and explanation. The use of jargon also creates problems of clarity for those not acquainted with the words. Unfamiliarity with jargon may cause a person to become confused and

frustrated in his or her efforts to understand; the person may even stop trying. To make the message as clear as possible, the communicator should define and explain unfamiliar or exceptional terms or concepts before using them.

4. Principle of Structure

Organize a message into a series of successive stages. Texts on public speaking emphasize the importance of making apparent the order or structure of a message. A well-organized speech, it is said, will increase the audience's understanding. However, there is little research evidence to support such a contention, especially with regard to face-to-face dialogue. Indeed, most people will structure the message in accordance with their own patterns of thinking even as they listen, regardless of how well a message is organized.

What is important is the clarity of thought and the expression of individual parts. In interpersonal communication it is probably best to develop one idea at a time. A message can be “packaged” into a series of stages, with one stage completed before the next is introduced.

Furthermore, the communicator can help the listener by not overloading him or her with information. When people are asked to comprehend too much, they tend to forget or become confused. By developing one idea at a time and taking one step at a time, the person speaking can facilitate accuracy in communication.

5. Principle of Repetition

Repeat the key concepts of the message. The principle of repetition is important—very important. The words “very important” in the previous sentence are repetitive; they repeated the idea in a slightly different manner in order to make the concept clearer. Repetition is particularly important in oral communication, where words are spoken only once. Obviously a communicator would not want to repeat everything he or she says; doing so would bore the listener. However, the person speaking needs to use enough repetition to ensure the clear reception of ideas. Some possible strategies are (1) repeating key ideas; (2) restating difficult ideas; (3) recycling ideas whenever feedback indicates they are weak or misunderstood; and (4) using examples, synonyms, analogies, or periodic summaries. In short, a person should use intentional repetition in attempting to achieve clarity.

6. Principle of Comparison and Contrast

Relate new ideas to old ideas; associate the unknown with the known. The principle of comparison and contrast is essential to the achievement of clear communication, as understanding comes most often through association—the perception of similarities and differences among objects, events, and people. A person can understand a new, unknown idea more clearly if he or she is able to relate it to an old, known one.

Discriminating between those elements that rightfully belong to an idea and those that do not will help a listener to understand a concept. Comparison helps the listener to identify the similarities in two or more ideas, and contrast helps to point out the differences in two or more ideas. When accurate discriminations occur, clarity in communication emerges: The sharper the discrimination, the greater the clarity.

Helpful devices for presenting comparisons and contrasts include the use of models, metaphors, analogies, and explanations.

7. Principle of Emphasis

Focus on the essential and vital aspects of the communication. As the transitory nature of interpersonal communication makes it highly susceptible to loss of information, attention should be given to the essential and vital aspects of a message. Communication goals and key points should be sharply focused so as not to submerge the message in details and make it vague, ambiguous, and blurred. The impact of the significant points of a communication can be heightened by speaking louder, using a different tone of voice, pausing, or using various other techniques to captivate the listener. *Reinforcing and underscoring ideas help in developing such impact.* Here is an example: *This last principle is an important one—remember it and use it.* Communication strategies based on this principle and the other six will result in a more accurate correspondence of ideas between people.

COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Once a message is constructed for sending to another person, it must be sent through a communication channel. Several factors related to communication channels affect clarification in the speaking-listening process. Four of these are discussed here.

Channels Available

An important aspect of communication that affects accuracy and clarity is the number of channels available for sending a message. For example, in a letter only one channel—the written word—is in use. Face-to-face interaction, however, utilizes several channels, for example, body tension, facial expressions, eye contact, hand and body movements, relative positions of each person, and the vocal sounds accompanying a verbal message.

To communicate clearly, a person should be aware of the various channels available and utilize as many of them as possible. When messages are sent through more than one channel, repetition is increased. As repetition increases, uncertainty is reduced and the chances for clarity are increased. It is important, however, that whenever multichannel communication occurs, the messages be consistent across all channels or the results will be confusing for the listener.

Feedback

The use of feedback is important to the communicator. Feedback, which is a term from cybernetic theory, is an essential element in any control process. This phenomenon can be observed in the operation of a self-adjusting camera in which a built-in light meter measures the amount of illumination in the environment and automatically adjusts the camera accordingly. In a comparable manner, feedback can be used to correct and adjust meanings and thus increase communication clarity. A person sending a message should elicit feedback following his or her communication attempts in order to determine whether the picture received was the one transmitted. On the basis of this feedback, the next step in the communication process can be taken. The following conversation between Joe and Sally is an example of feedback as purposive correction:

Joe: "Feedback is a process of correcting inaccuracy in communication."

Sally: "Do you mean that feedback is simply a process of correcting errors?"

Joe: "Not exactly, although that's part of what I mean. Feedback is a way of being sure that what I say to you is adequately perceived by you."

Sally: "Now you're really getting complicated. What does 'adequately perceived' mean?"

Joe: "Well, I think 'adequately perceived' means that you understand the idea as I would like for you to understand it."

Sally: "Oh, then you mean that feedback is a device for checking whether or not I got the idea you wanted me to get."

Joe: "Exactly."

Sally: "Do you think I used feedback effectively?"

Joe: "Well, how do you feel about it?"

In the same way that communication clarity can be increased by using a variety of available channels, a number of feedback channels can also be an aid to accuracy.

Noise

Communication accuracy is affected by noise, a term frequently used to refer to any disturbance that interferes with the sending of a message. Although noise may occur in almost any aspect of the communication process, such interference appears often as an obstruction in the channel between two interacting people. The interfering noise may be a conversation between two other people, the whirl of a vacuum cleaner, or the sound of a lawn mower coming through an open window. The greater the noise, the more difficult it becomes to communicate clearly. For this reason it is important for the communicator to find ways of eliminating or reducing sources of distracting noise.

Speed and Pacing

Clarity of communication is related to how much information a channel can carry and how much information a listener can receive at one time. Because the oral channel requires those listening to depend heavily on their memories for comprehension, it is less effective than other channels for handling large amounts of verbal information. Effective lecturers know that it is the rare audience that can absorb more than one or two new ideas. In contrast, the written channel can carry much more verbal information, as it allows people to reconsider the material. Therefore, the speed of oral communication must be determined by the rate of comprehension of the listener(s). The communicator should pace his or her message according to the information-processing capacities of the channel and the listener(s).

A SUMMARY OF GUIDELINES FOR CLEAR INTERPERSONAL COMMUNICATION

A person wishing to achieve greater clarity in his or her interpersonal communication would do well to remember these quotes:

“I know you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.”

“What is clear to you is clear to you and not necessarily to anyone else.”

Also, the communicator seeking to improve his or her communication clarity might find the following guidelines helpful:

1. Have a clear picture of what he or she wants the other person to understand as a result of the communication.
2. Analyze the nature and magnitude of his or her attitudes toward both the topic and the listener.
3. Assess his or her own communication skills and those of the listener.
4. Seek to identify himself or herself with the psychological frame of reference of the listener.
5. Develop a realistic expectation for the degree of clarity obtainable in a given context.
6. Make the message relevant to the listener by using that person's language and terms.
7. State his or her ideas in the simplest possible terms.
8. Define before developing and explain before amplifying.
9. Develop one idea at a time; take one step at a time.
10. Use appropriate repetition.
11. Compare and contrast ideas by associating the unknown with the known.
12. Determine which ideas need special emphasis.

13. Use as many channels as necessary for clarity.
14. Watch for and elicit corrective feedback in a variety of channels.
15. Eliminate or reduce noise if it is interfering.
16. Pace his or her communication according to the information-processing capacities of the channel and the listener.

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■ COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS: ACTIVE LISTENING AND SENDING FEELING MESSAGES

Jack N. Wismer

“I know you believe that you understand what you think I said, but I am not sure you realize that what you heard is not what I meant.” This quote illustrates an important point. When a person communicates a message to another person, the message usually contains two elements: content and feeling. Both elements are important because both give the message meaning. However, we often do not understand other people’s messages or are misunderstood by others because we forget that meanings are in people, not in words.

THE RISK OF COMMUNICATING NONACCEPTANCE

The communication of mutual acceptance is vital to developing and maintaining work and personal relationships. However, various ways of responding to situations run the risk of communicating nonacceptance. To understand a person’s point of view effectively, it is necessary not to communicate nonacceptance. According to Gordon (1970, pp. 41-44), author of several books on active listening, most people, in a listening situation, commonly respond in one or more of the following twelve ways:

1. *Ordering, Directing*: “You have to . . .”;
2. *Warning, Threatening*: “You’d better not . . .”;
3. *Preaching, Moralizing*: “You ought to . . .”;
4. *Advising, Giving Solutions*: “Why don’t you . . .”;
5. *Lecturing, Informing*: “Here are the facts . . .”;
6. *Evaluating, Blaming*: “You’re wrong . . .”;
7. *Praising, Agreeing*: “You’re right . . .”;
8. *Name Calling, Shaming*: “You’re stupid . . .”;
9. *Interpreting, Analyzing*: “What you need . . .”;
10. *Sympathizing, Supporting*: “You’ll be OK . . .”
11. *Questioning, Probing*: “Why did you . . .”; and
12. *Withdrawing, Avoiding*: “Let’s forget it”

Abstracted from *Thomas Gordon’s Parent Effectiveness Training*, Peter H. Wyden, New York, 1970. Used by permission.

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These modes of response may communicate to the sender that it is not acceptable to feel the way he or she feels. If the sender perceives one of these messages as indicating nonacceptance, there is a risk that he or she will become defensive about new ideas, will be resistive to changing behavior, will tend to justify certain feelings, or will turn silent because the listener is perceived as only passively interested in the sender.

ACTIVE LISTENING

A more effective way of responding to a listening situation is called “active listening.” Gordon (1970) defines active listening as a communication skill that helps people to solve their own problems. In active listening, the listener is involved with the sender’s need to communicate. To be effective, the listener must take an “active” responsibility for understanding the content and feeling of what is being said. The listener can respond with a statement, in his or her own words, of what the sender’s message means. Here is an example:

Sender: “The deadline for this report is not realistic!”

Listener: “You feel pressured to get the report done.”

To understand the sender’s meaning, the listener must “put himself or herself in the sender’s place.” Feeding back perceptions of intended meaning allows the listener to check the accuracy of his or her listening and understanding.

Benefits of Active Listening

An open communication climate for understanding is created through active listening. The listener can learn to see what a person means and how the person feels about situations and problems. Active listening is a skill that can communicate acceptance and increase interpersonal trust among people. It can also facilitate problem solving. Therefore, the appropriate use of active listening increases people’s communication effectiveness.

Pitfalls in Active Listening

Active listening is not intended to manipulate people to behave or think the way others believe they should. The listener also should not “parrot” someone’s message by repeating the exact words used. Empathy is a necessary ingredient—the listener should communicate warmth toward and feeling about the sender’s message by putting himself or herself in the sender’s place. Timing is another pitfall; active listening is not appropriate when there is no time to deal with the situation or when someone is asking only for factual information. Also, it is important that the listener be sensitive to nonverbal messages about the right time to stop giving feedback. Avoiding these common pitfalls will make active listening a more effective communication skill.

Principle of Problem Ownership

As active listening is most appropriate when a person expresses feelings about a problem, it is necessary to ask who owns the problem. The principle of problem ownership can be demonstrated in the following situations:

1. Person A's needs are not being satisfied by his or her own behavior, and A's behavior does not directly interfere with Person B's satisfaction of his or her own needs. Therefore, A owns the problem.
2. Person A's needs are being satisfied, but A's behavior interferes in some way with Person B's satisfaction of his or her own needs and thus creates a problem for B. B then owns the problem.
3. Person A is satisfying his or her own needs, and A's behavior does not directly interfere with Person B's needs. In this case, there is no problem.

Active listening is very useful, but it is not appropriate to use if another person's behavior is creating the problem.

COMMUNICATING ONE'S NEEDS

Ineffective Approaches

It is necessary for the person who owns the problem to know how to confront it and communicate his or her needs so that other people will listen. However, people frequently confront problems in a way that tends to stimulate defensiveness and resistance. The two most common approaches are as follows:

1. *Evaluating.* This approach communicates judgment, blame, ridicule, or shame (for example, "Don't you know how to use that machine?" or "You're late again!"). It has several risks: (a) It makes people defensive and resistant to further communication; (b) it implies power over the other person; and (c) it threatens and reduces the other person's self-esteem.
2. *Sending solutions.* This approach communicates what the other person should do rather than what the speaker is feeling (for example, "If you don't come in on time, I'll have to report you" or "Why don't you do it this way?"). Sending solutions also carries risks: (a) People become resistive if they are told what to do, even if they agree with the solution; (b) this approach indicates that the sender's needs are more important than the recipient's; (c) it communicates a lack of trust in other people's capacities to solve their own problems; and (d) it reduces the responsibility to define the problem clearly and explore feasible alternatives to solution.

A More Effective Approach

Problems can be confronted and one's needs can be made known without making other people feel defensive. An effective communication message has three components: (1) owning feelings, (2) sending feelings, and (3) describing behavior.

Ownership of feelings focuses on "who owns the problem." The sender of a message needs to accept responsibility for his or her own feelings. Messages that own the sender's feelings usually begin with or contain the word "I."

Sometimes communicating feelings is viewed as a weakness. But the value of sending feelings is communicating honesty and openness by focusing on the problem and not evaluating the person.

Describing behavior concentrates on what one person sees, hears, and feels about another person's behavior as it affects the observer's feelings and behavior. The focus is on specific situations that relate to specific times and places.

It is useful to distinguish between descriptions and evaluations of behavior. The italicized parts of the next statements illustrate evaluations of behavior:

"I can't finish this report *if you are so inconsiderate as to interrupt me.*"
"You're a loudmouth."

The italicized parts of the following statements are *descriptions* of behavior:

"I can't finish this report if you *constantly interrupt me.*"
"I feel that you *talked considerably during the meetings.*"

A design for sending feeling messages can be portrayed as follows:

Ownership + Feeling Word + Description of Behavior = Feeling Message

Here is an example:

"I (ownership) am concerned (feeling word) about finishing this report on time" (description of behavior).

The effectiveness of feeling messages can be attributed to several factors:

- "I" messages are more effective because they place responsibility with the sender of the message.
- "I" messages reduce the other person's defensiveness and resistance to further communication.
- Behavioral descriptions provide feedback about the other person's behavior but do not evaluate it.
- Although "I" messages require some courage, they honestly express the speaker's feelings.
- Feeling messages promote open communication in both work and personal relationships.

SUMMARY

Sending feeling messages and listening actively are skills that can be applied to work, family, and personal relationships (Prather, 1970, unpagged):

No one is wrong. At most someone is uninformed. If I think a man is wrong, either I am unaware of something, or he is. So unless I want to play a superiority game I had best find out what he is looking at.

“You’re wrong” means “I don’t understand you”—I’m not seeing what you’re seeing. But there is nothing wrong with you, you are simply not me and that’s not wrong.

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■ KENEPATHY

Michele Stimac

The importance of understanding feelings and emotions in the communication process or in a helping relationship has been stressed so often that there is no question but that affect is as important as cognitive data for human expression and understanding. Human relations trainers have stressed the importance of “catching feelings” (empathy) and have emphasized the importance of discerning feelings in order to understand an individual’s inner being. But training manuals filled with structured activities too often concentrate on affective understanding to the exclusion of cognitive understanding. This concentration on the affective dimension has created an imbalance in our skill training as egregious as the previous concentration on cognitive communication. Human beings function continually at several levels, and true understanding requires listening to them at all levels.

Individuals trained to listen to others must “kenepathize,” that is, hear the verbal message, see the nonverbal behavior, and grasp what the speaker’s thoughts and perceptions are as well as what that person is feeling and experiencing at the moment. The term “kenepathy” supplements the term “empathy.” We have come to associate empathy almost exclusively with “catching feelings” or understanding affect, so the term kenepathy has been coined to convey a more all-inclusive understanding. The prefix *ken*, borrowed from the archaic Scottish word meaning to know or to understand, has been joined to the root *pathy* from the Greek “pathos” or feelings. Kenepathy, as defined here, means to understand cognitive as well as affective data—to grasp another’s thoughts, perceptions, and feelings.

The “bucket” model developed here is useful in human relations or leadership training to convey the complexity of the human being and the need for a confluent grasp of feelings, thoughts, perceptions, and actions.

THE BUCKET MODEL

Human beings are so complex that their behavior is not easy to understand, a fact that Lewin (1951) attempted to explain with his concept of “life space.” According to Lewin, behavior is a function of each person’s life space; to understand it requires that we understand the dynamics in that person’s space—a challenge that even the most proficient listener finds difficult to meet. The bucket model illustrates the complexity of

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life space and helps us to perceive the monumental task involved in listening for true understanding. The model is explicated below.

Here-and-Now Level: The Conscious

Each of us is like a bucket (Figure 1) containing several dimensions. At the surface is our here-and-now (conscious) life space, which includes current behavior, both verbal and nonverbal. This facet is most accessible to anyone else who attempts to listen and understand.

Also included in our here-and-now space at the surface are our current thoughts and perceptions. These are apparent to others if we choose to disclose them directly or indirectly. Because we generally have been encouraged through schooling and societal conditioning, most of us readily exchange thoughts and ideas unless we find ourselves in inhibiting climates.

Finally, also at the here-and-now level are our current feelings and what we are experiencing at the moment. Our feelings are often not very accessible, especially if we are adept at hiding them. Societal conditioning in the United States in particular has typically not encouraged their expression, although the human relations movement has helped to modify this conditioning by pointing out that feelings are essential data that listeners must have if they are to really understand what we are like.

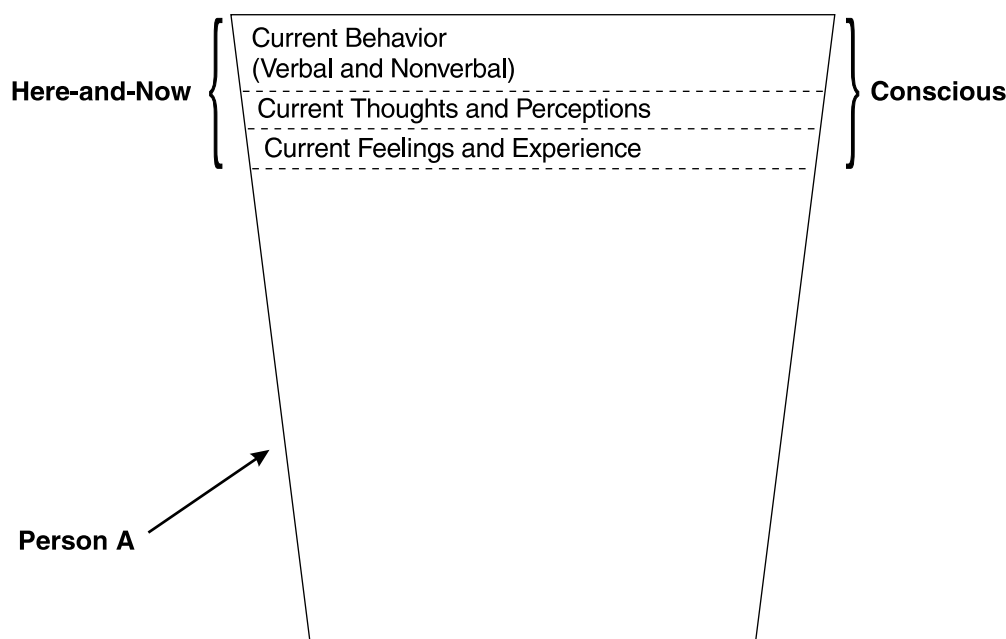


Figure 1. The Here-and-Now Level

There-and-Then Level: Preconscious

Kenepathizing requires more than understanding thoughts, perceptions, and feelings, however, because there are other levels in our “buckets.” As each moment passes, the

here-and-now becomes past data that fill “mini-buckets” in the there-and-then (preconscious) area of our larger buckets (Figure 2).

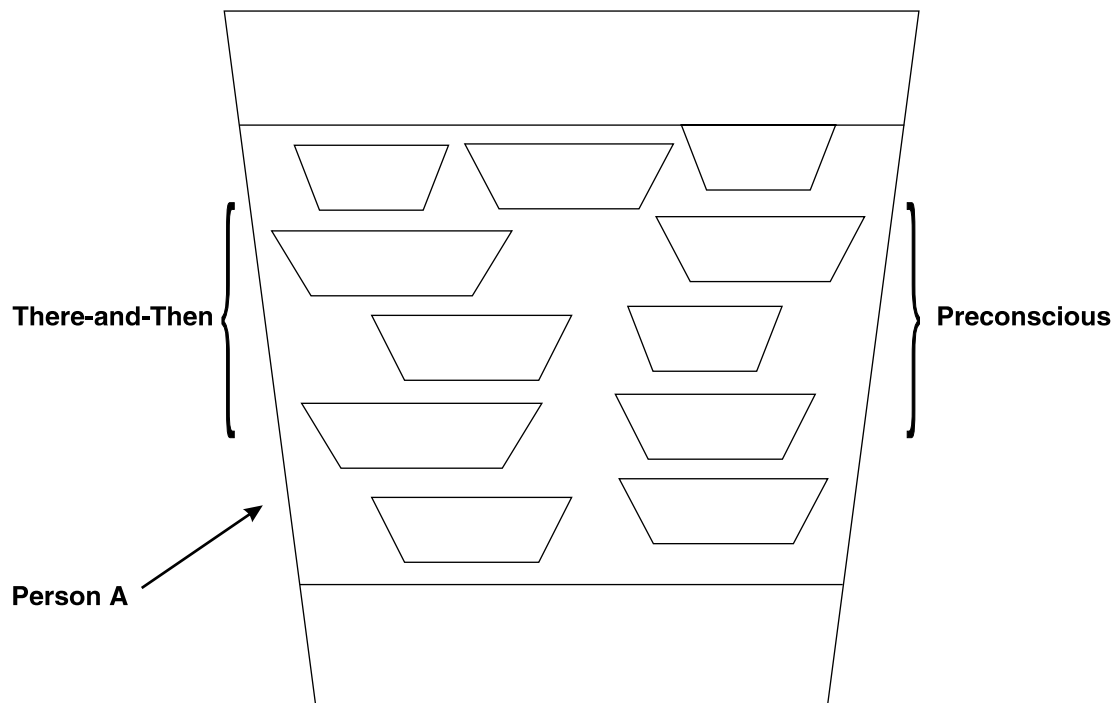


Figure 2. The There-and-Then Level: Preconscious

While receding into the there-and-then area, data are either posited so that they influence our current behavior, thoughts, and feelings or so that they are comparatively insignificant in our lives.

Through memory we can recall a great deal of these data, but some are virtually lost forever. Much of what we have done, thought, and felt has the potential to influence us dynamically at some later time in our lives. The data remain to be recalled and perhaps serve as a modifier of our current (here-and-now) behavior, thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and experience. Sometimes harmoniously, sometimes not, the past and present interrelate. Lewin (1951) might call these data the “facts” in our life space—memories that force their way into the current situation where they stir old feelings and thoughts and modify current perceptions and behavior. To kenepathize with us, others must understand the influences of the intruding mini-buckets that act as catalysts at the present moment.

There-and-Then Level: Unconscious

Even more remote and inaccessible is the unconscious area of our buckets—the most inscrutable of all (Figure 3). This area contains miniature buckets that represent what we have repressed throughout our lives. Experiences too painful to deal with have been pushed into the unconscious. Like experiences stored in our preconscious, they often

thrust their way into the present and influence our behavior—albeit in ways incomprehensible to us except through analysis.

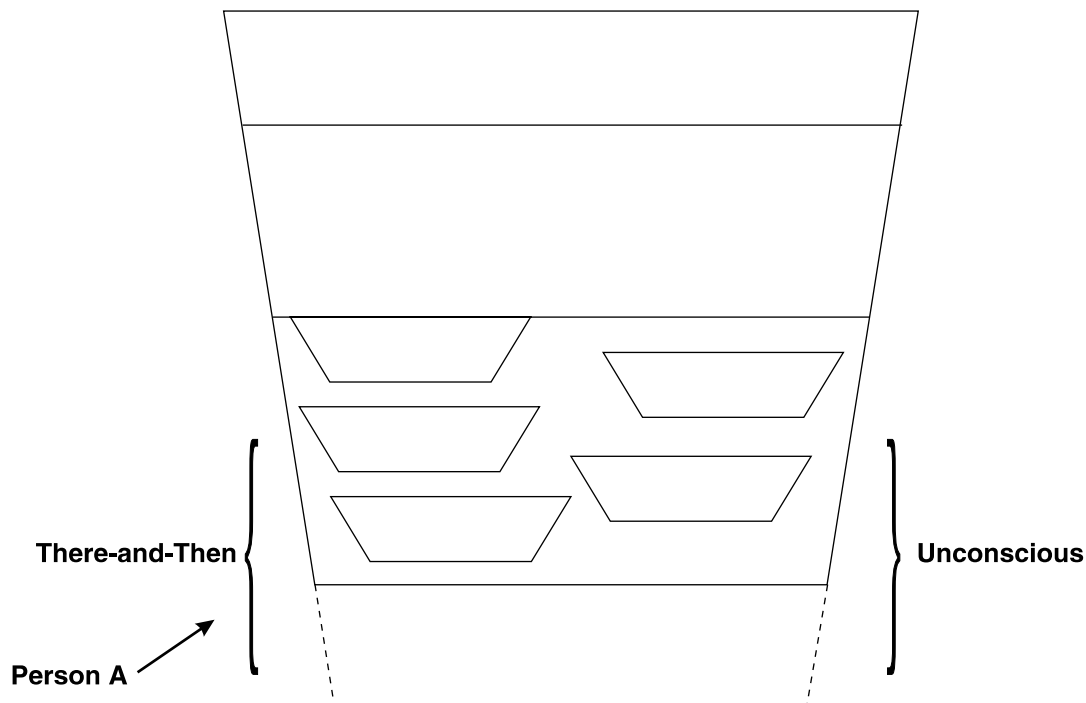


Figure 3. The There-and-Then Level: Unconscious

The bottom of the bucket in some sense remains bottomless. There is no way for behavioral scientists to make definitive statements concerning the unconscious. It is important to remember, however, that these forces influence our current behavior. Total kenepathy—in the sense of understanding the facts in our unconscious and how they influence our behavior—we leave to the psychotherapist.

Unlike the neatly placed miniature buckets in Figures 2 and 3, the pieces of data that the miniature buckets represent are often in collision and disharmony with one another. This very conflict is another source of our feelings, thoughts, and behavior.

MINI-BUCKETS MODIFY THE HERE-AND-NOW

The bucket model depicts the combination of here-and-now and there-and-then cognitive and affective data that must in some measure be understood by anyone who tries to understand another person. If Person B, for example, attempts to understand Person A (Figure 4), B must learn A's frame of reference, which includes facts from both cognitive and affective levels. As B kenepathizes with A, B must try to understand some of what is in A's there-and-then, especially if one or more of A's mini-buckets greatly influence A's here-and-now. This defies the general rule that group members must stay exclusively in the here-and-now when exchanging information. A better rule might be to remain in the here-and-now when functional, but to be alert to times when

there-and-then data that need to be expressed and understood invade and alter present experience.

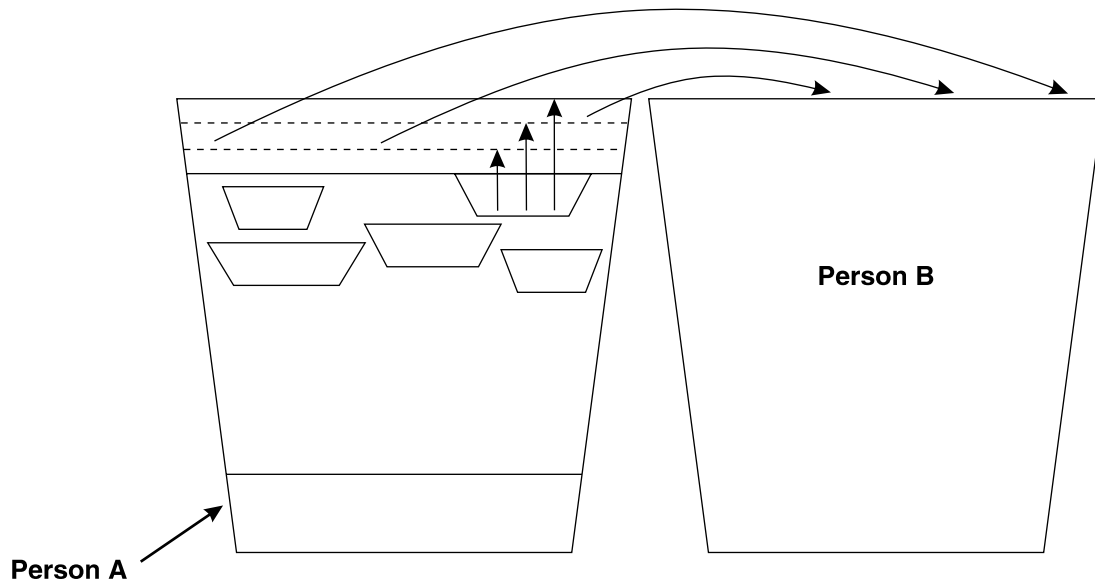


Figure 4. Mini-buckets from There-and-Then Influence the Here-and-Now

For example, if Person A has recently quarreled with a spouse, the residue of that quarrel will undoubtedly affect his or her interaction with Person B. The experience of the quarrel, a mini-bucket in A's there-and-then, will probably intrude on the current moment, so B must attempt to pick up on the experience of the quarrel also. The residue of the quarrel is probably mostly affect, so to empathize B must respond to A's feelings about it.

On the other hand, A may have just come from a stimulating brainstorming session with colleagues. In this instance, his or her mini-bucket contains a great deal of cognitive as well as affective material. In this case, it is essential for B to understand A's thoughts as well as A's feelings, especially if they modify A's current behavior.

There are endless examples that illustrate the demand on the listener for confluent attention and understanding; as shown here, to grasp only affect may be as remiss as to grasp only cognitive material.

Of course, the disposition of B, the listener, further complicates the process of communication. If B's bucket were accurately analyzed, it would be apparent what mini-buckets impose their dynamics into the here-and-now surface of B's conversation. B may fail to perceive accurately what is being communicated because of his or her own preconscious or unconscious data.

The complexity of life space—the bucket that each of us possesses—is enormous. The phenomenon of communication commands respect, even awe, when its intricacies and complexities are assessed. It is no wonder that so much miscommunication occurs.

SAMPLE ACTIVITIES CONTAINING COGNITIVE AND AFFECTIVE DATA

The bucket model reflects the multifaceted nature of the human being and illustrates the necessity for kenepathy, that is, simultaneously reacting to multiple levels of personality when communicating. The model is learned most effectively when reinforced with activities designed to develop discriminating yet comprehensive listening techniques. A few sample communications are cited below. After reading each, consider your own kenepathic response before reading the sample response.

At a meeting with the principal, a teacher suggests:

I really believe now that we should try to get our teachers to teach for mastery learning. We talked a lot about mastery learning in our departmental meetings this past month, and now I'm sold on it. I think it's the way to go.

This teacher is functioning mostly at the cognitive level, so the principal could respond kenepathically as follows:

You've had an insight that's changed your opinion of how to teach. You think we should move from our current method of giving students one chance to learn the material to a method that gives them as much time as it takes to learn the material.

This response obviously catches the teacher's thoughts on the subject and adequately says that he or she is understood.

In another example of an exercise in kenepathy, a coordinator speaks to his or her manager

Ms. Coronoa is really making a mess of that job I gave her last week.

If the listener reflects this statement with "You feel that she's not doing a good job"—a typical empathic response—the message has not been captured adequately. It is more accurate for the respondent to leave the statement at the cognitive level and respond with "You disapprove of her performance." A judgment, not a feeling, was expressed. If the listener detects affect also, he or she might add "and that makes you feel disappointed." But the speaker's statement alone, without accompanying body language or innuendo, is a cognitive statement.

Other examples of the intermix between affective and cognitive data can be generated easily. Examples rife with feeling are quickly available in training manuals. Practicing responses to both types helps us to see the importance of simultaneous discrimination of both dimensions. It exercises our skill at detecting ideas, preconceptions, and perceptions as well as feelings. It teaches us to listen to nonverbal and verbal cues in behavior. It helps us to verify that human beings think and feel simultaneously, a fact that we all experience in everyday life. In order to understand a person, we must be in tune with as much of that person's bucket as possible. Being able to kenepathize means getting in touch with every aspect of another person. The bucket model and the concept of kenepathy can be helpful tools to facilitate an understanding of the complexity of human beings and to develop comprehensive listening skills.

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■ COMMUNICATION MODES: AN EXPERIENTIAL LECTURE

John E. Jones

When we are attempting to transfer meanings to another person, we use three different modes, methods, or channels to carry our intentions. We use these modes to tell people who we are, how we experience the world, and the meanings that we attach to our experiences. We communicate symbolically, verbally, and nonverbally. This discussion centers around the definition of each of these modes and includes some suggested activities designed to look at the implications of these modes for improving one's communication with others. The intent is to explore the implications of the mixed signals that one often emits in attempting to share a meaning with another person.

When two people, A and B, are attempting to communicate with each other, their communication is distorted by their personalities, attitudes, values, belief systems, biases, backgrounds, assumptions about each other, and so on. A's communication to B flows through A's screen and through B's screen. When B responds to A, B is responding to what he or she heard rather than what A might have intended. B shoots a message back to A through his or her own screen of attitudes, values, and so on, through A's screen. What is often not understood is that the way we get messages through our screens and through the screens of others often is confusing and distorting in and of itself. We add to what we hear, we fail to hear, and we distort messages according to the modes that are used to convey messages.

SYMBOLIC COMMUNICATION

We say a great deal to each other about who we are and how we experience each other and the rest of the world through symbolic means. The symbolic communication mode is essentially passive, and messages emitted in this way are very easily misinterpreted.

What are some of the symbols that we use? First, our choice of clothing can tell a great deal about who we are, what our values are, what our status is, how conservative or liberal we are. We associate differences in occupational status with different uniforms. For example, a banker might wear a suit; a laborer might wear overalls; a radical student might wear colorful, loose clothing; and a straitlaced professor might wear a tailored vest.

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The second set of symbols with which we often associate meaning is hair. Bearded men are presumed to be more liberal than unbearded men; and men with long hair are presumed to have different political, economic, and social philosophies than men whose hair is short. Our choices about our appearance say a great deal about who we are. These signals are often highly ambiguous, however.

A third symbolic form is jewelry. Married people often wear wedding rings; some people wear beads; some people wear highly expensive jewelry; and so on. These are passive messages that are given out continually to other people. A flag in the lapel, a peace symbol around the neck, an earring in one ear say many things to other people.

A fourth form of symbolic communication to other people is cosmetics or makeup. We associate meanings with the different ways in which women apply makeup. The prostitute might wear heavier makeup than other women, for example. The man who uses a great many cosmetics is giving out a symbolic message about the meaning that his world has for him.

A fifth symbolic mode is the choice of automobiles. The business executive who drives a sports car is giving out a different set of messages to the world than his colleague who drives an ordinary family car.

A sixth symbolic mode is the choice and location of our homes. Social status is directly related to the type of dwelling that one lives in and its location.

Seventh, the geography of our living spaces is a form of symbolic communication. If you sit behind your desk in your office interviewing somebody who is on the other side of the desk, you are giving out a fundamentally different set of messages than if the two of you sit face to face with no intervening furniture.

Through the symbols that we choose to surround ourselves and invest ourselves with, we give out continual streams of signals about our meanings. These symbols are essentially passive. They are, however, a real part of our communication. When we are talking, when we are not talking, and even when we are sleeping, we emit passive symbolic signals.

SYMBOLIC ACTIVITIES

For the symbolic mode, participants may assemble into pairs and take turns interpreting all of the symbols about each other and sharing experiences about having their own symbols misinterpreted. An alternative activity is the statue game. In this game the participants form pairs and take turns being “it.” The person who is “it” imagines that he or she is a statue in an art gallery. The other person’s job is to examine the statue very closely, to be alert to all of the details of that person, and to try to memorize these details so that he or she can tell a third person why he or she decided to buy or not to buy the statue. After the partners have taken turns and inspected each other as statues, then they interpret as much of what they saw in terms of the kind of person each is.

VERBAL COMMUNICATION

The communication mode that we rely on most often to carry meaning from one person to another is the verbal mode. Everyone who has ever thought about it has come to the insight, however, that there are enormous difficulties in sole reliance on this mode of communication. History is replete with examples of misunderstandings among people who were relying on words to carry meaning. Perhaps the most significant learning that has come out of this experience has been that words themselves do not have meaning. *People* have meaning; words are simply tools that we use for trying to convey meaning that is idiosyncratic to one person into the idiosyncratic meaning system of another person.

One of the difficulties with words is that we attach to them different experiential and emotional connotations. Words are not always associated with similar experiences or similar feelings on the part of the listener and the speaker. Other difficulties encountered in using the verbal mode include the use of jargon, the use of clichés, and the use of specialized vocabularies. It is often said that words have meaning only in context; it can be better said that words have meaning only when they are associated with people in context.

People often struggle to find the right words to say what they mean. However, it is a myth that there is one correct way to say something. If we can extrapolate from that phenomenon, it is easy to hypothesize that there are some people who, instead of experiencing feelings and sensations, more often experience language; in other words, their experience parameters are defined by their vocabularies and their articulateness. The psychologist Piaget, describing cognitive development in children, says that we go through three phases: concrete, “imagic,” and abstract. When a baby first experiences the world, she is incapable of a highly differentiated emotional or sensational experience. She experiences only distress or delight, and her major inputs are concrete: She touches things, tastes things, sees things, hears things, smells things. As it becomes necessary for her to interact with the world and significant others in her environment in order to have her needs met, she develops a fantasy life, an “imagic” experience. She can imagine mother when mother is not concretely present. That fantasy life can remain throughout her life. As she develops verbal fluency, she begins to abstract, from physical stimuli, which bombard her, and from the images that are triggered by those stimuli, meanings that she attaches to her experiences. This abstract experience is a translation of sense data into a meaning system. The difficulty with us as adults, of course, is that very often we do not let into our awareness the physical sensations that we experience. We often mistrust our fantasy lives and tend to be afraid to permit ourselves to dream. We experience the world, then, in an abstract way rather than in a concrete and “imagic” way. The meanings that we permit ourselves to be aware of are verbal and abstract. What we abstract from the physical stimuli that we experience is dependent on our vocabularies and our reasoning abilities. But those three layers of experience—concrete, “imagic,” and abstract—are going on continuously. People experience in concrete ways and in “imagic” ways; and people experience the

abstracting process when they are awake and attributing meaning to what they see, hear, feel, taste, and touch. Not all of these meanings can be carried from one person to another through the verbal mode only.

VERBAL ACTIVITIES

Suggested activities for exploring the verbal mode include the following: Participants form trios and talk for three or four minutes using as many clichés as they can remember. Then each trio is instructed to attempt to come to some agreement on definition of several words, such as “uptight,” “heavy,” “straight.” Members of the trios are encouraged as a third activity to try to express verbally their here-and-now feeling experience of one another and of themselves. A fourth activity might be to get the members of the trios to attempt to agree on the percentage of time that they think about when they use the word “usually.” Once the trios have reached some consensus on the percentage of time associated with that word, these can be posted on a newsprint flip chart to illustrate the range of experience that we connote with the word. Similar tasks can be to ask the trios to attempt to come to some agreement on which is wetter, “damp” or “moist.” After three or four minutes of discussion, the trios can report by voting on which of those words connotes more wetness.

NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION

Recently a number of psychologists and people in the human-potential movement have turned attention to the nonverbal ways in which we share meaning with one another. The science of nonverbal communication is called “kinesis.” One’s nonverbal communication, or body language, is usually involuntary; the nonverbal signals that one emits often are a more valid source of gleaning information than are the signals that are expressed verbally and symbolically.

There are a number of forms of body language:

1. *Ambulation.* How people carry their bodies tells a great deal about who they are and how they are experiencing the environment. We associate different meanings to different ways in which people carry their bodies from one place to another.
2. *Touching.* This is perhaps the most powerful nonverbal communication form. We can communicate anger, interest, trust, tenderness, warmth, and a variety of other emotions very potently through touching. People differ, however, in their willingness to touch and to be touched. Some people give out nonverbal body signals that say they do not want to be touched, and others describe themselves and are described by others as touchable. There are many taboos associated with this form of communication. People can learn about their own personalities and selfconcepts by exploring their reactions to touching and being touched. The skin is the body’s largest organ, and through the skin we take in a variety of stimuli.

3. *Eye contact.* In the United States people tend to evaluate one another's trustworthiness by reactions to eye contact. Try a little experiment with yourself. Remember the last time you were driving down the road and passed a hitchhiker. The odds are very high that you did not look the hitchhiker in the eye if you passed him or her up. Con artists and salespeople understand the power of eye contact and use it to good advantage. Counselors understand that eye contact is a very powerful way of communicating understanding and acceptance. And speakers understand that eye contact is important in keeping an audience interested in a subject.
4. *Posturing.* How one postures when seated or standing constitutes a set of potential signals that may communicate how one is experiencing the environment. A person who folds his or her arms and legs is often said to be defensive. It is sometimes observed that a person under severe psychological threat will assume the body position of a fetus. The seductive person opens his or her body to other people and postures himself or herself so that the entire body is exposed to the other person.
5. *Tics.* The involuntary nervous spasms of the body can be a key to one's being threatened. A number of people stammer or jerk when they are being threatened. But these mannerisms can be easily misinterpreted.
6. *Subvocals.* We say "uh, uh, uh," when we are trying to find a word. We utter a lot of nonverbal sounds in order to carry meaning to another person. We hum, we grunt, we groan, and so on. These subvocal noises are not words, but they do carry meaning.
7. *Distancing.* Each person is said to have a psychological space around him or her. If another person invades that space, he or she may become somewhat tense, alert, or disconcerted. We tend to place distance between ourselves and others according to the kinds of relationships that we have and what our motives are toward one another. These reasons for establishing distances are often not displayed openly, but the behavior is, nevertheless, interpreted.
8. *Gesturing.* It is said that if we tie a French person's hands, he or she is mute. We carry a great deal of meaning to others through the use of gestures. But gestures do not mean the same things to all people. Sometimes people attach a different emphasis or meaning to the hand signals that we give. For example, the "A-O.K." sign that people in the United States use, a circle formed by the thumb and the first forefinger, is considered very obscene in some other countries. The "We're number one" sign, pointing the forefinger upward, is also considered obscene in some cultures. We give emphasis to our words and we attempt to clarify our meaning through the use of gestures.
9. *Vocalism.* As an example, take the sentence, "I love my children." That sentence is meaningless unless it is pronounced. The way in which the sentence is packaged vocally determines the signal that it gives to another person. For

example, if the emphasis is on the first word, “*I* love my children,” the implication is that somebody else does not love my children. If the emphasis is on the second word, “I *love* my children,” a different implication is given, perhaps that some of their behavior gets on my nerves. If the emphasis is placed on the third word, “I love *my* children,” the implication is that someone else’s children do not receive the same affection. If the emphasis is placed on the final word, “I love my *children*,” a fourth implication may be drawn, that is, that there are other people whom I do not love. So the way in which we vocalize our words often determines the meaning that another person is likely to infer from the message.

NONVERBAL ACTIVITIES

There is a wide variety of activities that can be used to study nonverbal communication. Suggested for use with this lecture might be nonverbal milling about the room, encountering people in whatever way a person feels comfortable with, assembling into pairs to do a trust walk, forming small groups to do a fantasy object game, and so on.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

These three modes of communication—symbolic, verbal, and nonverbal—are used by every person when he or she is awake and talking. Symbolic and nonverbal signals are continuous, just as are our experiences of the world in concrete and “imagic” ways. A steady stream of symbolic signals is being emitted from us to other people. Our bodies, voluntarily or involuntarily, also give out a continuous stream of messages to other people. Those messages, of course, may be different from what we intend. There is also the possibility that our intentions are not highly correlated with our actual experiences. When we are awake and talking with one another, we are giving out three sets of signals. These signals may not be correlated with one another. Our tongues may be saying one thing, our bodies saying another thing, and our symbols a third thing. True communication results when people share a common meaning experience. If there is a consistency among the modes that one is using to share meaning, then communication is much more likely to occur. When one is saying one thing and experiencing another, he or she is giving out confusing, mixed signals that can be very misleading to another person.

The implications are clear. For communication to occur, there must be a two-way interchange of feelings, ideals, and values. One-way communication is highly inefficient in that there is no way to determine whether what is heard is what is intended. The office memo is a form of one-way communication that is perhaps the least effective medium for transmitting meaning. A second implication is that for true communication to be experienced, it is necessary that there be a feedback process inherent in the communication effort. There needs to be a continual flow back and forth among the

people attempting to communicate, sharing what they heard from one another. The third implication is that people need to become acutely aware of the range of signals that they are emitting at any given moment. They can learn that by eliciting feedback from the people with whom they are attempting to share meaning.

■ MAKING REQUESTS THROUGH METACOMMUNICATION

Charles M. Rossiter, Jr.

When we communicate with others, we do so on two levels. The first is the *denotative* level. This is the level that deals with what we say—our words, the straightforward verbal content of our messages. The second is the *metacommunicative* level. We communicate on this level whenever we communicate about our communication. Virginia Satir (1967), a wellknown therapist, has suggested that we use communication about our communication to make requests of the person with whom we are interacting.

Metacommunications can be explicit and verbal, or they can be less obvious nonverbal cues. My tone of voice when I say “Get out of my office” to someone tells that person how to interpret my words. It tells him or her whether I am joking or serious. The nonverbal aspects of my voice indicate a request that he or she interpret my verbal, denotative message a certain way. By interpreting messages at both levels—denotative and metacommunicative—people decide what they think we mean, then act on that basis.

Obviously there can be interpretation problems. Because so many metacommunications are nonverbal, meanings must be inferred. Another problem is that we may not know how we really feel about the other person. We may do things to confound that person—because we are not sure ourselves what we want him or her to do or how we want him or her to interpret a message.

To amplify just a bit, let us presume that I really do not like a particular person, but that I also have difficulty rejecting people in general. This creates conflict in me. I want to reject the person, yet I do not want to.

In such a situation, an interaction might go like this:

- Me: Get out of my office (in a tone that says I’m serious).
Other: Oh, I didn’t know you were busy. (He turns and starts to leave.)
Me: Wait a minute. (I feel guilty when I see he is leaving and feeling rejected.)
Other: Huh?
Me: Where are you going?
Other: You told me to get out.
Me: Oh, I was only kidding. (I deny the metacommunication given earlier.)
Other: (Confusion: What should he believe—my tone of voice earlier or my verbal message now? What should he do? Should he stay or go?)

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This interaction is an example of *incongruent communication*, which occurs when two or more messages sent at different levels conflict seriously. Conflicting messages make things difficult for the person trying to interpret them. He wonders: “What does the other person really mean? Which of the requests should I believe?”

People vary in their capacities for sending requests clearly so that others do not need to guess much.

USELESS REQUESTS

Another point Satir (1967) makes is that some things cannot be requested. That is, it is useless to request the types of things that people cannot produce. Here are examples of some useless requests:

1. We cannot ask others to feel as we do or as we want them to. Feelings are spontaneous. All we can do is try to elicit feelings. If we fail to elicit feelings, we can accept the situation or try again.
2. We cannot ask others to think as we do. Thoughts also cannot be demanded. We can try to persuade. If that does not work, then we must accept the fact, compromise, or “agree to disagree.”
3. We *can* demand that others do or say (or not do or not say) what we want. But if we succeed, the success is questionable. We have shown only that we have power, not that we are lovable or worthwhile.

If we try to be more aware of our communicating and metacommunicating, we can change the way we make requests of others. If we increase our knowledge of ourselves and of what we want and how we feel about others, we are more likely to make clearer requests. We are less likely to put others in positions of conflict.

EXAMINING YOUR OWN REQUESTS

How congruent or incongruent are your communications? (If you do not know, ask others and then listen closely to what they say.) What kinds of requests do you tend to make of others? Do you make useless requests? How clear are your requests? Do you confound others with conflicting requests or with denials that you ever make requests?

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■ NONVERBAL COMMUNICATION AND THE INTERCULTURAL ENCOUNTER

Melvin Schnapper

An American nurse is accused by Ethiopian townspeople of treating Ethiopians like dogs. An American teacher in Nigeria has great trouble getting any discipline in his class, and it is known that the students have no respect for him because he has shown no self-respect.

Even though neither American has offended the respective hosts with words, both of them are unaware of the offenses they have communicated by their nonverbal behavior. These two examples cite but one aspect of the intercultural encounter. This occurs whenever people from different cultures meet, be they from different countries or from different racial or ethnic groups within one country. Whenever such persons encounter each other, they are apt to miscommunicate because of their different values, assumptions, perceptions, experiences, language (even if they speak the “same” language), and nonverbal communication patterns.

Although a great deal of attention has been given to the intercultural encounter, it is only recently that people in the training field have been given systematic preparation for the intercultural encounter. One aspect of this encounter that is still neglected in training is nonverbal communication.

NONVERBAL DIFFERENCES

In the first example, the nurse working at a health center would enter the waiting room and call for the next patient as she would in the States—by pointing with her finger to the patient and beckoning the patient to come. This pointing gesture is acceptable in the States, but in Ethiopia it is for children—and her beckoning signal is for dogs! In Ethiopia one points to a person by extending the arm and hand and beckons by holding the hand out, palm down, and closing the hand repeatedly.

In the second example, the teacher insisted that students look him in the eye to show attentiveness—in a country where prolonged eye contact is considered disrespectful.

Although the most innocent American/English gesture may have insulting, embarrassing, or at least confusing connotations in another culture, the converse also is true. If a South American were to bang on the table and hiss at the waiter for service in a New York restaurant, that customer would be thrown out. Americans usually feel that

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Japanese students in the U.S. are obsequious because they bow frequently. Male African students in the U.S. will be stared at for holding hands in public.

It seems easier to accept the arbitrariness of language—that the word “dog” in English is “chien” in French or “cane” in Italian—than it is to accept the different behaviors of nonverbal communication, which in many ways are just as arbitrary as language.

We assume that our way of talking and gesturing is “natural” and that those who behave differently are deviating from what is natural. This assumption leads to a blind spot about crosscultural behavior differences. And the person is likely to remain blind and unaware of the effect of his or her nonverbal communications, because the hosts will seldom tell the person that he or she has committed a social blunder. It is rude to tell people they are rude; thus, the hosts grant the foreigner a “foreigner license,” allowing him or her to make mistakes of social etiquette, and the foreigner never knows until too late which ones will prove disastrous.

An additional handicap is that the foreigner does not enter the new setting free of his or her cultural background, able to see and adopt new ways of communicating without words. The foreigner is a prisoner of his or her own culture and interacts within his or her own framework. Yet the fact remains that for maximum understanding, the visiting American must learn to use not only the words of another language, but also the tools of that culture’s nonverbal communication.

Although language fluency has achieved its proper recognition as being essential for success overseas, knowledge of nonverbal behavior should also be introduced to the trainee in a systematic way, offering him or her actual experiences to increase awareness and sensitivity. Indeed, it is the rise in linguistic fluency that now makes nonverbal fluency even more critical. A linguistically fluent person may offend even more easily than those who do not speak as well, if he or she shows ignorance about interface etiquette. The host national may perceive this disparity between linguistic and nonlinguistic performance as a disregard for the more subtle aspects of intercultural communication. Because nonverbal cues reflect emotional states, both foreigner and host national might not be able to articulate what is occurring between them.

CRITICAL DIMENSIONS

Although it would be difficult to map out all of the nonverbal details for every language, one can make people aware of the existence and emotional importance of the nonverbal dimensions. These dimensions of nonverbal communication exist in every culture. The patterns and forms are often arbitrary, and it is disputable which are universal and which are culture specific. At least five such dimensions can be defined: kinesic, proxemic, chronemic, oculesic, and haptic.

Kinesics

Movement of the body (head, arms, legs, and so on) falls into this dimension. In the initial example of the nurse at the health center in Ethiopia, the problem was caused by a kinesic sign being used that had a different meaning crossculturally.

In another example, the American gesture of drawing the thumb across the throat, implying slitting one's throat, means "I've had it" or "I'm in trouble," but in Swaziland it means "I love you."

Americans make no distinction between gesturing for silence to an adult or to a child. An American will put one finger to his or her lips for both, while an Ethiopian will use only one finger for a child and four fingers for an adult. To use only one finger for an adult is disrespectful. On the other hand, Ethiopians make no distinction in gesturing to indicate emphatic negation. They shake their index finger from side to side to an adult as well as to a child, whereas in the United States this gesture is used only for children. Thus, the American who is not conscious of the meaning of such behavior not only will offend his or her hosts, but also will feel offended by them.

Drawing in the cheeks and holding the arms rigidly by the side of the body means "thin" in Amharic. Diet-conscious Americans feel complimented if they are told that they are slim, and thus they may naturally assume that the same comment to an Ethiopian friend is also complimentary. Yet in Ethiopia and a number of other countries, this comment is pejorative; it is thought better to be heavyset, indicating health and status and enough wealth to ensure the two.

Proxemics

The use of interpersonal space is another dimension of nonverbal communication. South Americans, Greeks, and others are comfortable standing, sitting, or talking to people at a distance that most North Americans find intolerably close. We interpret this unusual closeness as aggressiveness or intimacy, which causes us to have feelings of hostility, discomfort, or intimidation. If we back away to the greater distance that we find comfortable, we are perceived as being cold, unfriendly, and distrustful. In contrast, Somalis would see us as we see South Americans, as the Somalis' interface distance is still greater than ours.

Chronemics

The timing of verbal exchanges during conversation is chronemics. As Americans, we expect our partners to respond to our statements immediately. In some other cultures, people time their exchanges to leave silence between a statement and its response. For Americans this silence is unsettling. To us it may mean that the other person is shy, inattentive, bored, or nervous. It causes us to repeat, paraphrase, talk louder, and "correct" our speech to accommodate our partner. In an intercultural situation, however, it would be best to tolerate the silence and wait for a response.

Oculesics

Eye-to-eye contact or avoidance is another nonverbal dimension. Americans are dependent on eye contact as a sign of listening. We do not feel that there is human contact without eye contact. But many countries follow elaborate patterns of eye avoidance that we regard as inappropriate.

Haptics

The tactile form of communication is a fifth dimension. Where, how, and how often people can touch each other while conversing are culturally defined patterns. We need not go beyond the borders of our own country to see groups (Italians and blacks, for example) that touch each other more often than Anglo-Americans do. Overseas, Americans often feel crowded and pushed around by people who have a much higher tolerance for public physical contact and even need it as part of their communication process. An American may feel embarrassed when a hostnational friend continues to hold his or her hand long after the formal greetings are over.

These five dimensions are by no means exhaustive. The list is literally infinite and may include things such as dress, posture, smell, colors, time, and many others.

PREPARATION FOR DIFFERENCES

There are ways of helping people to prepare for crosscultural differences; and there are some significant, additional benefits that trainees can gain through an appropriate training technique.

The critical need for nonverbal communication skills is unquestioned, but trainers differ as to whether and how these skills can be taught. While some trainers recognize that proficiency in nonverbal communication would help to reduce unnecessary strain between Americans and host nationals, others dismiss its importance, feeling that trainees will simply “pick it up” or that it can be dealt with as a list of “dos and don’ts.” Occasionally, a language teacher recognizes its possibilities, but generally nonverbal communication has been dealt with in a very haphazard way. The fact that nonverbal interaction is a part of every encounter between an American and a host national should be enough to signify its importance.

TRAINING TECHNIQUES

The goal of making trainees aware of and sensitive to nonverbal communication differences has been achieved by having them simulate a communication situation. This results in emotional responses similar to those that would occur in particular intercultural situations. Trainees are then encouraged to practice these new simulated behaviors until they become a natural and comfortable part of their repertoire of communication skills.

Self-Awareness

One technique in this approach is to divide a group of trainees into pairs and to ask one member of each pair to act in a prescribed nonverbal manner that will elicit feelings of discomfort in the other person about his or her partner's "strange" behavior.

As a sample exercise on proxemic behavior (use of space), the trainees are divided into two groups. Separately, each group discusses issues such as "why we want to go overseas" or "anticipated difficulties overseas." Then members of one group are told that when they rejoin the other group and are matched with their partners, they are to establish a comfortable distance and then decrease it by one inch each minute or by prearranged signals from the trainer. Signals could include the trainer's moving from one spot in the room to another or stopping the group to find out what specifics they talked about and then asking them to continue. In this case, the trainer's questions should be about the content of the conversation, not about the experiment in process. When the distance has been shortened by six inches or more, the nondirected partners will experience discomfort and, consciously or unconsciously, will start moving away.

It is easy at this point to explain that the directed partners were imitating the "comfort distance" of South Americans and that if the undirected partners were to retreat in the same way with a Latin, the Latin would think them unfriendly and cold. Conversely, in Somalia, it would be the American who would be perceived as aggressive by standing too close for Somali comfort.

Basically, this technique attempts to sensitize trainees to many other behavior patterns of nonverbal communication by taking an "informed" partner and a "control" partner and directing the former to alter his or her nonverbal behavior in a gradual manner to make the partner react. Both people will have an emotional or visceral reaction, which they can share at the conclusion of each exercise. Emphasis is placed on the reciprocal nature of the partners' discomfort and confusion.

These group sensitizing techniques are based on the principle that people will react emotionally and will give social meaning to alterations of standard American patterns of nonverbal behavior, for example, when someone blinks often, he or she is nervous; if the person avoids eye contact, he or she is insecure or untrustworthy; if the person does not nod his or her head in agreement or shake it in disagreement, he or she is not paying attention. And generally our interpretation is correct—if the other person is an American.

Role Playing

In addition to group experiences with a self-awareness emphasis, there are role-play techniques in which nonverbal patterns of the target language group are emphasized. Trainees watch and interpret. A dialogue with the host-national role player helps the trainees to discover what cues were misread and what the consequences of their misinterpretation could be.

Potential areas of discomfort for both the American and the host national are further explored after a trainee and the host-national role player have engaged in a role-play

activity with the host national critiquing the trainee's behavior. The purpose of these role plays is not to imitate behavior but to explore emotional reactions. The focus is on model behavior of a certain culture without accounting for the idiosyncratic differences between people in that culture.

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

The discussions following the training exercises are, in part, an attempt to merge the traditionally separate components of language and cultural studies as usually presented in training programs. Trainees can achieve a foundation of awareness and skill that will allow them to continue developing their personal inventory of language behaviors. Training for nonverbal communication serves as an excellent orientation for an immersion language program in which speaking any English is discouraged. A heightened awareness of nonverbal behavior will reduce both the trainees' temptation to discard the use of the target language and also their overall frustration. Nonverbal behavior is not a new communication tool that they must learn but one whose potential has been dormant.

And, finally, the study of nonverbal communication introduces activities and discussions that are both interesting and fun, while encouraging trainees and language instructors to look at their perceptions of one another. Very often trainees hesitate to ask intimate questions of host nationals. This format offers them and host nationals situations in which potentially controversial topics can be discussed dispassionately. Corollary activities might involve movies, videotapes, and photographs of common interface situations.

Host nationals who have worked with this approach have found it fascinating. Once the atmosphere of mutual exploration has been established, host nationals find that this method gives them a chance to explore their own cultural patterns as well as those of the trainees. It also goes a long way toward clearing up misconceptions that the host-country national may have developed while interacting with Americans. As part of a training program, this technique typically receives a very high evaluation from trainees and language teachers.

Of course, there is no guarantee that heightened awareness will truly lead to changed behavior. Indeed, there are situations in which an American should not alter behavior, depending on his or her status, role, personality, and ultimate objectives for being in the host country.

The attempt to make Americans more aware of their interpersonal relations overseas (left to chance for too long) is based partly on the assumption that a person will be sensitized to nonverbal differences because he or she is surrounded by them. While true for many people, it is also true, however, that many will remain oblivious to nonverbal differences even though exposed to them daily for many years.

Awareness in Situations Within the United States

Although the focus thus far has been on the American/non-American dimensions of intercultural communication, much of what has been said applies equally well to interracial and intergroup communication within the United States. Recent studies indicate that the oculesic and proxemic norms between whites and blacks in the United States differ to the extent that real miscommunication often occurs.

These concepts and specific training techniques have also been used successfully with groups who work in multicultural situations in the U.S. The emphasis on awareness works best when the trainee group itself is multicultural. This allows the group members' different reactions to the changed norms to validate the existence of nonverbal differences.

People with extensive intercultural experience benefit greatly from this approach, as they already have had prolonged contact with cross-cultural differences.

The useful technique of heightening the awareness of cultural differences should alert many people to attend more closely to an often-neglected part of the intercultural encounter—nonverbal communication.

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■ TOWARD ANDROGYNOUS TRAINERS

Melinda S. Sprague and Alice Sargent

There has been a recent cultural movement toward androgynous behavior, a movement that we as trainers have encountered in our own work. More than ever before, we have been concerned not only with helping women to be autonomous and more supportive of other women but also with helping men to make more emotional contact with others. These issues influence every facet of training programs and organizational behavior. This paper examines the impact of changing sex roles on the following dimensions of trainer/consultant activities: role models, leadership and training styles, power, the dynamics of interaction, and communication models.

ROLE MODELS

Current role models in training tend to be the same as role models in other professions, including politics, management, health, government, and educational administration. Value is placed on coolness, competitive power, charisma, toughness, resiliency, an external rather than an intrinsic reward system, logic, and a rational problem-solving approach rather than an integrated approach that relies on wants and needs as much as ideas.

To categorize this group of norms as “male” is probably less accurate than to characterize the current cultural norms in the United States as being divided into organizational norms and family norms. Stated most simply, men, who are taught to value a task-oriented, achieving style, have been socialized to fill the needs of organizations, whereas women, who are taught to be expressive and oriented toward the development of others as an extension of themselves, have been socialized to value the family setting as a means of fulfilling their own needs.

Given this emphasis, it is not surprising that women in government, education, business—or human relations training—have many similar problems to deal with. Contributing to the difficulty is the fact that the goals of training imply placing value on helping skills, collaborative power and nurturing, appreciation for the growth processes of others, vicarious achievement through the appreciation of others’ development, and expressiveness and emotionality. Yet the execution of a training program requires presence, authority, clarity of goals, and intellectual skills. Laboratory education requires not only the critical helping skills but also effective problem solving, the ability

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to deal with power and influence, the skill to know when to give in and when to force a point, and the ability to generalize rather than personalize.

Because of this needed blending of talents, we believe that the competent trainer must be androgynous. Sandra Bem (1974, p. 155) defines the androgynous person as “both masculine and feminine, both assertive and yielding, both instrumental and expressive.” The androgynous trainer is therefore both dominant and yielding, combining independence and competence with playfulness and nurturing. He or she combines a direct achievement style with a vicarious achievement style (Lipman-Blumen, 1973). A direct achievement style reflects the need to experience satisfaction and accomplishment through one’s own efforts; vicarious achievement implies experiencing satisfaction indirectly through another individual with whom one strongly identifies.

If we apply the concepts of Ornstein (as quoted in Mintzberg, 1976), we might say that an androgynous trainer is well developed in both the right (creative skills) and left (intellectual skills) brain hemispheres. Utilizing this terminology, we find that there are just as few “new women” as there are “new men.” In fact, it seems that many professional women, in their quest to be taken seriously, go through the state of becoming men before they give themselves the permission to recapture or reintegrate some of the tenderness and playfulness that they previously abandoned. But we note with optimism that as the pool of assertive women increases, more and more women models are surfacing who can be assertive without being oppressive or noncaring.

LEADERSHIP AND TRAINING STYLES

As women search for role models and try successfully or unsuccessfully to become like their male colleagues and mentors, they are often awkward. They may try to take charge or express anger in a manner similar to that of some charismatic male guru, only to feel even more inept because they have violated their own integrity.

Women’s leadership styles have been traditionally characterized by the hostess role. Women have learned to be pleasant—perhaps excessively so; to smooth over conflict; to be preoccupied with bringing people together; to be more concerned with feelings than with “getting the job done”; to smile—perhaps too much; to allow themselves to be interrupted; to let their voices trail off when they are making an important point; to laugh at the end of an assertive sentence; and to require more expertise from themselves before offering a contribution than men demand from themselves.

Courses in public speaking are particularly useful for women trainers; accepting opportunities to take charge and to give speeches is also worthwhile. Assertion-training programs can help encourage self-expression—making “I” statements and repeating one’s point even if it is for the seventh or eighth time, rather than giving up after two tries. We do have, however, a specific concern regarding assertion training. It develops powerful skills, but it can become verbal karate when it is practiced apart from an overall concern for individual relationships.

To enhance her own effectiveness, the woman trainer needs to be especially aware of certain issues. In design sessions for laboratory experiences and consultations, she needs to know where her support base is in the group; she needs to know the issues on which she will negotiate and those on which she will not. She needs to have a good sense of timing so that she intervenes at moments when her input can be best received. She needs to be equally unconcerned with being ignored and with being affirmed so that she can monitor the group climate. She needs to claim ownership for a job well done but also to acknowledge errors in judgment. She needs to deal with instances in which sexual attraction biases her responses to other trainers and group members.

Men, also, as they search for new, more collaborative, less competitive behavior and as they become committed more to openness than to coolness, are likely to be awkward. Men need to be encouraged to build support systems or begin consciousness-raising groups in which they can explore these new behaviors. In training settings particularly, we encourage men to be aware of whether they are operating out of a need for power and control or a need to get the job done, ignoring other significant needs for approval, closeness, or spontaneity.

POWER

A paramount issue for women in training is the exercise of power and the acceptance of the potential conflict that may result. This issue is manifest in both the planning and the execution of training programs. Women tend to be reticent with colleagues concerning confrontation or competition in design sessions, even when it is in the best interests of the client. The same is true when women consultants negotiate a contract with a client system. They often fail to conceptualize the issues and tend to see an impediment in terms of a power struggle even though such dynamics are ordinary and frequently useful components in every organization.

The woman trainer/consultant needs to be clear in her own mind about what is negotiable in the design and what is not, if she is to act in the best professional interests of her client and herself. Training designs, of course, may need to be modified after the program begins; or alternatives may need to be presented from which the participants can choose. But women particularly, because of their past socialization and the ongoing reward system in the United States culture, are especially vulnerable to abandoning a position of strength in order to be charming and conciliatory instead of forceful and persuasive.

Although ways of dealing with the authority issue vary tremendously among both male and female trainers, women tend to be reluctant to take charge when that is appropriate; and they overuse the collaborative/reactive mode even when it is not appropriate. As women become more comfortable in leadership roles, they will undoubtedly be able to make judgments based on a correct reading of the situation at hand.

In training there is ample evidence that women tend to give away their power. In simulations, for example, women participants may ignore three pages of written directions and instead turn to their neighbors to ask, “What did that say?” They seem to be much more familiar with seeking help from others than with being self-reliant.

In the United States culture, women have also been socialized to “make do” rather than to hustle. Women trainers may not ask for special facilities, may not think about going off-site, may not plan activities that require significant funds. Women are less likely than men to test budgetary and other resource limits.

In contrast, the culture of the United States has rewarded men for overusing the power mode. Many men have reported to us that they naturally fall into competitive, win-lose behavioral interactions even when such behavior is unnecessary. In order to become more androgynous, men need to be in touch with their tendency to assume power; they need to learn to accept the discomfort of being less in control, less persuasive, less inscrutable.

DYNAMICS OF INTERACTION

The psychological climate varies in all-male groups, all-female groups, and mixed groups. Although adequate research does not yet exist, it would follow that the sex of the trainer influences the climate of the group. For example, many male trainers tell stories and jokes in groups to enhance a point, and yet very few female trainers use this behavior; female trainers, in contrast, may be more likely to inquire about the families of clients.

Significant research exists on the impact of the composition of groups on interaction patterns. Aries (1976) reports that themes in all-male groups include competition, aggression, violence, victimization, joking, questions of identity, and fear of self-disclosure. About one-third of the statements in all-male groups are addressed to the group as a whole, signaling an avoidance of intimacy. Men in effect tend not to face the issue of having their intimacy needs met by other men.

All-female group themes include affiliation, family, conflicts about competition and leadership, and information about relationships. In mixed groups the men tend to be more tense, serious, and self-conscious; to speak less of aggression; and to engage in less practical joking. There are more references to self on the part of both sexes, there is more talk of feelings; but the women generally speak much less than the men, with the men taking two-thirds of the air time. Sexual tensions are present. Heterosexual contact is apparent, and values and concerns are expressed about being attractive to the opposite sex.

Women and men trainers alike need to be alert to the fact that a man in a female-dominated group is likely to be a central figure—to be deferred to and respected. In contrast, Aries (1976) reports that a woman in a male-dominated group is likely to be isolated and to be treated as trivial or as a mascot. It is a part of the trainer’s function to help women learn to relate to other women as well as to men. Our experience leads us to

believe that the learning is richer if several women are in one group than if a solo woman is in each training group, even if it means that some groups will have no women. A solo woman (see Wolman & Frank, 1975) is much more likely to be forced to accept male norms or to face isolation than if she has support from other women.

The research of Bender et al. (1966) and our own empirical data show us that femininity is correlated with selfdisclosure. In a training situation, women trainers are more likely to share their feelings and personal data, thereby modeling that behavior for participants and lessening the gap between trainer and member. Culbert (1970) found that although neither overdisclosure nor underdisclosure on the part of trainers was healthy or effective in a group, an optimal amount of selfdisclosure modeled openness, enhanced learning, and promoted cohesiveness. Women trainers, we think, bring these qualities to the training team and to their groups. Trainers (of both sexes) also report that they like having women members in their groups because women personalize the situation and generate a feeling of intimacy.

A COMMUNICATIONS PARADIGM

The language of transactional analysis (TA) has been important in describing models for communication. The typical “egogram” in TA describes communication as shown in Figure 1.

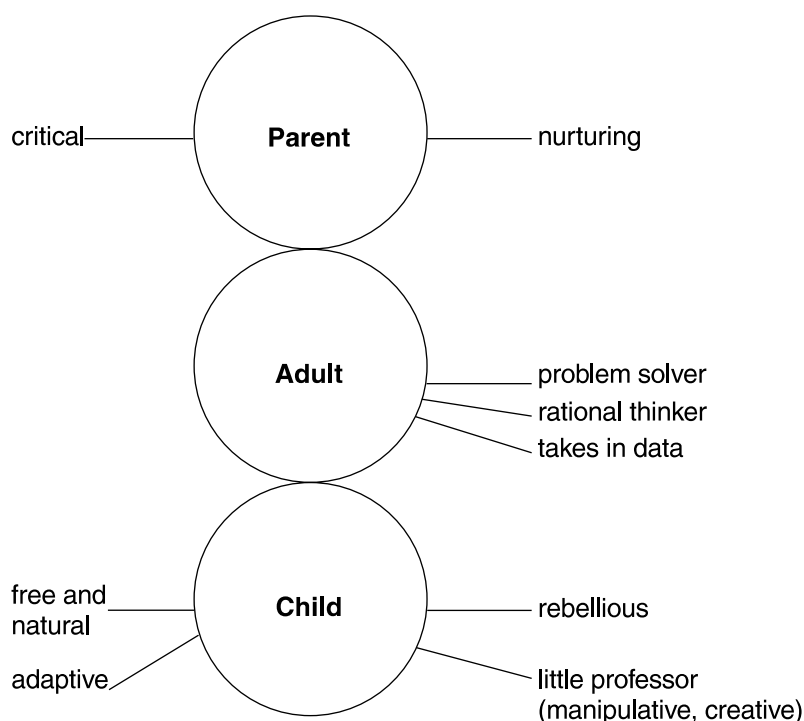


Figure 1. Parent, Adult, and Child Ego States¹

¹ Based on Berbe (1961, 1964) and Steiner (1975).

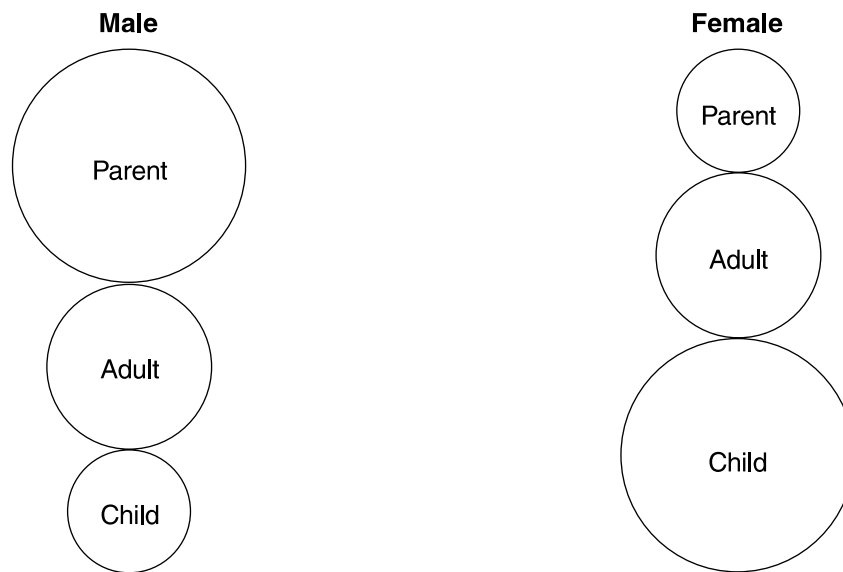


Figure 2. Male and Female Ego States

Steiner (1975) and Wyckoff (1975) suggested that men have overdeveloped Parent and Adult states and an underdeveloped Child state, whereas women have underdeveloped Parent and Adult states and an overdeveloped Child state. Therefore, in TA terms the male and female would appear as in Figure 2.

The TA description is particularly oriented toward a masculine model because it describes the Adult state as the rational, problem-solving mode and places the nurturing emotions in the Parent state. The androgynous trainer needs to combine the problem-solving style with nurturing, caring, and contact. He or she needs to learn to love, assert, be angry, be frightened, care, and solve problems as part of men-women communications or women-women communications in order to make a more complete range of behaviors available.

Clearly the sex of the trainer influences perceptions and expectations of a style of communicating. In addition to the trainer's own individual behavior, he or she is a ready target for a variety of participant projections from childhood concerning real or literary male and female authority figures. These may include the righteously indignant female elementary school teacher; the punitive male figure of retribution prevalent in most religions; the vain, jealous witch-woman; and the good, pure, rescuing knight. These misperceptions can lead to dysfunctional communication styles (Figure 3).

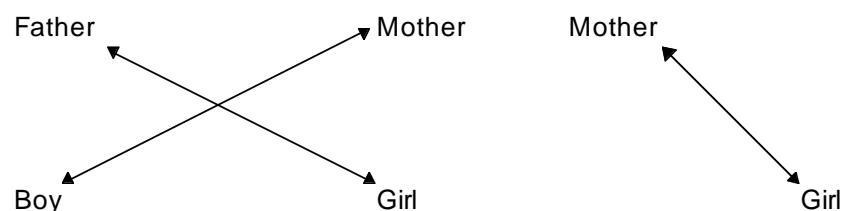


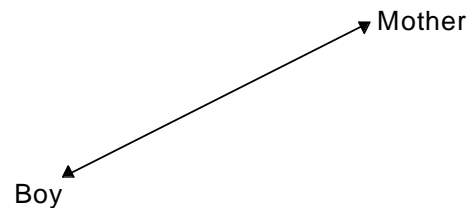
Figure 3. Dysfunctional Communication Styles

Such communication styles suggest dysfunctional communication patterns:

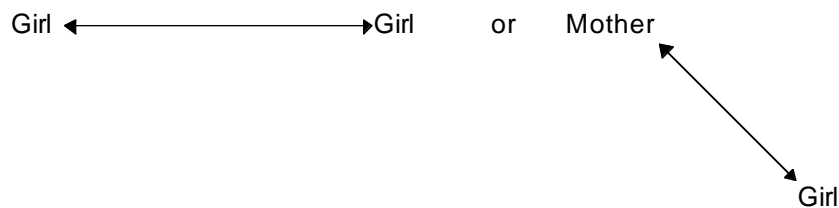
- Women's righteous indignation in the Mother role;
- Men's paternalism and protectiveness in the Father role; and
- Women's adoption of the angry or stubborn Child role.

If we take man \longleftrightarrow woman and woman \longleftrightarrow woman as our goal for many of our transactions, then we want to eliminate the following behaviors:

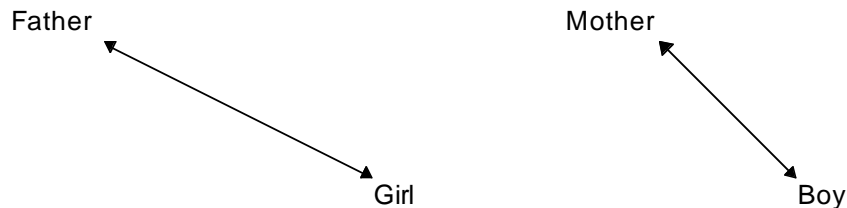
- Men's use of women trainers as mothers—telling them personal information but not treating them as real colleagues with whom they also solve problems and perform tasks;



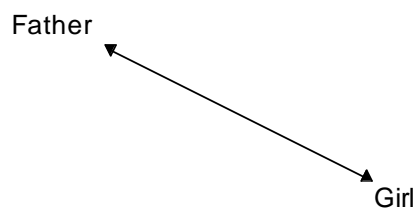
- Women participants' and trainers' failure to share their competence with one another;



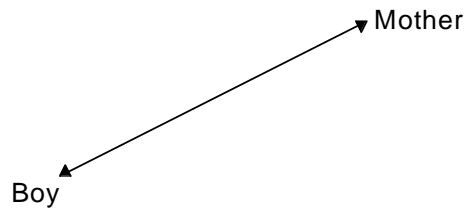
- Men and women trainers' and participants' use of sex to play out power and control issues;



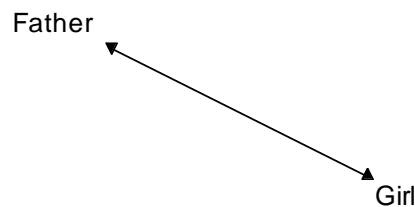
- Male trainers' sublimation of anger at women participants or trainers (assuming the Father role and protecting women);



- In co-training, the male trainer's deferring to his female colleague in emotional situations in which pain is being expressed (for example, a female trainer comforts a woman or a man who is crying while the male trainer steps aside);



- In co-training, the female trainer's deferring to her male colleague in issues concerning the control of the design or schedule for the group.



CONCLUSION

Today women and men are acknowledging their own special competencies and slowly differentiating which role models they value. We need to move toward androgynous models of leadership. Women need to expand their repertoire of behavior for dealing with power and conflict, while men need to increase their capability for selfdisclosure and for the spontaneous expression of feelings. Because our day-to-day relationships generally do not offer us sufficient support even now, there is surely not enough to see men and women through the coming stormy transition in male-female relationships. All of us need to build greater support systems to help us deal with our anxieties, take risks, and maintain our increasing options for behavior free of sex-role stereotyping.

These issues need to be talked about and explored in every aspect of training activities. As trainers, we need to be proactive and to highlight these concerns in our work and teaching. We are building toward dramatically new patterns of interaction between men and men, between women and women, and between men and women. Both sexes must be allowed to develop androgynous behavior free of sex-role constraints.

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■ COMMUNICATING COMMUNICATION

J. Ryck Luthi

Effectiveness of management personnel of all grades is very dependent upon the ability *to communicate* orally not only the policy of the company but suggestions as to how work should be done, criticism of poor work, and the application of discipline, and of course the general field of human relationships. (Lull, Funk, & Piersol, 1955, p. 17)

It seems safe to conclude from research studies that by and large, the better supervisors (better in terms of getting the work done) are those who are more sensitive to their communication responsibilities. They tend to be those, for example, who give clear instructions, who listen empathically, who are accessible for questions or suggestions, and who keep their subordinates properly informed. (Redding & Sanborn, 1964, p. 60)

Research leads to the conclusion that there is a positive correlation between effective communication and each of the following factors: employee productivity, personal satisfaction, rewarding relationships, and effective problem solving. Two major components of effective communication are sending messages and receiving messages. Techniques of listening and verbalizing help in both of these dimensions.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE SENDER

Self-Feelings

In the context of each communicating situation, the sender's feelings about self will affect how the message is encoded. The following questions are conscious and subconscious tradewinds that affect the effectiveness of the message: "Do I feel worthwhile in this situation? Am I safe in offering suggestions? Is this the right time (place)? Am I the subordinate or the boss in this situation?" In everyday jargon, such questions might be phrased in these ways: "Am I O.K.? Do I count?" Usually, the more comfortable or positive the self-concept, the more effective the sender is in communicating.

Belief in Assertive Rights

Linked to self-concept is the belief that one has some rights, such as the right to change one's mind; the right to say "I don't understand" or "I don't know"; the right to follow a

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“gut” or intuitive feeling without justifying reasons for it; the right to make mistakes and to be responsible for them; and the right to say “I’m not sure now, but let me work on it.” Believing in such rights can help strengthen the sender’s self-concept and avoid the defensive maneuvering that hinders communication in exchanging information. It would be wise to remember that assertive rights are not complete without responsibility. For example, one has the right to say “I don’t know”; but one probably also has the responsibility to find out.

The Sender’s Perception of the Message

The sender’s perception of the message is encompassed in the following questions: “Do I feel the information I have is valuable? Is it something I want to say or do not want to say? How do I feel it will be received? Is the topic interesting or not interesting to me? Do I understand the information correctly, at least well enough to describe it to others, and do I know the best way to say it?”

The Sender’s Feelings About the Receiver

The probability of effective communication is increased if the sender feels positive or respectful toward the receiver. Positive or respectful feelings usually carry a built-in commitment and/or desire to share communication. Negative or nonrespectful feelings require conscious effort to communicate effectively. For the sender it is important to know it is all right not to like everyone, or, for the optimist, to like some people less than others. It is also important to know that we live in a world in which not everyone is going to like or respect us and that is all right, too.

Suggestions for Effective Expression

In order to send messages effectively, you should consider the following points:

1. *Become aware of your thoughts and feelings.* Do not be quick to brand them “good,” “bad,” “wrong,” or “right.” Accept them as a reflection of the present “you,” and let them become best friends by giving support and feedback to your effectiveness and to your needs; consider what they are whispering or shouting to you. By increasing your awareness of your feelings, you can better decide what to do with them.
2. *Feel comfortable in expressing your feelings.* Such expression, when congruent with the situation and appropriate, can enhance communication.
3. *Be aware of the listener.* Try to verbalize your message in terms of the listener’s understanding and indicate why you feel the message is important to him or her. Does it have a specific significance for the listener, or is it just “general information”?
4. *Focus on the importance of the message* and repeat key concepts and essential aspects of the information.

5. *Use as few words as possible* to state the message.

POINTS FOR THE LISTENER

Effective listening is as important to communication as effective sending. Effective listening is an active process in which the listener interacts with the speaker. It requires mental and verbal paraphrasing and attention to nonverbal cues like tones, gestures, and facial expressions. It is a process of listening not to every word but to main thoughts and references.

Nichols (1952) listed the following as deterrents to effective listening:

1. Assuming in advance that the subject is uninteresting and unimportant;
2. Mentally criticizing the speaker's delivery;
3. Getting overstimulated when questioning or opposing an idea;
4. Listening only for facts, wanting to skip the details;
5. Outlining everything;
6. Pretending to be attentive;
7. Permitting the speaker to be inaudible or incomplete;
8. Avoiding technical messages;
9. Overreacting to certain words and phrases; and
10. Withdrawing attention, daydreaming.

The feelings and attitudes of the listener can affect what he or she perceives. How the listener feels about herself or himself, how the message is perceived, and how the listener feels about the speaker all affect how well the recipient listens to the message. As a listener, you should keep the following suggestions in mind:

1. *Be fully accessible to the speaker.* Being preoccupied, letting your mind wander, and trying to do more than one thing at a time lessen your chances of hearing and understanding efficiently. In the words of Woody Allen, "It is hard to hum a tune and contemplate one's own death at the same time." Interrupting a conversation to answer the phone may enhance your perceived ego, but the interrupted speaker feels of secondary importance.
2. *Be aware of your feelings as a listener.* Emotions such as anger, dislike, defensiveness, and prejudice are natural; but they cause us not to hear what is being said and sometimes to hear things that are not being said.

According to Reik (1972), listening with the "third ear" requires the listener to do the following things:

1. Suspend judgment for a while;
2. Develop purpose and commitment to listening;
3. Avoid distraction;

4. Wait before responding;
5. Develop paraphrasing in his or her own words and context, particularly to review the central themes of the messages;
6. Continually reflect mentally on what the speaker is trying to say; and
7. Be ready to respond when the speaker is ready for comments.

Responses That Block Communication

The following kinds of responses can block effective communication:

Evaluation Response. The phrases “You should . . .,” “Your duty . . .,” “You are wrong,” “You should know better,” “You are bad,” and “You are such a good person” create blocks to communication. There is a time for evaluation; but if it is given too soon, the speaker usually becomes defensive.

Advice-Giving Response. “Why don’t you try . . .,” “You’ll feel better when . . .” “It would be best for you to . . .,” and “My advice is . . .” are phrases that give advice. Advice is best given at the conclusion of conversations and generally only when one is asked.

Topping Response, or “My Sore Thumb.” “That’s nothing, you should have seen . . .,” “When that happened to me, I . . .,” “When I was a child . . .,” and “You think you have it bad” are phrases of “one-upmanship” or assuming superiority. This approach shifts attention from the person who wants to be listened to and leaves him or her feeling unimportant.

Diagnosing, Psychoanalytic Response. “What you need is . . .,” “The reason you feel the way you do is . . .,” “You don’t really mean that,” and “Your problem is . . .” are phrases that tell others what they feel. Telling people how they feel or why they feel the way they do can be a double-edged sword. If the diagnoser is wrong, the speaker feels pressed; if the diagnoser is right, the speaker may feel exposed or captured. Most people do not want to be told how to feel and would rather volunteer their feelings than to have them exposed.

Prying-Questioning Response. “Why,” “who,” “where,” “when,” “how,” and “what” are responses common to us all. But these responses tend to make the speaker feel “on the spot” and therefore resistant to interrogation. At times, however, a questioning response is helpful for clarification; and in emergencies it is needed.

Warning, Admonishing, Commanding Response. “You had better . . .,” “If you don’t . . .,” “You have to . . .,” “You will . . .,” and “You must . . .” are used constantly in the everyday work environment. Usually such responses produce resentment, resistance, and rebellion. There are times, of course, when this response is necessary, such as in an emergency situation when the information being given is critical to human welfare.

Logical, Lecturing Response. “Don’t you realize . . .,” “Here is where you are wrong,” “The facts are . . .,” and “Yes, but . . .” can be heard in any discussion with two people of differing opinions. Such responses tend to make the other person feel inferior or defensive. Of course, persuasion is part of the world we live in. In general, however, we need to trust that when people are given correct and full data they will make logical decisions for themselves.

Devaluation Response. “It’s not so bad,” “Don’t worry,” “You’ll get over it,” and “Oh, you don’t feel that way” are familiar phrases used in responding to others’ emotions. A listener should recognize the sender’s feelings and should not try to deny them to the owner. In our desire to alleviate emotional pain, we apply bandages too soon and possibly in the wrong places.

Whenever a listener’s responses convey nonacceptance of the speaker’s feelings, the desire to change the speaker, a lack of trust, or the sense that the speaker is inferior or at fault or being “bad,” communication blocks will occur.

AWARENESS OF ONE’S OWN FEELINGS

For both senders and listeners, awareness of feelings requires the ability to stop and check what feelings one is presently experiencing and to make a conscious decision about how to respond to the feelings. At first this technique may be uncomfortable and easy to forget, but only by using it will it become second nature. The individual should picture three lists:

Behaviors	————→	Feelings	————→	Responses
_____		_____		_____
_____		_____		_____
_____		_____		_____

At a given time, the person stops and mentally asks, “What am I feeling?” A person usually experiences a kaleidoscope of emotions simultaneously but can work on focusing on one present, dominant feeling. After the feeling has been identified, the person asks himself or herself, “What perceived behaviors are causing this feeling? Do I feel this way because of what the other person is saying or how he or she is saying it, or do I feel this way because I do not want to be bothered?”

The next step is for the person to choose how he or she wants to react to the feeling. There is much written about letting others know one’s feelings in order to bring congruence to actions and words. One can choose, however, not to express a feeling because of inappropriate time, place, or circumstances. For example, I may identify a feeling of annoyance at being interrupted. To share that feeling may not be worthwhile in the situation. The main thing is that *I am aware of my annoyance* and what caused the feeling and can now *choose whether or not to let it be a block to my listening*. I may tell myself that I am annoyed but that my feeling is not going to get in the way of my

listening. I can decide if my feeling is to be a listening block; and I can keep it from becoming one, if I so choose.

Another way of becoming aware of feelings is “hindsight analysis.” After any given situation, the person can recheck his or her responses and/or feelings: “What happened to cause those feelings? What was I feeling during my responses? Why do I tend to avoid certain people and why do I enjoy being around others?” “Why?” is very helpful in finding feelings and behaviors that cue those feelings. As a person works with this technique, identification and decision making will become better, resulting in more effective communication.

CONCLUSION

The communication process is complex but vital to effective problem solving and meaningful personal relationships. It is a process that is never really mastered; one can continually improve on it. It requires certain attitudes, knowledge, techniques, common sense, and a willingness to try. Effective communication happens when we have achieved sufficient clarity or accuracy to handle each situation adequately.

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■ ANYBODY WITH EYES CAN SEE THE FACTS!

Aharon Kuperman

Disagreements between individuals, especially those who depend on each other in order to “see” facts, are almost inevitable. Nevertheless, there is a common belief that “facts are facts.” When a dispute occurs, it should be possible to unearth the “real” facts, accept them, act accordingly, and thus settle any differences. Stagner, who for many years was involved in studying industrial conflicts, related how a known labor mediator liked to say, “There cannot be disagreement about facts, there can only be ignorance of them” (1956, p. 15). It is questionable, however, whether this belief rests on a firm foundation. The “facts” are not always that simple.

THE CASE OF “MR. RAT”

Figure 1 will give us a glimpse of what may be entailed in attempting to establish facts that can plainly be accepted by all who look. If the drawing in Figure 1 is shown to a group of people and each person is asked to describe what he or she sees, some individuals, without any trace of doubt or hesitation, will say, “A profile of a bald man with eyeglasses and a hooked nose.” Other observers, with no less confidence, will promptly respond, “A rat!” One might wonder how both responses could be right—or whether anybody needed an eye examination or one group was lying. It is easy to imagine the arguments between the two groups of observers after the picture is withdrawn.

Situations such as that illustrated by “Mr. Rat” are not as infrequent as they may appear. Stagner claims that many industrial conflicts revolve around the differences that management and labor see in the facts. If this is so, we might well wonder how facts can be established. It is not a new problem. The thorny question of the relationship between the “real” world and the world as it appears in our experiences has concerned the human race throughout history. Answers to such questions are prerequisites for gaining reliable and valid knowledge about the world in general.

PERCEPTION

In modern psychology, issues of this kind are dealt with under the heading of “perception,” a field that deals with the processes by which human beings establish and maintain contact with their environment. Since Locke (*An Essay Concerning Human*

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Figure 1. "Mr. Rat"¹

Understanding, 1690), most students of perception would agree that our knowledge of the world comes to us via our sense organs. Consequently, the main thrust of research in the field of perception has been concentrated not only on explorations of the structure and function of sense organs, but also on experiences related to sensing and, more recently, on behavioral responses to perceived stimuli. Today, evidence leads us to conclude that parts of the process of perception are learned whereas other parts are inborn.

Insights About the Perceptual Process

The following list is by no means complete, nor is it free of suppositions and speculation; but it may offer a sufficiently clear, although rudimentary, idea about what is involved in the perceptual process.

1. Knowledge about the world is obtained only through the sense organs.
2. The senses are capable of detecting certain kinds of energy (stimuli) emanating from the environment.
3. Each sense organ absorbs a special kind of energy within a given range of magnitudes; in other words, there are both upper and lower limits (thresholds) for sensing. For example, sound waves above a certain frequency cannot be detected by our ears; but a dog can hear them very well and respond to them.
4. Sense organs, using nerves as conduits, transmit the incoming energy to brain centers in the form of "signals." These signals are raw information because at this stage of the process their meanings for the perceiver are not yet clear.

¹ From Bugelski and Alampay (1964). Copyright © 1961. Canadian Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

5. Data from sense organs, fed into brain centers, are organized into patterns. Evidence indicates that some of this organization is due to past learning and some is inborn.
6. In every human culture, complete patterns of signals are given labels or names (concepts) that must be learned. These labeled patterns are “stored” for future reference.
7. Freshly organized patterns are sorted and matched with similar patterns already “stored” in the brain. This matching process gives rise to meanings, in terms of human language (concepts). Thus, a pattern without a label either remains a meaningless sensation or, if matched with a nameless stored pattern, may be considered to have a very private and vague meaning, not communicable to others.
8. The stored patterns in brain centers have both affective (feeling) and symbolic (concept) aspects.
9. The total process of perception, as described in items 1 through 7, is extremely fast (less than $\frac{1}{10}$ of a second).
10. Briefly, perception can be considered as a process of sensing signals and interpreting them.

Figure 2 shows the perceptual process in schematic form.

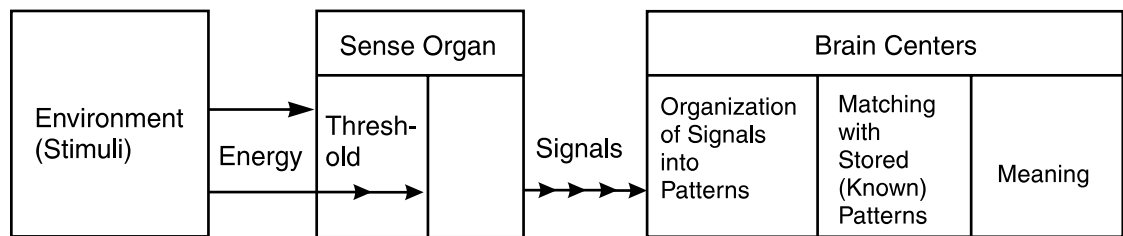


Figure 2. A Model of the Process of Perception

Implications

As is implied in items 6 and 7 above, one basic condition for perception is the availability of stored concepts in the brain. In the initial stages of development, the child learns from his or her “socializing agents” what names are to be associated with given patterns, and both the patterns and their associated names are stored and set aside for future reference. Thus, when a new pattern arrives, it can be recognized by matching it with a stored pattern. If a match cannot be found, either the pattern remains meaningless or a new concept is invented. This new concept can be private or public. To become public, it must be communicated to and confirmed by others so that they use the same concept for the same pattern.

As some of the organization of signals into a pattern is learned, it may be expected that in different cultures somewhat different patterns will be established by similar stimuli. People in different cultures organize their world into different patterns and hence possess different concepts for almost the same stimuli. Thus, they perceive the world slightly differently.

Indeed, comparative semantics and anthropology suggest that words of one language are often not exactly equivalent to words of another language. Thus, while the Western culture divides the color spectrum one way, one of the cultures in Liberia, for example, divides the same color spectrum slightly differently. In their language red and orange constitute a single unit; one word designates both colors (Brown, 1965). The Eskimos are known to have several words for snow, each of which indicates somewhat different qualities of snow, which are understood only with difficulty by an outsider. However, as many of these differences are due to learning, other people too can learn to make fine discriminations among the qualities of snow and hence perceive it in the same manner as the Eskimo.

Additional Factors Affecting Perception

Under certain specified conditions, perception may be distorted. Some factors that lead to such distortions are related to the internal emotional and motivational states of the perceiver, while others are considered to be properties of the stimulus.

It has been demonstrated that a child from a low-income home tends to recall a perceived coin as being larger than a richer child recalls it or than the actual size of the coin. “Set,” or readiness to perceive, is known to lower thresholds for certain stimuli. In other words, because of one’s set, which is established by frequent exposure to a given stimulus, one tends to perceive that particular stimulus more readily than otherwise. A given object placed in a different background is perceived somewhat differently. For example, a given color placed on a given color background may appear brighter or darker, depending on the background and without any changes in illumination. Sometimes certain features added to known stimuli distort the judgment of certain qualities of the perceived object; thus, an “optical illusion” is being created. For example, a given straight line may appear shorter if arrowheads are drawn on both ends of the line.

Sometimes stimulus conditions are uncertain or sensory information is less than complete, as when a person glances at an object for only a brief moment. Confusion can result, thus making a person mistakenly perceive a coiled piece of rope to be a snake. At other times an object may be sufficiently ambiguous so that absolute identification of the stimulus is very difficult. In other words, the pattern of signals is less than complete. Hence it can be matched with more than one stored pattern, leading to any one of several interpretations (“matching”). A set may determine which of the several alternative patterns will be chosen; so may other possible determinants such as interests, attitudes, values, and motives of the perceiving person.

INTERPRETATION OF “MR. RAT”

It is now easier to understand what may take place in the differing observations of Figure 1. As “Mr. Rat” is drawn ambiguously, the perceiver is forced to rely on certain cues in order to establish a meaning for the drawing. If the observer has a set to perceive a person (that is, in the past he or she has seen similar drawings of a person), then the cues that the he or she sees give rise to the perception of a person. Similarly, past experiences with similar drawings of rats give rise to the perception of a rat. Thus, two observers with two different “sets” perceive two different drawings, even though the image projected on the retinas of both observers is identical. The difference lies in the organization of the signals coming from the eye into a pattern that is matched in one case with the stored pattern of a person and in the other case with the stored pattern of a rat. It is very unlikely that the differences in perception here are due to differences in motivation or emotions.

HOW FACTS CAN BE ESTABLISHED

The study of perception shows us that there may be difficulties in agreeing on facts due to differences in perception. However, people all over the world are able to communicate with one another and to agree on facts, despite cultural differences. Following are some suggestions that can be helpful in communicating:

1. Specify in detail the conditions of observation.
2. Describe the observed phenomenon and the boundaries of what is to be observed.
3. Be on guard for optical illusions and other sources of perceptual distortions—use instruments and, if possible, several senses—and check for congruency.
4. Repeat observations several times under the same specified conditions.
5. Get confirmations from independent observers—make these observations public.

In practice, these suggestions mean taking careful and cautious observations of a situation and making adjustments and corrections by “reality testing.” Here, also, communication and listening skills are indispensable. Such skills can lead two differing groups of observers—as in the case of “Mr. Rat,” for example—to realize that both sides can be right and, through accurate descriptions, to see what others see.

FINAL COMMENT

It should be emphasized that what is described in this article relates to “object perception” or to perception of physical events. However, it is important to be aware that conflicts between and among people include not only disagreements over substantive matters, but also antagonisms and personal and emotional differences that are typical for interdependent individuals (Walton, 1969). Furthermore, it must be

remembered that in human relationships, knowledge about other people and their “dispositional properties” and intentions may turn out to be far more important than perceptions of objects.

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■ THE FOUR-COMMUNICATION-STYLES APPROACH

Tom Carney

Communication at cross purposes is all too unhappily common in everyday life. Mary tries to persuade Bill to adopt a certain way of doing things, arguing logically for the efficiency of her way. Bill responds with counterarguments about its human costs. Mary reacts with a more-telling cost-benefit analysis. Bill counters with examples of likely inconveniences for specific clients. By now the metamessages have taken over: Each person is bent on defending her or his approach, and emotional misperceptions of the other person distort all further communication.

One frequent cause of crossed communication is the common tendency to favor one particular style of communication, often at the cost of being insensitive to other styles—in others as well as in oneself. Ideally, one should be:

- Conscious of one's own stylistic preferences and dislikes;
- Able quickly to detect such preferences and dislikes in another person; and
- Able to adjust one's own style to that of another person.

If one attempts to achieve this ideal, a surprising number of payoffs result, both in personal insights and in interpersonal skills.

COMMONLY PREFERRED STYLES OF COMMUNICATION

Jung (see Jacobi, 1968) identified two major dimensions in our modes of relating to events: a thinking-feeling polarity and, at right angles to it, a sensing-intuiting one. These polarities are familiar in everyday life:

- *Thinking*: the logical, rational, sequential analysis that has been associated with left-brain hemisphere (Ornstein, 1978) dominance—or with “convergent” or “vertical” thinking (DeBono, 1970; Hudson, 1970). If this is one's preferred mode of relating to “reality,” one will probably use a precise, analytical form of communication.
- *Intuiting*: the making of associations; having insights that yield a novel “big picture” of a situation; the free flow of creative ideas. Currently associated with

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openness to right-brain hemisphere (Ornstein, 1978) functioning, this dimension is also termed “divergent” or “lateral” thinking (DeBono, 1970; Hudson, 1970).

- *Feeling Group Maintenance*: empathy with others’ feelings, leading to an emphasis on human relationships when communicating about how things get done.
- *Doing/Task Orientation* (Jung’s knowing by experiencing/sensing): a tendency to sense reality by doing and to emphasize practicality in communicating about that reality.

These continua are illustrated in Figure 1.

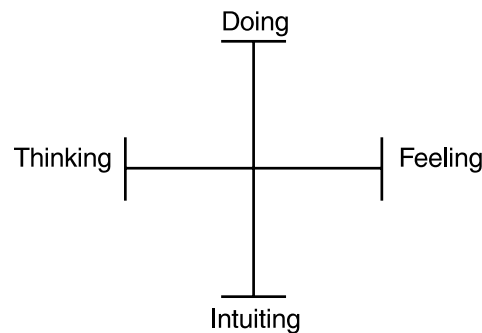


Figure 1. Dimensions of Relating to Events

Use of the Styles

Suppose you had a television set with four channels on which you could regularly get programs. Suppose, further, that reception was excellent on the first channel, good on the second, mediocre on the third, and poor on the fourth. In time, you would probably find yourself using the first and second channels and avoiding the third and especially the fourth. People’s use of the four modes of relating to, and communicating about, reality is somewhat similar.

You have a mix of all four styles¹. There is your “strong-suit” style, which you use easily and skillfully, and your “back-up” style, which you use fairly easily and skillfully. Then there is generally a style that you use only with effort and rather clumsily. Finally there is a style that always gives you trouble, that does not “work” when you have to use it. Generally you are fairly conscious of your use of your stronger styles, but you often put the weaker ones out of mind. You tend not to dwell on how little you practice them or how much you avoid having to use them. As does everyone else, you tend to have blind spots—not being aware of how much you overuse your strongsuit style and underuse your weakest one.

¹ See Parr (1979) for a self-inventory to determine one’s own style mix.

Shifting Styles Under Stress

Our society tends to overtrain and overuse the thinking style and underpromote and underuse the feeling one. Similarly, the doing style is much appreciated and used, the intuiting style somewhat less so. Usually we are not very conscious of these preferences. If we think about these things at all, we are most conscious of the styles that are dominant when we are really ourselves—when we are under nonstress conditions. Usually, however, our strong-suit styles drops back when we come under stress; and often our nonstress backup styles come to the fore. Generally, under stress, our doing and feeling styles seem to come to the fore, and our thinking and especially intuiting styles tend to recede. This shift can make us seem, to associates, “different people” under extreme stress.

Some people are much more self-aware than others in these matters. The thinker—that is, the person for whom thinking constitutes the dominant style in the foursome—tends to be most aware of his or her communication styles. But the thinker does not necessarily handle stress best. Knowing about one’s inner tendencies and being able to handle those tendencies are two different things. It is the feeler who seems to handle stress best. Feelers are more at home with their emotions—even though feelers sometimes do not appear very conscious of their dominant styles. Because doers generally cannot be bothered with introspection, they are not overly aware of their style mixes and can shift a great deal under stress, precisely because they tend to undervalue feelings. Intuitors, who are often surprisingly unaware of their style mix, seem to be the least stable under stress.

Figure 2 diagrams some examples of the style shifts that can result from stress, showing how extensive these shifts can sometimes be. A style’s position (or several styles’ positions) in a person’s order of preference can change—and the emphasis given to a style can change too.

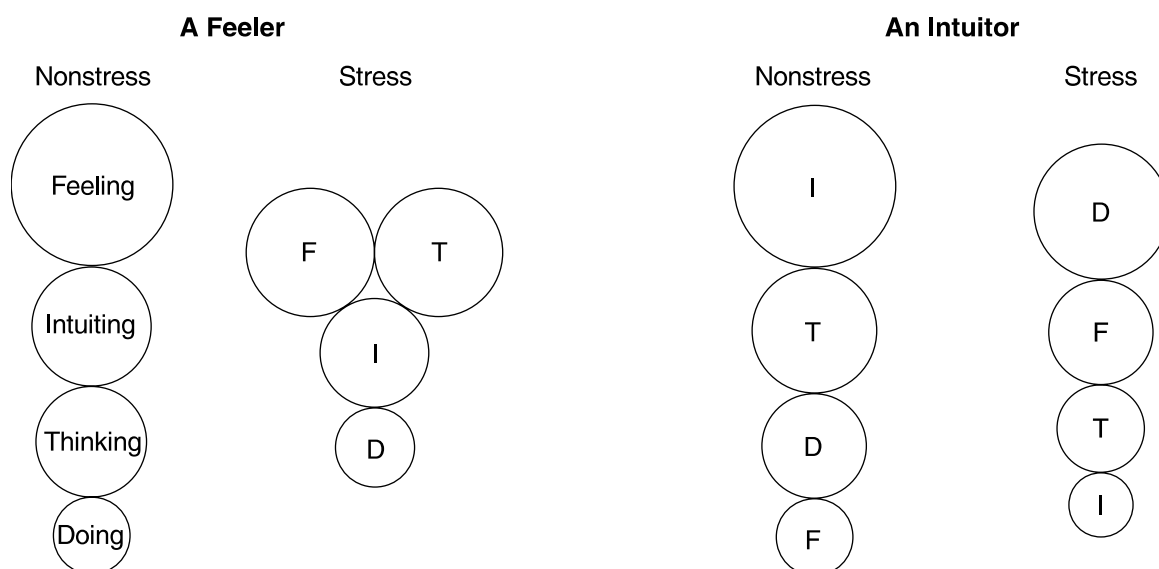


Figure 2. Style Shifts Under Stress

Style Blind Spots

The bigger one's blind spot, the more one tends to overuse one's strong-suit style and to be oblivious to the need to match styles with someone else on a markedly different wavelength. People get along best with others who are on their wavelength: Like attracts like. Thus, thinkers will tend to gravitate together, producing a group with tremendous ability to handle analytical problems; as all group members have strongly developed thinking skills, they enhance one another's effectiveness. While such a group builds an enviable record for its success in coping with analytical problems, sooner or later it will be handed a problem that calls for skills in intuition or empathy—and then disaster can very well result. It is not just that the group's skills do not match the skills the problem calls for; worse, "groupthink" (Janis, 1972) can result, as the group's mutually shared blind spots *increase* its members' tendency *not* to use their weak styles, which in this case would be more appropriate.

APPLICATIONS OF THE FOUR-COMMUNICATION-STYLES APPROACH

Knowledge about stylistic preferences has been used to hamstring juries. If, by questioning, it is possible to eliminate all the "feelers" from a jury, the group that results will not be able to achieve consensus on any issue that is at all emotional or controversial.

Style Flexing

The most frequent use of expertise in these four communication styles is "style flexing." This involves:

- Knowing your own most and least favored styles, in stress and nonstress situations alike;
- Knowing how you come across to others in either situation;
- Learning how to identify the dominant style of any person(s) to whom you may be talking; and
- Learning how to switch your style so as to get on the same wavelength as your conversational partner(s).

Team Building

The next most-frequent use of expertise in this approach is in team building. It is quite unusual to be a "team in one" (equally strong in all four styles both under stress and nonstress conditions). Most of us have overdeveloped some styles and underdeveloped others, but there are some different strong-suit styles that seem to go well together—feelers and thinkers in growth groups, for instance. The thinkers can dispassionately

analyze a complex interpersonal issue, while they envy the feelers their ability to express their emotions and bring interpersonal issues to a head (Eisenstadt, 1969).

By and large, however, naturally formed teams in organizations usually turn out to have the same one strong-suit style dominant in each member. Yet it is known that a heterogeneous group will outperform a homogeneous one, if only infighting can be prevented. Here, a team-building consultant can help the members of a wellrounded team to come together and to use their range of skills to stay together without infighting.

Teaching

Application of this approach to teaching (not yet common) holds great promise. Most teachers tend to have one, or at most two, strong communication styles. But they face classes in which all four dominant styles are represented, and the consequences are all too familiar. A teacher who has a dominant hard-line, analytical thinking style will simply make any student who is a feeler curl up inside as a result of what the feeler perceives to be a cold, calculating, impersonal presentation.

Furthermore, the overrepresentation of certain styles of teaching is reinforced by the teaching technology and by the examination system. Any given teaching approach or instrument may be effective with a student whose dominant style is thinking and ineffective with another student with a dominant feeling style (DeNike, 1976). For example, seminars suit thinkers/analysts, practica suit doers, and instructional simulations suit feelers with a thinker backup style. Basically, the school system is particularly suited to the thinker, whose activities—mathematical or linguistic—it can quantify and certificate. The other strong-suit styles, especially that of the feeler, find a much less supportive atmosphere in the school system (Bolles, 1978; Torrance, 1971).

A teacher needs to know his or her least and most favored styles. He or she should be able to communicate on *any* of the four wavelengths and should be equipped with teaching instruments that represent *all* of those four styles. School curriculums should be expressly designed to accommodate all styles.

Position Papers

Writers of position papers, or of any submissions to a multimember board, can be trained to present their materials in such a way that readers of each of the four dominant styles can easily understand communications conveyed in “their” respective styles. A reader who is a doer will want a *brief* expression of basic findings and recommendations: That person will go straight for the “bottom line.” The feeler will look for an assessment of the implications, in human relations, for the company team. The intuitor will expect a “big picture,” a “look down the road” (futurist orientation), and an impact assessment. The thinker will search for appendixes in which details have been marshaled in sequence, options stated, and trends extrapolated and reviewed. A report has to speak to its reader in the *reader’s* own dominant communication style if it is to be seen as “realistic.”

VALIDATION AND SUMMATION

The four-communication-styles approach is so obviously and immediately useful that most practitioners' energies have been directed toward evolving new and more powerful ways of teaching or using it (see Carney, 1976; Parr, 1979). Little energy has been put into validation and reports (see Slocum, 1978). Some observations, however, can be made. First, breaking mental sets does not necessarily mean innovative thinking. With thinker-analysts, it may involve criticism or mere negativity. Second, fluency of ideas does not necessarily mean novelty in thinking. Doers prove amazingly fertile in ideas for ways of coping, but these ideas are remarkably commonplace or simply variations on one theme: Doers are concerned with effectiveness rather than originality. Originality is the predominant characteristic of the intuitors, as a group.

Third, feelers are not emotional in their thinking. They tend to ask, "How is this going to affect *people*?" It is the intuitors who, if they become blocked (that is, if they cannot produce their usual spate of novel ideas), evidence most emotion. If they are producing well, they are very genial. The thinkers, too, if they cannot offer constructive suggestions and begin to produce spates of negative criticism, soon become emotional in the way they express their ideas.

Fourth, the most outstanding performance comes from a participant whose unique balance of two strong suits is ideally suited to the twin demands—criticism and originality—of the problem. This concept of balance may well be one of the most important ideas involved in the four-communication-styles approach.

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■ JARGON: REDISCOVERING A POWERFUL TOOL

Lilith Ren

Jargon, when used without proper understanding or care, can confuse the uninitiated and create serious problems. However, when used skillfully it is a multifaceted resource. The economy of weight and space accomplished through the use of jargon makes it the right tool for a variety of jobs.

A DEFINITION OF “JARGON”

Jargon is a specialized language that is developed and used by professionals within a given discipline to communicate more precisely among themselves. It includes the current phrases, slang, and idiosyncrasies of the personal vocabularies of such professionals.

Language is the primary means by which humans attempt to bridge the gap between one person's experiences and another's. Although language helps to describe a human experience, it is not to be equated with the experience itself. The words we use are symbols for what we see, hear, touch, taste, smell, and do. We use these symbols to structure thought; they serve as building blocks for the personal models we create as we organize and store the mass of stimuli that we perceive (Gordon, 1978).

Thus, all language, and therefore all jargon, is metaphor. Kopp (1971) defines metaphor as “a way of speaking in which one thing is expressed in terms of another, whereby this bringing together throws new light on the character of what is being described.”

THE VALUE OF JARGON

Although no type of language can duplicate experience point for point, expert communicators acknowledge that jargon does have a number of striking advantages over standard English. Skillfully used jargon is a tool that helps to structure, integrate, generalize, and retrieve experiences as well as the learnings associated with them.

Cognitive Structure

Jargon provides structure for a body of experience by bringing its new elements more clearly into focus. By naming these elements, we reinforce their existence, adding weight and value to them as their names are repeated (Bandler & Grinder, 1979; Skinner, 1957). By labeling an entire body of such elements as “human resource development” (HRD), we call attention to the programs, research, and technologies that

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reflect our commitment to helping individuals and organizations work in mutually beneficial ways. Then we add to the existence of HRD as a discipline by mustering other phenomena into the category that our jargon has provided. Thus, quality-of-work-life programs and management development are incorporated into organizational budgets and executive-meeting agendas.

By borrowing from other, more established sciences, we lend credibility to our jargon (Hardaway, 1976). For example, the “resource” focus of HRD adds an air of technology not found in “human potential development.” Similarly, calling an old experience by a new name casts it in a new light. “Self-disclosure” and “active listening” thus become discrete skills that can be taught rather than personal communication styles.

Efficiency

Jargon packs large quantities of information into small spaces (Billow, 1977). Without jargon, a trainer’s manual might instruct the trainer to “divide participants into two groups, each group forming a circle, one inside the other, allowing the participants in the outer circle to observe those in the inner circle while the latter participate in a brief structured experience.” The same manual might instruct the trainer to “have the participants assemble into a ‘fishbowl’ configuration.”¹

Jargon is more concise, combining two or more apparently unrelated phenomena to create a new concept (Billow, 1977). Integrated into this new terminology is a wealth of concrete, cognitive, and emotional data, making jargon a more potent tool than more formal English (Billow, 1977). The term “fishbowl” again serves as a good example. Concentrated into this one word is the representation of a commonplace object that everyone recognizes, the physical setup that it implies, an experiential-training technique, and the emotional overtones that accompany the experience of being observed. Clearly, the conceptual synergy created by using jargon is not as easily accomplished by using more formal English.

Memory

Jargon also aids memory by providing a verbal “index card” for more efficient retrieval (Fuld & Buschke, 1976). When jargon is included in a phrase, the phrase is more quickly recalled (Begg, 1972).

As stated before, jargon is metaphor, and it is the likeness between two concepts that promotes recall (Tatum, 1976). This conceptual interaction deeply links the new information or experience represented by the jargon to the listener’s existing conceptual models (Begg, 1972; Billow, 1977). For instance, the term “laboratory education” evokes an image of “hands-on” experience as well as experimentation. This type of conceptual interaction also helps to “cross reference” the information included in the jargon terminology, thereby aiding in integration and generalization of learnings. After

¹ Another jargon term for “fishbowl” is “group-on-group configuration.”

experiencing the solid, down-to-earth feeling of being “grounded” during an activity conducted in a personal-growth group, an individual remembers this learning every time he or she hears the term “grounded.” In addition to the specific learning involved, the associated emotional, physical, and intellectual experiences are recalled.

USING JARGON EFFECTIVELY

All of us who work in the field of HRD—counselors, consultants, and trainers—are professional communicators. Our major tool is our ability to send and receive communications effectively. Change, often in the form of learning on the part of our clients, is the end result toward which we work and by which we measure our effectiveness. It is a primary goal for all of us involved in this complex process to bridge the gap between our world and that of the client. The following “bridging techniques” are valuable and can be enhanced through the appropriate use of jargon:

- Establishing credibility and rapport;
- Developing an understanding of the client’s situation;
- Making oneself and one’s professional concepts understood; and
- Supporting new client skills (by providing a framework to help the client make sense of, remember, and use the information communicated).

Establishing Credibility and Rapport

When a client says, “You don’t speak my language,” this comment can be taken as a literal criticism of a professional who uses jargon ineffectively. Selecting language that is appropriate to the situation is crucial to success. The type of language used must be chosen on the basis of an awareness of the setting, the client’s disposition toward “outsiders,” and the topic to be discussed (Bourhis & Giles, 1976).

Moderate use of jargon common to the client’s field is appropriate if one has the conceptual base to support and reinforce this use. However, to maximize success it is important to be aware of the reactions that follow. It may not be functional to act like an insider if clearly one is not. But in the right place with the right recipient, “speaking the client’s language” has been proven to foster cooperation (Bourhis & Giles, 1976).

Using everyday English is safely neutral. It also allows a legitimate request for translation of jargon used by the client. Thoughtful questioning facilitates examination of the concepts, experiences, and subtle nuances of meaning that the client has condensed into jargon. This practice is valuable as a clarifying and diagnostic activity for everyone involved. It also provides verbal entry into the client’s world model, so that the HRD specialist can note the similarities and differences that exist between his or her own world model and that of the client (Gordon, 1978).

Developing an Understanding of the Client's Situation

The client's values and style of organizing can be analyzed further by listening to the jargon he or she uses. The language used reflects and reinforces values and world models. It identifies the stimuli to which people pay the greatest attention (Gordon, 1978; Hardaway, 1976). This same principle applies to both groups and individuals. For example, when an astute observer hears HRD specialists talking about "getting in touch with their feelings through authentic selfdisclosure during the teambuilding session," the observer may note that those in the field value cooperation, feelings, and honest interaction.

Bandler and Grinder (1979) maintain that an individual manages and stores the overwhelming amount of data conveyed by the senses by focusing on one of three kinds of input. This input is then stored according to category for later access. Some people focus on visual stimuli and reflect this emphasis by using sight-related jargon such as "seeing the problem in a new light" or "looking for a framework." People who pay primary attention to what they hear use phrases such as "keeping one's ear to the ground" or "harmonizing efforts." "Kinesthetic" people concentrate on tactile/olfactory sensory input, as evident in their use of such phrases as "cutting to the heart of the matter" or "getting a handle on the problem."

Knowing the client's primary focus and using the corresponding jargon has two distinct advantages: The first is that "speaking the client's language" quickly establishes strong, subconscious rapport (Gordon, 1978); the second is that probing with questions keyed to the client's individual accessing mode helps that person to understand such questions and retrieve relevant data. (For more explicit information on recognizing and using a client's conceptual processes to promote change, see Bandler & Grinder, 1979; Gordon, 1978.)

Making Oneself and One's Professional Concepts Understood

Using jargon that corresponds to the client's primary focus is particularly effective when attempting to gain support for interventions or to create a receptive attitude toward new learning. In addition, the use of appropriate jargon harnesses the subliminal powers of language. For example, effectively introducing a proposal to a visually oriented group of engineers might mean using a substantial amount of visual imagery supplemented with visual aids. The task of designing a presentation to coordinate with the client's focus may seem cumbersome at first, but it quickly becomes "second nature" with practice.

Bridging the communication gap may also mean teaching clients a new way of structuring their world through language. For example, an HRD consultant might be asked to intervene in an organization in which the "battle plan" has resulted in dysfunctional competition in the form of "killer stress levels" and the employees' practice of "defending" themselves by "bringing in the big guns." Intervening in such a climate suggests the need to help employees restructure their environment by restructuring their world model. In this situation a skilled HRD consultant might encourage a "new game plan" with a norm of "running interference for one another" for

the good of “the team.” Similarly, working to replace sexist, racist, or ageist language is a necessary step in realizing equal-opportunity goals (Swacher, 1976).

Supporting New Client Skills

Sometimes our own professional jargon is clearly the most effective way to express a crucial concept. On these occasions, it is best to take full advantage of the concrete, cognitive, and emotional meaning intrinsic to our jargon. Times like these are most likely to arise during introduction of human-relations concepts and skills. The key to translating our jargon is to embed it in a frame of reference that clients can understand. This approach may mean telling a visually oriented client that a sensing interview helps to “paint a picture” of an organization by “taking a fresh look” at certain practices. In this example, the definition of the concept combines the client’s visual proclivity with the jargon’s kinesthetic mode, thereby helping to bridge the gap between a visual orientation and a kinesthetic concept. Saying that a sensing interview “provides a feeling of what’s coming down” might confuse such a client. On the other hand, focusing only on the problems seen in this client’s organization might render a narrow reflection of the environment. When jargon is used skillfully, it can introduce a client to new aspects of experience.

In another hypothetical situation, the desired outcome might be to help the members of a highly visual and vocal work group to begin listening to one another. The objective calls for both new skills and a new process for dealing with one another. Use of typically kinesthetic human-relations jargon might focus the workers’ attention on the wrong data, thus conflicting with the skills being taught. In contrast, the use of carefully selected jargon that invites the workers to make auditory associations—through terms such as “active listening” or “feedback”—might help to focus attention on the relevant stimuli.

USING JARGON IN THE LEARNING CYCLE

Creative HRD professionals can find many ways to sharpen their use of jargon into a cutting-edge learning tool that is especially useful in group facilitation. To bring out the metaphorical magic that our jargon promises, the following conditions must exist (Billow, 1977):

1. The client understands the skills, experiences, and/or concepts expressed in the jargon.
2. The HRD specialist is aware of the metaphorical associations inherent in the jargon.
3. The specialist comprehends the relationship between the client’s understanding of the jargon and the metaphorical associations on which that jargon is based.

A strong connection can be established between these conditions and the five stages of a well-developed structured experience (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1981):

1. Experiencing;
2. Publishing;
3. Processing;
4. Generalizing; and
5. Applying.

Experiencing

During the experiencing stage of the learning cycle, the trainer's primary task in using jargon effectively is to link it to a full understanding of the concept or skill experienced. Jargon is a powerful tool for making abstract ideas concrete. For example, when clients have participated in a "fishbowl" activity and then hear that term later, they will remember the activity and its associated learnings (Billow, 1977). Linking jargon to an activity provides a common experience base for all members of a learning group, so it can decrease the ambiguity and misunderstanding that often result from misused jargon. This linkage is especially valuable when consensual understanding of terms is crucial, as in the training of trainers.

Publishing and Processing

Further clarification of jargon is achieved during the publishing and processing of learnings generated during the experience. At these stages the trainer helps participants to understand the physical and psychological associations among experience, concept, and jargon. Full comprehension of such associations is closely related to performance of tasks on an abstract level (Billow, 1975; Piaget, 1969). This process need not be lengthy or complex. It simply requires that the trainer concentrate on both the experience itself and on the psychological effects of the language used when discussing the experience. The participants' attention can be directed to these effects by discussing the associations made or through the publishing and processing questions used. To finish processing the jargon and to lead into the generalizing stage, the trainer verbally checks for clear, shared definitions of jargon used.

Generalizing

Paying careful attention to the generalizing of jargon during this stage is simple and important. As in previous stages, jargon used is processed as part of the learning experience. Again, using brief discussion can help participants to understand how the new concept and vocabulary being presented fit into their existing world models. The trainer can explore the ways in which new jargon is like and unlike the language to which participants are accustomed. During the generalizing stage, jargon and concepts become cross referenced to a variety of stimuli already in the participants' mental files. This process ensures that both jargon and concepts will be further reinforced with future

retrievals (Fuld & Buschke, 1976). Thus, the chances that participants will remember learnings and that what is remembered will be used are increased.

Application

Cross referencing continues during the application stage. While participants are applying the relevant concept, the trainer can help them to translate the associated jargon into everyday English or on-the-job terminology. The trainer can either provide direct verbal translation or ask the participants to rehearse presentation of the concept to those “back home.” Verbal or visual model building that invites the participants to fit the new jargon and concept into their existing world models fosters even more sophisticated application.

The trainer who does not foster translation and model building suggests something unfortunate by encouraging participants to leave behind the jargon they have learned when they return to the “real world.” Left behind with that jargon will be some of the learning associated with it. It is equally unfortunate to imply that the jargon and its associated learning have no place in the “real world.” Too often it happens that telling someone “back home” about what was learned is a difficult and disappointing experience. When a trainer helps participants to develop their abilities to apply both concepts and jargon to their “real world,” these participants can reenter their communities confident that what they have learned can be put to use in everyday life.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Jargon can be a potent tool for the HRD professional whose aim is to promote learning, change, or clear communication. Jargon shares psychological properties with all language and with metaphors in particular. It can be used in establishing rapport with and diagnosing problems of individual clients or client systems. When change is a desired outcome, the development and/or careful use of appropriate jargon can serve as an underlying structure to support that change. Finally, thoughtful use of jargon assists clients in making sense of, remembering, and finding new uses for the information, concepts, and skills presented by the professional. The reinforcing properties of jargon, when wisely used, can ensure that the change or learning persists after the contract ends.

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■ UNDERSTANDING AND IMPROVING COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS

Gustave J. Rath and Karen S. Stoyanoff

Several years ago Richard Bandler and John Grinder¹ began studying the communication behaviors of psychotherapists widely recognize for their therapeutic successes. Their aim was to identify patterns of behavior associated with effective results, to codify these patterns, and to make them available to others who aspire to be effective therapists. They chose as their basic subjects Virginia Satir (Bandler, Grinder, & Satir, 1976), a family therapist, and Milton Erickson (Bandler & Grinder, 1975a; Grinder, DeLozier, & Bandler, 1977), a clinical hypnotist; another subject of more indirect analysis was Fritz Perls, with whom Grinder studied. The skills and behaviors identified were referred to as “magic,” a traditional term for any process that people do not understand. In reality, once people learn these patterns of behavior, they, too, can be “magicians.”

Bandler and Grinder note that their background is that of linguists with a focus on the process of communication rather than the *content* (Bandler & Grinder, 1975b; Grinder & Bandler, 1976). The core of their theory is their interpretation of the ways in which linguistic meanings are mentally assigned to basic thoughts and experiences. This interpretation, called the Meta Model, serves as the foundation of their secondary model of interpersonal-communication effectiveness, which is known simply as the Communication Model. Although the communication methods proposed by Bandler and Grinder in accordance with these models were developed to improve communication effectiveness in the context of therapy, they can also be used to advantage in business and industry and in group facilitation.

THE META MODEL

This model is based on the assertion of Chomsky (1957, 1968) and other linguists that all languages share a basic or “deep” structure that is directly related to the physical structure of the human brain. The three processes by which an individual transforms this

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¹The most widely available reports of their work can be found in Bandler and Grinder (1975b) and Grinder and Bandler (1976). Eventually this work led them and their colleagues, Robert Dilts, Judith DeLozier, and Leslie Cameron-Bandler (Dilts, Grinder, Bandler, DeLozier, & Cameron-Bandler; 1979) to develop a theoretical approach called *neuro-linguistic programming*.® For detailed information regarding this approach, see Bandler and Grinder (1979) and Cameron-Bandler (1978).

deep structure of mental experience into an observable or “surface” structure that can then be communicated are identified in the Meta Model.

The first process consists of incorporating all relevant data in the transformation from deep to surface structure. Because language is essentially a summary of actual experience, it is inevitable that some information will be lost; however, it is important that such losses be limited to data concerning insignificant details.

The second process involves accurately translating the range of the experience from deep to surface structure. When this process is distorted, the individual focuses the surface structure on a single aspect of the actual experience, thereby setting erroneous limitations.

The third basic process concerns the correct use of logic. Although the deep structure is inevitably logical, the transformation of deep to surface structure may introduce a variety of illogical elements.

Thus, each of the three basic processes presents the potential for error: In the first case, significant information can be lost; during the second process, erroneous limiting of the experience can occur; and the third process can generate errors in logic. The Meta Model provides people with appropriate responses to correct these errors and to help clarify the meanings of messages. It should be noted, though, that the errors specified in the model are often related to psychological disorders. Thus, it is only in the context of psychotherapy that extensive use of the Meta Model is appropriate for interacting with one other person in particular.

However, occasional use of responses inspired by this model can be valuable in a group-facilitation setting to improve the communication process. The following paragraphs provide a detailed discussion of each error and suggested responses for correcting the error.

Informational Errors

The process of transforming relevant information can result in four different types of errors: deletion, references to unspecified people, use of unspecified verbs, and nominalization.

Deletion occurs when a significant aspect of an experience is omitted. For example, during a group discussion a member might say, “I disagree.” An appropriate response in terms of the Meta Model is to ask for identification of the element omitted: “With *what* do you disagree?”

The second type of information error, *references to unspecified people*, results from the use of vague or general nouns and pronouns. For instance, a group member might say, “They don’t like me.” In responding one must ask to whom the word “they” refers: “*Who* doesn’t like you?”

Use of unspecified verbs is the third type of error. A member of a group might say, for example, “This group ignores me.” The group leader might request clarification by asking, “Exactly *what* does the group *do* that makes you feel ignored?”

The fourth and final type of informational error is *nominalization*, which consists of making a noun from a word generally considered to be another part of speech. For example, a participant could say, “I believe the group process is going well.” “Process” does not refer to a concrete, measurable object.

Erroneous Limitations

An individual who generally focuses on only one aspect of any experience formulates a limited model of the world, which, in turn, keeps him or her from making free and open choices. People can limit their world views in three ways: by using universal qualifiers, by assuming the impossibility of certain situations, and by presuming the inevitability of other conditions.

Universal qualifiers are words such as “always,” “never,” “all,” “every,” and “nobody,” which imply that the statements to which they pertain are categorically true. It is unlikely, however, that any expressed idea is without exceptions. Thus, when a group member says, “Everybody in a group participates,” one may legitimately question the validity of this comment by asking, “Is that true for every group to which you have ever belonged?” Such a response may help the group member to recognize the fallacy in the original statement.

Assuming impossibility limits one’s own ability to bring about change. This is indicated by the use of words and phrases such as “can’t,” “impossible,” “must not,” and “unable to.” For example, a group member might say, “I can’t communicate clearly with John.” This narrowing of the range of what may or may not happen might be followed appropriately with the response “You haven’t yet found a way to communicate clearly with John.” A more direct confrontation is exemplified in the statement “You may not want to communicate clearly with John.”

Presuming inevitability is the opposite of assuming impossibility. The key words and phrases that indicate this form of narrowing process are “have to,” “necessary,” “must,” “no choice,” and “forced to.” The group member who says, “I disagree with the other members so strongly that I have no choice but to resign from the group” might be corrected with this response: “You choose to have no choices. You could work with the other members to resolve the conflict; you could present your viewpoint to the group as a legitimate alternative for group action; or you could simply accept your difference of opinion as normal and healthy in a group situation. Actually, you have a lot of choices that you’ve decided not to consider.”

Errors in Logic

These types of errors are characterized by sentences that establish illogical relationships and thus lead to ineffective communication. The four specific types are faulty cause and effect, mind reading, unlimited generalization, and unwarranted assumptions.

In this context *faulty cause-and-effect* statements are the result of the speaker’s belief that one person’s behavior can be the direct physical cause of another person’s emotional or internal change. A group member who says, “You bother me” might be

challenged with the question “What is it in my behavior that you choose to allow to bother you?”

Mind reading refers to drawing conclusions about a person’s thoughts or feelings without directly communicating with that person. An example is a comment such as “He won’t say anything because he’s afraid of stating his opinion.” An appropriate response might be “How do you know he’s afraid?”

The third type of error in logic, *unlimited generalization*, deals with personal opinions that are stated as if they pertain to everyone or to the world itself. For example, the statement “It’s a good idea to share feelings with others” may be countered with the question “For whom is it a good idea to share feelings with others?”

A fourth and final type of error in logic involves making *unwarranted assumptions*, assuming that some condition exists without verifying its existence. A group leader, for example, might say, “Who will be the first to share personal feelings?” The assumption behind this statement is that the members are willing to share their feelings. In addition, statements that are introduced with phrases such as “I wonder,” “I question,” “I’m curious,” “I know,” and “I understand” often contain embedded commands: “I wonder if you’re thinking about volunteering to be first.” Many people respond to such commands by complying, even though they have not been asked specifically to do so. Superficially the response called for is simply “yes” or “no,” but an implicit command of this kind is commonly used to control behavior. For instance, if a group leader wishes to tell the members to rearrange the chairs, he or she might say, “You can rearrange the chairs now.” Although simply a statement of possibility, this phraseology probably would lead the group members to respond directly by rearranging the chairs. In general, the appropriate challenge to this type of error in logic is to ask the speaker whether he or she is actually requesting that something be done.

THE COMMUNICATION MODEL

The Communication Model (see Figure 1) offers an advantage over the Meta Model in that it is easier to understand, to explain to others, and to use in various settings. It is based on evidence that everyone uses three types of imagery for representing information in the process of communication: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic. These “representational systems” are used to help one to recall certain information as well as to give and receive information. An individual’s principal representational system or preferred type of imagery can be determined by analyzing a variety of cues, the most popular of which are specific words and eye movements.

A person whose primary representational system is *visual* uses many phrases that are visually oriented, such as “I *see* what you mean” or “I can *see* the *picture* unfolding.” Specific eye movements also characterize this preference. People with this type of orientation tend either to look upward or to defocus when trying to communicate, interpret, or remember something.

SPEECH INDICATORS**EYE MOVEMENT INDICATORS****SPEECH INDICATORS****Visual Thinking**

I see

It looks

It might look like

Kinesthetic Thinking

I feel

I touch

I'm in touch

Kinesthetic Memory

I felt

I touched

I was in touch

Visual Memory

I saw

I looked

I remember how it looked

Auditory Thinking

I hear

It sounds

I can hear

Auditory Memory

I heard

It sounded

I remember hearing

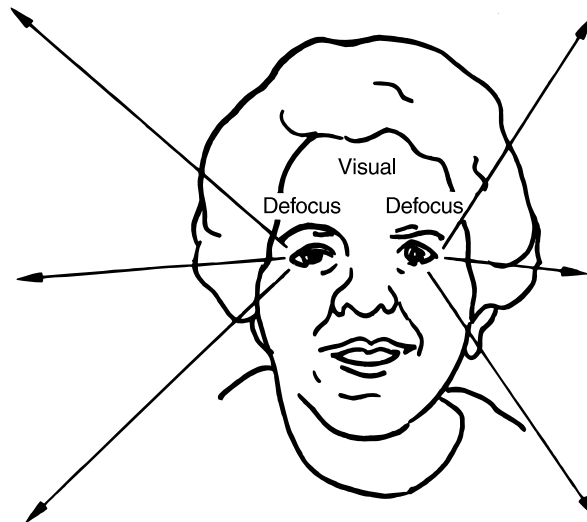


Figure 1. The Communication Model: Indicators of Representational Systems

Auditory representation is indicated by the use of phrases such as “I *hear* what you say,” “It *sounds* good to me,” and “I’m in *tune* with the situation.” The characteristic eye movements that accompany this preference are glances downward and to the left.

The *kinesthetic* representational system centers around movement, touch, and feeling. Phrases such as “I’m in *touch* with the situation,” “It *feels* right to me,” and “It’s going to be a *rough* job” are frequently used by an individual whose style preference is kinesthetic. Typical eye movements are glances downward and to the right.

An activity that can be used with a group to illustrate these phenomena is as follows: A volunteer is asked to close his or her eyes. All other participants are given copies of Figure 1 and are asked to listen and observe closely as the volunteer responds during the activity. To elicit information about the volunteer’s visual sensitivity, the facilitator uses probes such as the following: “How many windows are on the front of your house?” “Imagine that you are standing in front of this building. What color is the

roof?” A second set of probes is used to access auditory information: “What is the eighth word of the national anthem?” “When you open the door to your house, what is the first sound that you hear?” To derive kinesthetic information, the following types of probes are used: “Imagine that it is a cold winter day and you have just stepped out of your warm house. What are your feelings?” “Which hand do you use to answer the phone?” As a volunteer engages in this activity, the relative emphases that he or she places on the three systems become evident.

The Communication Model can be used to analyze and correct a communication breakdown as well as to improve an individual’s recall of important information.

Analyzing and Correcting Communication Breakdowns

If two people are having trouble communicating, the problem can be diagnosed by analyzing the principal representational system being used by each person. If it is discovered that these people tend to emphasize different types of imagery, their communication can be improved by involving a third person to translate for each in terms of his or her preferred system. As a result of this process, each of the original parties hears terminology consistent with his or her preference but based on the other’s representational system. When such a process takes place in a group setting, the others who are present may point out and explain what is being observed. These explanations help the two parties to understand that their inability to communicate is based not on unwillingness to do so but rather on the fact that they have different styles of communication because they use different representational systems. Ultimately, each of the two may become sensitive to the other’s style and may generalize this sensitivity so that the communications of others are more understandable and acceptable.

Such sensitivity can be a valuable asset when communicating with supervisors, clients, family members, close friends, and fellow group members. The individual who can identify another’s preferred representational system can employ that system to communicate effectively with the other person. For example, when presenting a proposal to a supervisor whose orientation is visual, using charts is appropriate. On the other hand, a presentation for a supervisor with an auditory orientation should be either completely verbal or in the form of written statements accompanied by spoken words; if a chart is necessary, the individual responsible for the presentation should describe the chart completely in words so that it is not necessary for the supervisor to interpret any information from the visual image. During the verbal explanation the supervisor may be seen to close his or her eyes or turn away, thereby ignoring a communication channel that is not useful in order to concentrate on one that is. This kind of behavior confirms the diagnosis of style preference.

Improving Memory Skills

The Communication Model can also be used to understand and improve memory skills. For example, an analysis may be made of a factory worker’s system for remembering the locations of various machine parts stored in the factory. During the course of this

analysis, it may be found that the worker's method is to recall an object visually, to scan the storage area visually, and then to recall the kinesthetic movements involved in putting the object in a specific place. Therefore, training another worker to use the same method would entail asking the worker to develop an awareness of this process; each time an object is stored, the worker should make a conscious effort not only to look at the object's specific place of storage as well as the surroundings but also to be aware of the physical movements involved in storing that object. This practice allows the worker to develop a model for remembering the object's location.

The training procedure can be altered to coincide with the individual learner's preferred representational system by emphasizing awareness of that system's cues in particular. For example, if the new factory worker's preferred communication style is auditory, he or she could be trained to repeat aloud the steps involved in storing the item rather than to scan the area visually. A person who can make use of all three systems may be able to remember much more easily than the individual who relies on only one or two systems; the second and third systems provide memory reinforcement as well as a means for checking the accuracy of memories based on the primary system. Awareness of finer distinctions, such as the color or intensity of visual cues, the pitch or volume of auditory cues, and the texture or softness of kinesthetic cues, can also be developed with practice, resulting not only in an increased ability to remember but also in a greater ability to communicate with others in the terminology of their own particular systems.

INTERRELATION OF THE MODELS

The Meta Model helps people to understand to some degree the nature of language and how it affects one's basic ability to communicate. The Communication Model deals with the ways in which an individual retrieves information from memory and presents it to others. Combination of the two models (Figure 2) results in a system that can be used for the following purposes:

- To interpret the nature of the internal transformations being generated by the sender or receiver of a message;
- To identify the kinds of transformational errors that may occur between the deep and surface structures for each individual involved in a communication; and
- To anticipate problems that might arise for two people who are attempting to communicate.

LAWS OF COMMUNICATION

Bandler and Grinder suggest a number of "laws" about human communication that form the foundation of their work (Grinder, DeLozier, & Grinder, 1977). Two of these laws

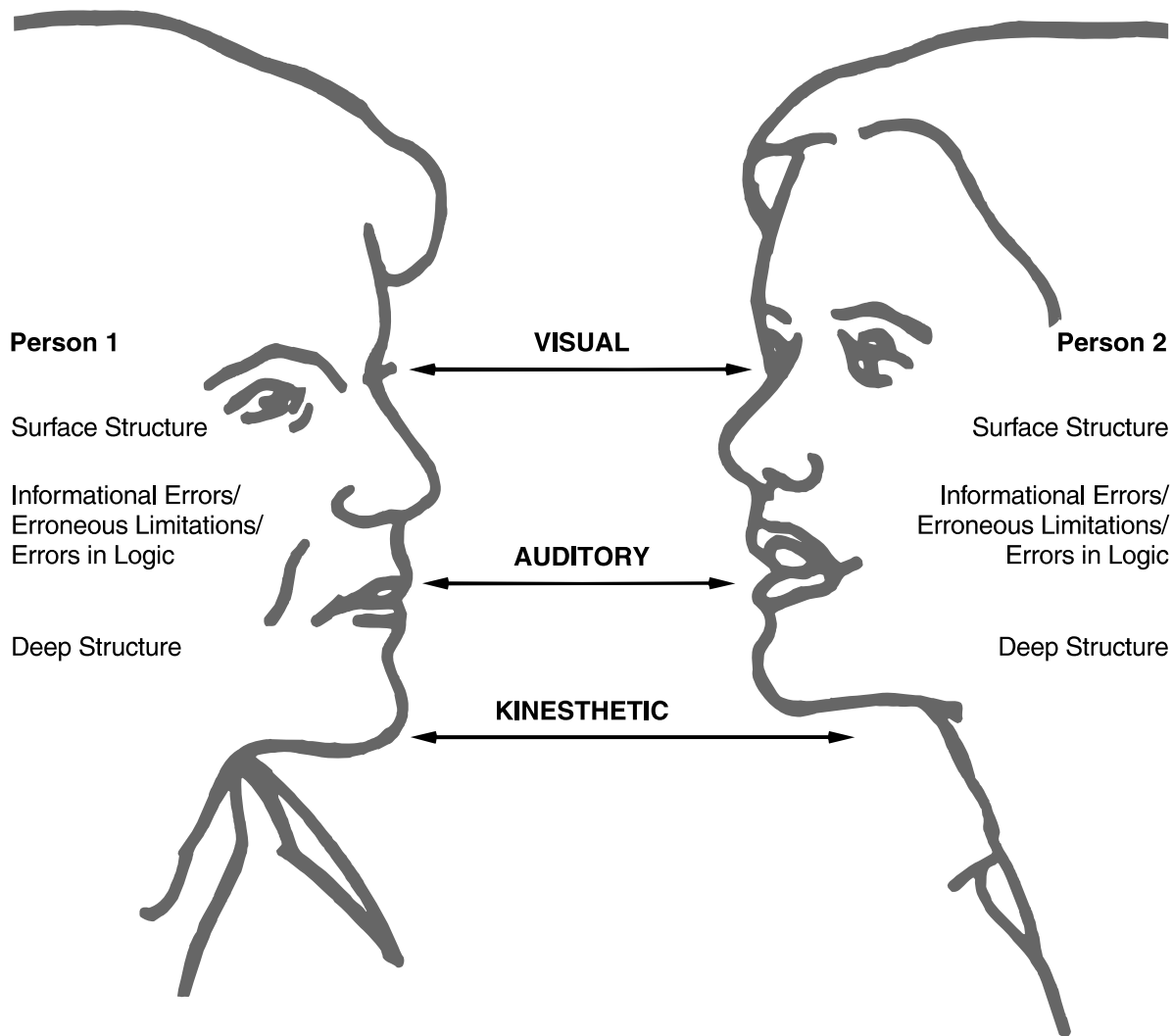


Figure 2. Interrelation of the Meta Model and the Communication Model

are especially important in that they further clarify communication problems and suggest additional approaches for dealing with such problems.

One law states that the meaning of communication is more dependent on the response it elicits than on the intent of the communicator. Ultimately what counts is people's reactions rather than the original statements. In many situations one does not have to say anything to communicate; nonverbal behavior suffices. Thus, in effect the law says that the first step in correcting faulty communications between two people is to examine their behavioral interaction.

The other law states that each communicator, no matter how ineffective he or she may seem, is using the best possible alternatives that are perceived to be available in a given situation. In other words, no one willingly communicates badly. The optimistic implication of this law is that people are generally willing to try to improve the effectiveness of their communication.

CONGRUENCY

Another important element in communication effectiveness is congruency, the extent to which the various communication channels—words, tone, gestures, body positions, eye movements, and so forth—all convey the same message. If this is the case, an individual's communication behaviors are said to be congruent; if not, they are considered to be incongruent. When incongruity is apparent, it is difficult to determine which message accurately communicates the speaker's intent. For example, if a member of a group says, "I want to be the first person to share my feelings," but at the same time shakes his or her head from side to side, the sincerity of the comment might well be doubted. The other members may not know how to respond to this situation. One approach is to directly confront the incongruence with a comment such as "You said you want to share your feelings, but at the same time you shook your head as if to say 'no' and to deny this. Which do you mean?" Any of a number of other approaches can be used to achieve at least temporary congruency (Bandler & Grinder, 1975b). Not dealing with another person's incongruity, however, creates further problems; when the listener randomly chooses one of the incongruent messages as representative of the speaker's intent and responds accordingly, the original speaker may be unable to determine which message generated the response. If the response to the previous example had been "That's fine," the original speaker would not have known what was considered fine—the comment, the underlying desire not to share feelings, or his or her state of conflict over the sharing of feelings.

Congruent communication is important in that it can facilitate the development of good rapport between two individuals or between a leader and group members. Achieving personal congruency is the first step. After this has been accomplished, one then develops the ability to match another person's use of communication channels (posture, gestures, language patterns, intonations, speed of talking, preferred type of imagery, and so forth). Choosing to be similar to another person not only develops rapport but also facilitates interpersonal trust, which, in turn, has been shown to have great impact on interpersonal communication effectiveness (Gibb, 1961) and group effectiveness (Zand, 1972).

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■ A PRIMER ON SOCIAL STYLES

Beverly Byrum

Most theories of leadership and management categorize “styles” or “types” of behavioral and personality characteristics. Although only a first step in understanding the complexities of human interaction, style differentiation at least provides a place to begin.

Merrill and Reid’s (1981) social-style approach demonstrates that an enormous amount of information can be perceived by watching and listening. Because the theory allows the perceiver to understand people better and to determine how best to work with them, this approach is useful for people at all levels in an organization.

Merrill and Reid suggest that the social-style approach differs from other approaches in the following ways:

1. The focus is on current behavior rather than on past behavior.
2. The emphasis is on external, verifiable information rather than on internal, subjective information.
3. The goal is to deal with a number of different situations rather than with a single type of situation (for example, assertiveness or delegation).

Another major difference is the nonjudgmental aspect of the approach; *acceptance* is a major theme. Styles are neither good nor bad, and no one style is preferable to another.

SOCIAL-STYLE THEORY

Social style is defined as patterns of behavior that others can observe and report. Social style originates in *behavioral preferences*, the manner of talking and acting with which one has become comfortable and tends to like in oneself and to be attracted to in others. Social style is a method of coping with others that is learned in childhood. This method becomes habitual and often clouds our intentions. This is especially evident in stressful situations.

Merrill and Reid began doing research in the 1960s, beginning with the previous work done by Fred Fiedler and the U.S. Office of Naval Research (Fiedler, 1967). This earlier research defined the behaviors of good leaders. Four categories of leadership behavior (consideration, structure, production emphasis, and sensitivity) resulted from having subjects check a list of descriptive behaviors to indicate those of good leaders,

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but further work that attempted to determine the most important category yielded no reliable results.

James W. Taylor, a staff psychologist with a large U.S. corporation (cited in Merrill & Reid, 1981), created a structured, adjective checklist and asked people to describe their own behaviors. Five categories emerged: self-confident, considerate, conforming, thoughtful, and rigid. Merrill and Reid decided to use a different approach with the checklist, asking numerous people to describe the behavior of one specific person. The results of this work led to the development of the following three scales:¹

1. *Assertiveness*: the tendency to tell or to ask, to influence or not to influence the decisions of others;
2. *Responsiveness*: the tendency to emote or to control one's feelings, to display openly or not to express emotion; and
3. *Versatility*: the ability to be adaptable, resourceful, and competent or to be inflexible and rigid.

Because versatility is the ability to change one's behavior on both the assertiveness and responsiveness scales to accommodate other people's preferences, the social-style profile is formed by using the *assertiveness* and *responsiveness* scales.²

Merrill and Reid, through the TRACOM Corporation, offer social-style awareness training based on identifying, responding to, and adjusting to individual behaviors to produce more satisfactory relationships.

The Goals of Social-Style Awareness

The four stated objectives of social-style awareness training are as follows:

1. *Know yourself*. Identify the strengths of your style and understand that overuse of strengths can lead to perceived negative attributes or weaknesses.
2. *Control yourself*. Identify and take the growth actions required by your style.
3. *Know others*. Identify the strengths of other styles and understand that it is overuse of strengths that leads to perceived weaknesses. Regard others as different rather than as wrong or bad.

¹ All three scales have been tested and determined reliable; assertiveness and versatility have been tested and found valid. See the "Appendix" in *Personal Styles and Effective Performance*, by David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid, 1981, Radnor, PA: Chilton Book Company.

² Although Merrill and Reid claim that styles should be viewed philosophically as different rather than as good or bad and that versatility is an independent dimension, research by Snavley (1981) indicates that certain styles are perceived more favorably than others in certain situations. His findings include the following:

1. Perceived versatility, trustworthiness, character, sociability, similarity, and social attraction are higher for responsive than nonresponsive styles.
2. Perceived competence, interpersonal power, and task attraction are higher for assertive than nonassertive styles.

These conclusions may suggest that an expressive style, high in both assertiveness and responsiveness, is more desirable than other styles when primary relationships are at stake. These scales yield four style types that can be differentiated in terms of behavior (see Figure 1).

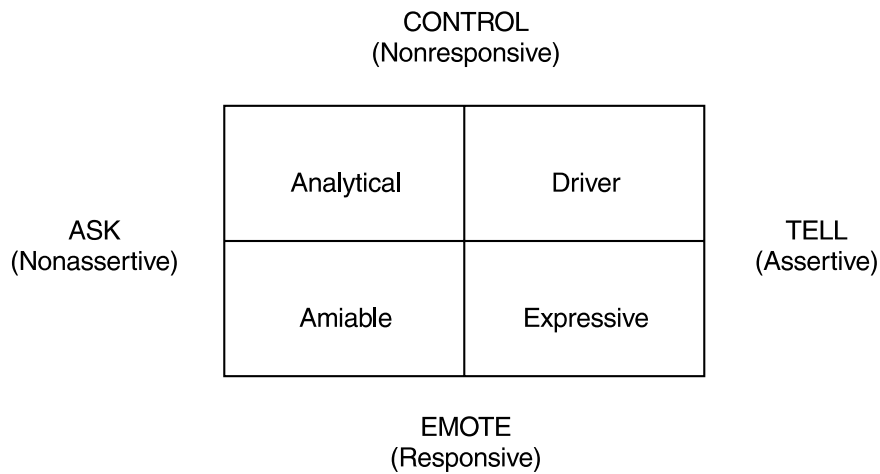


Figure 1. The Social-Style Profile³

4. *Do something for others.* Adapt your style to others by understanding how they perceive you, both positively and negatively; and use their styles to make contact with them, to complement their “weaknesses” in a sensitive manner.

The objectives of social-style awareness training lead to the ultimate goal of improving one’s versatility—the ability to handle behavioral preferences skillfully so that others remain comfortable and nondefensive. Increased versatility increases the probability of more respectful relationships and more productive work.

The Values of Social-Style Awareness Training

The goals of social-style awareness are based on values that result from the acceptance of differences in others. These values include the following beliefs:

1. People perform best in positive relationships.
2. People need to work on productive relationships.
3. A change of approach to people is *not* manipulative; rather, it demonstrates respect for the uniqueness of others.
4. Maturity involves the recognition that others are important.
5. Developing skills for dealing with interpersonal relationships is a desirable goal.
6. The use of skills to manipulate others becomes known.
7. The effort required to learn about social styles represents growth.
8. Controlling one’s actions need not conflict with one’s beliefs and values.

³ From *Personal Styles and Effective Performance*, by David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid. Copyright © 1981 by David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid. Reprinted with the permission of the publisher, Chilton Book Company, Radnor, PA. This book contains documentation related to the original work done by the TRACOM Corp. in Denver in the SOCIAL STYLE™ Models.

Merrill and Reid's approach, while behaviorally oriented, maintains that each person, unique and individual, is worthy of respect and effort in interpersonal relationships.

THE FOUR STYLES

A profile of each style follows (see Figures 2, 3, 4, and 5).⁴ The profile of the “driver” will be used to demonstrate how each profile is to be read. The driver's *strengths*, how he or she is *perceived* positively, are independence and practicality, while the *weaknesses*, how he or she is *perceived* negatively, are harshness and severity. The theme of this style is acting or doing, which often finds the driver *specializing* in positions of command or authority. The driving *behaviors* that can be recognized in self and others are a *verbal* focus on facts and task, a *vocal* pattern that tends to be fast and loud, and *nonverbal* behavior characterized by pointing, leaning forward, and a rigid posture. Under *stress*, the driver will resort to autocratic power or domination, a result of moving more intensely into his or her behavioral preferences. To control those behaviors and take *growth action*, the driver must practice listening. More generally, the driver can be recognized by a swift reaction time; a major effort to control; a minor concern for sensitivity in relationships; a present time frame; action that is direct and straightforward; a rejection of no action; and a strong need to control, produce results, and achieve.

⁴ These figures are based on material in *Personal Styles and Effective Performance*, by David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid, copyright 1981 by Merrill and Reid. Chilton Book Company, Radnor, PA. This book contains documentation related to the original work done by the TRACOM Corp. in Denver in the SOCIAL STYLE™ Models.

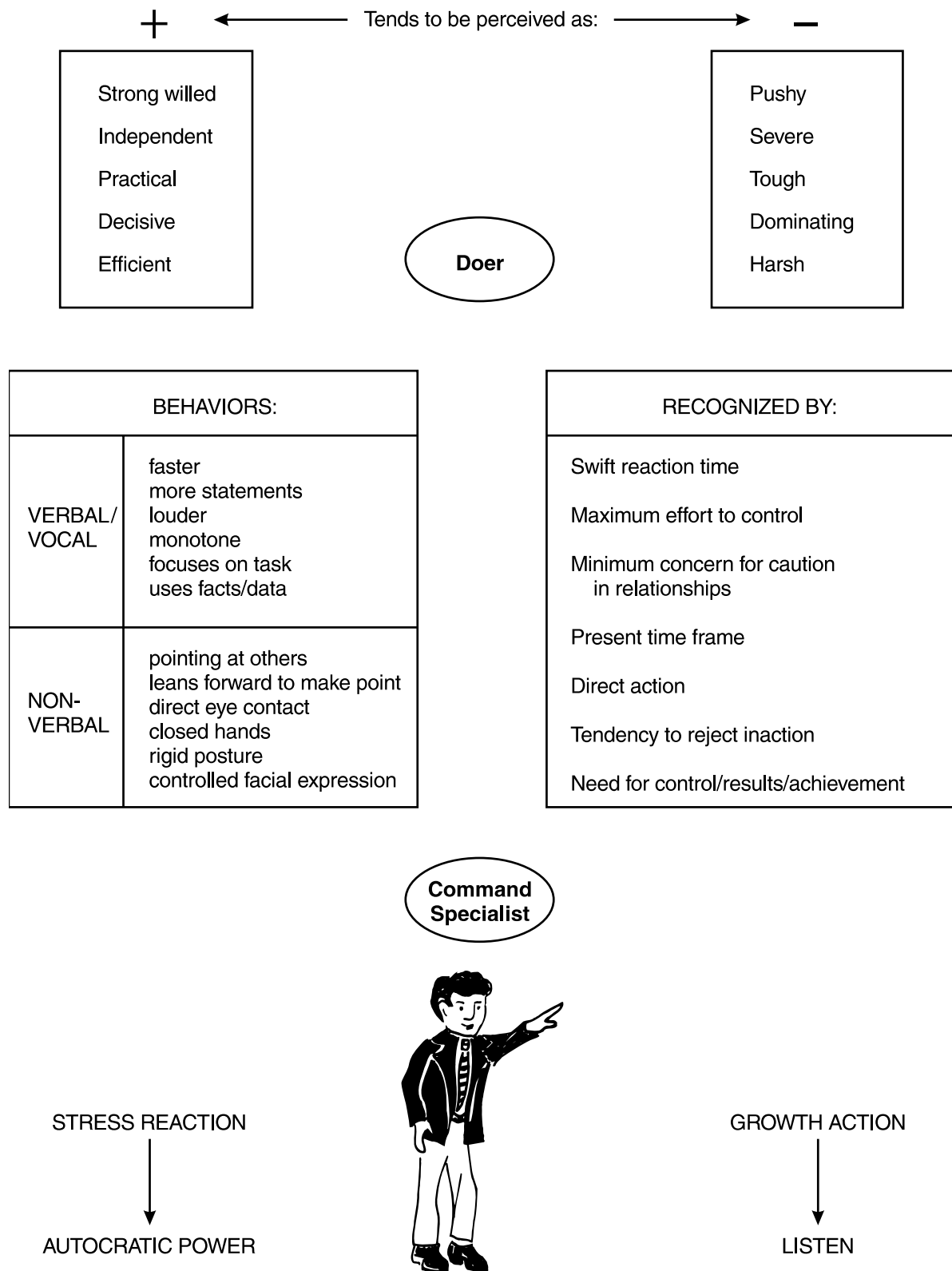


Figure 2. The DRIVER

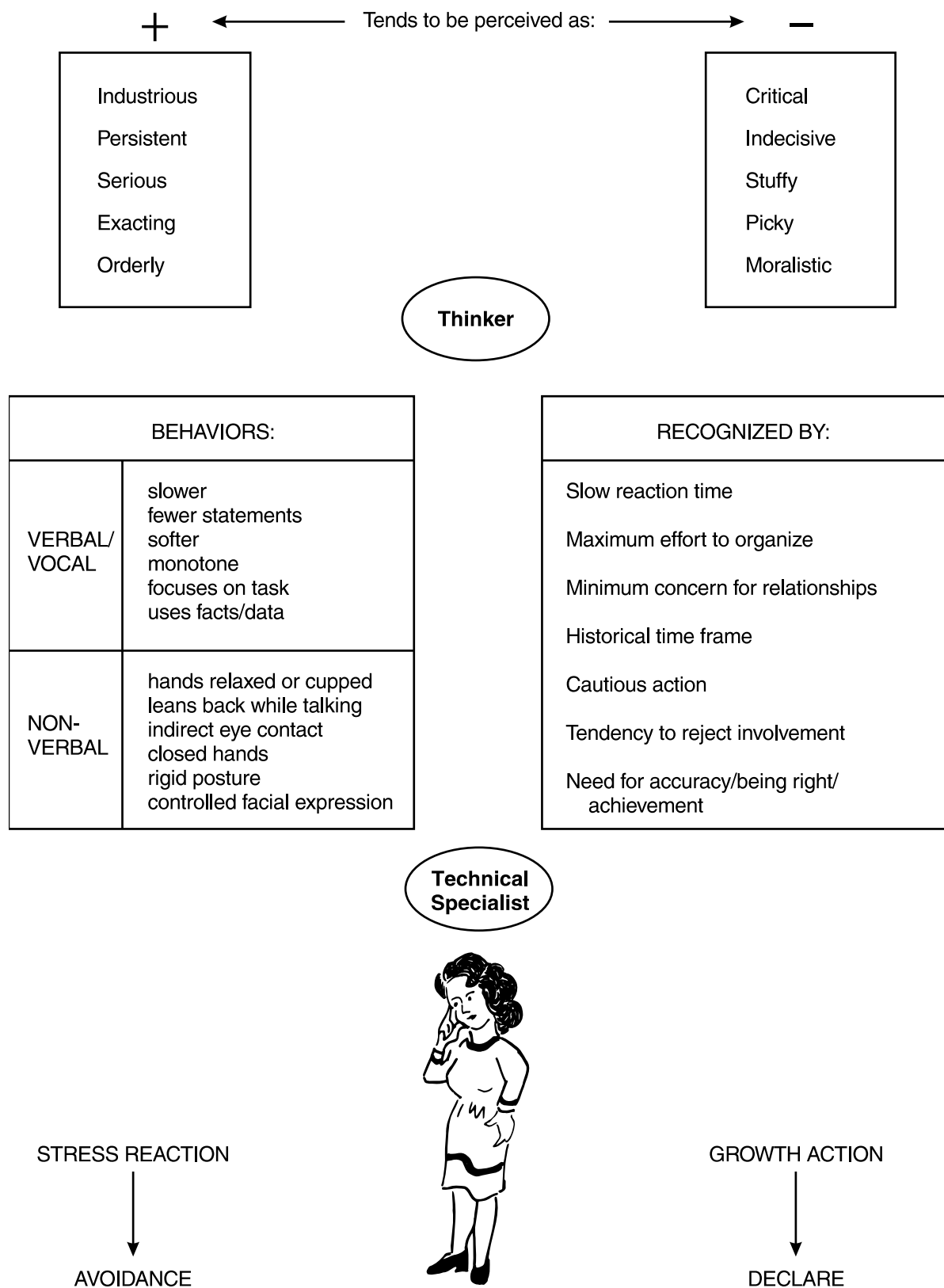


Figure 3. The ANALYTICAL

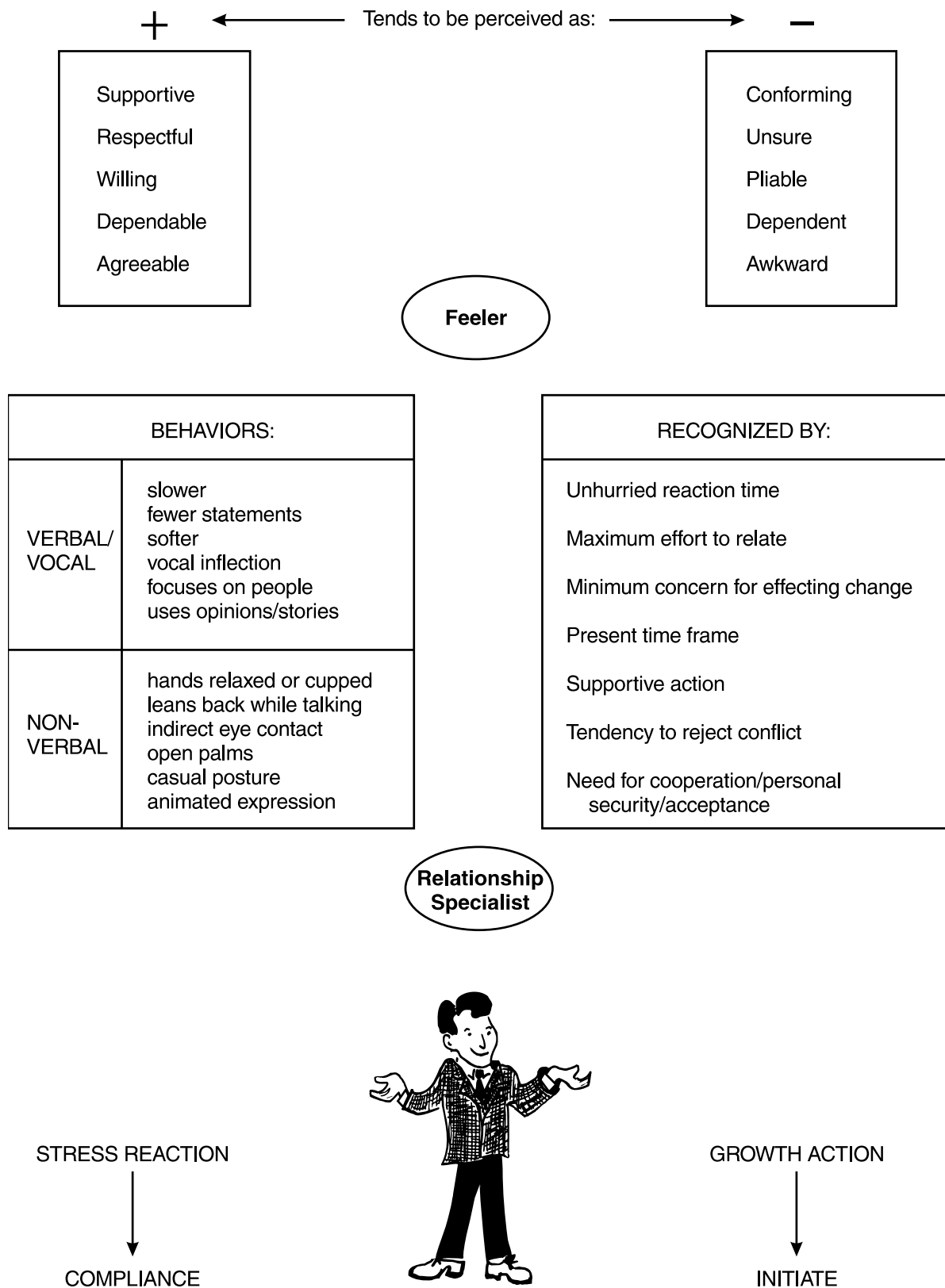


Figure 4. The AMIABLE

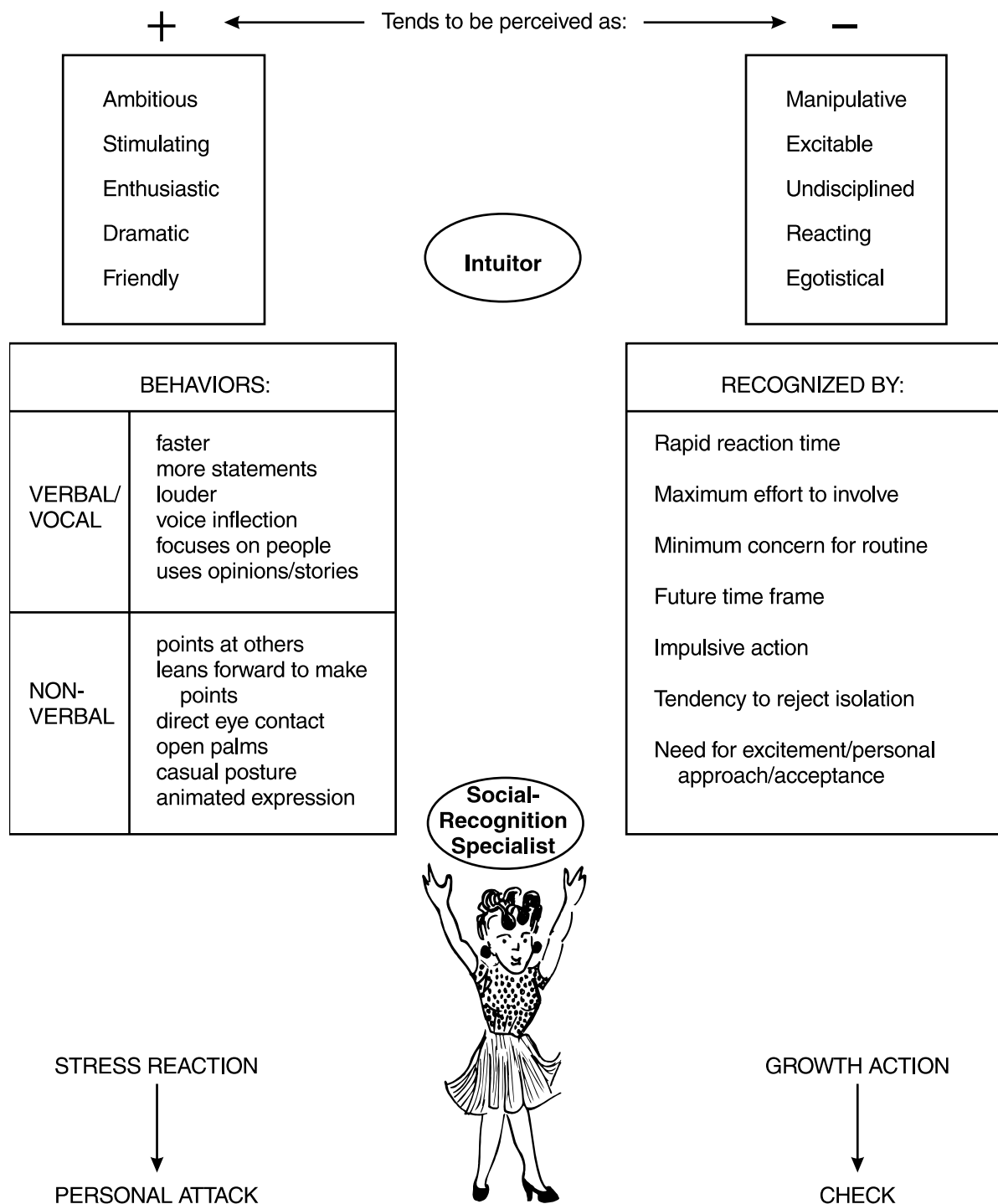


Figure 5. The EXPRESSIVE

Similarities in *behaviors* across styles are attributed to the common behaviors of either the assertiveness or responsiveness scales (see Figure 6). Because the scales are represented in quartiles, those that cluster around 50 percent on either dimension will also show evidences of the most proximate style.

		Assertiveness				
		0	25	50	75	100
Responsiveness	25	Analytical Analytical	Analytical Driver	Driver Analytical	Driver Driver	
	50	Analytical Amiable	Analytical Expressive	Driver Amiable	Driver Expressive	
	75	Amiable Analytical	Amiable Driver	Expressive Analytical	Expressive Driver	
	100	Amiable Amiable	Amiable Expressive	Expressive Amiable	Expressive Expressive	

Figure 6. Shared Behaviors Among Social Styles

Comprehension of one's own style and the styles of others clarifies why a dynamic fit exists between some people and tolerant coexistence or intense clashes exist between others (see Figure 7). One usually is most comfortable with people who have the same style; one usually can attain at least minimal cooperation with people whose styles share similarities to one's own on either the assertiveness or responsiveness scale; and one usually experiences tension in dealing with people whose styles have nothing in common with one's own.

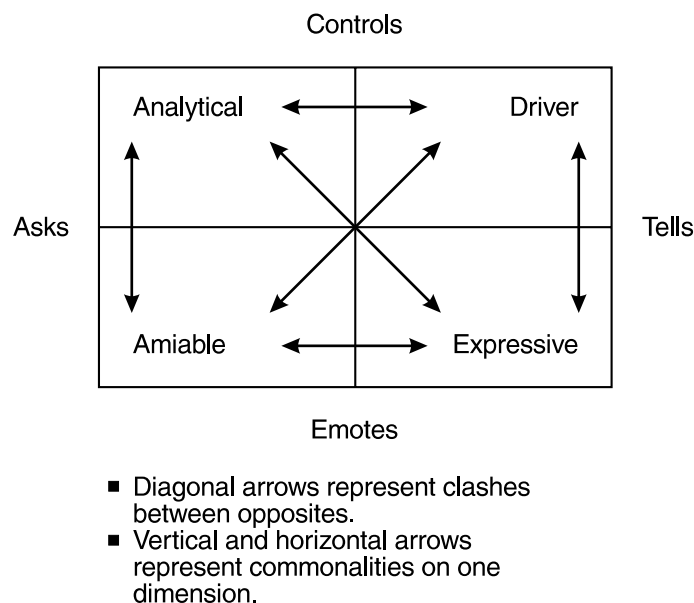


Figure 7. Relationships Among Social Styles

As one learns and practices versatility, tension and defensiveness between oneself and others can be reduced, and comfort and acceptance can be increased with all styles. Versatility means respectful adjustment to the styles of others; it does not require forsaking one's own style or convictions and becoming a different person.

Figures 8, 9, 10, and 11⁵ show how each style is perceived by the other styles, including the strengths and weaknesses of the style and how adjustments can be made to complement other styles for productive task accomplishment.

<p>Analytics</p> <p>Relate to your efficiency, logic, command of data, and task orientation. Question your haste, bossiness, decisiveness, competitiveness, and risk taking.</p> <p><i>To work better with analytics:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Bring them detailed facts and logic in writing. 2. Be patient while they evaluate and check the accuracy of the data. 3. Help them to reach conclusions by encouraging them to set deadlines after you have provided time for review. 	<p>Other Drivers</p> <p>Perceive you as action oriented, in a hurry, bossy, commanding, efficient, stubborn, disciplined, tough, independent, secretive, logical, demanding, nonlistening, quick, decisive, and unfeeling.</p> <p><i>To work better with fellow drivers:</i></p> <p>Agree in advance on specific goals and provide freedom to work within these limits. An unproductive deadlock can occur when there is too much dominance and no allowance for independence and individuality.</p>
<p>Amiables*</p> <p>Relate to your efficiency and discipline. Question your lack of feeling, tough mindedness, bottom-line orientation, impatience, and secretiveness.</p> <p><i>To work better with amiables:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show concern for them and their families, interests, etc. 2. Slow down and provide details and specifics about how to accomplish objectives. 3. Support efforts and accomplishment with personal attention. <p>*Working with this style will require <i>you</i> to exercise <i>your</i> versatility.</p>	<p>Expressives</p> <p>Relate to your accomplishments, independence, and decisiveness. Question your coldness, lack of playfulness, critical nature, and discipline.</p> <p><i>To work better with expressives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be more open about yourself, feelings, gossip, and opinions. 2. Relax time constraints within structure; provide incentives 3. Provide public recognition for accomplishments (let them win in front of others).

Figure 8. How Others Respond to a DRIVER

⁵ Adapted from pp. 140-143 in *Personal Styles and Effective Performance*, by David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid. Copyright © 1981 by David W. Merrill and Roger H. Reid. Reprinted with permission of the publisher, Chilton Book Company, Radnor, PA. This book contains documentation related to the original work done by the TRACOM Corp. in Denver in the SOCIAL STYLE™ Models.

<p>Other Analytics</p> <p>Perceive you as thoughtful, wanting more facts, conservative, quiet, critical, logical, cool toward others, thorough, cooperative, distant, reserved, stern, austere, dependable, and accurate</p> <p><i>To work better with fellow analytics:</i></p> <p>Recognize the need for making timetables and for reaching decisions. Reinforcing one another's desire for more information may form a self-perpetuating cycle that does not produce results.</p>	<p>Drivers</p> <p>Relate to your logic, command of data, accuracy, and dependability. Question your overabundance of facts, lack of decisiveness, and lack of risk taking.</p> <p><i>To work better with drivers:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarize the facts and various outcomes; let them decide. 2. Depend on self-discipline rather than on excessive reports or precise instructions 3. Recognize results with monetary rewards.
<p>Amiables</p> <p>Relate to your cooperative and conservative nature, accuracy, and patience. Question your lack of warmth and close relationships and your dependence on figures.</p> <p><i>To work better with fellow amiables:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Show your interest in them as people, rather than as workers. 2. Use their skills as mediators to build relationships inside the organization. 3. Help them to perceive the big picture and how they relate to it. 	<p>Expressives*</p> <p>Relate to your cooperativeness and dependability. Question your dependence on facts, criticalness, stuffy nature, impersonal approach, and lack of fun.</p> <p><i>To work better with expressives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spend informal time with them. 2. Recognize their need for package sales, incentives, and contests. 3. Ask for their opinions and input on a noncritical, accepting basis <p>*Working with this style will require <i>you</i> to exercise <i>your</i> versatility.</p>

Figure 9. How Others Respond to an ANALYTICAL

<p>Analytics</p> <p>Relate to your cooperative, careful, quiet, thoughtful, and willing ways.</p> <p>Question your soft-hearted, easygoing nature; emotional responses; and compliance with others.</p> <p><i>To work better with analytics:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Stress the need for facts and data rather than emotions to build a case, but let them do the work-up with a time limit. 2. Provide added opportunities for class work and study in return for meeting activity standards. 3. Build confidence in the relationship through demonstrated technical competence. 	<p>Drivers*</p> <p>Relate to your supportive, helpful, team-oriented, and careful nature.</p> <p>Question your lack of initiative, need for detail, small thinking, and responsive side.</p> <p><i>To work better with drivers:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Be businesslike; let them tell you how to help and what they want. Do not try to build a relationship or friendship. 2. Stay on schedule; stick to the agenda; provide factual summaries. 3. Let them make decisions based on options you provide. <p>*Working with this style will require <i>you</i> to exercise <i>your</i> versatility.</p>
<p>Amiables</p> <p>Perceive you as supportive, quiet, friendly, shy, retiring, team oriented, helpful, kind, thoughtful, slow to act, nonthreatening, soft hearted, easygoing, complying, responsive, open, willing, careful, and cooperative.</p> <p><i>To work better with fellow amiables:</i></p> <p>Be hard-nosed, insistent, and directive (an uncomfortable role but a necessary one in this situation); otherwise, it is likely that no one will take the necessary initiative, and the end result will be unsatisfactory.</p>	<p>Other Expressives</p> <p>Relate to your supportive, friendly, responsive, and helpful characteristics.</p> <p>Question your slowness to act and your careful, complying, non-competitive stance.</p> <p><i>To work better with expressives:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Try to bring them definite opinions, backed by third-party endorsement; do not waver. 2. Publicly recognize and praise their accomplishments. 3. Stand your ground when challenged about rules and previously established procedures.

Figure 10. How Others Respond to an AMIALE

<p>Analyticals*</p> <p>Relate to your imaginative, stimulating, and thought-provoking nature. Question your ability to perform as stated, your follow-through, and your loud, flashy, emotional side.</p> <p><i>To work better with analyticals:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Talk about facts, not opinions, and break down component parts, preferably in writing. 2. Back up your facts with proof from authoritative sources. 3. Be quietly patient while they discover for themselves what you already know. <p>*Working with this style will require <i>you</i> to exercise <i>your</i> versatility.</p>	<p>Drivers</p> <p>Relate to your outgoing, imaginative, competitive, and personable aspects. Question your rah-rah, demonstrative, impulsive, emotional side.</p> <p><i>To work better with drivers:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Back up your enthusiasm with actual results; demonstrate that your ideas work. 2. Be on time and keep within agreed-on limits; provide materials promptly. 3. Provide choices of action whenever possible and let the drivers select the course of action.
<p>Amiables</p> <p>Relate to your warmth, enthusiasm, and stimulating and personable nature. Question your outgoing, loud, dramatic, impulsive side.</p> <p><i>To work better with amiables:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Slow down the pace and volume; allow time to build a relationship. 2. Work on one item at a time, in detail; avoid the confusion of too many tasks or ideas at one time. 3. Encourage suggestions, participation in team activities, and supportive roles. 	<p>Other Expressives</p> <p>Perceive you as outgoing, enthusiastic, warm, opinionated, talkative, intuitive, emotional, stimulating, imaginative, impulsive, excitable, loud, flashy, dramatic, personable, competitive, and caring.</p> <p><i>To work better with fellow expressives:</i></p> <p>Provide the discipline in this relationship, or all the fun and creativity may accomplish nothing. Keep on track and emphasize the basics, allowing carefully limited experimentation as a reward for results.</p>

Figure 11. How Others Respond to an EXPRESSIVE

A simplified, general approach for each style, regardless of one's own, is as follows:

ANALYTICAL

- Explain how first.
- Proceed deliberately.
- Support the other person's principles.
- Talk about documented facts.
- Provide deadlines.
- Be patient, organized, and logical.

DRIVER

- Explain what first.
- Proceed rapidly.
- Support the other person's results.
- Talk about immediate facts.
- Provide freedom.
- Be businesslike, time conscious, and factual.

AMiable

- Explain why first.
- Proceed softly.
- Support the other person.
- Talk about personal life.
- Provide initiative.
- Be gentle, specific, and harmonious.

EXPRESSIVE

- Explain who first.
- Proceed enthusiastically.
- Support the other person's intentions.
- Talk about people and opinions.
- Provide discipline.
- Be stimulating, open, and flexible.

USES OF THE SOCIAL-STYLE APPROACH

The social-style approach can be used to improve relationships in seven areas in the workplace:

1. *Team Composition.* In forming a new team, care can be taken to have all four styles represented if the task must begin with ideas and end with implementation and evaluation. One particular style can be selected for particular portions of the task (for example, drivers for implementation).
2. *Team Building.* A social-style learning activity can be used to aid team members in understanding complementary and conflicting styles, potential blind spots, how to adjust to one another, and how to build on the strengths that members bring to the team.
3. *Superior/Subordinate Relationships.* The approach can be used from either vantage point to demonstrate how best to achieve task accomplishment with different styles. Supervisors and managers can learn how to direct, guide, support, and reward each style. Subordinates can learn how to enlist help from, propose ideas to, and win approval from each style.
4. *Recruitment.* Advertising can appeal to the social style desired for a position by describing the job in terms that reflect that style's behavioral preferences.

5. *Selection.* The social-style approach can be used both to help candidates feel comfortable and to determine their social-style “fit” for the position, especially if social-style profiles have been created for the “achievers” in that position.
6. *Training.* Training can be structured or adapted to the individual or group according to predominant style (for example, analyticals should be approached with an emphasis on actual data and a minimum of personal sharing).
7. *Organization Development.* A knowledge of the organizational culture can be increased by identifying the styles of those who guide the organization. A strong, stable organization can be built over time by having all four styles represented in appropriate functional areas. Plans for management succession can include training, developing, and placing people with particular styles in positions where those qualities are most needed.

Fit with Other Theories

Although the social-style approach is unique, it enjoys a good “fit” with other current theories that deal with the dimensions of assertiveness and responsiveness and the four combinations of styles that result: high assertiveness-low responsiveness, high assertiveness-high responsiveness, low assertiveness-high responsiveness, and low assertiveness-low responsiveness.

Training magazine (1982) published the chart shown in Table 1 to demonstrate the similarities among the four style approaches from a variety of training organizations and the published literature.

Table 1. The Many Faces of the Four-Style Grid⁶

	High Assertiveness Low Responsive- ness	High Assertiveness High Responsive- ness	Low Assertiveness High Responsive- ness	Low Assertiveness Low Responsive- ness	Combination
BASIC SYSTEMS					
Medieval Four Temperaments	Choleric	Sanguine	Melancholic	Phlegmatic	
William M. Marston, <i>Emotions of Normal People</i>	Dominance	Inducement of Others	Steadiness	Compliance	
John G. Geier, Personal Profile System	Dominance	Influence	Steadiness	Compliance	

⁶ Reprinted with permission from the November 1982 issue of *Training Magazine*. Lakewood Publications, Minneapolis, MN. All rights reserved.

Table 1 (continued). The Many Faces of the Four-Style Grid

	High Assertiveness Low Responsive-ness	High Assertiveness High Responsive-ness	Low Assertiveness High Responsive-ness	Low Assertiveness Low Responsive-ness	Combination
Thomas C. Ritt, Jr., Personal Concepts	Dominance	Influence	Steadiness	Compliance	
Leo McManus, AMA's Management and Motivation	Dominance	Influence	Steadiness	Compliance	
David W. Merrill-Roger H. Reid, <i>Personal Styles and Effective Performance</i>	Driver	Expressive	Amiable	Analytical	
The TRACOM Corporation, Style Awareness Training	Driver	Expressive	Amiable	Analytical	
Wilson Learning Systems, Managing Interpersonal Relationships	Driver	Expressive	Amiable	Analytical	
Stuart Atkins, LIFO® (Life Orientations)	Controlling- Taking	Adapting- Dealing	Supporting- Giving	Conserving- Holding	
CONFLICT RESOLUTION					
Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument	Competing	Collaborating	Accommodating	Avoiding	Compromising
Allen A. Zoll, III, <i>Explorations in Management</i> , quoting Mary Parker Follett	Domination	Integration	Suppression	Evasion	Compromise
Donald T. Simpson, "Conflict Styles: Organizational Decision-Making"	Power	Integration	Suppression	Denial	Compromise
Jay Hall, Conflict- Management Survey	9/1 Win-Lose	9/9 Synergistic	1/9 Yield-Lose	1/1 Lose-Leave	5/5 Compromise

Table 1 (continued). The Many Faces of the Four-Style Grid

	High Assertiveness Low Responsive- ness	High Assertiveness High Responsive- ness	Low Assertiveness High Responsive- ness	Low Assertiveness Low Responsive- ness	Combination
PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL					
Robert E. Lefton et al., <i>Effective Motivation Through Performance Appraisal</i>	Q1 Dominant-Hostile	Q4 Dominant-Warm	Q3 Submissive-Warm	Q2 Submissive-Hostile	
Dimensional Training Systems Dimensional Appraisal Training	Q1 Dominant-Hostile	Q4 Dominant-Warm	Q3 Submissive-Warm	Q2 Submissive-Hostile	

Four more additions can be made to Table 1, as shown in Table 2. Although the fit may not be exact, there are sufficient similarities to include them.

Table 2. Additional Four-Style Approaches

	High Assertiveness Low Responsiveness	High Assertiveness High Responsiveness	Low Assertiveness High Responsiveness	Low Assertiveness Low Responsiveness
1. Drake Beam Morin, Inc., I-Speak Communication Styles	Sensor	Intuitior	Feeler	Thinker
2. Hersey-Blanchard, Situational Leadership™	S1 Tell	S2 Tell	S3 Collaborate	S4 Delegate
3. Bernice McCarthy, 4 MAT System of Learning Styles	Type 3 Learner	Type 4 Learner	Type 1 Learner	Type 2 Learner
4. Ned Hermann, Brain Dominance	Limbic Left	Cerebral Right	Limbic Right	Cerebral Left

SUMMARY

The social-style approach focuses nonjudgmentally on the behavioral styles of oneself and others with the purpose of teaching one to adapt to and improve interpersonal interaction. It is useful in both personal and professional relationships, is easy to teach to people at any organizational level, and can serve a number of organizational goals.

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■ THE FEELINGS VOCABULARY: A TOOL FOR HRD PROFESSIONALS

Kathy L. Dovey and William L. Summer

Feelings are our reactions to the world around us. Many experts agree that all feelings are derived from one of four basic emotions: anger, joy, grief, and fear (represented, respectively, by the adjectives “mad,” “glad,” “sad,” and “afraid”). People’s abilities to express their feelings vary widely. Some people have the ability not only to state at any point in time which of the four emotions they are experiencing but also to pinpoint the precise word that defines the feeling. Others easily can identify their basic emotions, but are stymied in distinguishing beyond that. Still others have to struggle to identify their feelings or, in some cases, are unable to admit to being mad, glad, sad, or afraid.

Conventional wisdom in human behavior seems to be that a person benefits greatly by being in touch with his or her feelings. Understanding one’s feelings facilitates not only the development of intimacy in interpersonal relations but also the management of stress and physical and mental well-being. In the popular book *Mind Traps: Change Your Mind, Change Your Life*, Tom Rusk and Natalie Rusk (1988, p. 49) say, “Feelings are the reason anyone cares about anything in life. Without feelings, life would have no quality, good or bad.”

Human functioning and growth are largely dependent on the ability not only to identify but also to describe feelings. Understanding oneself and how one’s behavior affects others, communicating, and building satisfactory relationships are all dependent on this ability. The process of identifying feelings and describing them in a clear, concise manner can be learned. Personal-growth training, for example, provides participants with an opportunity to express their feelings openly and to receive feedback on how that expression affects others. Participants may find that sharing their feelings in this type of setting is either easier or harder than previously experienced, depending on whether the group is supportive or unsupportive. But at least the training setting offers a chance to explore feelings in depth. Trainers often ask questions such as “What are you feeling at this moment?” Some participants find themselves pausing for an uncomfortably long period of time as they struggle to reply; others attempt an awkward, rambling discourse on how they feel. But with persistence people gradually improve at understanding and expressing their feelings.

People who are unaccustomed to dealing with their feelings and want to change this mind-set may encounter certain barriers, one of which is defenses that have been built up as protection against pain. It may take exceptional discipline for a “feelings novice”

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to tune in to feelings. A commitment to check feelings daily at regularly scheduled intervals may help; just as repetition builds the negative habit of masking or denying feelings, it can build the positive habit of checking one's emotional state.

Another barrier may be a vocabulary that includes too few descriptive words or a tendency not to use a range of words to describe feelings. A number of personal-growth groups as well as some drug- and alcohol-addiction programs distribute lists of "feeling" words to participants. These lists serve as learning aids for participants as they strive to be in touch with their feelings enough to detect any patterns of negative behavior or addiction coinciding with certain feelings. The end result ideally would be a break with the connection and, thus, a change of the negative pattern.

A LIST OF "FEELING" WORDS

The authors prepared a list of "feeling" words based on a range of intensities (high, medium, or low) of the basic terms "mad," "glad," "sad," and "afraid." After developing the initial list, the authors mailed it to many HRD professionals to obtain their reactions. Any word whose level of intensity (high, medium, or low) received a fairly standard rating was retained, whereas any word that did not receive a fairly standard rating was deleted from the list.

Figure 1 presents the survey results.¹ Within each major category of feeling ("mad," "glad," "sad," and "afraid"), the words are divided into columns according to their corresponding levels of intensity as determined by the respondents. The words in each column are listed alphabetically. To use the list, a person refers to the appropriate category, identifies the level of intensity of the feeling being considered, and then surveys the words in that column to find one that matches or closely resembles the feeling.

This list is offered as the basis for a systematic approach to tapping into feelings, at least until the process becomes automatic for a person. Using the list may seem mechanical or contrived, and to some degree it is. However, the learning of any skill involves some awkwardness at first. Gradually the awkwardness is replaced with a degree of comfort, and eventually the use of the skill becomes automatic. At that point the person has developed a new habit—in this case, the habit of keeping in touch with feelings.

¹ When devising the list that was originally sent to respondents, the authors attempted to select words that would be subject to as little discrepancy as possible between the meaning intended and the meanings interpreted by respondents. Nevertheless, the words on the final list (those that appear in this figure) are relative; any judgment on the part of the respondents as to whether a word connotes high versus medium intensity or medium versus low intensity is a subjective matter.

MAD			
<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	
Angry	Aggravated	Animosity	Provoked
Bitter	Antagonistic	Bothered	Rancor
Boiling	Disgusted	Burned	Sore
Detestable	Exasperated	Chafed	"Teed off"
Enraged	Frustrated	Displeased	Uneasy
Fuming	Incensed	Enmity	Unhappy
Furious	Indignant	Ireful	Unsettled
Hateful	Inflamed	Irked	Vexed
Hostile	Vengeful	Miffed	
Infuriated	Worked-up	Peeved	

GLAD			
<i>High</i>	<i>Medium</i>	<i>Low</i>	
Alive	Blessed	Jovial	Blithe
Cheerful	Comfortable	Lighthearted	Bothersome
Delighted	Content	Overjoyed	Complacent
Ecstatic	Enchanted	Peaceful	Tranquil
Energetic	Exalted	Pleased	
Excited	Exquisite	Proud	
Exuberant	Gay	Rapturous	
Happy	Gleeful	Serene	
Jubilant	Grateful	Spirited	
	Gratified	Vibrant	
	Hilarious	Warm	
	Jolly	Zestful	

Figure 1. The Feelings Vocabulary

SAD				
<i>High</i>		<i>Medium</i>		<i>Low</i>
Beaten	Grim	Dejected	Moved	Ashamed
Bleak	Helpless	Discouraged	Pessimistic	Bored
Blue	Hopeless	Dismal	Regretful	Bruised
Crestfallen	Humiliated	Dispirited	Rejected	Cheerless
Defeated	Melancholy	Down	Shameful	Deflated
Depressed	Mournful	Downcast	Solemn	Disappointed
Despondent	Numb	Forlorn	Sullen	Distant
Devastated	Sorrowful	Heavy	"Turned off"	Embarrassed
Disconsolate	Woebegone	Humbled	Unfulfilled	Gloomy
Empty	Woeful	Lonely	Unhappy	Hurt
Grieving	Worthless	Morose		Let down
				Pained
				Resigned
				Somber
				Uninterested

AFRAID				
<i>High</i>		<i>Medium</i>		<i>Low</i>
Alarmed	Agitated	Nervous	Alone	Hesitant
Cowardly	Anxious	Perturbed	Bothered	Reluctant
Distressed	Apprehensive	Pessimistic	Cautious	Restless
Fearful	Disoriented	Shaky	Concerned	Skeptical
Frightened	Fainthearted	Startled	Coy	Timid
Ghastly	Inadequate	Tense	Diffident	Timorous
Intimidated	Inferior	Troubled	Disinclined	Unconfident
Panic-stricken	Insecure	Uptight	Doubtful	Uneasy
Petrified	Jittery	Worried	Dubious	Unsettled
Scared	Lost		Edgy	Unsure
Shocked			Fidgety	Vulnerable
Terrified				
Threatened				
Tremulous				

Figure 1 (continued). The Feelings Vocabulary

USE OF THE LIST IN HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Professionals in human resource development (HRD) may find the list useful in many different ways. Organizational-change agents need to be able to determine the intensity of people's feelings about events like mergers, alterations of organizational structure, and the introduction of new technology. As previously mentioned, many personal-growth groups and drug- and alcohol-addiction programs distribute similar lists as learning aids for participants who want to get in touch with their feelings. Training in assertion, active listening, and stress management may be facilitated by distributing the list and encouraging participants to use it. Sometimes the introduction of such a handout formalizes a discussion of a difficult subject like feelings and allows people to participate with a greater degree of comfort than they might otherwise experience.

In addition, the list may be used to help people to identify and discuss their feelings during the course of teambuilding sessions. In such sessions team members deal with a wide variety of issues: defensiveness, supportiveness, resistance, giving and receiving feedback, conflict management, personal congruence (between statements of beliefs and actual behavior), responsibility, risk taking, and various functional and dysfunctional behaviors. It is difficult if not impossible to address these issues without being able to identify and express feelings. Similarly, activities involving group problem solving and consensus seeking may present opportunities to use the list to elicit statements about feelings.

Managers, in particular, may benefit from being introduced to the list. During the processes of coaching and performance appraisal, for example, a manager may need to elicit information from a subordinate about personal feelings. Also, every manager needs to obtain feedback regarding how subordinates feel about organizational or unit changes; without such information, changes can fail shortly after implementation due to people's inability or unwillingness to follow through.

Professionals in HRD may also find the list helpful in eliciting feedback about the impact of their behavior on others. Trainers and consultants have a significant influence on the learning processes of those with whom they work. It is essential to determine whether trainees and clients are receptive, involved, and enthusiastic; it is equally essential to gauge how a professional's behavior affects such attitudes as well as how the professional feels about the effects of his or her behavior. Trainers who receive negative feedback on their training styles, for example, need to get in touch with their feelings about that feedback. Ignoring or denying feelings hinders the feedback process and prevents trainers from taking steps to change behaviors that are negatively perceived by trainees.

The HRD professional is continually confronted with the importance of identifying and describing feelings; it is a rare training session or consultation that does not evoke feelings that must be dealt with. The professional who is able to deal with feelings—and to help others in the process of dealing with theirs—can be an invaluable asset to an organization. The authors hope that the feelings vocabulary offered in this article will facilitate the development of that ability.

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■ USING PERSONALITY TYPOLOGY TO BUILD UNDERSTANDING

Toni La Motta

Understanding how others function is a first step in working with them. Organizations consist of people who differ from one another on almost every dimension possible. Diversity certainly is a challenge that is here to stay.

However, diversity also offers an opportunity to appreciate differences. In the face of constant change, organizations need the differing strengths of different types of people. Increasingly organizations are turning to human resource development (HRD) professionals to guide them in managing change and managing diversity. The HRD professional then acts as a bridge between past and future technologies and as a facilitator between employees and managers and among various teams within an organization. As such, an HRD professional plays roles ranging from teacher to technician to prophet to psychologist.

In a dynamic environment, the most important and least understood HRD role may be that of psychologist. People react in many ways to changes around them; some adjust well, but others see change as threatening and react defensively. An effective way to diminish the defensiveness that occurs with change is to define roles clearly and to make personnel feel acknowledged and appreciated. Understanding theories of personality type can help an HRD professional in these endeavors.

This article begins with brief reviews of three related theories of personality typology: Jung, Myers and Briggs, and Keirsey and Bates. Jung's work formed the basis of the later work of Myers and Briggs; the work of Myers and Briggs, in turn, formed the basis of Keirsey and Bates' work. Next the article describes the four dimensions of personality that provide the structure for these three theories. These dimensions are extraverts/introverts, sensors/intuitors, thinkers/feelers, and judgers/perceivers. The article subsequently outlines Jung's functional types and then provides detailed explanations of the more widely recognized Myers-Briggs types and Keirsey and Bates temperaments.

The explanatory material is important to an understanding of the next section, the role of temperament and management style. Following that, four case studies of how personality typology can be used in an organizational setting are presented. Finally, the article describes action steps that can be taken by managers and HRD practitioners who want to use personality typology to enhance understanding in the workplace.

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HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON PERSONALITY TYPOLOGIES

Jung's Theory of Type

Carl Gustav Jung was a Swiss psychiatrist whose theory of psychological types (Pfeiffer, 1991) helps people to recognize and to understand basic personality differences. In essence, this theory describes people's ranges of orientations to *perceiving* (sensing versus intuitive), *interpreting* (thinking versus feeling), and *responding* (extraversion versus introversion). By becoming aware of these basic differences, people can better understand others' motivations and behaviors and can expand tolerance and respect for those whose styles are different.

Jung recognized that people make clear choices from infancy on as to how they use their minds. Although each person has some of each kind of orientation, he or she generally favors one type over the other. Furthermore, types seem to be distributed randomly with regard to sex, class, level of education, and so on.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator

In the early 1940s, Isabel Briggs Myers and her mother, Katherine Briggs, began to explore ways to use Jung's theories to explain personality differences. With World War II as a backdrop for their work, the women saw peace in the world as the ultimate goal of understanding personality types. Their paper-and-pencil instrument for determining personality type became known as the *Myers-Briggs Type Indicator* (MBTI). The MBTI is based on a psychometric questionnaire whose results seem to determine accurately a person's viewpoint and style of behavior in all aspects of work and personal interaction. Use of the MBTI is extremely widespread; to date, several million Americans have taken it. The instrument also has been translated into Japanese, Spanish, and French, helping many people around the world to understand and accept themselves and others.

Using Jung's theories as a starting point, Myers and Briggs designated three sets of letter pairs: E/I (extraversion/introversion), S/N (sensing/intuitive), and T/F (thinking/feeling). To these they added a fourth letter-pair set, J/P (judging/perceiving). The MBTI classifies each person in one of sixteen personality types, based on that person's preferences for one aspect from each of the four sets of letter pairs.

The Keirsey and Bates Sorter

David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates (1984), in their book *Please Understand Me*, use the same four dimensions that are found in the MBTI to outline four "temperaments." They define temperament to be "that which places a signature or thumb print on each of one's actions, making it recognizably one's own" (Keirsey & Bates, 1984, p. 27).

Temperament is based first on the S/N dimension; differences on this dimension are "the source of the most miscommunication, misunderstanding, vilification, defamation, and denigration" (Keirsey & Bates, 1984, p. 17). People with an S (sensing) preference gather information in concrete ways, based on facts in the here-and-now; temperament theory then subdivides them based on how they act on this information (judging or

perceiving). People with an N (intuitive) preference gather information in abstract ways, based on intuition and possibilities; the temperament sorter then subdivides them based on how they make decisions about this information (thinking or feeling). Thus, according to the Keirsey and Bates Sorter, a person is characterized as SJ, SP, NT, or NF.

THE LETTER PAIRS

The dimensions used by Jung, by Myers and Briggs, and by Keirsey and Bates represent tendencies rather than absolute choices. In most situations, a person prefers one approach over another. A person who understands his or her own approach then can use this information to improve communication with others.

Extraverts and Introverts (E and I)

Jung identified two basic “attitude types,” which describe the direction of a person’s interest: extravert and introvert. In the context of personality typology, an extravert is a person whose energy source is the external world of people and things, whereas an introvert is a person whose energy source is the internal world of ideas.

An extravert generally appears friendly and easy to know; he or she tends to think aloud and to express emotions openly. An extravert often acts first and reflects later. In contrast, an introvert is most productive in private and tends to reflect first and act later. An introvert generally internalizes emotions and appears to be less self-revealing and to need a great deal of privacy. Contrary to popular notions, however, a healthy extravert may need time alone and a healthy introvert may have highly developed communication skills.

Sensors and Intuitors (S and N)

The S/N preference concerns the mental function of how a person takes in data from the outside world. The letter “S” is used for sensing, and the letter “N” is used to represent intuition.

A person is a sensor if he or she takes in information in parts, noticing fine details by means of the five senses. A sensor is a very practical individual who wants, trusts, and remembers facts. He or she is highly attuned to details and is usually very orderly and organized. For this person, learning is a linear process in which data are collected sequentially and facts are believed only when experience bears them out. A sensor values order and truth; often he or she is a hard worker who values perspiration more than inspiration. A sensor enjoys the present moment, takes directions easily, and may be most comfortable with tasks that are highly detailed and require repetition.

In contrast, a person is an intuitor if he or she perceives a situation in its entirety rather than piecemeal. An intuitor has a global perspective and is often described as living by a sixth sense. He or she is imaginative and is always anticipating future events. An intuitor looks primarily for relationships and patterns in the information taken in. He

or she is an innovator who believes in and excels in hunches, visions, and dreams. An intuitor is adept at long-range planning and can recognize all of the complexities in a given situation.

Taken to the extreme, the sensing function causes a person to miss the forest for the trees, and the intuitive function causes a person to miss the trees for the forest.

Thinkers and Feelers (T and F)

Once data have been collected, decisions often must be made, a process that is determined by one's T/F preference. The letter "T" represents thinking, and the letter "F" represents feeling. Although this preference is based on how logic is used, thinking should not be equated with intelligence or intellectualism, nor should feelings be equated with emotion.

A thinker processes data in a formalized, linear fashion and can be described as logical. He or she uses an impersonal basis to make decisions in an exacting, structured, analytical manner. The thinker's actions are apt to be deliberate and based on cause and effect. A thinker is ruled by the intellect and will fight for principles; such a person is drawn to jobs that do not depend heavily on interpersonal dynamics.

In contrast, a feeler makes decisions based on a process that more closely reflects personal values or concerns for others. He or she looks at extenuating circumstances rather than rigid laws. A feeler often is artistic and sensitive to the opinions and values of others; consequently, he or she is best suited to a job that requires strong communication and interpersonal skills.

Judgers and Perceivers (J and P)

Jung's discussion of temperament actually dealt only with the S/N, T/F, and E/I preferences, emphasizing that each person has preferred styles of perceiving and judging that are best done in either the outer or inner world. Myers and Briggs built from Jung's theory and created a fourth pair of opposites for the MBTI, concerning the style in which a person lives life (J/P). The J/P preference represents the weight that each of the mental functions (S/N and T/F) is given. In general terms, this preference refers to lifestyle.

A judger prefers situations that are orderly and well planned; and the judging function is dominant in the decision-making dimension, regardless of whether the person is a thinker or a feeler. Such a person prefers a decided, settled path and tends to be neat and orderly. A judger must know priorities and works best when his or her attention is dedicated to one assignment. He or she likes to be prepared for any situation, runs life by making and adhering to lists, thrives on deadlines, and always sees a task through to the end. However, because of a strong desire for stability, a judger may find change troubling.

A perceiver, on the other hand, lives life in an open, fluid, and spontaneous fashion. The perceiving function is dominant in his or her actions, regardless of whether the person is a sensor or an intuitor. A perceiver sees life's possibilities and is always ready

for the unexpected. He or she remains open to sudden changes and is comfortable with letting things happen by chance; this person adapts well to changing environments and usually enjoys being given a variety of tasks.

COMBINING ATTITUDE AND FUNCTION

Jungian Functional Types

Jung categorized people according to the psychological functions of thinking, feeling, sensation, and intuition; each of these functions then could be found in either extraverted or introverted individuals. In this way, Jung recognized eight functional types: extraverted sensing, extraverted intuitive, extraverted thinking, extraverted feeling, introverted sensing, introverted intuitive, introverted thinking, and introverted feeling.

The Myers-Briggs Types

The sixteen four-letter type indicators that classify types in the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) consist of one letter representing a trait from each pair. Thus, the possible sixteen combinations are ISTJ, ESTJ, INTJ, ENTJ, ISTP, ESTP, INTP, ENTP, ISFJ, ESFJ, INFJ, ENFJ, ISFP, ESFP, INFP, and ENFP. Each of these types has certain characteristics and preferences that distinguish it from other types.

ISTJ (*Introverted-Sensing-Thinking-Judging*). The ISTJ type is dependable and decisive. Attention to detail, combined with dependability, draws a person of this type to careers in which he or she can work alone and can focus on results, objective thinking, and procedures.

ESTJ (*Extraverted-Sensing-Thinking-Judging*). People of this type perceive through their senses rather than through their intuition and can be described as practical and oriented toward facts. Because of their focus on visible, measurable results, this type is ideally suited to organizing and directing the production of products.

INTJ (*Introverted-Intuitive-Thinking-Judging*). The INTJ type is naturally good at brainstorming and excels at turning theory into practice. People of this type often choose careers that allow them to create and apply technology, and they often rise rapidly in an organization because of their abilities to focus on both the overall picture and the details of a situation.

ENTJ (*Extraverted-Intuitive-Thinking-Judging*). The ENTJ type uses intuition rather than sensing to explore possibilities and relationships between and among things. People of this type have a strong desire to lead and tend to rise quickly to upper-management levels.

ISTP (*Introverted-Sensing-Thinking-Perceiving*). An ISTP type excels in technical and scientific fields because he or she uses sensing and thinking to analyze and organize data. Not wasting time is a key value for a person of this type, who tends to become bored by tasks that are too routine or too open ended.

ESTP (*Extraverted-Sensing-Thinking-Perceiving*). The ESTP type makes decisions based on logic more than on feelings. Such a person prefers to learn as he or she goes

along, as opposed to becoming familiar with an entire process in advance. An ESTP type has excellent entrepreneurial abilities but quickly tires of routine administrative details.

INTP (*Introverted-Intuitive-Thinking-Perceiving*). The INTP person uses intuition to explore possibilities, preferring new ideas and theories to facts. This person's love of problem solving means that he or she is well suited to research and other scholarly endeavors.

ENTP (*Extraverted-Intuitive-Thinking-Perceiving*). The ENTP type is attracted to work that allows the exercise of ingenuity. Such a person learns best by discussing and challenging and has little tolerance for tedious details.

ISFJ (*Introverted-Sensing-Feeling-Judging*). An ISFJ type combines an ability to use facts and data with sensitivity to others. Although uncomfortable in ambiguous situations, a person of this type is a hard worker and prefers work in which he or she can be of service to others, both within the organization and outside it.

ESFJ (*Extraverted-Sensing-Feeling-Judging*). The ESFJ type is probably the most sociable of all types and thus is highly effective in dealing with others. He or she often leans toward a career that serves others, such as teaching or the ministry.

INFJ (*Introverted-Intuitive-Feeling-Judging*). The INFJ type has a natural gift for facilitating groups. Although interpersonal interactions are important to a person of this type, he or she can be comfortable with any work that allows opportunities to grow and to learn.

ENFJ (*Extraverted-Intuitive-Feeling-Judging*). An ENFJ person is a born leader who places highest priority on people. This preference, combined with his or her strong verbal-communication skills, makes the ENFJ type ideally suited for motivating others.

ISFP (*Introverted-Sensing-Feeling-Perceiving*). People whose type is ISFP excel at tasks that require long periods of concentration and have senses that are keenly tuned. They prefer to express themselves in concrete, nonverbal ways and are especially inclined toward the fine arts.

ESFP (*Extraverted-Sensing-Feeling-Perceiving*). An ESFP type uses sensing and feeling to live in the here-and-now and is most challenged by activities that are new and require some special effort. He or she prefers work that provides instant gratification, an opportunity to work with others, and avenues for learning and growing.

INFP (*Introverted-Intuitive-Feeling-Perceiving*). People of this type are best described as idealists; they value integrity, hard work, and concern for others. Although they are adaptable to most work situations, they are best suited for careers that involve service to others.

ENFP (*Extraverted-Intuitive-Feeling-Perceiving*). The ENFP type is most interested in finding new solutions to problems and is attracted to work that involves people. Such a person tends to be impatient with rules and procedures and serves better as a mentor for employees than as a boss.

Keirsey and Bates Temperaments

The Keirsey and Bates Sorter classifies people by temperament rather than by type. Based on Jungian definitions, the sorter lists the four temperaments as sensing perceiver (SP), sensing judger (SJ), intuitive thinker (NT), or intuitive feeler (NF). Sensing perceivers and sensing judgers each make up between 35 and 40 percent of the population, while intuitive thinkers and intuitive feelers each constitute between 10 and 15 percent.

Sensing Perceiver (SP). An SP, or sensing perceiver, constantly seeks adventure and freedom and is open to whatever is new and changing. This person lives for the moment and makes an excellent negotiator. In a work setting, he or she may deal well with vendors and may be useful in keeping the staff abreast of new products and new releases. Such a person often is known as a troubleshooter who likes to resolve crises and to rally the support of others in solving a problem. Hot-line programs are often well served by people with SP temperaments.

Sensing Judger (SJ). A sensing judger (SJ) believes in rules, regulations, and rituals. He or she works best in a formalized, structured situation and often is well qualified to institute the structure that is needed in the workplace. A sensing judger would make a good librarian, inventory controller, scheduler, or administrator. He or she thrives on setting standards, whether in reference to resource selection or the day-to-day operating procedures of a department.

Intuitive Thinker (NT). A person who wants to understand, control, explain, and predict events is an intuitive thinker (NT). He or she is an intellectual purist and a self-motivated learner. An intuitive thinker can best serve an organization as a visionary and planner. He or she is a determined learner and will pursue something until it is mastered. An intuitive thinker makes an excellent system designer because of his or her conceptual ability and may be well suited to customer support because of a need to strive for resolution. Newsletter production may also be a good outlet for an intuitive thinker's skills.

Intuitive Feeler (NF). An intuitive feeler (NF) is enthusiastic and often has strong communication and interaction skills. Such a person often excels at public relations and can be effective as a liaison to other companies or departments. An intuitive feeler also often makes a good teacher, especially on the elementary level, because of his or her patience and understanding. Such a person is excellent at setting the atmosphere necessary for quality learning and training.

PERSONALITY TYPOLOGY AND MANAGEMENT STYLE

Because all temperament types bring their own strengths and weaknesses to the workplace, managers need to be aware of their own temperaments before they attempt to understand and lead the rest of the staff. Temperament, according to Keirsey and Bates (1984), is a prime determinant of management style. To use personality typing within a department, a manager must first look at the corporate culture in which the department exists, its particular mission, and the objectives of the available positions. He or she must consider whether the department is new, is seeking greater recognition, or is a mature group looking to improve or to maintain services.

Managers need to assess their own temperaments and personality styles and their inherent strengths and weaknesses before assessing the behavior exhibited by current or potential staff members. Most managers will need staff members with similar personalities to support them. However, opposite types are also needed to compensate for existing weaknesses. The best teams seem to be composed of people who have some personality differences but who are not total opposites. Differences can encourage group growth, while similarities can facilitate understanding and communication. When a team of complete opposites does exist, an understanding of type theory can go a long way toward alleviating disagreements and recognizing the need for team integration.

When looking for a clear vision of how to plan for the future, the manager should keep in mind that sensors are best at practical, detail tasks; that intuitors are best at creative, long-range tasks; that thinkers' skills are appropriate for analysis tasks; and that the skills of feelers are suited to interpersonal communications. A successful staff demands that all skills be used in the right place at the right time. A good manager will recognize the type of task that needs to be done and will assign the best and most appropriate talents to accomplish the job in harmony.

The Sensing-Judging (SJ) Manager

The SJ manager is a stabilizer or consolidator who excels at establishing policies, rules, schedules, and routines. Such a person is usually patient, thorough, and steady. An SJ manager will provide a sense of permanence that encourages industriousness and responsibility in a staff. A sensing-judging manager is a task master who feels that every person must earn his or her keep and therefore tends to be very reluctant to praise. Operational costs are carefully monitored, but true costs often are not. An SJ manager is impatient with delays, may decide issues too quickly, and often complicates matters by preserving rules that are unnecessary and by adapting slowly to change. On the other hand, this type of person has a strong understanding of policy and is a good decision maker. He or she runs meetings efficiently; is always punctual; and can absorb, remember, manipulate, and manage a great deal of detail—traits that certainly are useful to an organization.

The Sensing-Perceiving (SP) Manager

Unlike the SJ manager who sets up rules, regulations, and procedures, the SP manager excels at putting out fires. An SP manager has a good grasp of potential situations and is an excellent diplomat. The SP type is crisis oriented and makes decisions based on expediency; neither regulations nor interpersonal relations are so sacred that they cannot be negotiated by an SP manager. An SP manager is concerned with getting the job done and is very reluctant to pay attention to theory or abstractions. Such a person often makes commitments that he or she has difficulty carrying out when something comes up that is more current or more pressing. An SP manager can be unpredictable and, when not troubleshooting, can resist changes that are imposed by someone else. However, such a person adapts well when a situation changes, always seeming to be one step ahead. He or she is very practical and often sees breakdowns before they occur. Beginning or struggling organizations are ideally suited to the SP manager.

The Intuitive-Thinking (NT) Manager

An NT manager is the true architect of change, questioning everything and basing answers on proven laws and principles. Although he or she is not good at managing maintenance or consolidation projects, an intuitive-thinking manager excels at and takes pride in technical knowledge. An NT manager avoids crisis at all costs because everything must make sense to him or her. The NT manager may delegate the execution of organizational plans but afterward rarely feels that these plans were carried out satisfactorily. Such a person often has difficulty with interpersonal transactions because of his or her impatience and reluctance to show appreciation. A need to escalate standards continually results in the NT manager's feeling restless and unfulfilled. An NT manager sees the long- and short-term implications of a decision, can recognize the power base and the structure of an organization, and can make decisions based on impersonal choices. More than any other type, an intuitive thinker seems to have the vision to see all dimensions of a system, making him or her a very capable planner and constructor.

The Intuitive-Feeling (NF) Manager

A manager who is an intuitive feeler is probably inclined toward personnel management. He or she is committed to the personal progress of the staff, to seeing possibilities for others' growth, and to helping others to develop their potentials. An NF manager is democratic and encourages participation; in fact, he or she often is overly concerned with the staff's personal problems. Interpersonal relationships often drain the time and energy that an NF manager needs for his or her personal and professional life. However, an NF manager's ability to show appreciation can encourage staff; verbal fluency and enthusiasm make him or her an excellent spokesperson for an organization. An NF manager is often a good judge of the organizational climate; he or she shows great patience, despite a tendency to opt for stopgap solutions. Such a person can find himself

or herself in conflict if the qualities of subordinates do not match the tasks required by the manager's superiors. In such situations, an NF manager can become frustrated at not being able to please all of the people all of the time; often, however, he or she learns to turn liabilities into assets.

PERSONALITY TYPOLOGY IN THE WORKPLACE

Personality typology can be used to classify a person's behavioral type in very general terms. Despite significant differences within each type, recognizable similarities are apparent. The purpose of studying types is not to judge others or to change their behavior, but rather to understand and to appreciate why people respond differently to the same stimuli. No preference is right or wrong; each has its own strengths and weaknesses. Effective decision making in the workplace can hinge on exploiting the strengths and minimizing the weaknesses of each type. For example, on a team project, an S (sensor) will note essential details and apply practicality. However, an N (intuitive) will exercise ingenuity, see the possibilities, and give a clear vision of the future. In addition, a T (thinker) will provide incisive analyses, and an F (feeler) will supply the necessary interpersonal skills. Together all four will be effective in bringing the project to fruition.

Being typed, therefore, should not limit people but rather uncover their possibilities. Living or working with a person of the opposite type can generate friction, but understanding may help opposites to accept and to take advantage of each other's differences.

Case Study 1: Extraverted Feeler and Introverted Thinker

The following example illustrates how a manager and an employee used personality typology to resolve a conflict. The manager, Helen, showed a strong preference for extraversion and feeling; in contrast, the employee, Marie, tended toward introversion and thinking. When Helen would ask Marie how she felt about issues they had been discussing, Marie never expressed an opinion. Later, however, Marie would complain or express disagreement about the same issues to Helen or to another staff member. Once she understood the concept of personality types, Helen learned that the best way to encourage Marie's feedback in a positive manner was to ask Marie to consider the situation and to express her opinions within a few hours or days. This approach gave Marie the time she needed to sort through her ideas and to substantiate her viewpoint. Meanwhile, through typing, Marie began to understand Helen's need to verbalize and to monitor the environment around her.

Case Study 2: Training Extraverts and Introverts

In creating a training environment, an HRD professional must be aware that extraverts and introverts learn differently. For an extravert, concepts must follow experience; in other words, extraverts learn by example or trial and error. In contrast, an introvert

wants to learn the theory or the concepts behind a lesson before trying to put them into practice.

For example, a trainer who teaches conflict-management skills to introverts might first familiarize them with theories of conflict and encourage them to read on the subject; then the trainer could conduct activities that involve group processes. A trainer teaching conflict-management skills to extraverts might need the opposite approach: Group experience would precede any written text or theory because extraverts learn best by trial and error and tend to have shorter attention spans.

The same consideration of E/I preference holds true for the working environment. Extraverts may experience a distracting loneliness when not in contact with people. They usually do not mind noise around the workplace, and some may even need noise (such as music) in order to work. The introvert, however, is more territorial. He or she may desire a defined space and may show a true need for privacy in the physical environment. Understanding and accommodating these needs and differences will foster the highest-possible productivity.

Case Study 3: A Perceiver and a Judger

Veronica, a perceiver, and Wayne, a judger, worked together on a project. Each time they met for strategic planning sessions, Wayne felt that nothing of value had been accomplished. However, Veronica felt satisfied that the sessions had unveiled many possibilities—but she also sensed Wayne’s discomfort. Because they were aware of their differences on the J/P scale, they resolved the conflict by establishing a clearly defined agenda and setting strict time limits for each meeting; this satisfied the judger’s needs. To satisfy the perceiver’s needs, they agreed to explore as many areas as possible on a given topic and to reopen the topic at the next session to make sure that all of the issues had been explored.

Case Study 4: Hiring Decisions That Reflect S/N Preferences

The way a manager interviews potential staff members may reveal his or her own sensing/intuitive preference. A sensing manager will be inclined to rely on résumés and on proven experience, but an intuitive manager will be inclined to rely more on an actual interview and on the applicant’s potential. For example, an executive-employment agent who wanted to hire an HRD manager for a major bank said that he wanted someone who had already started an HRD department successfully, preferably for a bank in the same state. This specificity indicates the agent’s sensing mentality. When he was unable to fill the position according to his preference, he acceded to the bank’s request for someone with the creative potential to deal with new situations and enough understanding of the HRD function to be able to create new programs—a more intuitive approach.

Because a work team needs a mix of types, managers and HRD professionals must not let their own S/N preference govern hiring decisions. For example, consider the following two approaches to learning a new computer program: (1) reading the manual and following the instructions closely, and (2) plunging into the task and looking up

needed information only if it does not become obvious with use. Which approach is more successful? The answer depends on the learner. Sensors would rather use skills already learned, while intuitors prefer to develop new skills. To a sensing interviewer, an intuitor may appear to have his or her head in the clouds. Conversely, the intuitive interviewer may see the sensor as being too set in his or her ways and too materialistic. Both types have strengths and weaknesses, and both can be useful. Managers and HRD professionals who have good grasps of personality typing should be able to understand and work with both types, deploying them according to their strengths.

ACTION STEPS

The theories of personality typing that have been discussed in this article must be implemented with great care and flexibility. The following checklist provides some general guidelines for managers and HRD professionals who wish to use personality-type testing to select and assign staff members:

- Read about personality-type theories.
- Contact organizations that teach or use the theories.
- Assess the existing organizational climate to determine how the theories can best be used.
- Use the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) or a similar instrument to type members of the organization.
- Understand that a person's own personality type affects his or her perceptions of others.
- Help employees to understand type theory and encourage them to use this understanding to reduce conflicts.
- Consider type theory as one factor in selecting employees and in making assignments.
- Use typing to understand a person's potential and best work style, not to set limits.
- Stress that all personality types have strengths and orientations that can be invaluable to the organization.
- Use type theory to explain rather than to excuse.
- Celebrate differences.

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■ TRAINING FROM THE TRANSACTIONAL VIEW

Karen L. Rudick and William Frank Jones

Abstract: Trainers often view the training process, because of its one-to-many nature, as an action that one person takes toward others, not as a transaction between people. According to the action view, the trainer's role is to create a message and inject it into the listener's head. Although this is an "overly simplified view of communication, it is one that many people still accept" (Stewart & Logan, 1993, p. 39). However, a more effective and comprehensive view of the training event is the transactional view.

This article applies the *action*, *interactional*, and *transactional* views of the communication process to the training process and discusses the advantages of viewing training from a transactional model. It also presents the six components of the transactional model.

THE ACTION VIEW

Since Aristotle, scholars have viewed communication as something one does to an audience. A message is something that one transfers to the other (Gronbeck, McKerrow, Ehninger, & Monroe, 1994). Because early rhetoricians were concerned primarily with the training of orators, early communication theories stressed the role of the speaker (Berko, Wolvin, & Wolvin, 1992). This perspective of communication, commonly referred to as the action view, is analogous to the hypodermic needle. The sender inserts the medicinal message into the passive receiver. Recipients of the message are believed to be directly and heavily influenced by the sender.

In the early 1900s, this view was also referred to as the "magic-bullet theory" by mass-communications researchers (Sproule, 1989) or as "the conduit metaphor" (Reddy, 1979). Some of the first communication models, appearing around 1950, used this linear view of communication (Lasswell, 1948; Shannon & Weaver, 1949). It is still discussed in introductory communication textbooks (Berko, Wolvin, & Wolvin, 1992; Gronbeck et al., 1994), mostly for historical reasons and to provide a framework for later work (McQuail & Windahl, 1993).

Although most communication scholars today consider this view outdated, and educators recognize the importance of the receiver of the message, very little is done in educational curricula to reflect this realization. For example, many universities require a basic communication/public-speaking course but require no listening course. Also, the syntactical structure of the English language (subject-verb-object) promotes this view of communication (Fisher, 1980). As Fisher notes, we often describe communication as person A speaking to (persuading, informing) person B, or as the sender affecting a receiver.

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This speaker-centered view of communication suggests that messages are unidirectional, from speaker to listener, and that the listener has a minimal role in the process. It assumes that communication occurs when the message is received accurately. This assumption ignores the listener's role in providing feedback. If communication is ineffective or unsuccessful, blame usually is placed on the speaker, rarely on the listener. It is the speaker who is boring, speaks in a monotone, does not repeat instructions, or talks too fast.

It is assumed that if the speaker were to improve his or her sending skills, the problem would be solved. Therefore, a person is told to do something about his or her communicative behavior, e.g., add vocal variety, repeat, slow down. As Sereno and Bodaken (1975, p.7) point out, "all of these are strategies designed to reinforce a one-way notion of communication, and often they also reinforce the problem because the source is dissuaded from hearing the receiver sending." This one-way, linear view is incomplete and oversimplifies communication.

Many trainers still view communication as an action. For example, one may say things such as "It's hard to get that idea across to him," or "I made sure they understood me; I drew it on a piece of paper and repeated the directions twice," or "No wonder we don't get along; she doesn't communicate well," or "That professor bores me." Each of these comments makes it sound as if communication is an action (Stewart & Logan, 1993).

THE INTERACTIONAL VIEW

Because the action view fails to take into account all the variables in the communication process, some communication theorists have presented a more sophisticated perspective of communication: the *interactional* model. The interactional model not only recognizes the importance of the receiver and includes the concept of feedback, it also attempts to demonstrate a more dynamic nature of the communication process. Most often noted for the interactional model, Berlo (1960, p. 24) states, "We view events and relationships as dynamic, on-going, ever-changing, continuous . . . it [the communication process] does not have a beginning, an end, a fixed sequence of events . . . The ingredients within a process interact; each affects all the others."

Although Berlo originally intended this model to recognize the dynamic nature of communication, it does not meet these expectations. For example, Stewart and Logan (1993, p. 41) likened the interactional view to a table full of billiard balls. "One person makes an active choice to do something to affect another, passive person, who's [sic] direction gets changed by what the active person does. Then the person who was passive becomes active, and in turn affects either the first person (who's now passively waiting to be affected) or someone else . . . The process is all cause and effect, stimulus and response."

When applied to billiards, this way of thinking correctly assumes predictability of response. If you hit a ball in exactly the right spot, at exactly the right angle, with

exactly the right amount of force, the next ball will go where you wish. However, the predictability assumption is false when applied to human communication. No two people respond to the same message in the same way. Viewing communication as active then passive, or all cause and effect, distorts the process.

Also, emphasizing cause and effect tempts the person, as Stewart and Logan (1993, p. 42) state, “to focus on who’s at fault or who caused a problem to occur.” Given both sides and a fuller understanding of the context, it is very difficult to tell who “started it” or who is to blame. The complexities of human relationships do not allow for such a simplistic explanation. Moreover, fault finding and blaming make improving a situation almost impossible.

Another problem with viewing communication from the interactional view is the failure to see people as changing while they are communicating (Stewart & Logan, 1993). Neither humans nor environments are constant over time. “Moreover,” as Sameroff and Chandler (1975, p. 234) note, “these differences are interdependent and change as a function of the mutual influence on one another.” One cannot ignore this mutuality of influence or interdependence.

When viewing communication from the interactional perspective, a person is not only concerned with the “proper” preparation and delivery of messages, he or she is also listening for feedback to alter future messages—thus making the process less speaker-centered and more message-centered. A more equal emphasis on the “encoding” and “decoding” processes acknowledges the problems “in translating our thoughts into words or other symbols and in deciphering the words or symbols of others into terms we can understand” (Gronbeck et al., 1994, p. 501).

The billiard-ball view of communication also suggests a series of actions and reactions, “a process that is somewhat circular: sending and receiving, sending and receiving, and so on” (Berko, Wolvin, & Wolvin, 1992, p. 52). Each communicator is seen as either sending *or* receiving. The ability to simultaneously send *and* receive is not recognized (Sereno & Bodaken, 1975; Burgoon, 1978).

The interactional framework implies that the speaker can manipulate the message. In other words, if he or she chooses the “right” words, the communication problems will be solved. Unfortunately, communication is not that simple. Even if both parties select the “right” words and agree on their meanings, misunderstanding can still occur because each person brings different experiences to the communication event. As Gronbeck et al. (1994, p. 501) point out, “even when a message is completely clear and understandable, we often don’t like it. Problems in ‘meaning’ or ‘meaningfulness’ often aren’t a matter of comprehension but of reaction; of agreement; of shared concepts, beliefs, attitudes, values.”

THE TRANSACTIONAL VIEW

A more accurate view of the communication process takes into account the simultaneity of sending and receiving, mutual influence, and interdependence. It also takes into

account the many changes that occur while people communicate and how meaning is created between the participants. Recognizing this, many communication scholars have used the term “transaction” (Barnlund, 1970; DeVito, 1994; Kreps, 1990; Sereno & Bodaken, 1975; Stewart, 1986; Verderber, 1993; Watzlawick, 1978; Watzlawick, Beavin, & Jackson, 1967; Wilmot, 1987).

According to Prizant and Wetherby (1990, p. 5), “in the transactional model, developmental outcomes at any point in time are seen as a result of the dynamic interrelationships” between the parties and the environment that may influence both parties. Viewing the training process as transactional allows the trainer to see several important factors that affect what is going on.

In the *transactional* framework, communication has numerous components. An understanding of all the components is needed to provide a basis for the design of training strategies. The remainder of this paper is devoted to describing the transactional nature of the communication process and to providing an understanding of the way trainers behave toward clients and vice versa. Major components of communication as a transaction—such as system, process, perception, meaning, fault/blame, and negotiation—are discussed.

COMPONENTS OF THE TRANSACTIONAL PROCESS

System

Rather than viewing communication as a message injected into a passive recipient or a billiard-ball, cause-and-effect model, proponents of the transactional model assert that a communication event is a system. A systemic view of communication acknowledges not just the importance, but the constant awareness, of key factors such as interdependence and environment.

The premise that individual behavior is a part of a system, rather than a characteristic of the individual, provides an expanded view of the training process. This expansion recognizes the influence of different levels of reciprocal effects. The trainee is seen as one system immersed in and inseparable from a “larger ecological framework of systems” (Simeonsson & Bailey, 1990, p. 430).

Holding this view of communication acknowledges that it is impossible to separate the client, the trainer, the setting, the community, and the organizations from which the trainee and the trainer come. These components do not act in isolation, but influence one another in a complex and reciprocal fashion. A change in one element of the communication event “may completely change the event” (Cronkhite, 1976, p. 53). All elements are interdependent, and one cannot be considered without considering the others. As Sereno and Bodaken (1975, p. 8) state, “to deal with any one element of communication—say merely to analyze the verbal message—to the exclusion of all the others falsifies the true picture of communication as a continuous interchange.”

To consider simultaneously these multivariables and their interdependence, one must keep in mind the constant “interplay between the organism and its environment” (Sameroff & Chandler, 1975, p. 234). What makes the transactional model so innovative and unique is its equal emphasis on the communicators and the environments (Sameroff & Fiese, 1990). The experiences provided by the environment are not viewed as independent of the communicators.

When trainers ignore the systemic and interdependent natures of human communication (such as the impact of a nonsupportive work environment on trainees), training is ineffective. For example, employees cannot be expected to report potential safety hazards if this information is received negatively by their supervisors. Usually, trainees are well aware of the organizational environment that they must reenter. However, if the trainer does not acknowledge this environment and make allowances for it in the training design, the message communicated to the trainee is ignored, and the trainee feels frustrated and considers the material irrelevant. The end results are that trainees do not learn or do not apply their learnings and trainers discredit themselves and the training program.

Something very similar happens when training is mandated and does not address the problems that exist in the workplace. Consider, for example, a sudden increase in accidents despite the presence of employees who are knowledgeable and enforce safety regulations effectively. The safety problems may result not from a lack of training but from other environmental factors that have a bearing on accidents—such as improperly maintained equipment or overtime hours that result in fatigue. The employees are fully aware of the reasons, yet are forced to receive additional safety training. If the trainer does not acknowledge the factors that are beyond the control of the trainee, both become frustrated, and the training process is ineffective.

The environment within which the training occurs also impacts effectiveness. Therefore, the issue of onsite versus offsite training is not a light decision. Onsite training can be especially effective when training involves new equipment. However, when training is located onsite, employees—especially managers—typically use their breaks to go to their offices and check mail, return phone calls, or take care of problems. The trainees are unable and/or unwilling to separate themselves psychologically from the workplace distractions, and the trainer who is unaware of environmental factors cannot facilitate the needed psychological distance. Offsite training can encourage new ways of relating to peers, subordinates, and other members of the team.

Thus, the trainer and trainee may be powerful determinants of perceived outcomes, but potential outcomes cannot be realized without considering the effects of the environment on the communicators. Further, the communicative process is a function of neither a single individual nor of the environment alone. Rather, the “outcomes are a product of the combination of an individual and his or her experience” (Sameroff & Fiese, 1990, p. 122).

Process

The second major component of the transactional model—and probably the least understood—is *process*. Unfortunately, many people believe process to be linear and describe it as “method,” “order,” or a “step-by-step” or “systematic” approach (Johnson & Proctor, 1992). However, process is not linear. It implies ever-changing, flowing, dynamic entities with no beginning and no end.

Two essential elements of process, *ongoingness* and *simultaneity*, are neither as easy to construct nor as simple as the linear and interactional models. Instead of the hypodermic-needle or billiard-ball analogy, a systemic view provides a new analogy for the study of communication: the living organism. The human body never remains constant. Neither does communication. Because of this inconstancy and the interdependent nature of communication, the roles of encoder and decoder are inseparable and interchangeable throughout the act of communication.

To increase effectiveness, trainers must monitor the impact of their interventions constantly, as well as adjust their interaction, especially when facilitating activities that generate much affect or emotional data. For example, when group feedback is focused on a group member’s behavior, the trainer must constantly monitor nonverbals to ensure that the person is not experiencing the feedback as a personal attack. Even while a trainer is encouraging feedback regarding a group member’s behavior, he or she must be sensitive to the receiver’s nonverbals (body language, skin tone, etc.) to ensure the psychological safety of the recipient.

The encoding and decoding of messages are not mutually exclusive. Communicators are both senders and receivers at the same time in the transaction. As Sereno and Bodaken (1975, p. 8) state, there are “no periods of passive receptivity on the part of any communicator At all times the participants are actively exchanging either verbal responses (words, sentences) or nonverbal responses (gestures, glances, shrugs or other cues of their reaction to the ongoing conversation).” The encoding and decoding processes occur simultaneously, continuously, and multidirectionally (Berko, Wolvin & Wolvin, 1992).

Perception

When using a theoretical model, one is forced to consciously simplify in graphic form a piece of reality (McQuail & Windahl, 1993). Models are merely static snapshots that capture separate pieces of a whole within moments of time, but never the whole. No one snapshot can capture all that is going on. This also is true of the communication event. No one view can capture all that has taken place; a person’s “view” can explain only what *that person* perceived.

As Sereno and Bodaken (1975, p. 14) state, “When we speak of communication as having ‘taken place’ or ‘occurred,’ we’re speaking figuratively of the arbitrary, fictional freezing of the process.” A perceptual process helps “freeze” the communication event and make sense of the surrounding world.

Perception, the third component of the transactional model, is an active, subjective, continuous, sense-making process. Because people are continuously interpreting the world, they sometimes overlook the active and subjective natures of perception. The active nature of perception implies choice, and the subjective implies the personal, one's own. People have choices about how they interpret the world, and this sense-making process of the present is accomplished through their past experiences, which are entirely their own.

For example, when a trainer notices that someone is glancing at a clock or watch, he or she may interpret this act as boredom or simply an interest in the time—depending on the trainer's past experience. When someone suddenly leaves the meeting room, the trainer can interpret it as a serious incident or merely as an urgent need for a cigarette. Trainers who are aware of the complexity of the perception process and who constantly monitor trainees will increase the accuracy of their interpretations.

The interpretations that people choose are affected by their past experiences and relationships. As Gronbeck et al. (1994, pp. 502-503) point out, communicators “will comprehend and understand each other to the degree” of similarity between their prior experiences. If a person does not understand the prior experiences being applied to a conversation, meaning is altered.

For example, one of the authors is hearing impaired and must stay focused and concentrate when being spoken to. She explains this to the trainees in her introductory remarks in order to eliminate some perceptions of being harsh or too intense. She tells trainees that people have said that in the training environment she is totally different from the person she seems to be in her office. She further explains that in her office she does not have to concentrate as hard to hear, because she has only one person to focus on, compared to twenty people in the training room. Knowing her prior experience (hearing impairment), trainees are able to interpret her behavior within a context.

No one person's reality is *the* reality. The subjective nature of perception can be illustrated in a variety of ways. One's perception of others is influenced, for example, by one's emotional state at the time of the event (Forgas, 1991), the others' physical characteristics and attractiveness, and one's own gender (Zebrowitz, 1990), personality characteristics (Verderber, 1993), and self-perceptions (Zalkind & Costello, 1962). Self-perception and the perception of others significantly affect communication (Verderber, 1993). The more conscious that people are of the subjectivity of their interpretations, of the choices they have in this interpretation process, and of the fact that no two people will interpret the same event in the same way, the better communicators they will become (Stewart & Logan, 1993).

Perception is one reason that trainers need to use humor very carefully. Someone could be offended by a seemingly harmless joke. It is also important to protect trainees' perceptions of one another. For example, in an active-listening activity that assigns a controversial subject to the speaker, the speaker's position may be different from the one held by the listener, who is trying to practice listening skills. If the listener feels very strongly about the topic, he or she may interpret the views as the speaker's own and

form negative and adverse feelings about the speaker. The trainer with a transactional view of communication would realize the importance of perception and disengage the speaker from ownership of the views expressed. The trainer could say, "When talking about a controversial subject, you may argue for or against it. You do not have to believe the position you are taking."

Created Meaning

Acknowledgment that no two people interpret anything in the same way implies that the same message has different meanings for different people (DeVito, 1994). The transactional view not only recognizes that the same word has different meanings to different people, it also recognizes a fourth component: *meaning* that is created collaboratively between communicators (Stewart & Logan, 1993).

Whereas the action view is speaker-centered and the interactional view is message-centered, the transactional view recognizes the need for "a meaning-centered theory" (Gronbeck et al., 1994, p. 502). An action or interactional view assumes that a message has one meaning, held by the speaker, to be reproduced in the listener. The transactional view, however, acknowledges a "productive rather than a reproductive approach to understanding" (Broome, 1991, p. 240). The trainer and trainee are active participants in the construction and negotiation of meanings. From a transactional perspective, the meaning of the content is created in the interaction between people and the context within which the communication occurs.

The following illustration comes from a training-in-residence event that involved twenty trainees. A small space in a large room was marked off with tape. Two trainees at a time were asked to enter the room, and each was asked to visualize his or her ideal space within the marked-off area. The ideal spaces the trainees visualized were very different from one another and usually were based on the individuals' needs and desires.

Later, all the trainees were brought into the same marked-off area and were asked to build a community out of the different spaces created in their imaginations. They soon revealed that their projected desires and needs had different meanings and were in conflict with one another. While one person had visualized a tent in the woods, another had visualized an ocean, another a waterfall, and another an office in the city.

The next few days were spent working out these differences, processing the event, and highlighting what could be learned from it. After the group finished this intense, affective work, the room had taken on all kinds of affective meaning for the participants. The trainers could not ignore this phenomenon and moved the remaining training events to a different room.

This example demonstrates the importance of being aware of the created-meaning component of the transactional model and also illustrates many of the other components previously discussed, such as environment, interdependence, process, and perception. An environment takes on different meanings to the trainees as they go through their training, and this creation of meaning is ever changing. We cannot separate these components from one another, because they are interrelated.

Also, it is important to consider the *potential* meaning of a space, the *different* meanings of that space for the trainees, and the space's *ever-changing* meaning, which is created between the communicators. A trainer must not be fooled into thinking that he or she can look at something as a discrete piece, separated from the larger environment. Space and time take on meaning. Training brings out all kinds of affective and cognitive meanings associated with the past, brought to the present, and projected into the future. A transactional perspective helps the trainer to become aware of these dynamic forces involved in a training event.

No Fault or Blame

If the creation of meaning is shared by communicators, the responsibility for this creation is also shared. This sharing leads to the fifth component in the transactional model: *no fault* and *no blame*. When communicators are mutually responsible, the notion of blame is eliminated (Verderber, 1993). This does not mean that no one is responsible, but, rather, the term "responsibility" is redefined to mean "response-able" or "able to respond" (Stewart & Logan, 1993). If people are not responsive, they are not considering how their behavior is affecting others. They are not conscious of how their "choices are part of a larger whole" (Stewart & Logan, 1993, p. 51).

The trainer must create a community of learners with training structures that support everyone's sharing the responsibility for learning. One way is to assign a learning monitor whose role is to focus on how effectively the group is learning. The role of the other participants is to provide feedback to the monitor. If there are questions or concerns, the monitor may function as a liaison between the trainer and trainees. Learning monitors take the responsibility of voicing trainees' concerns and providing the trainer with input about trainees' needs and how effectively those needs are being met.

Another way to enact this element of no fault or blame is to ask participants at the beginning of the training event what they want to accomplish from the training event. Hearing these expectations makes the trainees aware of mutual responsibility in the learning process. However, their needs may change; therefore, the "want" list should reflect those changes throughout the event. The trainees must be given the responsibility for providing feedback on how effectively their needs are being addressed.

The transactional view requires a conscious and continuous attempt by the trainer to change the way he or she thinks about communication. This is not easy. It is human nature to want to point the finger at someone else when shared meaning is not successfully created. However, one of the major benefits of a trainer's attempt to view communication from a transactional view is a more complete and less simplistic explanation of communication. The trainer also will enhance his or her probability to improve communication.

Negotiation of Selves

Using the term “transactional” to describe human communication implies “that each person is changing, being defined and redefined in relation to the other persons involved” (Stewart & Logan, 1993, p. 45). This process of constructing and responding to definitions of oneself and others is the sixth component of the transactional model, the *negotiation-of-selves* process (Stewart & Logan, 1993). Research shows that people who are more aware of this negotiation-of-selves process are perceived as more effective communicators (Applegate & Delia, 1980; Burleson, 1987; O’Keefe & McCornack, 1987).

This process acknowledges several factors, including the importance of feedback, simultaneity of sending and receiving, and interdependence. First, feedback is paramount. If definitions of selves and others are negotiated and created between communicators, shared meaning is not necessarily created. Meaning is shared through feedback. The more one recognizes that sending and receiving processes are simultaneous and cannot be separated, the more he or she will recognize that feedback is continuous and ongoing.

The trainer who views communication from the transactional model will pay attention to the continuous flow of feedback from and to trainees and not wait until the end of the training event for an evaluation. Nor will the trainer wait until the actual training event begins to seek input about the client and client system. To determine the appropriateness of the content, the client must be involved as much as is practical in the analysis of the problems and the design of the training solution.

Definitions of self and others are not determined by one person but are interdependent. Interdependence means that one communicator may affect the other, but no one individual controls or determines the other. In other words, what I do may affect you and what you do may affect me, but neither of us determines the outcome (Stewart & Logan, 1993).

From the beginning of the training event, a trainer needs to make clear to the trainees how he or she will function; for example, what the trainer’s role is and what kind of self the trainer will project. The trainer’s role is not that of a lecturer. The trainer should tell the participants that he or she will not just present information, that an active learning approach will be used, and that the trainee’s role is necessary to make this approach successful.

Defining the roles expected of the trainees is also important. One way to help them to start thinking about their roles is to ask, “What are the worst and the best things that could happen, and what can you do to encourage the best?” Responses will give the trainees some insight into what kind of “selves” they are going to be during the training event and will reinforce the idea of shared responsibility.

As a person goes through training, he or she is continually negotiating who the trainer is, who the trainees are, and who each is for the other. So everything the trainer can do to facilitate the negotiation process is important. When a trainer asks a trainee to role play something in new ways, he or she is asking that person to be a new self. The

trainer must give that person sufficient feedback about how to fine tune the role or self he or she is assuming.

The trainer also should redefine his or her own role so that it is appropriate to the task that is assigned. For example, if a trainer facilitates a group activity in which trainees assume the roles of practicing professionals in occupational therapy (O.T.), the trainer may need to interact with the trainees while they are still in role. This interaction could cause the trainees to shift in and out of the assigned roles.

To avoid this problem, trainers can redefine the facilitative role in a way appropriate to the roles assigned trainees. In the present example, a trainer could say, "My role in this activity is to be your O.T. consultant. If you have a problem in working with your O.T. client and don't know what to do, you may call on me to give you some input." Assuming the role of consultant to the activity assists the participants in maintaining the roles essential to their learning.

Giving trainees positive feedback about the new roles they are about to assume is helpful. Statements like "You are really effective when you're an active listener" are positive reinforcements to help them maintain the newly negotiated selves that they have discovered during the training event. Support during the training event will help them to continue their new roles when they return to their work environments.

CONCLUSION

The transactional communication model has been applied to a variety of training situations, such as gerontology (Litterst & Ross, 1982), intercultural communication (Broome, 1991), child care (Prizant & Wetherby, 1990), and child development (Sameroff, 1975). This model is not limited by any area of training expertise, and the possibilities of application are limitless.

The transactional view requires that a more integrated perspective of multiple variables be considered, including system, process, perception, meaning, no fault or blame, and negotiation of selves. This approach recognizes that focusing only on isolated aspects of training without considering the interrelationships among and between these different variables may be of limited value and may not be true to the realities of the training. This view also requires consideration of the complex interdependencies among trainers, trainees, and organizational and situational contexts.

When the transactional model is applied to training, it helps us to see the complexity of factors in successful training. The more we take these factors into consideration, the more likely we are to be successful in our training endeavors.

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■ OPENNESS, COLLUSION, AND FEEDBACK

J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones

“Tell it like it is” is a saying that is popular today. It is based on the assumption that complete honesty is a preferred human condition; but it might better be stated as “Don’t tell it like it isn’t.” Leveling, or responding with absolute openness, is sometimes inappropriate and harmful. What is to be avoided is deceiving other people. This article focuses on problems of openness as they are experienced in human communication. The intent is to suggest a way for genuine communication to take place while preventing systems from being blown apart by insensitivity.

THE OPEN-CLOSED CONTINUUM

Openness

Each of us is a part of a number of interpersonal systems. There are interlocking networks of people in our families, our work staffs, our social circles, and so on; and these systems are maintained in part by commonly held expectations about appropriate behavior. Each of the systems within which we interact with other people can be made tense or even destroyed by too much openness. Unrestricted, untethered “truth” can create high levels of anxiety and can cause people in a system to become less able to accomplish their goals. Stream of consciousness is a valid literary technique, but it can be highly dysfunctional in interpersonal relationships.

An example of *inappropriate openness* is depicted in the movie *Bob & Carol & Ted & Alice*. Bob and Carol have just become reinvolved in their relationship during a weekend growth-center experience, and they are having dinner at a restaurant with Ted and Alice. Carol pours out her feelings in such a way as to embarrass Ted and Alice. She confronts the waiter with information about her feelings and then follows him to the kitchen, where she apologizes to him in front of his coworkers, thereby increasing his embarrassment. She is displaying insensitive sensitivity; that is, she is aware of herself but oblivious of the impact she is having on others. We label this phenomenon of being more expressive of oneself than the situation will tolerate as “Carolesque” openness. A person who displays Carolesque behavior is highly aware of his or her own feelings to the exclusion of any awareness of the impact of his or her behavior on others.

Destructive openness can result from the placement of an inordinate value on “telling it like it is,” from insensitivity to the recipients of the communication, or from a desire to be punitive. If the effect of open selfdisclosure is to make another person

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defensive or highly anxious, there is a high potential for destructiveness. If the open communication is markedly judgmental of others, the chance that it will be harmful is increased. For example, a husband and wife may be out for the evening; during the course of the conversation, she asks how he likes the new dress she is wearing. His honest reaction may be highly negative; however, if he is frank, it will be a “brutal frankness.” Not only will she be hurt over his rejection of her choice of attire; but she will experience great frustration in that the situation is not modifiable, as it is too late for her to change to another outfit. Total openness could only ruin the evening for both of them. The husband need not be “dishonest” if he describes the dress in words that do not convey a message of feelings, such as “striking” or “different,” and chooses to deal with his negative reaction to the dress at a more appropriate time. He has not told it “like it is,” but neither has he told it “like it isn’t.”

A number of motives may be served by sharing one’s feelings and ideas with others. One’s intent may be to help, to impress, to seduce, to punish, to exploit, or to achieve catharsis. The reasons behind the sharing, as well as its effects on the listener(s), determine the ethicalness of self-disclosure. Openness *qua* openness is not justifiable except in a human context in which readiness and willingness for honest interchange have been assessed. Choosing what to share in interaction with another person or system is purposive behavior. Therefore, openness can be helpful or harmful, effective or ineffective, appropriate or inappropriate, depending on one’s motives, on one’s ability to be sensitive to the probable effects of the sharing, and on the readiness of the recipient(s) of the data. It may be hypothesized that people’s capacities for openness with themselves regarding their motives for open communication define limits on their ability to be sensitive to the needs of individual situations. If people deceive themselves about their own aims, they can probably also distort the cues they get from others in the system. On the other hand, when people are conscious of having hidden agendas, their communication is not likely to be genuine in that they may suppress many of their reactions.

We have labeled the concept of ethical authenticity, which promotes growth in a system, as *strategic openness*. Strategic openness means determining how much open data flow the system can stand and then giving it about a ten-percent boost—enough to stretch it but not to shatter it. This risk taking is an attempt to open up the system by mild pushing and is far more effective than attempting to force it into whatever recognition of conditions or sets of values the initiator of the openness had in mind. Strategically open behavior underlies attempts at seduction, but the intent can be either benevolent or malevolent. Being strategically open implies a responsibility to check out the system carefully, being alert to cues that say to go on and to cues that say to stop.

Collusion

Collusion is characterized by an unwillingness to take risks and an unwillingness to check out assumptions about the expectations of others. It is confounded by being a contract of tacit and implicit terms. It drastically underestimates the ability of the system

(and the members of the system) to deal with openness. It is a state of being closed that is reinforced by default.

In the experience of organization development consultants, a fairly common assessment in the sensing (or diagnosing) period is that the key issue is the ineffectiveness of a manager.

In one such sensing phase, the common, independently issued complaint of six subordinates was “The problem with this organization is that Jack is a lousy manager—reactive, slow to make decisions, and frequently preoccupied with something other than the business at hand.” Jack revealed in an interview that he was “giving a great deal of thought to stepping down.” He continued, “With the kids grown, through college, and both living out on the West Coast there isn’t much to keep me interested in my work. My wife and I have enough money so that I really don’t need to work anymore; some days I just feel more like golfing or sitting around than I do going to the office.” At the next staff meeting Jack decided to broach the subject of retiring. Here is how the conversation progressed:

Jack: I’ve been thinking it over and what I think this division needs is a new chief, someone with more energy than I have . . .

Subordinates (in chorus): Oh no, Jack! We couldn’t get along without you.

What has taken place in this anecdote is an example of collusion—the opposite of being too open. When collusion is identified, for example, in the anecdote involving Jack, the unified response of the colluders is to deny the data or to attack the person who has exposed the collusion.

FUNCTIONALITY IN COMMUNICATION

It may be useful to consider openness as a nonlinear phenomenon. Too much and too little openness can both be dysfunctional in human systems. Figure 1 depicts the functional-dysfunctional aspects of openness. Closed communications (collusion) can be equally as dysfunctional as completely open expression (“Carolesque” behavior). Strategic openness functions to ameliorate the system rather than to destroy it or to hide its reality. People in a system that has an openness problem may vacillate between too much and too little sharing. A system that can tolerate high levels of honest interchange of feelings and ideas is characterized by trust and interpersonal sensitivity. As they interact, people are free to give, receive, and elicit feedback on the effects of their own and others’ behavior.

Feedback

Feedback is a method of sharing feelings directed toward another and is generally considered a phenomenon of encounter or T-groups; however, we are constantly engaged in feedback activity in our minds, whether or not the data are ever shared. Feedback sharing may be incorporated into our daily experience as a means of

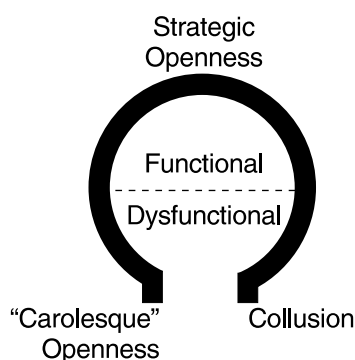


Figure 1. A Nonlinear Conceptualization of the Open-Closed Continuum in Interpersonal Relations

constructive openness, based on an intent to help. When openness is applied to feedback, some definite criteria can be established. Feedback is more constructive when it has the following characteristics:¹

- It is descriptive rather than evaluative.
- It is specific rather than general.
- It takes the needs of the system (two people, multiple people) into account.
- It focuses on modifiable behavior.
- It is elicited rather than imposed.
- It is well timed.
- It is validated with the recipient.
- It is validated with others.

Evaluative feedback induces defensive reactions and makes listening difficult. To be told that one is not O.K. often requires that one defend oneself. On the other hand, having the effects of one's behavior described leaves one the option of making one's own evaluation. Giving evaluative feedback is promoting one's own ideas of what behavior should be; it does not increase the freedom of the other person to decide for himself or herself.

General feedback is often not useful because the recipient is left to guess about what behavior might benefit from change. A message such as "You are pushy" is less effective in promoting learning than are messages that focus on definite, observable behaviors. "When you cut off Joe while he was talking, I felt irritated with you" is highly specific feedback that leaves the listener free to choose what he or she wants to do with it.

¹ Adapted from theory-session material contained in the NTL-IABS 1968 Summer Reading Book.

The third feedback criterion, taking needs into account, relates directly to the concept of strategic openness. Whose needs are being met at whose expense? The person who is contemplating being open about his or her reactions to another person needs to consider why it seems important to share those reactions. In order for the feedback to be constructive, the giver of that feedback needs to assess not only his or her own motives but also the readiness and willingness of the other person to receive the reaction.

Focusing on modifiable behavior increases the freedom of the recipient of feedback. To call attention to behaviors over which a person has little or no control, such as tics or other nervous mannerisms, simply leads to frustration.

Elicited feedback is more easily heard than is imposed feedback. The person who asks to be told what his or her impact is on others is probably more ready and willing to engage in high-level openness than is the person who feels attacked. Imposed feedback often elicits defensiveness and denial. When the recipient of the feedback has named the behavior on which feedback is desired, he or she is far more likely to listen.

The timing of feedback is critical. “Gunnysacking,” or withholding one’s reaction until later, is a common interpersonal phenomenon; sharing reactions about events in the past is less constructive than giving immediate feedback. To be told “Last week you upset me when you didn’t call” is less useful than to be confronted with that reaction relatively soon after the behavior has occurred.

The choice of whether and when to express the feelings that one experiences is not a single one. It is best made from data about the interpersonal situation in which emotion is generated and from the style that the person has in responding to his or her “inner life.” In a committee meeting, for example, one of the members becomes irritated at the parliamentary maneuverings of the chairperson. This member may not permit himself or herself to be conscious of the negative affect, and this would be what analysts call “repression.” The member may engage in suppression, or a conscious choice to focus awareness on something else besides his or her feelings. A third type of response would be to choose not to confront the chairperson but to maintain consciousness of the irritation. Finally, the member may confront the other person. Choosing not to confront can be a low-profile, avoidance style as well as a conscious attempt to be sensitive to others. Feedback can be considered timely, then, if it is given as soon as it is appropriate.

Validating feedback makes sense for two reasons. First, what is heard is very often not what is intended. Second, a given person’s reaction may not be shared by others. Feedback should be at least a two-way process. The recipient of the feedback needs to determine the range of reactions caused in others by his or her behavior.

To be open in giving feedback to another person or to a group, then, is neither effective nor ineffective except as the communication is based on sensitivity to self and to others. It is not inauthentic to be careful in giving feedback, but downplaying one’s reaction can carry the message that the recipient is incapable of hearing feedback. If the

intent is to enlarge the freedom of the feedback recipient, the message should increase options.

Ideally, openness should be both strategic and constructive. It should enlarge the range of the recipient's options without shutting him or her down emotionally. It requires demanding self-appraisal of motives on the part of the person who chooses to be open because he or she must assume responsibility for that openness as well as for imposing the results of his or her behavior on another. A person's openness must be dealt with, in some fashion, by those with whom he or she has chosen to share feelings and ideas or to give feedback. Therefore, openness should never exceed the system expectations to the extent of reinforcing closed behavior in others; rather, it should become a growth experience for both the open person and the system with which he or she is interacting.

IMPLICATIONS

The group facilitator needs to be aware of both the problems and possibilities with regard to openness, collusion, and feedback. A number of these implications are suggested by the points of view expressed in this article. Feedback criteria can be taught rather easily in small group meetings either experientially or didactically. Building and maintaining the norms implied in these "standards" can result in constructive openness and trust.

The facilitator should be careful in surfacing evidence of collusion in a human system. He needs to find a nonthreatening way of helping the colluders to "own" and to deal with their complicity. It is equally dangerous to generate or focus on more data than the system can process. One example of generating too much data would be calling attention to the feelings of task-group members who have not voluntarily committed themselves to studying their interpersonal process. Another example is a facilitator who "models" openness in the initial session of a growth group but expresses so much feeling that participants become unduly anxious. Hypotheses about a system's readiness for increased openness need to be tested. The facilitator should be wary of a tendency to project his or her own position onto others or to be party to the collusion that may exist in the system. The facilitator needs to check out his or her assumptions about the client system and to find out the assumptions that people in the system are making about him or her.

Openness and trust grow in a nurturing environment; they cannot be expected to be engendered instantaneously. The level of openness in growth-group meetings usually cannot automatically be reproduced in "back-home" settings. The facilitator needs to negotiate (and renegotiate) the level of openness that is to be expected in his or her relations with others.

■ THE JOHARI WINDOW: A MODEL FOR ELICITING AND GIVING FEEDBACK

Philip G. Hanson

The process of giving and receiving feedback is one of the most important concepts in laboratory training. It is through feedback that we implement the poet's words, "to see ourselves as others see us." It is also through feedback that other people know how we see them. Feedback is a verbal or nonverbal communication to a person (or a group) that provides that person with information as to how his or her behavior is affecting you or the state of your here-and-now feelings and perceptions (giving feedback). Feedback is also a reaction on the part of others, usually in terms of their feelings and perceptions, as to how your behavior is affecting them (receiving feedback). The term was originally borrowed from electrical engineering by Kurt Lewin, one of the founders of laboratory training. In the field of rocketry, for example, each rocket has a built-in apparatus that sends messages to a steering mechanism on the ground. When the rocket is off target, these messages come back to the steering mechanism, which makes adjustments and puts the rocket back on target again. In laboratory training, the group acts as a steering or corrective mechanism for individual members who, through the process of feedback, can be kept on target in terms of their own learning goals.

The process of giving and receiving feedback can be illustrated through a model called the Johari Window (see Figure 1). The window was originally developed by two psychologists, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, for their program in group process. The model can be looked on as a communication window through which you give information about yourself to others and receive information about yourself from them.

Looking at the four panes in terms of vertical columns and horizontal rows, the two columns represent the self and the two rows represent the *group*. Column one contains "things that I know about myself"; column two contains "things that I do not know about myself." Row one contains "things that the group knows about me"; row two contains "things that the group does not know about me." The information contained in these rows and columns is not static but moves from one pane to another as the level of mutual trust and the exchange of feedback vary in the group. As a consequence of this movement, the size and shape of the panes within the window will vary.

The first pane, called the "arena," contains things that I know about myself and about which the group knows. It is an area characterized by free and open exchange of information between me and others. The behavior here is public and available to everyone. The arena increases in size as the level of trust increases between people or

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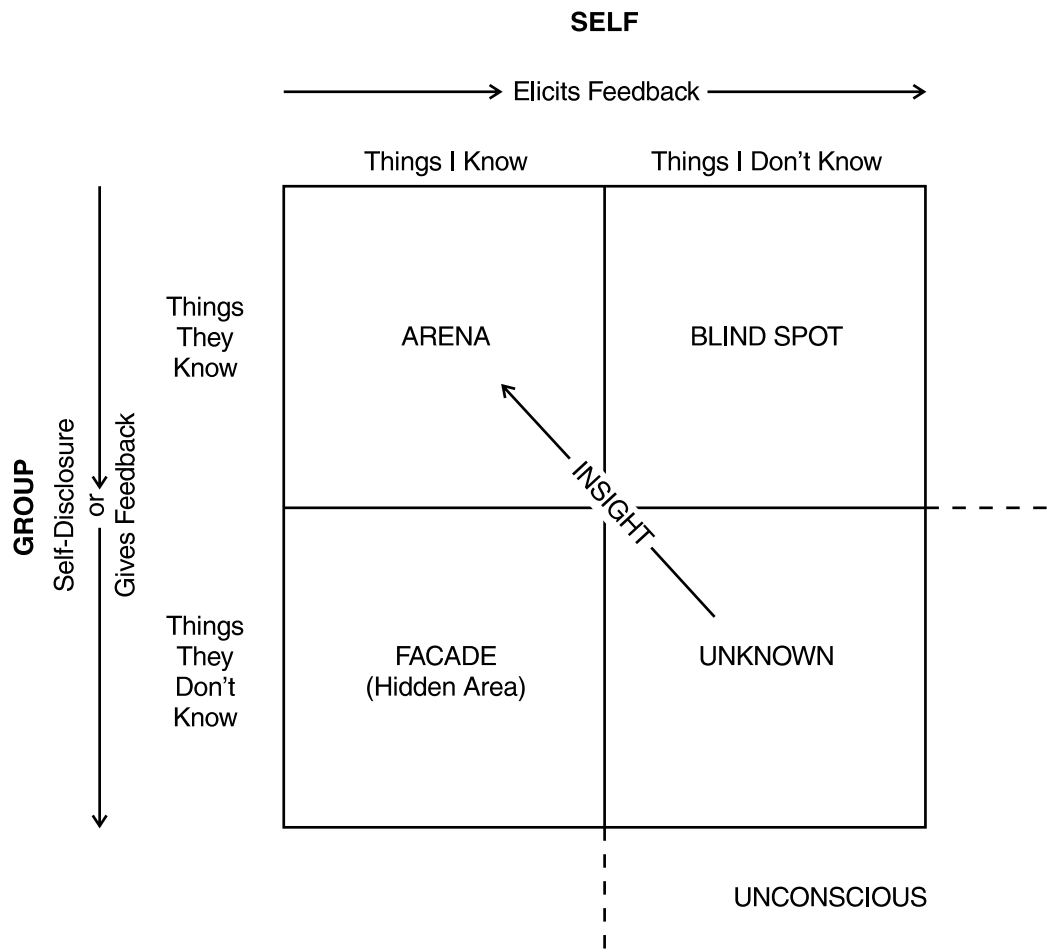


Figure 1. The Johari Window¹

between a person and his or her group and, therefore, as more information—particularly personally relevant information—is shared.

The second pane, the “blind spot,” contains information that I do not know about myself but about which the group may know. As I begin to participate in the group, I communicate all kinds of information of which I am not aware, but that is being picked up by other people. This information may be in the form of verbal cues, mannerisms, the way I say things, or the style in which I relate to others. The extent to which we are insensitive to much of our own behavior and what it may communicate to others can be quite surprising and disconcerting. For example, a group member once told me that every time I was asked to comment on some personal or group issue, I coughed before I answered.

In pane three are things that I know about myself but of which the group is unaware. For one reason or another I keep this information hidden from them. My fear

¹ The copyright for the Johari Window is held by Joseph Luft. Requests to reprint it should be addressed to Mayfield Publishing Company, 1240 Villa Street, Mountain View, CA 94041. Used with permission.

may be that if the group knew of my feelings, perceptions, and opinions about the group or individual members of the group, they might reject, attack, or hurt me in some way. As a consequence, I withhold this information. This pane is called the “facade” or “hidden area.” One of the reasons I may keep this information to myself is that I do not see the supportive elements in the group. My assumption is that if I start revealing my feelings, thoughts, and reactions, group members might judge me negatively. I cannot find out, however, how members will really react unless I test these assumptions and reveal something of myself. In other words, if I do not take some risks, I will never learn the reality or unreality of my assumptions. On the other hand, I may keep certain kinds of information to myself when my motives for doing so are to control or manipulate others.

The last pane contains things that neither I nor the group knows about me. Some of this material may be so far below the surface that I may never become aware of it. Other material, however, may be below the surface of awareness to both me and the group but can be made public through an exchange of feedback. This area is called the “unknown” and may represent such things as intrapersonal dynamics, early childhood memories, latent potentialities, and unrecognized resources. As the internal boundaries can move backward and forward or up and down as a consequence of eliciting or giving feedback, it would be possible to have a window in which there would be no unknown. As knowing *all* about oneself is extremely unlikely, the unknown in the model illustrated is extended so that part of it will always remain unknown. If you are inclined to think in Freudian terms, you can call this extension the “unconscious.”

One goal we may set is to decrease our blind spots, that is, move the vertical line to the right. How can I reduce my blind spot? As this area contains information that the group members know about me but of which I am unaware, the only way I can increase my awareness of this material is to get feedback from the group. As a consequence, I need to develop a receptive attitude to encourage group members to give me feedback. I need to actively elicit feedback from group members in such a way that they will feel comfortable in giving it to me. The more I do this, the more the vertical line will move to the right. See Figure 2.

Another goal we may set for ourselves, in terms of our model, is to reduce our facade, that is, move the horizontal line down. How can I reduce my facade? As this area contains information that I have been keeping from the group, I can reduce my facade by giving feedback to the group or group members concerning my reactions to what is going on in the group and inside me. In this instance, I am giving feedback or disclosing myself in terms of my perceptions, feelings, and opinions about things in myself and in others. Through this process the group knows where I stand and does not need to guess about or interpret what my behavior means. The more selfdisclosure and feedback I give, the farther down I push the horizontal line. See Figure 3.

You will notice that while we are reducing our blind spots and facades through the process of giving and eliciting feedback, we are, at the same time, increasing the size of our arena or public area.

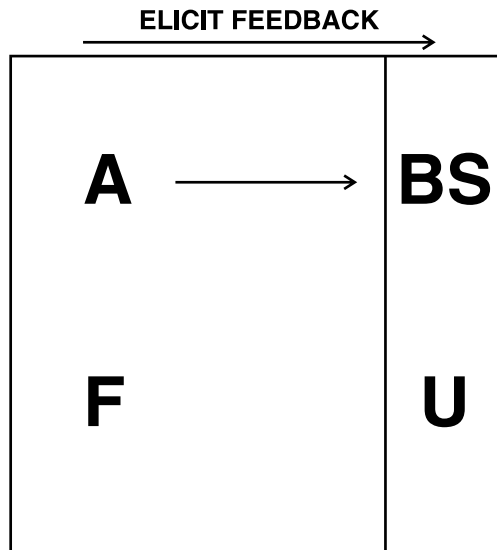


Figure 2. Reducing Blind Spots

In the process of giving and asking for feedback, some people tend to do much more of one than the other, thereby creating an imbalance of these two behaviors. This imbalance may have consequences in terms of the person's effectiveness in the group and group members' reactions to him or her. The *size* and *shape* of the *arena*, therefore, is a function of both the amount of feedback shared and the ratio of giving versus eliciting feedback. In order to give you some idea of how to interpret windows, I would like to describe four different shapes that characterize an ideal window and three extreme ratios in terms of eliciting and giving feedback. These descriptions will give you some idea of how people, characterized by these windows, might appear to others in a group setting. See Figure 4.

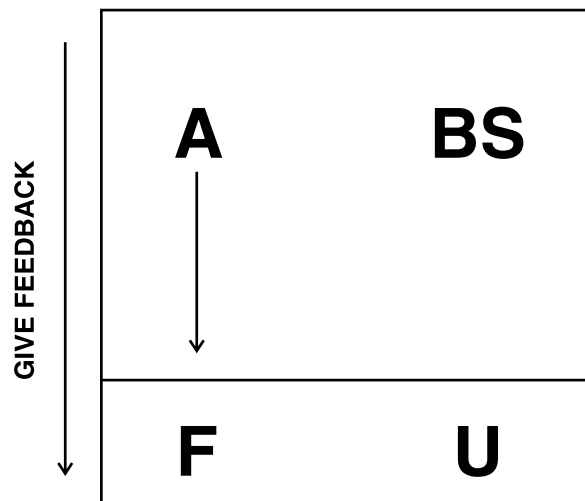


Figure 3. Reducing the Facade

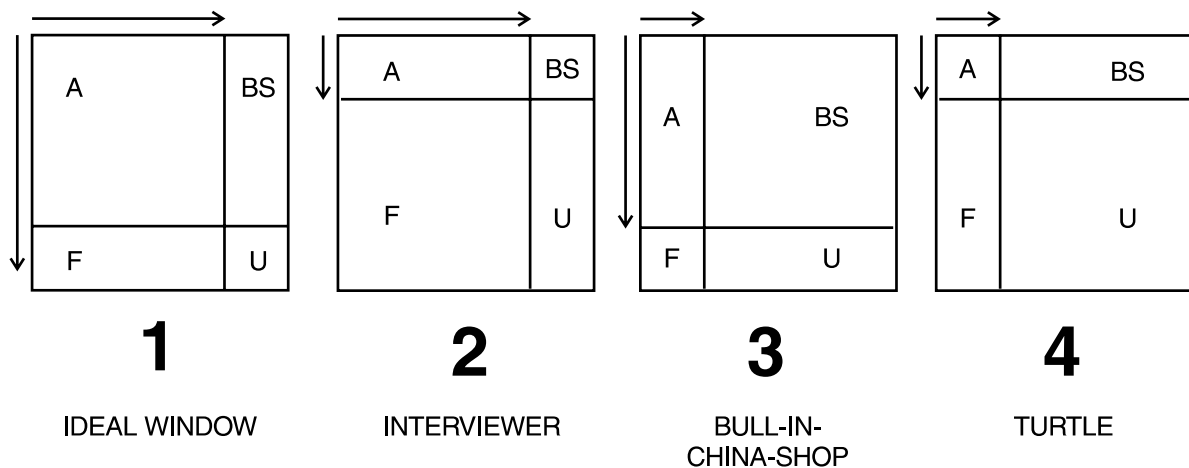


Figure 4. Ideal Window and Extreme Ratios

Window number 1 is an “ideal window” in a group situation or in any other relationship that is significant to the person. The size of the arena increases as the level of trust in the group increases, and the norms that have been developed for giving and receiving feedback facilitate this kind of exchange. The large arena suggests that much of the person’s behavior is aboveboard and open to other group members. As a consequence, there is less tendency for other members to interpret (or misinterpret) or project more personal meanings into the person’s behavior. Very little guesswork is needed to understand what the person is trying to do or communicate when his or her interactions are open both in terms of eliciting and giving feedback. It is not necessary, however, to have a large arena with everyone. The people with whom you have casual acquaintances may see this kind of openness as threatening or inappropriate. It is important to note, however, in your group or with some of your more significant relationships, that when most of your feelings, perceptions, and opinions are public, neither person has to engage in game behavior.

The large facade in window 2 suggests a person whose characteristic participation style is to ask questions of the group but not to give information or feedback. Thus, the size of the facade is inversely related to the amount of information or feedback flowing from the individual. He or she responds to the group norm to maintain a reasonable level of participation, however, by eliciting information. Many of his or her interventions are in the form of questions such as these: “What do you think about this?” “How would you have acted if you were in my shoes?” “How do you feel about what I just said?” “What is your opinion about the group?” The person wants to know where other people stand before committing himself or herself. You will notice that his or her “eliciting feedback” arrow is long, whereas the “giving feedback” arrow is short. As this person does not commit himself or herself in the group, it is hard to know where the person stands on issues. At some point in the group’s history, other members may confront him or her with a statement similar to “Hey, you are always asking me how I feel about

what's going on, but you never tell me how you feel." This style, characterized as the "Interviewer," may eventually evoke reactions of irritation, distrust, and withholding.

Window number 3 has a large blind spot. This person maintains his or her level of interaction primarily by giving feedback but eliciting very little. The person's participation style is to tell the group what he or she thinks of them, how he or she feels about what is going on in the group, and where he or she stands on group issues. Sometimes the person may lash out at group members or criticize the group as a whole, believing that he or she is being open and aboveboard. For one reason or other, however, the person either does not hear or appears to be insensitive to the feedback given to him or her. The person either may be a poor listener or may respond to feedback in such a way that group members are reluctant to continue to give him or her feedback; for example, he or she may become angry, cry, threaten to leave. As a consequence, the person does not know how he or she is coming across to other people or what his or her impact is on them. Because the person does not appear to utilize the corrective function (reality) of group feedback, many of his or her reactions or self-disclosures appear out of touch, evasive, or distorted. The result of this one-way communication (from him or her to others) is that the person persists in behaving ineffectively. As the person is insensitive to the steering function of the group, he or she does not know what behaviors to change. The person's "eliciting feedback" arrow is very short, while his or her "giving feedback" arrow is long. This style of interaction comes across as a "bull-in-a-china-shop."

Window number 4, having the large unknown, represents the person who does not know much about himself or herself, nor does the group know much about him or her. This person may be the silent member or the "observer" in the group, who neither gives nor asks for feedback. As you can see in window number 4, the "eliciting" and "giving feedback" arrows are very short. He or she is the mystery person in the group because it is difficult for group members to know where this person stands in the group or where they stand with him or her. The person appears to be surrounded by a shell that insulates him or her from other group members. When confronted about the lack of participation, he or she may respond with a comment such as "I learn more by listening." Group members who are not actively involved in the group or who do not participate receive very little feedback because they do not provide the group with any data to which they can react. The person who is very active in the group exposes more facets of himself or herself and provides the group members with more information about which they can give feedback. While this kind of exchange may cause the active participant some discomfort, he or she learns considerably more than the inactive participant who does not give or elicit feedback. The person characterizing this window is called the "turtle" because a shell keeps other people from getting in and him or her from getting out. It takes a considerable amount of energy to maintain an arena this small in a group situation because of the pressure that group norms exert against this kind of behavior. Energy channeled in maintaining a closed system is not available for self-exploration and personal growth.

The goal of eliciting feedback and self-disclosure or giving feedback is to move information from the blind spot and the facade into the arena, where it is available to everyone. In addition, through the process of giving and receiving feedback, new information can move from the unknown into the arena. A person may have an “aha” experience when he or she suddenly perceives a relationship between a here-and-now transaction in the group and some previous event. Movement of information from the unknown into the arena can be called “insight” or “inspiration.”

It is not an easy task to give feedback in such a way that it can be received without threat to the other person. This technique requires practice in developing sensitivity to other people’s needs and being able to put oneself in other people’s shoes. Some people feel that giving and receiving feedback cannot be learned solely by practice; instead, giving and receiving feedback require a basic philosophy or set of values that must first be learned. This basic philosophy is that the person be accepting of himself or herself and others. As this acceptance of self and others increases, the need to give feedback that can be construed as evaluative or judgmental decreases.

■ BASIC CONCEPTS OF SURVEY FEEDBACK

David G. Bowers and Jerome L. Franklin

Perhaps the most common misconception about survey feedback pivots on the failure to distinguish the *process* and what it represents from the *data* and what they represent. For the unwary, a rush to action based on this misconception all too often results in damage to the recipient and disillusionment for both the recipient and the purveyor.

Survey feedback is not a sheet of tabulated data, nor is it the simple return of such data to some representative of the respondents. Instead, it is a relatively complex guidance *method* that draws on the device of the questionnaire survey to upgrade and make more complete, rational, and adequate a process inherent in social organizations.

THE NATURE OF FEEDBACK

At the root of survey feedback, as with any guidance device, are three fundamental properties: (1) *purposiveness*, (2) *a flow of events* through time, and (3) *periodic discrepancies* between what occurs and what was desired or intended. The first of these refers to the perhaps-obvious fact that “feedback” without some aim, objective, target, or purpose is meaningless. The recitation of stock-market quotations may be eminently meaningful to a broker or to an investor eagerly or anxiously anticipating his gains or losses; it has no meaning for a person who has no stake in it, does not understand it, and for whom it is simply “feed” (that is, noise).

The second basic property points to what must be implicit in the term “feedback,” namely that a number of events occur sequentially across time. They flow from an action on the part of the potential recipient to an end-state about which he or she hopefully obtains information regarding how well that action went.

The third fundamental condition simply states that for feedback to be useful (that is, to result in midcourse corrections), one must assume that some difference or discrepancy exists from time to time between what has been desired or intended and what has actually occurred.

Building on these three basic properties, one is able to distinguish feedback from other forms of information input. Information that is novel and extraneous to accepted purposes, while potentially quite useful, is different from feedback. Information that refers to events now complete and not likely to recur is not feedback and, for guidance purposes, is as likely to be without value as is information that conveys no difference from what was intended (that is, leads to no action).

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Descriptive or Evaluative Feedback

At a somewhat more concrete level, much is often made in interpersonal settings of the value of providing feedback that is descriptive rather than evaluative. To the extent that this precept refers to avoiding the debilitating effects of threat and punishment, one can only concur. Both research and experience indicate that fear, resentment, and excessive anxiety at best can be counterproductive, at worst paralyzing and highly destructive.

However, this is a different genre of issue from that which arises if one insists that feedback, when provided, must be unconnected to value judgments of goodness and badness, usefulness, desirability, and the like. In fact, the heart of any feedback process is precisely that: a reading, returned to the actor, on how well or how poorly things are going in relation to what he or she has done. In this sense, feedback (including survey feedback) *is* evaluative.

Its highly desirable property of descriptiveness is therefore determined not by the extent to which it avoids evaluations (it does not and cannot), but by the extent to which it encompasses in its message information about the flow of events leading to the outcome. As such, it must be connected, in a way clearly understood, accepted, and believed by the actor, to a model of those events that includes cause-effect relationships.

In form, it is built around the notion that if the actor does *A*, that action results in *B*, which in turn produces *C*. Although feedback that lets the actor know only that he or she has not attained in the most current attempt(s) the desired state of *C* certainly possesses some utility, feedback that also states that *A* was inappropriate, or that it did not lead to a sufficient *B*, permits the actor to revise his or her actions and perhaps the model itself on something more than a trial-and-error basis. It is in this sense that another property commonly felt to be desirable in feedback—that it be *helpful*—reflects a great deal of truth. However, helpfulness resides more in what the feedback permits the actor to do constructively than in the demeanor or tone of the purveyor.

In the specific case of survey feedback, the substance of these points is that such feedback:

- Must be built around a model that has a maximum likelihood of being correct (that is, around principles of behavior and organization derived and verified scientifically as appropriate to the situation);
- Must be clearly tied, through this model, to outcomes that are positively valued; and
- Must provide a return of model-valid information relevant to more than merely the outcomes of the process represented by the model.

Previous Endorsement of Model

Finally, an obvious corollary is that the principles, ideas, and concepts that make up the model must be accepted and endorsed by the actor *before*, not merely after, he or she receives the information intended as feedback. A survey-feedback operation launched

without this prior acceptance, but in the hope that the information will itself be persuasive, is doomed to failure for the same reason mentioned in the earlier stock-market illustration: The input will be meaningless and therefore rejected. Where the principles and concepts contained in the model and operationalized in the survey are not understood or accepted in advance, the leader, change agent, or facilitator is well advised to proceed no further until, by training or planned experience, he or she has implanted that understanding and acceptance.

THE CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF DATA FOR SURVEY FEEDBACK

Understanding the causal sequences—let alone measuring them—involves us in an immediate paradox. If we say, for example, that *A* causes *B*, we have to assume two mutually contradictory things: that both *A* and *B* occurred at exactly the same point in time (as no event can be caused by something that it is not in contact with), and that *A* must have preceded *B* (as a cause must occur before its effect). In everyday life, we solve this problem by *storing* large numbers of connected *A-to-B* events and looking at them for some period of time.

The same practice holds true for the survey. Questionnaire respondents, in describing their leader's behavior, the behavior of their fellow members, or the conditions present in the larger organization, summarize a large number of specific acts and events, some of which have caused others. The picture that results in the tabulated data, although taken at one point in time, is a composite photograph of the person, group, and/or organization as it has persisted over some period of weeks or months. By the changes observed in the picture from one administration and feedback to the next, movement is depicted in much the same way as in a motion picture.

Accuracy of the Picture

The accuracy of the resulting picture depends on the care that goes into those several aspects of the process and on the instrument that reflects their design: the accuracy and adequacy of the body of principles and concepts on which both the model and the instrument have been built (are they the result of rigorous research, or of armchair extractions from experience?); the reliability and validity of the questionnaire instrument and its measures (does it measure dependably and accurately what it purports to measure?); and the conditions under which the data are collected (trust, confidence, care, and clarity of procedures).

Beyond the conventional indicators of validity, the procedure employed in survey feedback relies on the consensual validation implicit in collecting multiple perceptions of the same events from several people. Those who view and report about the same phenomenon should substantially agree in their perceptions and differ from other people who perceive other events.

A Representation of Reality

What results, of course, is a representation in abstract symbols (numbers) of the organizational reality in which respondents live. Events have been summarized by each respondent across some period of time considered by him or her to be appropriate, translated by the survey into numbers, and summarized in the tabulation across all members of the group. Their subsequent ability, in the feedback process, to translate this into a common experience base about which joint conclusions can be drawn depends on the clarity and concreteness of the original questionnaire items. Clear, concrete, descriptive items are more readily converted in the discussion into clear, concrete examples than are fuzzy, abstract ones. *It is precisely this translation-summary-conversion process, resulting in a shared view of problems and strengths, that lies at the heart of survey feedback's payoff potential.*

Perception of Threat

Confidentiality of individual responses also plays a considerable role in the validity question. Survey feedback is seldom undertaken in other than hierarchical organizational settings. The differences in positions, roles, status, and power that this fact implies make each respondent vulnerable in some respect to being held accountable in punitive terms for having expressed himself or herself. If the threat is real and is applicable to the majority of respondents, the facilitator's attempt to use survey feedback to develop constructive problem solving obviously faces a situation of model nonacceptance.

However, more common, and in some ways critical, is the real perception of an unreal threat; and it is this anxiety that the confidential treatment of individual responses helps to allay. Even though it is obvious to respondents that some handful of personal background items could identify them, there is considerable reassurance in not having to write their names on their questionnaires. "Taking attendance," scrutinizing a respondent's questionnaire as it is handed in, and peering over the respondent's shoulder are similarly to be avoided, as is the practice of including immediate superiors and their subordinates in the same questionnaire-completion session.

Observing these cautions, together with aggregating data across all respondents in the group and into summary indices geared to the group's size (a mean response preserves confidentiality in small groups, whereas a percentage spread does not), helps to guarantee that the results will be truly consensually valid and reasonably free from distortions attributable to a threatened position.

CRITICAL ASPECTS OF THE FEEDBACK PROCESS

The usefulness of the survey data depends as much on the nature of the feedback process as on the character and quality of the actual data. Although a complete treatment would involve a consideration of specific aspects of this process, we will focus at present on only four additional major issues: (1) the role of a resource person in the process, (2) the preexisting role relationships of people in the groups, (3) feedback sequencing for

groups at different hierarchical levels within social systems, and (4) the place and value of the survey-feedback process.

Effectively done, survey feedback is a complex process requiring special knowledge and skills. Its success depends largely on the ability of the people involved to understand and subsequently use the data as the basis for altering conditions and behaviors. In most cases the recipients of survey feedback require the help of a resource person who provides expertise and skill in several areas and who serves as a link between these people and those other resources (for example, knowledgeable people) that serve as a potential energy source for the group's development.

The Resource Person's Role

The resource person's expertise must include an understanding of organizational processes and techniques of data aggregation and statistical analyses. In addition, this person must be skilled in helping the recipients to understand and use the feedback data constructively. Abilities related to these functions include those of formulating meaningful pictures of social interactions on the basis of quantitative information and interacting with individuals and groups to facilitate the constructive use of the data.

It should by now be apparent that the resource person's role is not an easy one. To be useful to the process, he or she must know the group's data thoroughly prior to any feedback-related contact with its members or its leader. Only a thorough grounding in data analysis and interpretation can provide this skill, and only extensive practice can perfect it. In the group's discussion, he or she must be able to distinguish the elaboration and refinement of otherwise-tabulated reality from the frequently exciting, but obfuscating, attempts by the group members to provide the consultant with what they think he or she wants to hear and work with. The consultant must be able to intervene in the process to keep it on track with the model and with what he or she knows represents a profitable course for the group members. Yet the consultant must do so in ways that avoid his or her being perceived as engaging in exaggerated flattery or reproof, telling them what to do, or solving their problems for them.

Group-Member Relationships

Through all of this, the consultant must remember that the feedback meeting or training session is an artificial setting for the group's members. The fact that, in survey feedback, they are and ordinarily have been for some time enmeshed in a network of relationships, roles, and functions means that, for them, *the greater part of their organizational reality exists outside that setting and is more closely aligned to the data than to the process that the consultant has stimulated*. This fact requires that, prior to the group session, the consultant present and discuss the data privately with the group leader or supervisor and counsel him or her as to the meaning of the data. Only then can that leader, who must chair the group session, be expected to cope constructively with the various stresses and strains of meeting his or her subordinates.

“Waterfall” Design

Although this latter principle is extended by some to augur what is known as a “waterfall” design of survey feedback (beginning the process at a subordinate echelon only after it is complete in several sessions at the echelon above), this would appear to be an unnecessary elaboration. The modeling, which is presumed to be an advantage, seems in fact to be less important than the reassurance that is provided by having had an exposure as a subordinate in the group above. This seems to be largely accomplished during the first or early session. Adhering to a “top-down” design, yet pushing to as nearly simultaneous feedback to all levels as possible, would appear from experience and such evidence as exists to be an optimal strategy.

The Place and Value of Survey Feedback

The point has been made that the survey-feedback process ordinarily is attempted within complex social systems. This point cannot be overemphasized; it is this fact, principally, among others, that ordinarily complicates even further what must seem to the reader to be an already-complicated process. Survey feedback is a method, procedure, or technique that often occurs within a broader paradigm termed “survey-guided development.” This latter and broader procedure encompasses, in addition to survey feedback, the use of survey data to diagnose the organization as a functioning social system; it also serves to establish the proper sequencing of inputs—determined through diagnosis—of a (nonfeedback) informational, skill, and structural-change variety.

A person proposing to move, as a facilitator or change agent, into a survey-guided development effort cannot hope to do so without first understanding the processes of survey feedback.

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■ GIVING FEEDBACK: AN INTERPERSONAL SKILL

Philip G. Hanson

The processes of giving and asking for feedback constitute probably the most important dimension of laboratory education. It is through feedback that we can learn to “see ourselves as others see us.” Giving and receiving feedback effectively are not easy tasks; they imply certain key ingredients: caring, trusting, acceptance, openness, and a concern for the needs of others. Thus, how evaluative, judgmental, or helpful feedback is may finally depend on the personal philosophies of the people involved. Nevertheless, giving and receiving feedback are *skills* that can be learned and developed and for which certain useful guidelines exist.

The term “feedback” was borrowed from rocket engineering by Kurt Lewin, a founder of laboratory education. A rocket sent into space contains a mechanism that sends signals back to Earth. On Earth, a steering apparatus receives these signals, makes adjustments if the rocket is off target, and corrects its course. The group can be seen as such a steering mechanism, sending signals when group members are off target in terms of the goals they have set for themselves. These signals—feedback—can then be used by a person to correct his or her course. For example, George’s goal may be to become more selfaware and to learn how his behavior affects others. Information from the group can help George to ascertain whether he is moving toward this goal. If George reacts to criticisms of his behavior by getting angry, leaving the room, or otherwise acting defensively, he will not reach the goal. The other members may help by making comments such as “George, every time we give you feedback, you do something that keeps us from giving you further information. If you continue this kind of behavior, you will not reach your goal.” If George responds to the “steering” of the group by adjusting his direction, he can again move toward his target. Feedback, then, is a technique that helps members of a group to achieve their goals. It is also a means of comparing one’s own perceptions of one’s behavior with others’ perceptions.

Giving feedback is a verbal or nonverbal process through which a person lets others know his perceptions and feelings about their behavior. When *eliciting* feedback, a person is asking for others’ perceptions and feelings about *his* or *her* behavior. Most people give and receive feedback daily without being aware of doing so. One purpose of laboratory training is to increase awareness of these processes so that they can be engaged in intentionally rather than unconsciously.

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INFORMATION-EXCHANGE PROCESS

Between two people, the process of exchange goes something like this: Person A's intention is to act in relation to person B, who sees only person A's *behavior*. Between Person A's intention and behavior comes an encoding process that he or she uses to make the intention and behavior congruent. Person B perceives person A's behavior, interprets it (a decoding process), and intends to respond. Between person B's intention and responding behavior an encoding process also occurs. Person A then perceives person B's responding behavior and interprets it. However, if either person's process is ineffective, the recipient may respond in a manner that will confuse the sender. Although the feedback process can help a person to discover whether his or her behavior and intentions are congruent, the process focuses on *behavior* rather than on *intentions*. A person's intentions are private; unless he or she explains them, other people can only guess what those intentions are. One of the most confusing aspects of communication is that people tend to give feedback about other people's *intentions*, rather than their *behavior*. Causing further confusion is the fact that many people perceive behavior as being negatively intended, when in fact it is not. It is often difficult to see that the sender's intentions may not be what they are perceived to be.

RESPONSIBILITY FOR FEEDBACK

In many feedback exchanges, the question of ownership frequently arises: How much responsibility should the giver and recipient assume for their respective behaviors? If person A evokes a negative response (feedback) from person B, how much ownership should each person assume for his or her part of the interaction? Some people are willing to assume more than their share of the responsibility for another person's responses, while others refuse to own any responsibility for their behavior.

For example, a person may be habitually late for group meetings and may receive feedback concerning members' negative reactions to this behavior. The response of the late person is to point out to the group members their lack of tolerance for individual differences, saying that they are limiting his or her freedom and that they seem to be investing too much responsibility in him or her for the group's effectiveness. The late person further states that he or she wants to be involved in the group but does not understand why the members need him or her to be on time.

This situation presents a value dilemma to the group; the late person's observations are accurate, but his or her behavior is provocative. One clarification of this dilemma is to point out that although a person owns only his or her behavior, the reactions of others inevitably affect him or her. To the extent that the late person cares about the others or his or her relationship with them, he or she must consider their responses.

Concern for the needs of others as well as one's own is a critical dimension in the exchange of feedback. Ownership or responsibility for one's behavior and the consequences of that behavior overlap between the giver and recipient of feedback. The

problem lies in reaching some mutual agreement concerning where one person's responsibility ends and the other's begins.

GUIDELINES FOR USING FEEDBACK

It is possible to minimize a person's defensiveness in receiving feedback and to maximize that person's ability to use it for his or her personal growth. Regardless of how accurate feedback may be, if a person cannot accept the information because he or she is defensive, then feedback is useless. Feedback must be given so that the person receiving it can *hear* it in the most objective and least distorted way possible, *understand* it, and choose to *use* it or *not use* it.

The following guidelines are listed as if they were bipolar, with the second term in each dimension describing the more effective method of giving feedback. For example, in one group George, intending to compliment Marie, says to her, "I wish I could be more selfish, like you." Marie might respond, "Why, you insensitive boor, what do you mean by saying I'm selfish?" George might then get defensive and retaliate, and both people would become involved in the game of "who can hurt whom the most." Instead, Marie might give George feedback by stating her position in another way. That is, she could say, "When you said, 'I wish I could be more selfish, like you,' I felt angry and degraded." This second method of giving feedback contains positive elements that the first does not.

Indirect Versus Direct Expression of Feelings

When Marie stated that George was an insensitive boor, she was expressing her feelings indirectly. That statement might imply that she was feeling angry or irritated, but one could not be certain. On the other hand, Marie expressed her feelings directly when she said, "I felt angry and degraded." She committed herself, and there was no need to guess her feelings. If Tom says to Andy, "I like you," he is expressing his feelings directly, risking rejection. However, if he says, "You are a likeable person," the risk is less. Indirect expression of feelings is safer because it is ambiguous. Andy might guess that Tom likes him, but Tom can always deny it. If Andy rejects Tom by saying "I am happy to hear that I am likeable, but *I* do not like you," Tom can counter with "You are a likeable person, but I do not like you." Indirect expression of feelings offers an escape from commitment.

"You are driving too fast" is an indirect expression of feelings. "I am anxious because you are driving too fast" is a direct expression of feelings. Indirect statements often begin with "I feel that . . ." and finish with a perception or opinion, for example, "I feel that you are angry." This is an indirect expression or perception and does not state what "I" is feeling. Instead, "I am anxious because you look angry" expresses the speaker's feelings directly and also states a perception. People frequently assume that they are expressing their feelings directly when they state opinions and perceptions starting with "I feel that . . .," but they are not.

Interpretation Versus Description of Behavior

In the original example in which Marie said to George, “When you said, ‘I wish I could be more selfish, like you,’ I felt angry and degraded,” Marie was describing the behavior to which she was reacting. She was not attributing a motive to George’s behavior, such as “You are hostile” or “You do not like me.” When one attributes a motive to a person’s behavior, one is interpreting that person’s *intention*. As the person’s intention is private, interpretation of his or her behavior is highly questionable. In addition, one person’s interpretations probably arise from a theory of personality that may not be shared by the other person. For example, if William is fidgeting in his chair and shuffling his feet, and Walter says, “You are anxious,” Walter is interpreting William’s behavior. Walter’s theory of personality states that when a person fidgets chair and shuffles, he or she is manifesting anxiety. Such a theory interposed between two people may create a distance between them or act as a barrier to understanding. If, instead, Walter *describes* William’s behavior, William may interpret his own behavior by saying, “I need to go to the bathroom.”

In any event, interpreting another person’s behavior or ascribing motives to it tends to put that person on the defensive and makes the person spend energy on either explaining his or her behavior or defending himself or herself. It deprives the person of the opportunity to interpret or make sense of his or her own behavior and, at the same time, makes him or her dependent on the interpreter. The feedback, regardless of how much insight it contains, cannot be used.

Evaluative Versus Nonevaluative Feedback

Effective feedback to George was not accomplished by calling him names such as “insensitive boor” or, in other words, evaluating him as a person. When giving feedback, one must respond not to the personal worth of the person but to the person’s *behavior*. When someone is called “stupid” or “insensitive,” it is extremely difficult for that person to respond objectively. The person may sometimes *act* stupidly or *behave* in an insensitive way, but that does not mean that he or she is a stupid or insensitive person. Evaluating a person casts one in the role of a judge and places that person in the role of being judged. In addition, a frame of reference or set of values is imposed that may not be applicable to, or shared by, other people. That is, the person making the evaluation assumes that he or she can distinguish between a “good” person and a “bad” person or between “right” and “wrong,” and that if the recipient of the feedback does not exemplify these values, the sender will be unhappy with him or her.

Response to Evaluative Feedback

It is difficult for anyone to respond to evaluative feedback because it usually offends his or her feelings of worth and self-esteem. These are core concepts about ourselves that cannot be changed readily by feedback, nor can they be easily interpreted in terms of actual behavior. It is difficult, for example, to point out to a person the specific

behaviors that manifest low self-esteem. If a person is given feedback that he or she is “stupid,” that person may not know what *behaviors* to change. It is the person’s observable behavior and not his or her self-esteem that must be responded to when giving feedback.

An additional problem with evaluative feedback is that it often engenders defensiveness. When this occurs, the feedback is not likely to be useful.

General Versus Specific Feedback

When Marie responded to George by saying, “When you said, ‘I wish I could be more selfish, like you,’ I felt angry and degraded,” she was describing a *specific* behavior. If she had said, “You are hostile,” she would have been giving feedback in *general* terms; George might not have known to which behavior she was reacting. The term “hostile” does not specify *what* evoked a response in Marie. If George wanted to change, he would not know what behavior to change. However, when the sender is specific, the recipient knows to what behavior the sender is responding, which he or she can then change or modify. Feedback expressed in general terms, such as “You are a warm person,” does not allow the recipient to know what specific behavior is perceived as warm. The recipient cannot expand or build on this feedback until he or she knows which behavior evoked the response “warm.”

Pressure to Change Versus Freedom of Choice to Change

When Marie told George that she felt angry and degraded by George’s statement, she did not tell him he had to change his behavior. If she or the feedback were important to George, however, he would probably change anyway; if these were not important to him, he might decide not to change. A person should have the freedom to use feedback in any meaningful way without being required to change. When the giver of feedback tells a person to change, the giver is assuming that he or she knows the correct standards for right and wrong or good and bad behavior and that the recipient needs to adopt those standards for his or her own good (or to save the sender the trouble of changing). Imposing standards on another person and expecting him or her to conform arouses resistance and resentment. The sender assumes that his or her standards are superior. A major problem in marriages arises when spouses tell each other that they must change their behaviors and attitudes to conform with one or the other partner’s expectations and demands. These pressures to change can be very direct or very subtle, creating a competitive, win-lose relationship.

Expression of Disappointment as Feedback

Sometimes feedback reflects the sender’s disappointment that the recipient did not meet his or her expectations and hopes. For example, a group leader may be disappointed that a member did not actualize his or her potential impact on the group, or a professor may be disappointed in a student’s lack of achievement. These situations represent a

dilemma. An important part of the sender's feedback is his or her own feelings, whether they are disappointment or satisfaction; if the sender withholds these feelings and/or perceptions, the recipient may be given a false impression. If, however, the sender expresses his or her disappointment, the recipient may experience this feedback as an indication of personal failure instead of as an incentive to change.

Persistent Behavior

Frequently the complaint is heard that a group member persists in a behavior that others find irritating, despite the feedback he or she receives. Group members exclaim, "What are we supposed to do? He won't change!" The most the members can do is to continue to confront the offender with their feelings. While the offender has the freedom not to change, he or she will also have to accept the consequences of that decision, that is, other people's continuing irritation at his or her behavior and their probable punitive reactions. He cannot reasonably expect other group members both to feel positive toward the offender and to accept the behavior they find irritating. The only person an individual can change is himself or herself. As a byproduct of the change, other people may change in relationship to him or her. As the person changes, others will have to adjust their behavior to his or hers. No one should be forced to change. Such pressure may produce superficial conformity, but also underlying resentment and anger.

Delayed Versus Immediate Timing

To be most effective, feedback should, whenever possible, be given immediately after the event. In the initial example of the exchange between George and Marie, if Marie had waited until the next day to give feedback, George might have responded with "I don't remember saying that," or if Marie had asked the other group members later they might have responded with only a vague recollection; the event had not been significant to them, although it had been to Marie.

When feedback is given immediately after the event, the event is fresh in everyone's mind. It is like a mirror of the person's behavior, reflected to him or her through feedback. Other group members can also contribute their observations about the interaction. There is often, however, a tendency to delay feedback. A person may fear losing control of his or her feelings, fear hurting the other person's feelings, or fear exposing himself or herself to other people's criticisms. Nevertheless, although the "here-and-now" transactions of group life can often be most threatening, they can also be most exciting and can produce the greatest growth.

Planned Feedback

An exception to this guideline is the periodic feedback session, planned to keep communication channels open. Staff members in work units or departments may have weekly feedback meetings, or a specific time may be set aside for structured or unstructured feedback sessions in one- or two-week workshops. In these scheduled

sessions, participants may cover events occurring since the last session or may work with material generated during their current meeting. For this process to be effective, however, the decision to have these feedback sessions should be reached through a consensus of the participants.

External Versus Group-Shared Feedback

When feedback is given immediately after the event, it is usually group shared, so that other members can look at the interaction as it occurs. For example, if group members had reacted to George's statement ("I wish I could be more selfish, like you") by saying, "If I were in your shoes, Marie, I wouldn't have felt degraded" or "I did not perceive it as degrading," then Marie would have had to look at her behavior and its appropriateness. If, on the other hand, group members had supported Marie's feelings and perceptions (consensual validation), her feedback would have had more potency.

Events that occur outside the group ("there-and-then") may be known to only one or two group members and, consequently, cannot be reacted to or discussed meaningfully by other participants. In addition, other group members may feel left out during these discussions. For example, when a group member is discussing an argument he had with his wife, the most assistance that group members can provide is to attempt to perceive from his behavior in the group what occurred in that interaction and to share these conjectures with him. In describing the event, the group member's perception is colored by his own bias and emotional involvement; consequently, group members may receive a distorted picture of the argument and may not be able to discriminate between fact and fiction. If the argument had occurred in the group, however, group members could have been helpful as they would have shared the event. Then, if the involved group member had begun describing his perceptions of what happened, other group members could have commented on or shared their perceptions of the interaction.

Use of There-and-Then

In other words, events within the group can be processed by all group members who witness the interaction; they can share their perceptions and feelings about what occurred. This does not mean that group members cannot get some value from describing events external to the group and receiving comments from other members. What happens frequently, however, is that the group member describes these events in such a way as to elicit support or confirmation of his or her own perceptions rather than objective evaluation. Yet this relation of there-and-then events to the here-and-now can often be extremely productive as back-home "bridges." It can also be productive when some members have had long-term relationships with one another. It is important, at these times, to recognize both the necessity and the difficulty of involving other group members in the discussion.

Consistent Perceptions

Shared perceptions of what happens in here-and-now events is one of the primary values of a group. “Group shared” also implies that, ideally, each member has to participate. Frequently a person receives feedback from *one* member in the group and assumes that the rest of the group feels the same. This is not always a correct assumption. Feedback from only one person may present a very private or distorted picture because that person’s perceptions of the event may differ from other group members’. When everyone’s reactions are given, however, the recipient has a much better view of his or her behavior. If the group members are consistent in their perception of the recipient, and this perception disagrees with the recipient’s view of himself or herself, then the recipient needs to look more closely at the validity of his or her self-perceptions. Frequently the fact that people perceive a person’s behavior differently is useful information in itself. Part of each group member’s responsibility is to ask for feedback from members who are not responding so that the recipient will know how everyone sees his or her behavior. The recipient may have to be somewhat aggressive and persistent in seeking this information. Group members may tend to say “me, too” when their feedback is being given by someone else. When *all* of the data have been obtained, the recipient is in a better position to make a more effective decision regarding his or her use of the feedback.

Imposed Versus Elicited Feedback

In most exchanges, feedback is usually imposed. People give feedback whether it is elicited or not and whether the person is prepared to receive it or not. In addition, the sender’s need to give feedback may be much greater than the potential recipient’s need to receive it. This is particularly true when the sender is upset about something concerning the potential recipient. In many situations, it is legitimate to impose feedback, particularly when a norm exists for giving as well as for eliciting feedback, or in order to induce a norm of spontaneity. However, feedback is usually more helpful when the person elicits it. Asking for feedback may indicate that the recipient is prepared to listen and wants to know how others perceive his or her behavior.

In asking for feedback, however, it is important to follow some of the same guidelines as for giving feedback. For example, a person should be specific about the subject on which he or she wants feedback. The person who says to the group, “I would like the group members to tell me what they think about me” may receive more feedback than he or she planned. In addition, the request is so general that the group members may be uncertain about where to begin or which behaviors are relevant to the request. In these cases, other group members can help the recipient by asking such questions as “Can you be more specific?” or “About what do you want feedback?” Feedback is a reciprocal process; both senders and recipients can help one another in eliciting and in giving it. Sometimes it is also important to provide feedback on how a person is giving feedback. If a recipient is upset, hurt, or angry, other group members can say to the sender, “Look how you told her that; I would be angry, too” or “What

other way could you have given her the same information without evaluating her or degrading her?" It is desirable to give feedback so that the recipient can preserve his or her self-esteem.

Many people want to know how their behavior is being perceived by others, but they fear the consequences of asking for such information. How easily a person will ask for feedback is related to the amount of trust in the interpersonal relationship. However, people fear that the recipient will use their feedback (particularly negative feedback) to reinforce negative feelings about himself or herself. Again, it is sometimes difficult for a person to separate his or her behavior from his or her feelings of self-worth.

Unmodifiable Versus Modifiable Behavior

To be effective, feedback should be aimed at behavior that is relatively easy to change. Many people's behaviors are habitual and could be described as personal styles developed through years of behaving and responding in certain ways. Feedback on this kind of behavior often is frustrating because the behavior can be very difficult to change.

Feedback on behaviors that are difficult to change may often make the person self-conscious and anxious about his or her behavior. For example, if the wife of a chain smoker gives him feedback (using all of the appropriate guidelines) about his smoking behavior, it would still be very difficult for him to change. Chain smoking is a behavior determined by often-unknown causes. The man may smoke to reduce his tension level; continual feedback on his smoking behavior may only increase his tension. Consequently, he smokes more to reduce that tension.

Occasionally, in giving feedback, one must determine whether the behavior represents a person's lifestyle or results from some unknown personality factors. Sometimes it may be helpful first to ask whether the recipient perceives his or her behavior as modifiable. Many behaviors can be easily changed through feedback and the person's conscious desire to change his or her behavior in order to produce a more effective interpersonal style.

Motivation to Hurt Versus Motivation to Help

It is assumed that the primary motivation of membership in growth groups is to help oneself and others to grow. When a person is angry, however, his or her motivation may be to hurt the other person. Frequently, the conflict turns into win-lose strategies in which the goal of the interaction is to degrade the other person. It is difficult when one is angry to consider that the needs of the other person are as important as one's own. Angry feedback may be useless, even when the information is potentially helpful, because the recipient may need to reject the feedback in order to protect his or her integrity.

Coping with Anger

There are several ways to cope with anger. One is to engage in a verbal or physical attack that frequently increases in intensity. Another method to deal with anger is to suppress it. One consequence of this strategy, however, is that the person builds internal pressure to the point of possibly losing control of his or her behavior. A third—and better—method is to talk about personal feelings of anger without assigning responsibility for them to the other person. Focusing on personal feelings may frequently encourage other group members to help the person. In this way the anger dissipates without either viciousness or suppression. Anger and conflict are not themselves “bad.” Angry feelings are as legitimate as any other feelings. Conflict can be a growth-producing phenomenon. It is the manner in which conflict or angry feelings are handled that can have negative consequences. Only through surfacing and resolving conflicts can people develop competence and confidence in dealing with these feelings and situations. Part of the benefit derived from growth groups is learning to express anger or to resolve conflicts in constructive, problem-solving ways.

CONCLUSION

The process of giving feedback obviously would be hampered if one attempted to consider *all* of the above guidelines. Some are needed more frequently than others: feedback should be descriptive, nonevaluative, specific, and should embody freedom of choice. These guidelines can also be used diagnostically. For example, when the person receiving feedback reacts defensively, some of the guidelines have probably been violated. Group members can ask the recipient how he or she heard the feedback and can help the giver to assess how he or she gave it.

Giving feedback effectively may depend on a person’s values and basic philosophy about himself or herself, about his or her relationships with others, and about other people in general. Certain guidelines, however, can be learned and are valuable in helping people to give and receive effective and useful feedback. The checklist that follows (Appendix: A Feedback Checklist) offers rating scales that a person can use to assess his or her own feedback style.

APPENDIX: A FEEDBACK CHECKLIST

Rating scales for some of the feedback guidelines in “Giving Feedback: An Interpersonal Skill” are listed below. For each item, draw a circle around the number on each scale that best characterizes your feedback style. Thinking of your own specific examples for each item may be helpful.

- | | | |
|--|-------------------|---|
| 1. <i>Indirect Expression of Feeling.</i> Not describing your own emotional state, e.g., “You are a very likeable person.” | 1 2 3 4 5 | <i>Direct Expression of Feeling.</i> “Owning” your own feelings by describing your emotional state, e.g., “I like you very much.” |
| 2. <i>Attribute Feedback.</i> Ascribing motives to behavior, e.g., “You are angry with me.” | 1 2 3 4 5 | <i>Descriptive Feedback.</i> Observing and describing the behavior to which you are reacting, e.g., “You are frowning and your hands are clenched in a fist.” |
| 3. <i>Evaluative Feedback.</i> Passing judgment on another person’s behavior or imposing “standards,” e.g., “You shouldn’t be so angry.” | 1 2 3 4 5 | <i>Nonevaluative Feedback.</i> Commenting on behavior without judging its worth or value, e.g., “Your anger is as legitimate a feeling as any other.” |
| 4. <i>General Feedback.</i> Stating broad reactions and not indicating specific behaviors, e.g., “You’re pretty touchy today.” | 1 2 3 4 5 | <i>Specific Feedback.</i> Pointing out the specific actions to which you are reacting, e.g., “When you frowned, I felt anxious.” |
| 5. <i>Pressure to Change.</i> Implying that people are not behaving according to your standards, e.g., “Don’t call me ‘Sonny’!” | 1 2 3 4 5 | <i>Freedom of Choice to Change.</i> Allowing others to decide whether they want to change their behavior, e.g., “When you called me ‘Sonny’ I felt put down.” |

- | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|
| 6. <i>Delayed Feedback.</i> Postponing feedback to others' behavior until later, e.g., "I was really hurt yesterday when you ignored me." | 1 2 3 4 5 | <i>Immediate Feedback.</i>
Responding immediately after the event, e.g., "I'm feeling hurt because you're not responding to me." |
| 7. <i>External Feedback.</i> Focusing attention on events outside the group, e.g., "My friends see me as being very supportive." | 1 2 3 4 5 | <i>Group-Shared Feedback.</i>
Focusing attention on events that occur in the group, e.g., "Does this group see me as being very supportive." |

Share your ratings with your group and elicit feedback from group members as to how they would rate your feedback style. On the basis of your own ratings and the feedback you received from other group members, check those items on which you want to work and on which you want continuing feedback from the group. Giving feedback effectively is a skill that can be developed.

■ INTERPERSONAL FEEDBACK AS CONSENSUAL VALIDATION OF CONSTRUCTS

Donald A. Devine

A central feature of group process that is frequently discussed is interpersonal feedback. Few attempts, however, have been made to relate the significance of interpersonal feedback in the group situation to the process of individual ideation and its subsequent relationship to behavior (Miller & Porter, 1972; Robinson & Jacobs, 1970).

The fact that giving feedback and receiving feedback are two of the implicit or explicit objectives of a treatment or awareness-oriented group is well documented (Bach, 1966; Ellis, 1973; Miller & Porter, 1972). Because of the emphasis that group members give to the exchange of feedback (an interpersonal process that serves to consensually validate reality), the parallel intragroup processes of ideation, construct formation, and inferring are often overlooked.

In our daily interpersonal relationships we form constructs, ideas, or assumptions about others based on the actions of these others. Both the overt and subtle behaviors of others are used as the basis for creating a cognitive framework that is then used to interpret future behavior.

This process of making inferences from behavior is of crucial importance, because the assumptions, once formed, will tend to be resistant to change (Kelly, 1963) and will also shape behavioral responses (Ellis, 1973; Kelly, 1963). It is useful to specify the relationships to behavior of an interpersonal process (consensual validation) and of an intrapersonal process (construct formation) and to foster awareness of these relationships. Figure 1 briefly describes these relationships. As can be seen in the figure, once the initial behavior (Behavior 1) has set this process in motion, it is difficult to interrupt the flow of interaction that follows.

CONSENSUAL VALIDATION

The one asset of a treatment or awareness group that is not available in an everyday situation is validation. Groups such as these allow each group member to validate the inferences that he or she is making concerning a person's behavior via verbal or nonverbal feedback. An informal "hold" procedure can be established that will enable a group member to check his or her inferences concerning present, ongoing group and individual behavior with the other members of the group. Ideally, this form of validation will also allow group members to become sensitive to and reevaluate the assumptions

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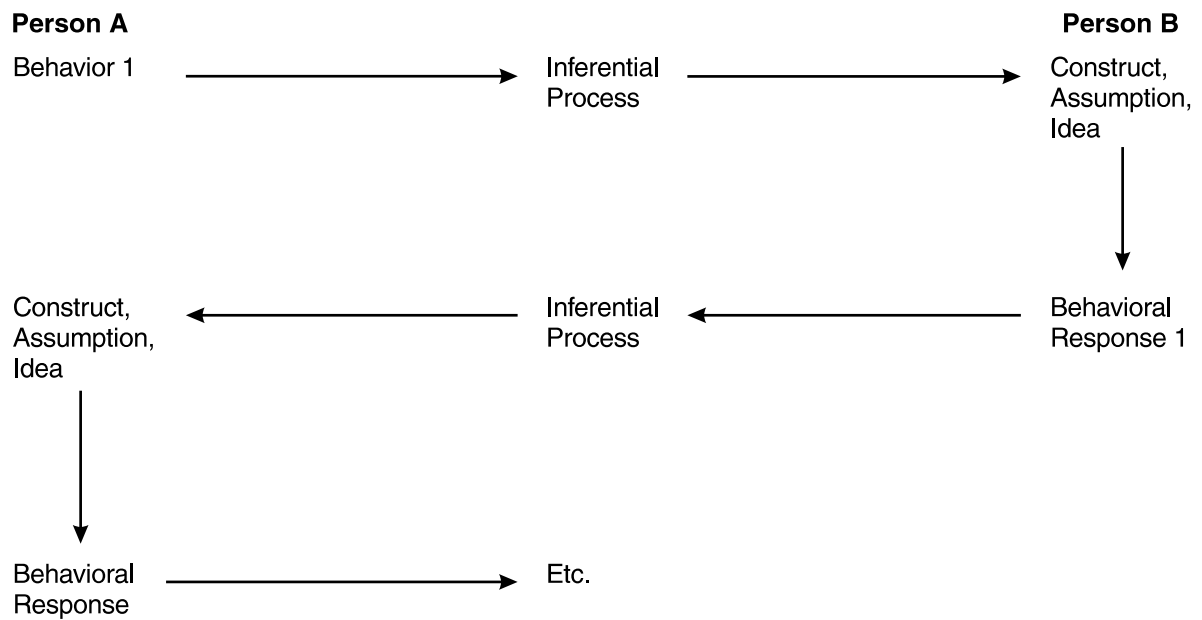


Figure 1. Construct Formation and Behavioral Response

that they make concerning others. If changes on a conceptual level are made, it could be expected that alternative behavioral responses would also be considered.

APPLICATION

This model could be applied to the behavior of a group and of individual people in a group in a variety of ways. In any group there are a number of situations in which a group member appears to make inferences about another group member that affect his or her behavior toward that other member. For example, if Tom interacts with another group member, Kathy, and during this interaction he infers from Kathy's method of presentation (behavior) that she is defensive and manipulative, the constructs of "defensive" and "manipulative" are then involved in shaping Tom's behavioral response (Behavioral Response 1) and his interpretation of further input from Kathy. Thus, he may confront Kathy strongly, saying she is "defensive" and "manipulative." This response then results in Sandy's making inferences, which, in turn, result in assumptions on her part concerning her relationship to Tom and perhaps even to the other group members. It is conceivable that Kathy's inferences could result in cognitive constructs such as "rejection" or "attack." If this is the case, it might follow that Kathy would contemplate quitting the group (Behavioral Response 2). Figure 2 details the example described.

The "Hold" Procedure

The cyclical nature of the form of interaction described requires that an intervention be made if alternative behavioral responses are to result. A hold-feedback procedure

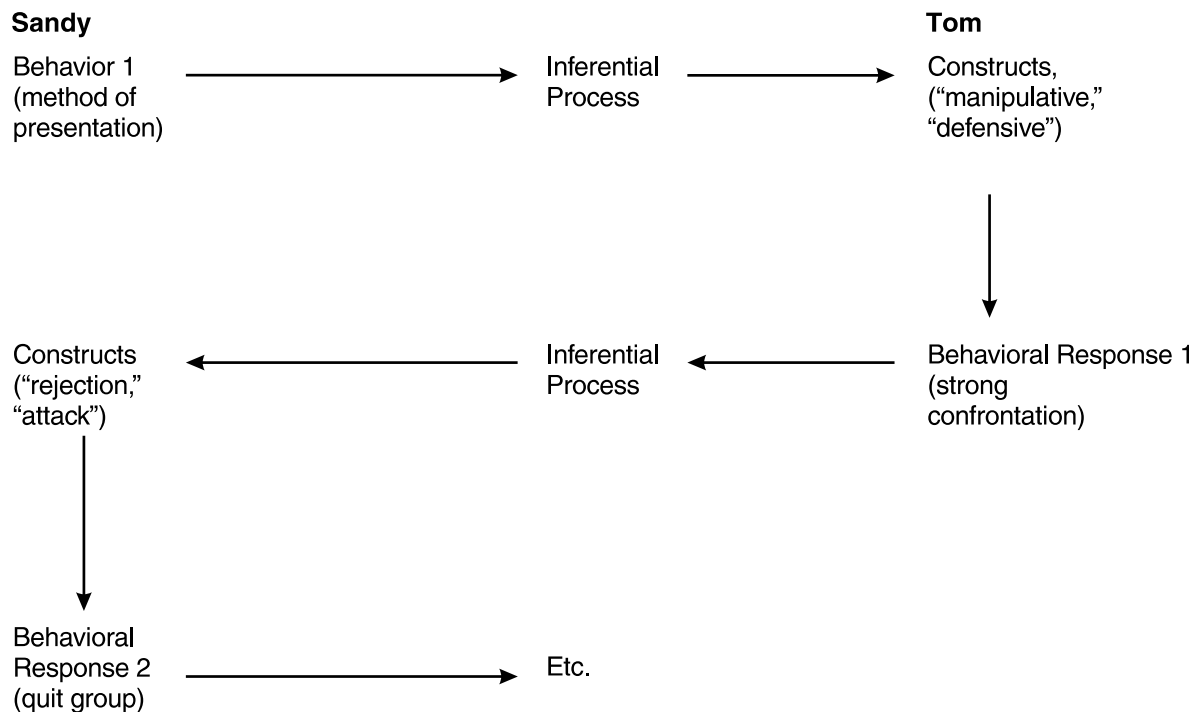


Figure 2. Example of Inferential Process: Construct Formation and Behavioral Response

provides a constructive vehicle through which group participants can receive and share information concerning their behavior, inferences, and constructs.

If group members observing the interaction between Kathy and Tom provide Kathy with concrete examples of those behaviors that resulted in Tom's forming the constructs "manipulative" and "defensive," alternative methods of presentation might be considered by Kathy. It is also possible that Tom has made faulty inferences. In other words, he may have formed constructs concerning Kathy's behavior that are inappropriate or invalid. Feedback to Tom, as the recipient of Kathy's communications, should address the inappropriateness of his inferences, as these will eventually provide the basis for his behavioral response to Kathy. Finally, those involved in the feedback process can provide Kathy with alternative methods of presenting herself and can offer Tom alternative interpretations, if they are warranted.

For example, if the group consensus is that the inferences Tom drew from Kathy's behavior were inappropriate, and if alternative interpretations are offered (that is, that Kathy's behavior indicates she is scared), Tom's response to her might be support rather than confrontation. Figure 3 shows this process.

This model can be used to provide a conceptual framework for the interpretation of both group and individual behavior. Using this model, awareness groups can serve two important functions. First, through the use of consensual validation, they can create sensitivity to the inferential process and its behavioral ramifications. Second, they can suggest alternative behavioral responses and provide a nonthreatening environment in which the members can experiment with these responses.

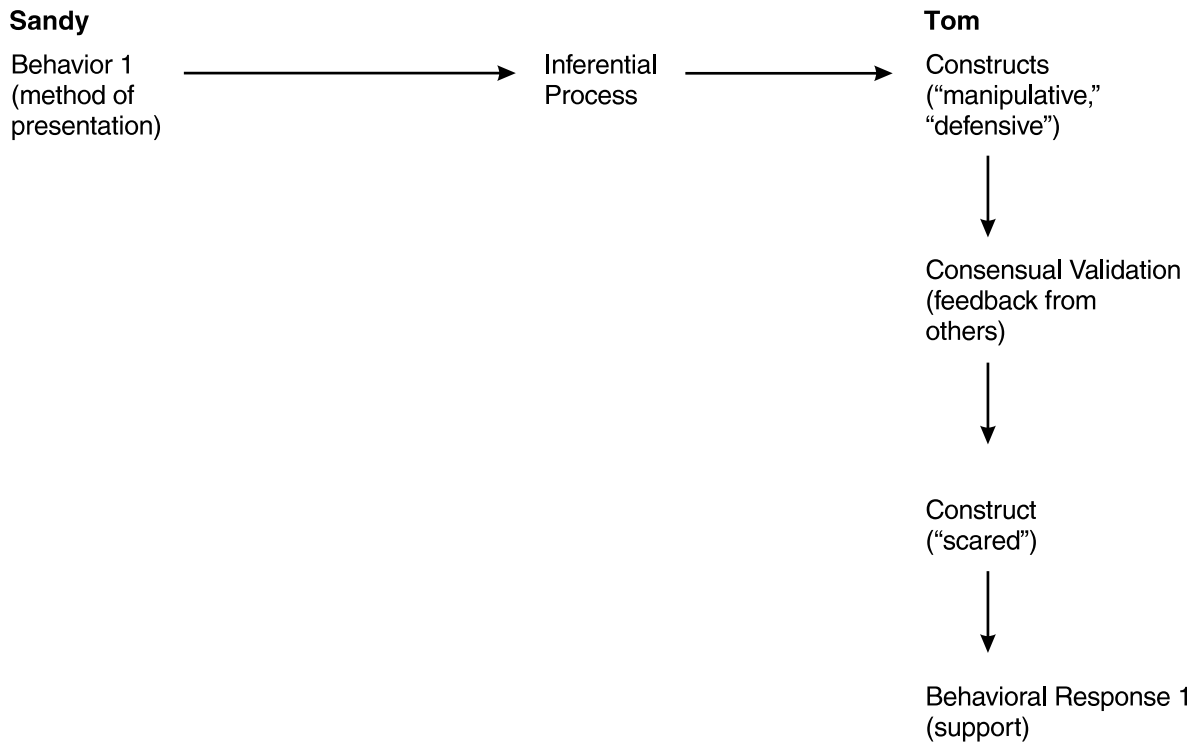


Figure 3. Consensual Validation

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■ MAKING JUDGMENTS DESCRIPTIVE

Alan C. Filley and Larry A. Pace

Both the literature and the training norms associated with the human-potential movement in the United States have stressed the value of using descriptive rather than judgmental language. It is useful in providing non-evaluative feedback (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1972; Hanson, 1975). It is helpful in developing a problem-solving rather than a conflictive interaction between parties (Filley, 1975). It tends to evoke factual rather than judgmental responses (Berne, 1961; Harris, 1969). In a counseling or therapeutic context, it encourages trust and openness between the parties rather than promoting defensiveness.

There is little doubt about the efficacy of such behavior. The response to the judgmental statement “You are wrong” is likely to be different from and less functional than the response to the descriptive statement “I disagree with you.” The former is more likely to evoke anger or defensiveness than the latter. The descriptive statement, instead, is more likely to generate neutral fact gathering and problem solving.

Yet experience indicates that judgments do have to be made and communicated. Words like “good,” “bad,” “effective,” “ineffective,” “better,” and “worse” are a necessary part of human interaction. Supervisors evaluate employee performance. Trainers communicate judgments about group performance. Therapists evaluate client progress. The way in which such judgments are communicated can evoke a wide variety of responses, depending on the form of the statement. Following are some alternative ways to make what might be called “descriptive judgments.” They suggest approaches in communicating evaluations that minimize the threat to the recipient and reduce his or her defensive reaction.

It is assumed that the performance of the party (a person or a group) in question has been objectively measured by any reasonably reliable method; the point of concern here is the objective assignment of value statements to measured performance. Thus, the definition of “good” versus “bad” performance is crucial. The elements of the process are twofold: (1) the presence of objective measures that compare actual behavior with some kind of standard and (2) the communication of the standard, the measure, and the judgment to the recipient.

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BASES FOR DESCRIPTIVE JUDGMENTS

Comparison with Other Measured Performances

When, for example, a supervisor tells an employee, “You are doing the same kind of work as employees A, B, and C, but last month they each averaged sixty units per hour and you averaged forty units per hour,” a comparison with other measured performances is being made. “On this basis I judge your work to be the least effective in the group.” In this situation the supervisor has communicated the basis for the judgment, the comparative measurement and relative position among the four workers, and his or her judgment. The response evoked is likely to be better than if the supervisor merely said, “You are not doing a good job.”

A judgment based on a comparison with all other comparable members is an example of what is known as “norm-referenced appraisal” in the testing sense (American Psychological Association, 1974, p. 19), in which, for example, the position of each person’s score is determined, compared with a mean, and expressed as a standard score. The major criticism of norm-referenced appraisal is that relative position depends on the performance of parties with whom the individual is compared. When used for purposes of judgment, the recipient might well say, “But my work is more like that of employees D, E, and F than employees A, B, and C.” This difficulty may be allayed if agreement about the proper comparison parties and about the unit of measurement to be used is obtained prior to the actual measurement and evaluation of performance.

Comparison with an Accepted Standard

A comparison based on this approach involves the use of a generally accepted definition of performance, over which the recipient has no control. For example, a supervisor may say, “We all know that the standard output for a person doing your job is sixty units per hour. You averaged forty units during the last month. On this basis I judge your work last month to be ineffective.” Again, the basis for measurement, the result, and the judgment have been communicated.

This method is one form of “criterion-referenced appraisal.” A cutoff score on admission tests used by a university is a similar example. The chief difficulty with criterion-referenced appraisal is the arbitrariness of the criterion level. This problem may be reduced by identifying valid evidence of the value of the standard. Such an approach is not likely to be welcome when the person making the judgment relies solely on his or her status or experience (for example, “Speaking as a psychologist . . .” or “In my experience . . .”).

Comparison with an A Priori Goal

The use of a standard to which the recipient has agreed prior to actual performance is essential with this method, which is another form of criterion-referenced appraisal. For example, a supervisor may say, “We both agreed last month that an acceptable level of

performance for you in your job would be an average of sixty units an hour. You have been averaging forty units over the last month. On this basis I would judge your performance as ineffective.” If, on the other hand, the supervisor says, “Your performance has averaged forty units per hour; that is ineffective,” the result may be an argument about whether forty units is really good or bad. We should remember that bettors place their bets before a wheel is spun or a race is run. “Good” must be defined prior to behavior if it is to have meaning.

The use of an *a priori* goal differs from the use of a generally accepted standard, in that the recipient agrees on the definition of “effective” or “good” performance before the activity takes place. Thus, it escapes the arbitrariness of an externally imposed standard.

Comparison with Desired Behavior

This approach emphasizes the recipient’s actions that have been shown to lead to preferred outcomes. For example, a supervisor may say, “When an employee arrives at work at the 9:00 starting time, presses the activating buttons on the machine for an average of forty minutes an hour, follows the prescribed work cycle, and takes no more than twenty minutes a day for relief breaks, he or she will average sixty units an hour. You have been late most days and have taken one hour for breaks, so your output has averaged forty units. That is not good behavior.”

Such comparisons between planned and actual behavior as an assessment of outcomes are a form of criterion referencing known as “content-referenced appraisal.” It differs from the appraisal based on a universal standard or an *a priori* goal because of its emphasis on the process that leads to desired outcomes. When a known procedure is shown to lead to a desired goal, controlling the performance of the procedure ensures the attainment of the goal. Thus, a judgment that the behavior is not being executed automatically suggests that outcomes will not be or have not been met.

Content-referenced appraisal depends on a proven connection between behavior and outcomes and on the recipient’s acceptance of that connection. Its chief limitation is the lack of consideration of other alternatives. Judgments about failure to follow desired behaviors may be resisted or resented by recipients who have demonstrated alternate behaviors that achieve the same goal. For this reason, content-referenced appraisal should probably be limited to situations in which there is only one process to a goal or one clearly superior alternative.

Comparison with Past Performance

A supervisor using this approach might say, “Your performance in the job averaged sixty units a day over the past six months. This month you averaged forty units a day. Your production this month has not been effective.” In this case the past performance provides the standard, and deviation from that standard is used as the measure of performance.

This approach is variously identified as “difference-score,” “gain-score,” or “change-score” analysis. In conventional usage a pretest is given, a treatment administered, and a posttest given. The two scores are compared, presuming that differences in test scores are a function of the treatment. Various forms of change analysis are widely used in teaching, counseling, and training to make assessments of performance.

Change-score analysis has been variously criticized, and its utility as a valid basis for inference has been rejected by some researchers. The objections are mainly statistical, having to do with the unreliability of such scores. In addition, it is not clear that the change is due to the treatment (or behavior of the party being evaluated).

CONSIDERATIONS

Some of the approaches discussed here suggest useful ways of making judgments descriptive and, therefore, more effective. Change scores do provide descriptive judgments, but they are sufficiently weak as a basis for judgment that their value in appraising performance is minimized. Particular applications may occur, such as the shaping of desired behavior; but equating “good” merely with “better” is not likely to be helpful. Content-referenced appraisal has the limitations already suggested.

However, both norm- and criterion-referenced judgments offer more promising application in the context described here. With the former it is important that the reference parties and the measures used be agreed on prior to behavior. With the latter it is important that the criterion be acceptable prior to behavior. In both cases the parties involved are merely defining “good” before the fact—an essential factor in evaluating what “good” is.

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■ **ALTERNATIVE DATA-FEEDBACK DESIGNS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL INTERVENTION**

David A. Nadler

The observation has been made that organization development (OD) has two basic roots associated with two specific technologies (French & Bell, 1973). One root is that of group dynamics, associated with the T-group and related laboratory methods used to facilitate organizational learning and change. Another root is that of action research, seen in the use of surveys and other data-collection devices as part of data-based organizational-change technologies. While the group-dynamics root has been heavily researched, discussed, and considered, the action-research or data-feedback root has received considerably less attention. At the same time, action-research and data-feedback tools have continued in general use by practitioners of organizational change, and their use has increased during recent years.

Over the past few years, however, work that gives serious and systematic attention to the question of how to use data for purposes of organizational change (see, for example, Bowers & Franklin, 1977; Nadler, 1977) has begun to emerge. The research on data-based organizational change and the development of theories about how information affects behavior in organizations have extended our knowledge of how data can be effectively used to initiate, facilitate, and monitor change. The use of data involves several discrete but interrelated steps (see Figure 1), including preparation for data collection, data analysis, data feedback, and follow-up. Of these, clearly data feedback stands out as the most critical stage in this cycle of events. Research and experience indicate that the way in which the feedback process is structured and implemented can have a major effect on the ultimate usefulness of that activity. Over time, different approaches to structuring the feedback experience—different feedback designs—have been developed and used in organizations. As such designs have proliferated, the change practitioner is faced with the question of which designs to use under what conditions.

This article is an attempt to identify the range of different data-feedback designs. It also tries to provide criteria for choosing among alternative designs by specifying the conditions under which different designs will be most effective. The first section is concerned with the role of the feedback meeting within the change process and the factors that affect the success of a feedback meeting. The second section identifies a number of feedback designs, some commonly used and some relatively new, and discusses the various characteristics of the designs and implications for their use.

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DATA-FEEDBACK MEETINGS AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Feedback of information about organizational functioning (be it from attitude surveys, interviews, observations, or whatever) is one of a number of different tools that can be used to initiate and guide participative change processes in organizations. Feedback can be a powerful stimulus for change, serving both to generate (that is, motivate) behavior and to direct behavior (through error correction or learning).

However, experience and research indicate that providing feedback to a group or organization does not automatically lead to change. As seen in Figure 2, several questions must be addressed for feedback (or any intervention for that matter) to result in change. The first question is whether the feedback creates any energy at all. If no energy is created, then there is no potential for change. People are not motivated to act, and thus change cannot occur. If energy is created, then the second question becomes important: What is the direction of the energy? Feedback can create energy to use data to identify and solve problems; on the other hand, it can also be threatening and thus create anxiety, which leads to resistance and ultimately a lack of change. Even if the feedback does create energy and direct it toward problem identification and solution, there is a third question: Do the means exist to transform that energy into concrete action? If not, frustration and failure may occur, and no change will result. If the necessary structures and processes do exist, then change can occur.

Various factors in the whole process of feedback influence how these questions are resolved. One factor is the nature of the feedback data; the data need to be timely and meaningful, presented in usable form, and so on. A second and possibly more important factor is how the feedback data are used by organizational members—what processes and structures are present to ensure that feedback will lead to the generation of energy, the direction of energy toward constructive change, and the translation of constructive energy into action.

Process and Content in the Feedback Meeting

Both research and experience with data-based change point to the importance of the feedback meeting (Klein, Kraut, & Wolfson, 1971; Nadler, 1976). Very clearly, change begins to occur when people sit down together to work with the data. What happens at feedback meetings is thus at the center of the question of whether feedback will produce change.

Change is initiated or occurs in two different ways in the feedback meeting. First, it occurs as a result of attention to the *content* of the data that are being fed back. Behavioral change can occur through mechanisms such as disconfirmation, learning, cueing, and so forth (see Nadler, 1977). The data provide information on problems in the organization and thus can trigger problem identification and solving. The data also provide people with goals to work toward and rewards for doing well. Thus, the content of the data—what the data actually say—is an important and obvious factor for initiating change.

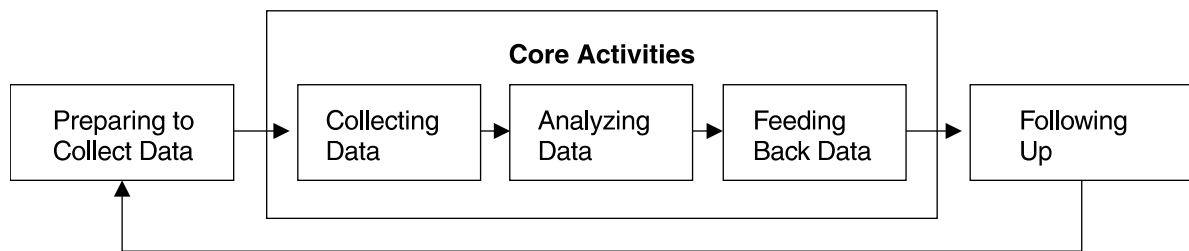


Figure 1. The Data-Collection/Feedback Cycle¹

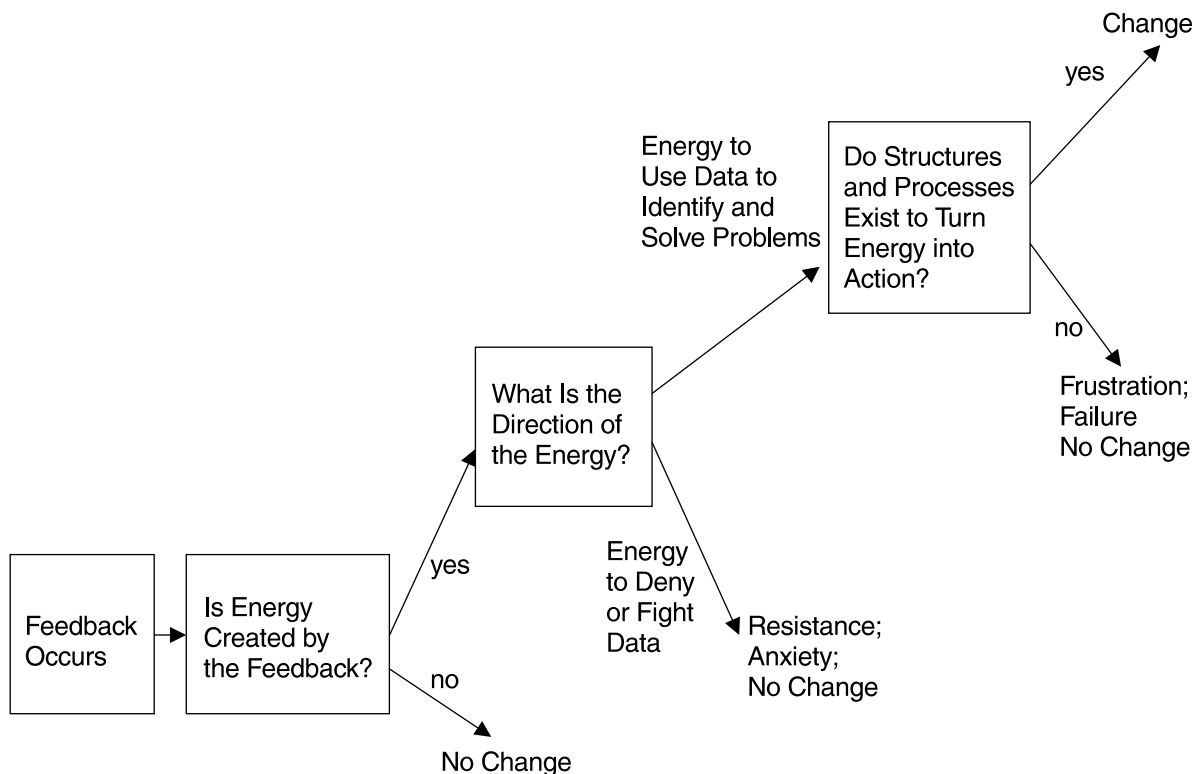


Figure 2. Possible Effects of Feedback²

A second important aspect of the feedback meeting, however, relates to the *process* of making use of data to identify and solve problems. Most approaches to feedback involve using the feedback meeting not only to examine what problems exist and what solutions may be applicable, but also to examine how the group goes about working on

¹ From D.A. Nadler, *Feedback and Organization Development: Using Data-Based Methods* (p. 43), © 1977 by Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

² From D.A. Nadler, *Feedback and Organization Development: Using Data-Based Methods* (p. 146), © 1977 by Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

and solving problems. The meeting is used to learn about and to improve how the group members work together, often with the help of an outside consultant.

The process and content dimensions of the feedback meeting are related to each other, and a successful feedback meeting needs to be effective in both dimensions. Process is particularly helpful in aiding the group in working through content problems; on the other hand, process problems in the group may be only symptomatic of larger problems as reflected in the content of the feedback data. The important question is how to create an effective process in feedback meetings so that energy will be generated, directed, and transformed into action.

Process Issues in the Feedback Meeting

Any group attempting to do work faces the problem of building an effective process (see Schein, 1969). Thus, a group specifically meeting to work on feedback has the normal process concerns of leadership, participation, communication, power, decision making, and so on. The feedback situation, however, has certain special aspects. People expect to receive data that pertains to them and possibly to their own behavior—a very different situation from working with everyday information that deals with things like production or markets, things that focus away from the behavior of the group. Because of the nature of the feedback meeting, the experience may be uncomfortable; people walk into feedback meetings with a number of different kinds of feelings that clearly affect the process of the meeting:

1. *Anxiety*. Perhaps the most pervasive feeling is anxiety. In organizations most people do not usually give, receive, or hear valid and straightforward feedback. Therefore, a feedback meeting is a new, unusual, and frequently uncertain situation; people do not know what to expect. This uncertainty initially makes the feedback meeting an uncomfortable experience.

2. *Defensiveness*. People enter the meeting thinking that negative things might be said about them, either individually or as a group; therefore, they are ready to defend themselves against attack. This defensiveness clearly can get in the way of effective communication and can hinder the ability of the group to identify and solve problems. When people are more interested in defending themselves than in finding out the causes and responses to problems, it becomes difficult to do constructive work.

3. *Fear*. People also worry about the consequences of their feedback. If, for example, lower-level employees have filled out a questionnaire and have been critical of their supervisor, they may be concerned about the supervisor's reaction and fear his or her response, seeing the possible result as decreased communication and punishing behavior. Fear concerning the reactions of other people, particularly people in power, therefore motivates people to be cautious, to hedge on their positions, and in some cases not to participate at all. When people enter the meeting with fear, the real issues may lurk beneath the surface and may never be brought up.

4. *Hope*. Not all of the feelings that people have on entering the meeting are negative. Frequently, individuals come to feedback meetings with a great deal of excitement and positive energy. They see in the data and in the meetings the possibility of major and constructive change and an opportunity for critical information to be put on the table, for problems to be surfaced, and for problem solving to begin.

To some degree, group members and leaders come to the feedback meeting with a combination of all of these feelings. The fact, however, that people come into the meeting with strong feelings of anxiety, defensiveness, fear, and hope makes the meeting a particularly complex situation and implies that issues of process in the group are important if the group is to do constructive work. There are many opportunities for the group to get sidetracked, to spend its energy in defensive or punitive behavior, or to let anxiety serve as a blockage to effective action. The process of working with the data is therefore important.

Agendas in the Feedback Meeting

In any meeting there is both a formal agenda and an informal process of group development. For the formal agenda, several specific approaches have been outlined elsewhere (for detailed guides, see, for example, Hausser, Pecorella, & Wissler, 1977; IBM, 1974). Most formal outlines see the meeting as having several discrete phases. Frequently, there is premeeting preparation with the meeting leader (sometimes the supervisor of a work group) or with the leader and the consultant. In the meeting itself, the first step is a brief introduction in which the group leader or consultant describes the goals of the meeting and attempts to establish how the group members will work together. Second, the leader or consultant gives a presentation or overview of the data. Third, the group gets involved in specific parts of the data, working to identify and define problems and develop solutions. This stage may extend over many meetings. Finally, the solutions that are generated are developed into an action plan as a basis either for recommendations or actual concrete action.

Questioning Data Validity

Other events occur in the feedback meeting that are not accounted for by the formal structure of the meeting. Neff (1965) has provided some insight into what happens by describing a series of stages that groups receiving feedback appear to go through. The first stage concerns data validity. People enter the meeting anxious, defensive, and possibly skeptical of the ability of the consultant's data-collection methods to come up with anything real or new. Thus, because they frequently deny the validity of the data, it is crucial early in the meeting to present data that people can verify, to provide them with some information on how the data were obtained, and to create the kind of climate in which people will not be motivated to deny the validity of the data. Obviously, if organizational members have been highly involved in the data collection and analysis, many of the validity problems are taken care of.

Resisting Responsibility

Once the validity of the data has been established, a second issue becomes important: The group members may *resist accepting responsibility* for the data and what they represent. They may claim that the results do not apply to their own group or that the causes of problems lie elsewhere (with top management, for instance). Frequently, this is flight behavior, in which members avoid the uncomfortable task of dealing with the problems indicated. Here the role of the consultant or leader is important in order to help the group redirect its energies toward identifying those aspects of its behavior for which it is responsible and away from flight or blaming other groups or people for problems.

Solving the Problem

Only when the data have been accepted as valid and the group has accepted responsibility for the data can *problem solving* occur. Problem solving involves some version of the basic steps of defining the problem, collecting information, generating alternative solutions, evaluating alternative solutions, making a choice of action plans, and implementing action plans. (For a more detailed description of problem-solving processes in groups, see Morris & Sashkin, 1976.)

The role of the consultant and group leader (who may or may not be the same person) is thus one of helping the group to resolve major issues of validity and responsibility so that it can move through the first two stages and begin problem solving. If the group is not helped, it may become stuck at one of the stages and never get to the point of accepting responsibility for problems and taking action.

Characteristics of the Successful Feedback Meeting

If it is assumed that most groups working with feedback will have normal process problems (facing the particular concerns of anxiety, defensiveness, hope, and fear) and will in some form move through the stages that Neff (1965) outlines, there are some things that need to be present to ensure that the group will effectively work on identifying and solving problems, that people will communicate clearly, that the process issues that may get in the way of the work will be surfaced, and that action steps will be generated from the meeting.

Let us assume that planning and preparation have been done well, that data collection and analysis have been competently executed, and that the feedback data and/or reports are well presented. Some energy has already been generated through the planning, data collection, and analysis work. It is now time to hold meetings with the purpose of generating more energy and directing and transforming that energy into concrete action that will result in the improvement of the organization. Given all this, the meeting must have at least some of the following characteristics if it is to be successful:

1. *Motivation to work with the data.* People need to feel that working on the data will lead to positive results and that these results may come from the activity itself. For

example, people may feel that working on the data will lead to an improved organization or working life. But they may also be motivated by specific rewards: A person may feel that his or her supervisor will approve of attempts to use the data to solve problems. Frequently, however, people feel that if they work on the data, raise problems, or attempt to identify their concerns, they will be punished by the organization or by their supervisor in some way. If people come into a meeting with the feeling that they will be punished if they raise problems, their motivation to work on the data will be decreased, and participation in the meeting may be very low. This underscores the need for early planning and understanding and the commitment of power groups to the data-collection and feedback process. If the general perception is that management, for example, does not really want to find out about and work on problems, all of the meetings in the world may lead to nothing.

2. *Assistance in using the data.* In the group, there must be some skill in understanding and using the data. Someone needs to understand how the data were collected, what they mean, and how they should be interpreted. There should also be someone skilled in using data once they are understood. This person (or persons) may be a group member, the formal leader, or someone from outside the group who can serve as a consultant to the group.

3. *A structure for the meeting.* Other meetings have structures such as procedures, agendas, rules, or ways of working together; but working with feedback is a new kind of task, and the old structures may not be adequate. Therefore, it may be useful to have some kind of agenda or outline that can provide a guide, a road map, to working with the data.

4. *Appropriate membership.* An important issue is who attends the meeting. In general, people who have problems in common and can benefit from working together on questions raised by the data should be included in the meeting. Who these people are, however, may vary from situation to situation. In some cases membership might consist of a formal work unit with its supervisor, a work unit without its supervisor, or a new group that cuts across existing lines. Different types of problems and different approaches to feedback call for different groups.

5. *Appropriate power.* The feedback group needs to have a clear idea of its power to make changes: on what issues it can make changes, on what issues it can recommend changes, and what issues are clearly out of its domain. A feedback group that has no power to make any changes may be better off not meeting at all. Of course, not every group can have the power to restructure the entire organization; but the members of a group can be provided with power to change how they work together and to alter certain aspects of their environment. In clarifying the nature of the group's power, the efforts of the group can be focused toward those areas over which it can exercise some control. For the total organization to change, a structure must be set up to ensure that the results of the feedback-initiated problem solving will be translated into concrete action.

6. *Process help*. A final necessary factor is some kind of assistance to ensure that the group's process is at least minimally effective. Someone, either inside or outside the group, needs to be attuned to the various process issues, to watch *how* the group is working rather than *what* it is working on. This person should have the skills to intervene and help the group to improve its process as it works on real organizational problems.

SYSTEMATIC FEEDBACK DESIGNS

Given the requirements for effective feedback meetings, there are a number of different ways in which feedback meetings can be structured. Each of these feedback designs differs on some dimensions, but each includes a preplanned and systematic approach to using feedback for change.

Characteristics of Feedback Designs

Three key characteristics seem to differentiate feedback designs. The first is the *composition* of the group or groups in which feedback meetings are held: existing groups within the current organizational structure or new groups created for the purpose of receiving, working with, and acting on feedback data. When existing groups are used, they may be used in combinations or in parts that normally do not meet together. The second characteristic has to do with the *sequence* in which the feedback data are presented to different individuals and groups within the organization. Data may be given to managers first and then their subordinates at subsequent organizational levels in a top-down approach, or data may be given to subordinates first in a bottom-up approach. Feedback may also be provided simultaneously to multiple levels of the organization. The third characteristic concerns the nature of the *consultant* and the role that he or she plays: whether the consultant who provides process assistance in the feedback meeting is internal or external to the system that is actively receiving feedback (as opposed to the total organizational system).

Given these characteristics, the literature on feedback and discussions with practitioners indicate that there are at least seven different feedback designs that have been used and some initial implications for using each of these. (See Table 1 for a listing of designs and major features and Table 2 for a summary of key characteristics of each design and implications for use.)

Family-Group Survey Feedback

One of the designs developed for feedback is the family-group survey-feedback approach (Baumgartel, 1959; Mann, 1957; Mann & Likert, 1952). At the core of this design is the collection of data from what are called "family groups" within the organization and the feedback of the data to those groups. A family group is a formal work group made up of a supervisor and all of the people who directly report to him or her. Implicit in this approach is the assumption that the critical behavioral problems in organizations are related to issues of leadership and group functioning (Likert, 1961)

and that the formal work group is the most logical forum for working on these problems. As opposed to other possible groups, such as a T-group made up of people who do not work with one another, the family group can implement solutions to problems because it is the group that actually works together in the day-to-day situation. An important element in the survey-feedback model is the process consultant. Although feedback sessions might be conducted by the formal leader or supervisor, a consultant is present to help the work group to solve problems. The consultant aids the group by calling its attention to process problems, particularly those having to do with how the group goes about problem solving. As a result, the group receiving feedback works on the data but at the same time works on developing its own ability as a problem-solving entity.

Table 1. Seven Feedback Designs and Their Major Features

Design	Major Features
1. Family-Group Survey Feedback (Mann, 1957)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback to family group (work group and its supervisor) ■ Questionnaire-based data ■ Process help from consultant
2. Survey-Guided Development (Bowers & Franklin, 1972)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback to family groups in a waterfall ■ Attitude data based on a model ■ Process help from trained internal resource people ■ Systemic diagnosis of total system
3. Subordinate Group (Schein, 1976)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback to family group ■ Subordinates see data first, work on them before supervisor sees them ■ Subordinates then meet with supervisor
4. Peer Group/Intergroup (Heller, 1970; Alderfer, 1973)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Peer groups concurrently see data and work on it by themselves ■ Cross-level meetings held (vertical intergroup)
5. Intergroup (Beckhard, 1969)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback shared between groups ■ Meetings held with both groups to work on problems (horizontal intergroup)
6. Collateral Problem-Solving Group (Mohrman, Mohrman, Cooke, & Duncan, 1977)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Separate feedback, problem-solving, and decision-making structure set up outside of normal structure ■ Collateral group does data collection, feedback, and problem solving
7. Ad Hoc Collateral Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Feedback given to large group ■ Small action groups form around problems

Table 2. Key Characteristics of Seven Feedback Designs and Implications for Use

Design	Key Characteristics			Implications for Use
	<i>Composition</i>	<i>Sequence</i>	<i>Consultant</i>	
1. Family-Group Survey Feedback	Existing units (as they are)	Top-down	External	Focus on existing work units; best for work on within-group process issues; dependent on outside consultant and supportive leader
2. Survey-Guided Development	Existing units (as they are)	Top-down	Internal	Focus on existing work units within a hierarchy; best for work on within-group issues and problems of communication up and down the hierarchy; breakdown of process at one level critical; preparation of internal resources important
3. Subordinate Group	Existing units (in parts)	Bottom-up	External	Focus on existing work units; best to work on issues of superior-subordinate relations in specific setting as well as relations among subordinates; absence of supervisor allows for building ownership in a safer environment; can be threatening to supervisor; is dependent on outsider
4. Peer Group/Intergroup	Existing units (in parts) or new units	Simultaneous	External	Focus on relationships between levels of the hierarchy; best to work on general issues of authority and communication within the hierarchy; moving out of family groups provides a better environment for considering these issues; dependent on external consultant
5. Intergroup	Existing units or new units	Simultaneous	External	Focus on relationship between different work units; best for work on intergroup relations, coordination, conflict; allows for direct exchange of feedback; heavily dependent on external consultant
6. Collateral Problem-Solving Group	New units	Simultaneous but limited	Internal	Focus on organizational-system issues; best for work on major system's problem rather than within or between group issues; may be combined with other designs; moves control of change process out of hierarchy; formation and mandate of group and internal resource training important
7. Ad Hoc Collateral Groups	New units	Top-down	External	Focus on entire-system issues; best used where there is a range of distinct problems in system; keeps control with management; requires coordination of process by consultant

The key characteristics of this approach are fairly straightforward: the use of existing work units (family groups) without any alterations; feedback being given in a top-down sequence, with managers receiving feedback before their subordinates; and the process consultant being external to the system receiving feedback.

As already mentioned, the focus of the process is on existing work units. Thus, this design is most appropriate when within-group issues are the major concern. It may not be very effective and may actually lead to increased feelings of frustration and powerlessness when major problems are outside the control of the work unit. As many people are naturally hesitant to discuss process issues in an ongoing group without an outside consultant, the design is heavily dependent on the external consultant's presence. It also is dependent on the group leader or manager's being supportive of the process so that problem solving and action steps will continue in the absence of the external consultant.

Survey-Guided Development

A logical extension of the family-group survey-feedback approach is the survey-guided-development design developed by Bowers and Franklin (1972, 1977). Survey-guided development draws heavily on Likert's (1961, 1967) model of organizational functioning. As with survey feedback, the core of survey-guided development is the feeding back of questionnaire data to formal work groups (family groups) within the organization.

Several important differences exist, however, between the two different approaches. Survey-guided development explicitly uses a top-down approach. Feedback starts with the top work group in the organization and then proceeds downward in what is called a "waterfall" design. Each supervisor participates as a group member in a feedback session with his or her own manager and peers before he or she conducts a feedback session with subordinates. As the feedback process moves downward through the hierarchy, ideas and suggestions are filtered upward through the chain of work groups. Second, the attitude data are taken from a standardized survey based on the Likert model (Taylor & Bowers, 1972). Third, process help and skill in using the data do not come from outside consultants. Rather, a group of internal resource people are trained in the concepts of the model and techniques of survey feedback. These internal people then serve as resources in the family-group meetings. Finally, the waterfall feedback design is supplemented by what is called "systemic diagnosis." Outside consultants write up a comprehensive analysis of the problems and functioning of the total organization based on the questionnaire results and give this report to top management. Based on the group feedback meetings and the systemic diagnosis, the organization may then go beyond survey feedback and begin other intervention work (such as job design, changes in compensation systems, and so on).

Survey-guided development is similar to family-group survey feedback in that it makes use of existing units as they are and it provides feedback very explicitly in a top-down sequence. On the other hand, the design involves the training and development of

internal resource people (consultants) who can aid in feedback meetings. These people, while not normally members of the group actually conducting the feedback meeting, are still internal to the total system receiving feedback; and their continued presence in that system combined with system-level diagnosis provides support for the feedback activity.

The focus of the feedback activity is on issues related to existing work units within a hierarchy. The design is thus best used for work on within-group issues and also for work on problems of communication up and down the hierarchy of the organization. The waterfall concept is both a strength and a weakness. Although having feedback at higher levels before having feedback at lower levels builds support for the activity, if a breakdown occurs at any one level, it is highly likely that the activities at all levels below that one may be less effective. Obviously, the training and skills of the internal resource people are critical. They need to be familiar with the content of the feedback data as well as to possess process skills.

Subordinate Group

Another variation on the family-group approach has been suggested by Schein (1976). Using the family group has risks because of the possibility of conflict between the role of the supervisor as the leader of the meeting and the role of the supervisor as the possible focus of feedback. The supervisor may do things that hinder the group's ability to work with data. Schein offers an alternative to the "top-down" survey-guided-development approach: a "bottom-up" subordinate-group approach. In this case, subordinates in the family group receive the feedback and work with it with the assistance of a consultant before the supervisor ever sees the data. Only after considerable work has been done is the supervisor given the data and asked to join the meeting. Thus, by the time the supervisor does join the meeting, the data have been validated, the group feels some ownership over them, and the process of using them as a problem-identification and -solving tool has been started. Much of the initial anxiety, fear, and defensiveness is defused by having the supervisor absent.

Although the subordinate-group feedback design makes use of existing work units (the family group), it uses them in parts rather than as a whole (for example, part of the unit—the subordinates—meets to work with the data before the whole unit meets). Clearly the sequence of receiving data is bottom-up, and the design involves an external consultant. As the bottom-up sequence runs contrary to the normal methods of distributing information, it has consequences for power relations and may be very threatening to the supervisor.

Thus, a competent and credible outside consultant is important; that consultant has the significant role of helping the supervisor to avoid natural feelings of defensiveness and of aiding the subordinates in using the data constructively. The design is particularly useful for working on issues of power and on particular issues of superior-subordinate relations and communications within the particular work unit. By removing the superior, the design also may facilitate clearer and more open communication among work-unit members about problems of relationships among themselves. The greatest risk,

obviously, involves the degree to which the supervisor is threatened by the loss of power.

Peer Group/Intergroup

Similar concerns with the effect of the supervisor in the feedback meeting have led to the development and testing of another approach, the peer-group/intergroup design (Alderfer & Holbrook, 1973; Heller, 1970). In this design, groups of peers (people at the same organizational level) review the data separately. Subordinates in one group therefore work with the data in the absence of their supervisor. At the same time, however, the supervisor works with the data in his or her peer group (other supervisors at the same level). After working in peer groups, with consultative help, the groups are brought together to share perceptions and to work on problems. Again the process of using the data and working on potentially threatening issues is initiated in the relatively safer peer environment and only later moved to the meeting with superiors. The final stage is essentially an intergroup conflict-resolution meeting, with the groups arrayed along a vertical dimension, one group being the subordinate of another group.

This design makes use of parts of existing work units and new work units (new peer groups). Feedback is provided simultaneously to several levels of the organization. A consultant who is external to the system is usually used. Such a design is best employed to work on general issues of authority, control, participation, and communication within the hierarchy. Moving out of family groups and into larger groups allows a more general consideration of these issues as they affect the whole organization or a portion of the organization, rather than a focus on issues just within one work unit. Moving out of family groups provides a safer environment for dealing with issues of authority, but some external force (that is, the consultant) is needed to make sure that the learnings and practices coming out of the intergroup sessions are supported and integrated into ongoing patterns of behavior.

Intergroup

Although not exclusively a feedback approach, the intergroup confrontation meetings proposed by Beckhard (1969) are applicable. Data concerning the relations between two or more groups are collected by various means—a questionnaire, an individual interview, or a direct group interview. Included in these data are one group's perceptions of another group, which are then fed back to the other group as a way of initiating a discussion of the conflicts, tensions, and common interests that exist between the groups.

As with the peer-group/intergroup design, this approach makes use of both existing work units and new work units. Feedback is provided simultaneously to different parts of the organization, and an external consultant is usually involved. Here the focus of the design is on the relations that exist between different work units but generally does not involve questions of authority or control, as the two work units or groups are not in a direct authority relationship with each other. Such a design is best to work on issues of

intergroup conflict, including questions of intergroup perceptions, coordination problems, active conflict, communication problems between groups, and so forth. The design allows for direct exchange of feedback between groups across organizational boundaries, with an external consultant present to help groups to hear feedback and work constructively with it. As with the peer-group/intergroup model, it is inherently dependent on an external third party who is trusted by both groups, is perceived as neutral, and has process skills that can be used to aid the groups in sharing their feedback and working constructively with the data.

Collateral Problem-Solving Groups

The argument has been made that the family group is not the most effective place for receiving feedback and working on problems because the family group, with its supervisor, is part of the hierarchy of the organization; and frequently the problems that the feedback deals with are caused by the nature of the organization's structure and how it solves problems. Based on this observation, a number of feedback designs have been developed that involve the creation of new structures outside the existing hierarchy as special feedback, problem-solving, and decision-making groups. Probably the best-developed example of this is the collateral problem-solving group design developed for use in educational settings (Coughlan & Cooke, 1974; Mohrman, Mohrman, Cooke, & Duncan, 1977). The groups include representatives of the organization (in this case, the individual school members), with similar groups created at other levels of the organization (for example, at the level of the school district). These groups have overlapping memberships so that communication across levels of the new hierarchy is relatively easy and so that groups at the school level can refer broader problems and receive support from groups at a higher (district) level. In each group, at least one member receives intensive training on problem-solving and survey-feedback methods from outside consultants. This member subsequently serves as the process consultant and group leader. The group then coordinates the collection of data, and the feedback is directed to this group. The group works to solve problems, make decisions, and implement solutions with the help of other groups at different levels. Thus, feedback is used as an initiator. The groups are permanent structures that become involved in other kinds of change and frequently resort to other kinds of data-collection activities and interventions. The design combines feedback with the creation of a new organizational structure to build a permanent mechanism in the organization for identifying and solving problems, this mechanism being outside the basic formal organizational structure. As a permanent structure, it has the advantage of continuing change activities long after the first survey and feedback sessions.

The collateral problem-solving group design makes use of new organizational units and specifically moves control of the feedback data and process out of the existing hierarchy. As the group represents different levels of the hierarchy, and this group receives the data first, feedback is basically simultaneous with regard to level, although limited to selected members of the organization. The design is intended to make use of

members of the system (members of the collateral problem-solving group) to work as process consultants after extensive training.

The design is best used when large-scale, system-level problems need to be investigated and addressed. It is much less effective by itself for working on within-group or between-group issues, although it may be combined with other designs if those issues are of concern. The design moves control of the change process away from the hierarchy and to a new group, and thus it is inherently a change in power relations and an organization-design intervention. Because of this, the method of forming the group, the mandate of the group, and the skill and role of the internal consultant are critical if the design is to work effectively. A group with an unclear mandate, inappropriate composition, and a weak resource person with limited skills will not be able to bring about major change.

Ad Hoc Collateral Groups

A variation of the collateral-group design is multiple collateral groups, each focused on a specific problem or issue and each having a temporary or limited existence. This ad hoc design is less of a radical change in the organization's structure, but it still involves the creation of some mechanisms outside the existing structure designed for identifying and solving problems. Typically, feedback from a survey is given to a large organizational unit (such as a division or a large department). This feedback can be given in multiple sessions or in one large session. In the course of the feedback presentation, major critical issues and problems are identified. Following the feedback, small groups are formed through self-selection. Each of these small "action groups" is charged with working on a specific problem surfaced by the feedback (such as supervision or pay systems). These groups do further data collection and develop action plans, which are then put together by the consultant and used as a basis for deciding on further steps, including additional data collection, further feedback, or other changes in the organization.

This design also makes use of new units, although the feedback sequence is top-down. Management generally receives feedback first and then passes on the data for work by the ad hoc groups. The consultant is generally someone who is external to the system of ad hoc groups and has the role of coordinating the work of the different groups.

The design is best used when there is a range of distinct problems within an organizational system that can be identified and addressed individually. This design differs significantly from the previous one in that it keeps the control of the change process in the hands of management, which does the initial diagnostic interpretations based on the data, determines what problems warrant the creation of collateral groups, and ultimately determines what actions will be taken on the collateral groups' recommendations.

IDENTIFYING AND CHOOSING FEEDBACK DESIGNS

The organization has a wide range of differing designs to choose from when planning feedback interventions. Or designs may be combined to create new and hybrid designs. For example, the ad hoc collateral problem-solving design might include within it family-group survey feedback, subordinate-group feedback, or peer-group/intergroup feedback as one of the activities for the collateral groups. The designs are not necessarily mutually exclusive.

Another choice point involves the design of continual feedback interventions. Most of the designs as described imply a single feedback meeting or a process involving several meetings that end at a specific time. Recently, experiments have been conducted that have begun to indicate the potential value of creating continual or ongoing feedback interventions (Nadler, Mirvis, & Cammann, 1976). Such approaches again could be combined with many of the designs discussed here.

The realization that a choice exists among feedback designs is important, but it is only a first step. Clearly, additional work needs to be done in the development of this change technology. First, additional feedback designs need to be identified. The seven designs presented here are not necessarily all of the designs in use or all that are suggested by the research. Thus, it will be important to continue to identify other designs that differ significantly from the ones described here and that provide the structure for working on different kinds of organizational problems.

A second concern is the further investigation and testing of the applicability of different designs to different problems and situations. The implications for use briefly described in this article are basically hypothetical, based on some limited research results and some common sense. There is a need to test these hypotheses and to go beyond speculation. One way is to do research that tests the effectiveness of different feedback designs in different situations and for different problems (Sashkin & Cooke, 1976, have made a first stab in this direction). Perhaps more useful and productive in the long run would be to have practitioners who have used different feedback designs begin to share their knowledge and to aid in the development of guidelines for using different designs for different organizational problems.

Information in general—and data feedback in particular—provides a potentially powerful technology and tool for bringing about organizational change. A critical issue in whether that tool is successfully used involves the structure of the feedback process and the feedback meeting.

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■ INTERPERSONAL FEEDBACK: PROBLEMS AND RECONCEPTUALIZATION

Raymond V. Rasmussen

In the field of cybernetics, the term “feedback” is used to describe an essential component of self-regulating devices (Ruben, 1972). A thermostat is a familiar example. In human relations, “feedback” has been used to refer to a process of information gathering and correction: One person feeds back his or her perceptions of another person so that the second person can make his or her social or work behavior more effective.

A number of writers have said that giving and receiving feedback is one of the most important processes in group dynamics (Devine, 1976; DiBerardinis, 1978; Hanson, 1973; Lundgren & Schaeffer, 1976). Schein and Bennis (1965) have stated that practically all human learning is based on obtaining information about performance (feedback) and then determining how far the performance deviates from a desired goal. According to these authors, feedback shakes up or “unfreezes” people by creating a perceived threat to their self-concepts. The unfreezing process elicits a need for change. Support for this notion comes from a review of the T-group literature by Campbell and Dunnette (1968), who found that the reception of negative feedback stimulates a group member to alter his or her level of self-satisfaction and to try new behaviors.

Feedback is also a widely prescribed strategy in the management literature (Hackman & Oldham, 1976; Luthans & Kreitner, 1975; Tosi & Carroll, 1970). The utility of interpersonal feedback in the organization has been explained by several writers. For example, Myers and Myers (1973) state that in order to be effective in an organization, people need to know how their behavior impacts others. Solomon (1977) has stated:

Feedback...can help an individual become more effective in his interpersonal relations, on-the-job behavior, and task accomplishment. If a person's behavior is not having desirable or intended effects, he can change it. Without feedback, the impact of his behavior on others may never be fully or accurately known. (p. 185)

Although feedback has many potential benefits, it also seems clear that it does not always work in practice. Pfeiffer and Jones (1972) have stated that unrestricted, untethered truth can create high levels of anxiety and can cause people to become less able to accomplish their goals; Solomon (1977) suggested that feedback can lead to long-term reprisals; Lundgren and Schaeffer (1976) found that negative feedback was

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often rejected by the recipient; and Gibb (1961) found that the ways in which messages typically are delivered in interpersonal situations tend to evoke defensiveness.

There are problems in transmitting as well as in receiving feedback. For example, substantial evidence shows that people try to avoid transmitting unpleasant messages (Blumberg, 1972; Fitts & Ravdin, 1953; Oken, 1961; Tesser & Rosen, 1975) and that if they cannot avoid giving feedback, people tend to distort it or make it more positive (Fisher, 1979; Tesser, Rosen, & Tesser, 1971).

A good deal of the literature on feedback is prescriptive in nature and not empirically validated (Argyris, 1962; Egan, 1975; Gibb, 1961; Hanson, 1975; Kurtz & Jones, 1973; Mill, 1976; Morris & Sashkin, 1976; Pfeiffer & Jones, 1972; Solomon, 1977). It suggests that there are certain rules for delivering feedback that will make the feedback more effective. The majority of these prescriptions concern the accuracy, focus, timing, objectivity, and validation of the transmission, that is, ensuring that the recipient receives the correct message. Keltner (1973, p. 97) stresses, "For any change to occur not only is feedback essential, but the synonymous meaning of the message must be shared by the generator and the receiver."

It seems likely, however, that accuracy of transmission is not the major cause of problems with the feedback process. Several writers have acknowledged that feedback can hurt people and lead to defensiveness and reprisals *despite skillful delivery* (Porter, 1974; Solomon, 1977). A second, largely unaddressed, problem with the feedback process has to do with the *willingness* of the recipient to utilize the feedback. Until this problem is resolved, feedback may remain underutilized and problematic in human systems. Therefore, this paper will now address the problem of willingness.

FEEDBACK AS PART OF A CHANGE PROCESS

Most of the literature views feedback as an input to help direct behavioral change (Budd, 1972; Hanson, 1975; Mill, 1976). However, the implication that change is necessary or desired evokes feelings about being controlled. According to Gibb (1961), a continual bombardment of persuasive messages from politicians, educators, special causes, advertising, religion, medical experts, and industrial relations and guidance counselors has resulted in cynical and paranoid responses to messages that contain an element of control. Gibb also states that change messages convey implicit, esteem-reducing information that evokes defensive reactions:

Implicit in all attempts to alter another person is the assumption by the change agent that the person to be altered is inadequate. That the speaker secretly views the listener as ignorant, unable to make his own decisions, uninformed, immature, unwise, or possessed of wrong or inadequate attitudes is a subconscious perception which gives the latter a valid base for defensive reactions. (p. 143)

Such resistance to change messages is not a new phenomenon. According to McGinnes and Ferster (1971, p. 432), "Ever since Machiavelli, and perhaps before, there

has been a fear of control and manipulation of one person's behavior for the benefit of another."

The perspective of the behaviorist school also sheds light on why feedback may be a problematic process. According to the behaviorists, society primarily uses aversive or punishment-oriented control techniques (Luthans & Kreitner, 1975; Skinner, 1953). Thus, negative feelings that are associated with being controlled by aversive methods have become associated with any attempt to control behavior, even if the attempt is intended to be helpful.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE FEEDBACK

A second reason why change-oriented feedback may cause problems concerns the *focus* of the feedback. Although some writers emphasize that both positive and negative feedback can be given in a group context (Luthi, 1978; Solomon, 1977), the Schein and Bennis (1965) learning model clearly emphasizes that it is negative feedback that is disconfirming and causes unfreezing and the need for change to occur.

The emphasis on feeding back any negative information is strongly opposed by the behaviorists (Gambriel, 1977; Luthans & Kreitner, 1975), who believe that the best way to create behavioral change is to focus on positive or desired behaviors and to ignore undesirable behaviors. In their view, negative feedback probably constitutes a punishing experience for most people and can lead to detrimental side effects (for example, anxiety, reduced performance, defensiveness, reprisal).

The counseling literature takes a similar view. Berenson and Mitchell (1969) have distinguished five major types of confrontation, including "strength" confrontation, focused on the resources of the person being confronted, and "weakness" confrontation, focused on the pathology or liabilities of the person being confronted. Their research indicates that effective helpers use strength confrontations more frequently and weakness confrontations less frequently than ineffective helpers.

FEEDBACK AND VALUES

The difficulties of the feedback process can be understood further by considering the issue of values. A person who sets a thermostat decides on a "good" temperature. The thermostat does not care. However, in human systems, there often is more than one definition of the desirable state. Discussion and clarification not only of behaviors but also of conflicting *values* often are required. If, for example, there is consensus among group members that it is good to be assertive and members of the group provide feedback about certain behaviors of an unassertive member, the information could help the recipient to become more assertive. If, however, the values of those providing the feedback are not accepted as correct, the feedback may indicate a need to examine the system as a whole. It may be that the "unassertive" person's values are of a higher order than those of the other members of the group. It also may be that the person who

initiated the feedback could benefit from examining his or her reactions to “unassertive” people.

HELPING OR CONFLICT MANAGEMENT?

Another difficulty in the feedback process has to do with whether feedback is perceived as part of a helping or conflict-management process. In most group situations, the people who are sending feedback probably see themselves in helping roles whereas, in reality, their position may be better described as being in conflict with those of the other people. That is, if one person experiences a drive to send feedback to another person, it usually is because he or she feels that there is something bothersome or wrong with the other person’s behavior. It is probably for these reasons that Rogers (1970) prefers to use the term “confrontation” for encounter situations in which people give each other feedback and why Egan’s (1970, p. 295) definition of confrontation is so similar to what others have called feedback: “Confrontation takes place when one person, either deliberately or inadvertently, does something that causes or directs another person to reflect upon, examine, question, or change some aspect of his behavior.”

When conflict-oriented feedback is sent in the guise of a helping gesture, there is a problem for both sender and recipient. The sender-helper is certain that the problem rests with the other and that the solution is for the other to change. Thus, the sender fails to examine his or her own values and behavior. The problem is compounded because the would-be helper is frustrated when the recipient-helpee indicates an unwillingness to accept the information and to change his or her behavior.

On the other side, the recipient may feel grateful because of the attention or intention to help, but probably also feels hurt and resentful because of sensed criticism and the impression that a comfortable behavior is being attacked.

A skilled helper should be able to distinguish between conflict and helping feedback. According to Egan (1975), conflictual feedback stems from a discrepancy between the sender’s values and the values and behaviors of the recipient. Helping feedback is based on the discrepancies between the *recipient’s* values and behaviors. People who attempt to give feedback in either group or organizational contexts are unlikely to be operating at this level of sophistication. In fact, they simply accept the trainer’s implicit suggestion that feedback is “helpful” and, thus, think of themselves as helpers.

In summary, little attention has been paid to the willingness of the recipient of feedback to change his or her behavior. Unwillingness may stem from several factors: whether the recipient perceives the feedback as control, whether the feedback is positive or negative, whether the feedback is based on the sender’s or recipient’s values, and whether the feedback is described as “help” when it would better be described as “conflict.”

RECOMMENDATIONS

If the points made in this article are accepted, prescriptions that have been suggested elsewhere for making the feedback process more effective can be expanded and, in some cases, should be modified.

First, people giving feedback should be able to distinguish between conflict-based feedback and helping-oriented feedback. If the feedback is conflict based, a conflict-resolution process should be utilized. Then the feedback would be merely the start of an examination by both the initiator and the recipient to examine the behavior in question with respect to their different value systems. The resolution could entail a change of attitude or behavior on the part of either the initiator or the recipient or both. Although accuracy of transmission is important, it is less important than the recognition that the situation is conflictual. Gordon's (1970) system of Parent Effectiveness Training, Gibb's (1961) Problem Orientation, and Harris's (1969) Transactional Analysis model are examples of conflict-management processes based on these premises.

Second, some behaviors that would be appropriate in a helping situation would be inappropriate in a conflict situation. For example, consensual validation by others in a conflict situation would be likely to be thought of as interference and could hinder the resolution of the conflict.

Third, in either a conflict or a helping situation, an effort to reinforce desired behaviors and ignore undesirable behaviors would probably be more effective than describing, and thus implicitly criticizing, undesirable behaviors.

Fourth, in *any* feedback situation, it should be acknowledged that the feedback is likely to evoke negative affect and feelings of resistance. The message that feedback can lead to growth and therefore is something that one should gracefully accept denies the reality of the situation and compounds the problem by placing pressure on the recipient.

Fifth, in a conflict-based situation, the sender of the feedback may well use the urge to send feedback as the beginning of a self-examination that may lead to a change in his or her own attitudes or behavior. This person then may or may not choose to send the feedback.

In summary, problems with the use of feedback in human systems stem from two sources: the difficulty in transmitting messages accurately and the degree of willingness of the recipient to use the transmitted information. The literature deals primarily with techniques for transmission and largely ignores the issue of the willingness of the recipient. The suggestions in this article for modifying and adding to the prescriptions for users of the feedback process provide an area for further exploration of the use of feedback in group and organizational settings.

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■ THE LOST ART OF FEEDBACK

Hank Karp

The ability and the willingness to communicate effectively are the keys to supervisory success. Although communication effectiveness is based on the ability to make and maintain effective contact, regardless of the situation, specific areas of communications require some additional thought and planning.

One of the most important tools for maintaining control and developing people is the proper use of feedback. Although feedback has been categorized as positive and negative, another way of viewing it is to classify it into *supportive* feedback (which reinforces an ongoing behavior) and *corrective* feedback (which indicates that a change in behavior is appropriate). In this sense, all feedback is positive. The purpose of all feedback should be to assist a person in maintaining or enhancing his or her present level of effectiveness.

Some feedback, by definition, is better than no feedback. There are, however, ways to give feedback well and ways to give it superbly; there are also ways to receive it effectively. This article presents some guidelines that can help to sharpen the processes of giving and receiving feedback. The most important function of feedback is to help the person who is receiving that feedback to keep in touch with what is going on in the environment.

SUPPORTIVE FEEDBACK

Supportive feedback is used to reinforce behavior that is effective and desirable. An axiom of effective supervision is “Catch them doing something right and let them know it” (Blanchard & Johnson, 1982). One of the most damaging and erroneous assumptions that many supervisors make is that good performance and appropriate behavior are to be expected from the employee and that the only time feedback is needed is when the employee does something wrong. Therefore, these supervisors never give supportive feedback. If a supervisor, however, were determined to give only one kind of feedback, he or she would do well to choose supportive feedback and let corrective feedback go. In other words, if a supervisor stressed errors only, the end result would be—at most—an attempt by employees to do standard, error-free work. This accomplishment would not be *bad*, but there is a better way.

If a supervisor concentrated on what employees were doing well, then superior work is what those employees would become aware of. They would begin to view their

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work in terms of performing as well and as creatively as possible. What is reinforced has a tendency to become stronger; what is not reinforced has a tendency to fade away. If excellence is actively reinforced and errors are simply mentioned, employees will focus on excellence and tend to diminish errors. The following example of the two types of feedback illustrates the difference.

Focus on errors: “The last three pieces in that batch contained wrong figures. We cannot have that kind of sloppy work in this department.”

Focus on good work: “This batch looks good, except for the last three pieces, which contain wrong figures. You probably used the wrong formula. Take them back and check them out, just the way you did the first group.”

Fortunately, however, no one has to make a choice between using only supportive or only corrective feedback. Both are essential and valuable, and it is important to understand how each works so that the maximum gain can be received from the process.

CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Corrective feedback is used to alter a behavior that is ineffective or inappropriate. It is as essential to the growth process as supportive feedback. A corrective feedback session, although never hurtful if done properly, is not a particularly pleasant experience. Under the best of circumstances, the subordinate will probably feel a little defensive or embarrassed.

In giving corrective feedback, the manager should have an option ready to present. When the employee is made aware of the inappropriate behavior, having an immediate alternative can be effective and powerful in shaping behavior. By presenting the alternative immediately after the corrective feedback, the manager is helping the subordinate to come out of a personally uncomfortable situation in the shortest possible time. This protects the dignity of the subordinate. The manager also is establishing himself or herself as a supporter of good work and good workers, which goes a long way in developing strong, productive, and supportive working relationships. Also very important, the manager is presenting an alternative that the employee might never have considered—or that was considered and rejected. This provides for immediate learning. Most important, however, is the fact that the manager is making the employee aware that an alternative was available at the time the employee chose to act otherwise. This awareness can help the employee to take responsibility for his or her own choices. In other words, the employee would realize, “That’s right; I could have done it that way.” The following example shows how an alternative can be effectively added to the feedback: “When you snapped at Ann in front of the group, she appeared to be very embarrassed and angry. *When you must remind an employee to be on time, it’s less embarrassing for everyone to discuss it with the employee privately after the meeting.*”

GUIDELINES FOR EFFECTIVE FEEDBACK

The following guidelines are helpful for managers who are trying to improve their feedback skills, and they may also be used as a review prior to giving feedback.

1. Deal in Specifics

Being specific is the most important rule in giving feedback, whether it is supportive or corrective. Unless the feedback is specific, very little learning or reinforcement is possible. The following examples illustrate the difference in general and specific statements.

General: “I’m glad to see that your work is improving.”

Specific: “I’m pleased that you met every deadline in the last three weeks.”

General: “You’re a very supportive person.”

Specific: “I appreciate your taking time to explain the contract to our new employee.”

General: “You’re falling down on the job again.”

Specific: “Last month most of your cost reports were completely accurate, but last week four of your profit/loss figures were wrong.”

The last set is, of course, an example of corrective feedback. General statements in corrective feedback frequently result in hostile or defensive confrontations, whereas specific statements set the stage for problem-solving interaction. Carrying the last illustration one step farther, the manager could add an alternative: “Start checking the typed report against the computer printouts. Some of the errors may be typos, not miscalculations.”

If the employee is to learn from feedback and respond to it, then he or she must see it in terms of *observable* effects. In other words, the employee must be able to see clearly how his or her behavior had a direct impact on the group’s performance, morale, and so on. When the employee sees the point of the feedback objectively, the issue will be depersonalized; and the employee will be more willing to continue with appropriate behaviors or to modify inappropriate behaviors. Although the manager’s personal approval (“I’m glad to see . . .”) or disapproval (“I’m disappointed that . . .”) can give emphasis to feedback, it must be supported by specific data in order to effect a change in behavior.

2. Focus on Actions, Not Attitudes

Just as feedback must be specific and observable in order to be effective, it must be nonthreatening in order to be acceptable. Although subordinates—like their supervisors—are always accountable for their *behavior*, they are never accountable for their attitudes or feelings. Attitudes and feelings cannot be measured, nor can a manager determine if or when an employee’s feelings have changed. For feedback to be acceptable, it must respect the dignity of the person receiving the feedback.

No one can attack attitudes without dealing in generalities, and frequently attacks on attitudes result in defensive reactions. The following example illustrates the difference between giving feedback on behavior and giving feedback on attitudes.

Feedback on attitude: “You have been acting hostile toward Jim.”

Feedback on behavior: “You threw the papers down on Jim’s desk and used profanity.”

An attitude that managers often try to measure is loyalty. Certain actions that *seem* to indicate loyalty or disloyalty can be observed; but loyalty is a *result*, not an action. It cannot be demanded; it must be earned. Whereas people have total control over their own behavior, they often exercise little control over their feelings and attitudes. They feel what they feel. If a manager keeps this in mind and focuses more energy on things that can be influenced (that is, employee behavior), changes are more likely to occur.

The more that corrective feedback is cast in specific behavioral terms, the more it supports problem solving and the easier it is to control. The more that corrective feedback is cast in attitudinal terms, the more it will be perceived as a personal attack and the more difficult it will be to deal with. The more that supportive feedback is cast in terms of specific behaviors, the higher the probability that those behaviors will be repeated and eventually become part of the person’s natural way of doing things.

3. Determine the Appropriate Time and Place

Feedback of either type works best if it is given as soon as feasible after the behavior occurs. Waiting decreases the impact that the feedback will have on the behavior. The passage of time may make the behavior seem less important to the manager; other important events begin to drain the energy of the manager, and some of the details of the behavior might be forgotten. On the other hand, dwelling on it for a long period could blow it out of proportion. From the subordinate’s viewpoint, the longer the wait for the feedback, the less important it must be. The following example illustrates this point.

Tardy feedback: “Several times last month you fell below your quota.”

Immediate feedback: “There are only ten products here; your quota for today was fourteen.”

Enough time should be allotted to deal with the issues in their entirety. A manager can undercut the effectiveness by looking at the clock and speeding up the input so that an appointment can be met. Answering the telephone or allowing visitors to interrupt the conversation can have the same effect. The manager can also cause unnecessary stress by telling an employee at ten o’clock in the morning, “I want to see you at three this afternoon.” A more appropriate procedure would be to say, “Would you please come to my office now” or “When you reach a stopping point, drop by my office. I have something good to tell you.”

In addition to an appropriate time, the setting for the feedback is important. The old proverb “Praise in public, censure in private” is partially correct. Almost without exception, corrective feedback is more appropriately given in private. In the case of supportive feedback, however, discretion is needed. In many instances, praise in public

is appropriate and will be appreciated by the subordinate. In other instances, privacy is needed to keep the positive effect from being short-circuited. For example, some people make a virtue out of humility; any feedback that reinforces their sense of worth is embarrassing. Rather than appreciating an audience, this type of employee would find it painful and perhaps resent it.

Sometimes a norm arises in a work group that prevents anyone from making a big deal out of good work. This does not mean that the group does not value good work, but supportive feedback in private might prevent the employee from feeling he or she was responsible for breaking the norm. In other instances, public praise can cause jealousy, hostility, or tense working relationships. Therefore, a conscious decision should be made about whether or not to give the supportive feedback publicly.

Another important consideration is the actual location selected for giving the feedback. The delivery of the feedback should match its importance. If the feedback concerns an important action, the manager's office would be better than an accidental encounter in the hall. On the other hand, the manager might convey a quick observation by telling someone at the water fountain, "Say, that was beautiful art work on the Madison report." Choosing the time and place is a matter of mixing a little common sense with an awareness of what is going on.

4. Refrain from Inappropriately Including Other Issues

Frequently when feedback is given, other issues are salient. When supportive feedback is given, any topic that does not relate to the specific feedback point should not be discussed if it would undercut the supportive feedback. For example, the manager could destroy the good just accomplished by adding, "And by the way, as long as you are here, I want to ask you to try to keep your files a little neater. While you were away, I couldn't find a thing."

When corrective feedback is given, however, the situation is different. The manager will want the feedback to be absorbed as quickly and as easily as possible, with the employee's negative feelings lasting no longer than necessary. Therefore, as soon as the feedback has been understood and acknowledged, the manager is free to change the subject. The manager may want to add, "I'm glad that you see where the error occurred. Now, as long as you are here, I'd like to ask your opinion about" This type of statement, when used appropriately, lets the subordinate know that he or she is still valued. Obviously, the manager should not contrive a situation just to add this type of statement; but when the situation is naturally there, the manager is free to take advantage of it.

In certain situations, it is appropriate to give supportive and corrective feedback simultaneously. Training periods of new employees, performance-appraisal sessions, and times when experienced employees are tackling new and challenging tasks are all good examples of times when both types of feedback are appropriate. Nevertheless, some cautions are necessary:

Never follow the feedback with the word “but.” This word will negate everything that was said before it. If it is appropriate to give supportive and corrective feedback within the same sentence, the clauses should be connected with “and.” This method allows both parts of the sentence to be heard clearly and sets the stage for a positive suggestion. The following examples illustrate the difference:

Connected with “but”: “Your first report was accurate, but your others should have measured up to it.”

Connected with “and”: “Your first report was accurate, and your others should have measured up to it.”

Connected with “but”: “You were late this morning, but Anderson called to tell you what a great job you did on the Miller account.”

Connected with “and”: “You were late this morning, and Anderson called to tell you what a great job you did on the Miller account.”

Alternate the supportive and corrective feedback. When a great deal of feedback must be given, it is frequently better to mix the supportive feedback with the corrective feedback than to give all of one type and then all of the other. If all of one type is given first, regardless of which type comes first, the latter will be remembered more clearly. If a chronic self-doubter is first given supportive feedback and then only corrective feedback, he or she is likely to believe the supportive feedback was given just to soften the blow of the other type. Alternating between the two types will make all of the feedback seem more genuine.

When feasible, use the supportive feedback to cushion the corrective feedback. When both types of feedback are appropriate, there is usually no reason to start with corrective feedback. However, this does not mean that corrective feedback should be quickly sandwiched between supportive feedback statements. Each type is important, but frequently supportive feedback can be used as an excellent teaching device for areas that need correcting. This is especially true if the employee has done a good job previously and then failed later under similar circumstances. For example, the manager might say, “The way you helped Fred to learn the codes when he was transferred to this department would be appropriate in training the new employees.”

PRINCIPLES OF FEEDBACK

Two major principles govern the use of feedback. The first principle, which relates to how feedback is conducted, can be paraphrased as “I can’t tell you how you are, and you can’t tell me what I see.” In other words, the person giving the feedback is responsible to relate the situation as he or she observes it; and the person receiving the feedback is responsible for relating what he or she meant, felt, or thought. The second principle is that feedback supports growth.

Giving Feedback: “You Can’t Tell Me What I See”

The object of giving feedback is not to judge the other person, but to report what was seen and heard and what the effects of the behavior were. Personal approval or disapproval, even if important, is secondary.

Feedback should be given directly to the person for whom it is intended. When others are present, the manager sometimes addresses them almost to the exclusion of the intended recipient, who sits quietly and gathers information by eavesdropping. Good contact with the recipient is an essential element in giving feedback.

It is never necessary to apologize for giving corrective feedback. Corrective or otherwise, feedback is a gift; apologies will discount its importance and lessen its impact. Nevertheless, corrective feedback must be given in a way that does not jeopardize the recipient’s dignity and sense of self-worth.

It is sometimes helpful to offer an interpretation of the behavior or a hunch about what the behavior might indicate. What is of paramount importance is that the interpretation be offered as a suggestion and *never* as a judgment or clinical evaluation of the person. Only the recipient is capable of putting it into a meaningful context. For example, the manager might say, “When Pete showed you the error you made, you told him it was none of his concern. I wonder if you were mad at Pete for some other reason.” This statement shows the recipient the behavior and allows him or her to consider a possible cause for that behavior.

Receiving Feedback: “You Can’t Tell Me How I Am”

From the recipient’s viewpoint, the first principle is “You can’t tell me how I am, and I can’t tell you what you see.” Although most people realize that giving feedback correctly requires skill and awareness, they are less aware of the importance of knowing how to receive feedback. When receiving feedback, many people tend to argue about, disown, or justify the information. Statements like “I didn’t say that,” “That’s not what I meant,” and “You don’t understand what I was trying to do” are attempts to convince the person giving the feedback that he or she did not see or observe what he or she claims. However, the recipient needs to understand that the observer—whether manager, peer, or subordinate—is relating what he or she experienced as a result of the recipient’s behavior. The giver and the recipient may well have different viewpoints, and there is nothing wrong with that. The purpose of feedback is to give a new view or to increase awareness. If an argument ensues and the observer backs down, the recipient is the loser.

The appropriate response, as a rule of thumb, is to say “thank you” when either type of feedback is received. It is also appropriate, of course, to ask for clarity or more detail on any issue.

The purpose of feedback is to help the recipient. Feedback can be thought of as food. It is very nourishing. When people are hungry, food is what they need; but when they are full, food is the last thing they want or need. The same applies to ingesting feedback. When people have had enough, they should call a halt. Attempting to absorb all of the feedback that might be available, or that various people would like to give, is

like forcing food into a full stomach just because someone says, “Please have some more.”

The recipient is responsible for demanding specificity in feedback. No feedback should be accepted as legitimate if it cannot be clearly demonstrated by an observable behavior. For example, if someone says, “You’re very arrogant,” an appropriate response would be “What specifically have I said or done to cause you to think that?” If that response is countered with “I don’t know; I just experience you that way,” then the accusation should be immediately forgotten. People cannot afford to change just to meet everyone’s personal likes or expectations.

In fact, it is impossible to change to meet *everyone’s* expectations, and the situation becomes compounded as more and more people give the feedback. A single act can generate disparate feedback from different people who observe the behavior. For example, a loud exclamation could be viewed as appropriately angry by one person, overly harsh by another, and merely uncouth by a third. Each person will see it from his or her unique perspective. Therefore, feedback requires action from both the giver and the recipient. Only the giver can tell what he or she observed or experienced, and only the recipient can use the information in deciding whether or not to change the behavior.

For feedback to be effective, the recipient must hear what the giver is saying, weigh it, and then determine whether or not the information is relevant. The following example illustrates how this can be done:

Department manager: “Waste in your unit is up by 4 percent. Are you having any problems with your employees?”

Supervisor: “I was not aware of the waste increase. No, I am not having trouble with my employees. I suppose I have been focusing on the quality so much that I lost sight of the waste figures. Thanks for bringing this to my attention.”

Feedback Supports Growth

The second major principle, “feedback supports growth,” is important, because we cannot always see ourselves as others see us. Although a person may be the world’s foremost authority on himself or herself, there are still parts of that person that are more obvious to other people. Although people may be more aware of their own needs and capabilities and more concerned about their own welfare than other people are, they are able to stretch themselves and grow if they pay attention to feedback from others. Although feedback may be extremely uncomfortable at the time, a person can look back later and recognize such feedback as the spark that inspired a directional change in his or her career or personal life. If the feedback is not rejected or avoided, recipients can discover and develop ways to behave that they did not think were available.

FEEDBACK STRATEGIES

The strategies suggested here are not step-by-step procedures to be blindly followed. Their purpose is to help in planning and organizing an approach to dealing with an issue.

They offer a logical and effective sequence of events for the feedback session. The person planning the session must decide on the desired future objective. (The “future,” however, could be five minutes after the session or two years later.) During the feedback session, attention must be focused on what is happening in terms of the outcome. In other words, the focus must be on obtaining the goal, not on sticking to the strategy. This focus allows the giver to change tactics or even modify the original strategy if conditions change or unforeseen events occur. After the strategy has been selected, the following three rules should be kept in mind:

1. Be clear about what you want in terms of specific, identifiable outcomes for yourself, your subordinate, and the organization.
2. Plan what you intend to say and how you intend to conduct the meeting, according to the particular strategy you will use.
3. Have the strategy in mind as you engage the person, but keep it in the background.

Supportive Feedback Strategy

The following steps are suggested as a strategy for supportive feedback:

1. *Acknowledge the specific action and result to be reinforced.* Immediately let the subordinate know that you are pleased about something he or she did. Be specific and describe the event in behavioral terms. “You finished the project (*action*) on time (*result*).”

2. *Explain the effects of the accomplishment and state your appreciation.* For the behavior to be reinforced, the person must be able to see the effects of that behavior in specific, observable ways. Your appreciation is important but as an additional reinforcing element. The main reinforcement is the effect. “What you did on the project was a major factor in getting the contract (*effect*), and I am pleased with your outstanding work (*appreciation*).”

3. *Help the subordinate to take full responsibility for the success.* If the employee acknowledges the feedback, this step is accomplished. If the employee seems overly modest, more work is needed. Unless he or she can, to some degree, internalize the success and receive satisfaction from it, very little growth will occur. One approach would be to ask how the success was accomplished or if any problems were encountered and how they were overcome. In talking about what happened, the employee is likely to realize how much he or she was really responsible for. It is important for both you and the employee to hear how the success was accomplished.

4. *Ask if the subordinate wants to talk about anything else.* While the employee is feeling positive and knows that you are appreciative and receptive, he or she may be willing to open up and talk about other issues. The positive energy created by this

meeting can be directed toward other work-related issues, so take advantage of the opportunity.

5. *Thank the subordinate for the good performance.* The final step, again thanking the subordinate for the accomplishment, ensures that your appreciation will be uppermost in his or her mind as he or she leaves and returns to the work setting.

Corrective Feedback Strategy

The following steps are suggested as a strategy for corrective feedback:

1. *Immediately describe the event in behavioral terms and explain the effect.* Relate clearly in specific, observable, and behavioral terms the nature of the failure or behavior and the effect of the failure or behavior on the work group or organization. If you can appropriately say something to reduce the employee's embarrassment, the employee is more likely to accept the feedback nondefensively.

2. *Ask what happened.* Before assuming that the subordinate is at fault, ask what happened. In many instances, the subordinate is not at fault or is only partially responsible. At the worst, the employee is given an opportunity to explain before you proceed; at the best, you may receive information that would prevent you from censuring the employee.

3. *Help the subordinate to take full responsibility for the actions.* The more time spent in step 2 (finding out what happened), the easier step 3 will be. The subordinate needs to learn from the experience in order to reduce the probability of a recurrence. Unless this step is handled effectively, the subordinate will see himself or herself as a victim rather than as someone who made a mistake and is willing to correct it.

4. *Develop a plan to deal with the issues.* Once the subordinate has accepted responsibility, the next step is to help rectify the situation. Now that the employee is willing to be accountable for errors, you can jointly devise a plan that will help eliminate them. In other words, both of you must agree to take action. If you both want the same thing (that is, better performance from the subordinate), then both of you are obligated to do something about it. This is also an excellent opportunity to build on the subordinate's strengths (for example, "I'd like for you to show the same fine attention to safety regulations that you show to job specifications").

5. *State your confidence in the subordinate's ability.* Once the issue is resolved, end the session by stating your confidence in the ability of the employee to handle the situation. The object is to allow the subordinate to reenter the work setting feeling as optimistic about himself or herself as the situation permits. The subordinate must also understand that you will follow up and give additional feedback when the situation warrants it.

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■ TYPES OF PROCESS INTERVENTIONS

Arthur M. Freedman

During a recent consulting experience shared by several consultants, some useful discussion surfaced concerning *how*, *how often*, and *when* to intervene in groups and *what kinds* of interventions to make. The consultants expressed similar uncertainties and insecurities regarding their own organization development (OD) skills and knowledge. How could they be sure that they would intervene effectively at just the point when an intervention would be maximally facilitative during a process consultation? The appropriate moment for a particular intervention might easily come and go without either the consultant's or the client's realizing it.

This discussion prompted outlining the following operational "philosophy" of making interventions, with the thought that it may be of some value to other OD practitioners. Although all process interventions can be called merely "process interventions," they can be differentiated into three distinct and separate classes. These types might be labeled *conceptual-input*, *coaching*, and *process-observation interventions*. Each type could (and probably ought to) be considered in terms of (1) what it might look or sound like when it is made; (2) the objective(s) that it can facilitate; (3) when it can be made; and (4) the form or style it might take.

CONCEPTUAL-INPUT INTERVENTIONS

Example

The following is an example of a conceptual-input intervention:

Member A, a supervisor (to the client group): "I am beginning to see that you people get pretty upset when I come over to discuss the work I want you to do. I can see that when you get upset, the work doesn't get done as well or as fast as I think it should. But what I don't know is what I do that gets you all so upset. Maybe I need to hear a little of what these consultants call 'feedback.'" "

Member B (to Member A, after a long silence): "Well, I guess I could give you some. You know, A, you can be pretty overbearing sometimes, and some of these new people don't know how to handle you."

Member A: (Pause) "What the hell are you talking about? What's that supposed to mean?"

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Consultant (to the client group): “It seems to me that we’re doing a little experimenting with giving feedback on how our actions affect one another, but we’re running into a problem. As I see it, the problem might be this: ‘Just what is feedback and how do you give it so that the person [*stating the problem*] who is getting it can use it?’ Does that sound right to you?” [*double-checking for agreement or disagreement*].

The client group indicates general agreement; members nod their heads and offer short, affirmative statements.

Consultant (to client group): “O.K. Maybe it would help if I laid down some ground rules for giving feedback.” (The members of the client group engage in more nonverbal affirmation.) “Different consultants use the idea of feedback in different ways. But, for me, good, useful feedback has three parts to it; and if any part is left out, the value of it decreases. The first of the three parts is your description of what the other person is *saying* and *doing* that is of concern to you; the second part is your description of what you *feel* when you focus your attention on the other person’s actions; and the third part is your indication of what you would *most likely do*, yourself, if you were on the receiving end of the other person’s actions—the *implications* of the other person’s behavior.

“An example of a complete piece of feedback would be something like this: ‘I noticed a moment ago that you reached over and patted me on the back when I commented on Bill’s idea; and when I turned around to look at you, I saw that you were smiling [*description of the focal behavior*]. At the time I felt pretty good, as if you were telling me that you thought I was saying the right thing. I like that because I know I need some reassurance. I felt good, almost proud of myself for being able to think up something to say that led to getting a pat on the back. And I guess I did feel that I was approved of and that my ideas were actually wanted [*expression of feelings*]. Now I’m thinking that I’ll probably be more of an active participant at these meetings in the future. I don’t think I’ll hold myself back so much” [*statement of implications*].

Member B (to Member A): “Yeah. That helps me to organize my thoughts better. What I was trying to say to you was that when you come over to us when we’re working, you seem to see yourself as trying to ‘discuss’ our work with us. But, from my point of view, you come across as a critic.”

Consultant (to Member B): “Can you say what it is that he says or does that gives you the impression he is a critic?” [*coaching*]

Member B (to Member A): “Yes. You never tell us that we’re doing O.K. Instead, you say things like how you would approach the problem in a different way from the way we’d already done it [*description of behavior*]. And when you say things like that, I just want to hide somewhere and get out of the way [*close to expression of feelings*]. So I sometimes change the subject if I can, or I ‘remember’ another appointment I ‘have’ to go to. Naturally, the work stops” [*statement of implications*].

Objectives

A conceptual-input type of process intervention is intended to provide members of a client group with an “organizing principle” that has, as its payoff, the power to help them clearly see distinctions between typical but not optimal behavior (the things people say and do and/or the style with which the things are said and done) and less traditional but more effective behavior. Conceptual inputs also tend to be easily remembered and can, therefore, be referred to in the future. When a consultant intervenes in this way, he or she is providing clients with a new vocabulary and a conceptual system that is quite *explicit* and is *shared* and *understood* by all client-group members. Confusion and misunderstandings should thus be minimized, as clients are more likely to remember, understand, and make use of the kinds of behaviors to which the new “language” refers.

Timing

A conceptual-input type of intervention can be used at any time during a process consultation—as long as the contract between the consultant and the client group legitimizes this type of consultant behavior. For maximum effectiveness and impact, the intervention should come *immediately after* a transaction between members that clearly illustrates the undesirable consequences of dysfunctional or ineffective behavior. In the preceding example, the consultant timed his or her intervention to take place after Member A’s expressed confusion (one sort of undesirable consequence). This was the point at which the intervention was most likely to make immediate sense to the client-group members. When an intervention makes sense, people are also more likely to make use of it.

Form or Style

A conceptual input should be brief and succinct. Words and phrases that are *comprehensible* to the members of the client group should be used. It does not help to make the perfectly appropriate intervention at exactly the right time if, for example, the consultant’s terms are so pedagogical that the listeners cannot understand them. Such a style could result in clients’ disregarding the consultant as unable to relate to them.

COACHING INTERVENTIONS

A second type of process intervention aims at facilitating the acquisition of desirable, functional habits of interacting.

Example

The scene takes place after the group has received a conceptual input on giving and receiving feedback.

Member A (to Member B): “I experience you as acting in an arbitrary manner.”
(Silence.) [A is labeling B.]

Consultant (to Member A): “What is it about Member B’s behavior that has led you to conclude she is ‘arbitrary’?” [*This is an invitation to focus on observable behavior rather than use abstract labels.*]

Member A (to Consultant): “She sometimes asks us for information to help her make decisions.”

Consultant (to Member A): “Talk to her.”

Member A (to Member B): “But after you get it, even if you say you appreciate our ideas, you don’t seem to use them [*description of behavior*]. You act in such a way that I get the impression you never really wanted our ideas in the first place and you were just going through a formality . . . as if you knew all along that you would stick to your original decision regardless of what we might say” [*conjecture*].

Consultant (to Member A): “Do you have feelings that you are willing to share with Member B about Member B’s not using your ideas?” [*invitation to complete the second component of feedback, ignoring the nonproductive conjecture*].

Member A (to Member B): “Yes, I do. I find myself a bit confused and wondering whether anything I might say to you has any meaning or significance in your eyes. It’s as if I am being disregarded and held off at a distance when I really want to get close to you and work with you. I don’t want to be pacified. I guess I feel pretty disappointed.” (Pause.) “I had always hoped I could come up with ideas that would be valuable for helping us do our work. Yes, I’m very disappointed. I feel I’m something of a failure since I don’t seem to be getting the response . . . the affirmation I’ve been looking for [*an expression of feeling*]. Now I’m not sure if I’ll even bother giving you any information about me the next time you ask for it. I probably won’t. I don’t see what value it would have. You’d probably just disregard what I say” [*a statement of implications somewhat garbled by a prediction of Member B’s future behavior, which may not be accurate*].

Member B (to Member A, after a long pause): “I hear what you’re saying pretty clearly. It helps me to make some sense out of what has been happening between us over the last several weeks. I recognize now that I’ve sort of been aware of some tension. But I guess I just let myself pretend that it didn’t mean anything. Now I don’t know quite what to do about it all” [*an acknowledgment of the feedback and of having reached an impasse. This implies the possibility that B might be ready to accept help in identifying some functional alternatives for dealing with the problem—but she is not expressing this.*]

Consultant (to Member B): “Would you be interested in spending some time now to see if there’s anything we can do about this problem?” [*an inquiry to test whether B is willing to assume responsibility for searching for new alternatives*].

Member B (to Consultant, after a pause): “No, I guess I’m feeling a need to think about this for a while. It has a lot of implications, and I’m not yet ready to share them all with anyone else. Right now I want some quiet time alone. I’ll check back with the rest of you after I’ve had a chance to mull it over” [*owning up to and being responsible for her desire to disengage temporarily, with an option to reopen the issue at a later date*].

Objective

Such coaching interventions are intended to assist members of a client group in forming the habit of using new experimental behaviors that they have said they want to practice.

Timing

Coaching interventions are most effectively made either (1) during the early, standard-setting phases of the consultative process (to “shape” the kinds and sequence of interpersonal communications at an early point) or (2) just after a conceptual input has been made that provides a justifiable theoretical framework for the coaching efforts. In either instance, coaching interventions should be discontinued as soon as the client group’s members demonstrate that they can employ the new behaviors without assistance (or when some members begin systematically to perform the coaching function for other members).

Form or Style

Coaching interventions should use up very little of the client group’s “air time.” They should be suggestions rather than demands or reprimands. And they should be quite precise, not at all ambiguous. No one should have to guess about what the consultant is aiming at.

PROCESS-OBSERVATION INTERVENTIONS

Example A

The following is an example of a process-observation intervention:

Member A (to the client group): “A little while ago I wanted to share an observation that I thought might have been useful at the time, but I restrained myself. I wanted to say that you’ve been on this topic for twenty minutes without coming to a conclusion. You’re wasting my time. You guys aren’t accomplishing anything, and you ought to move on to a different issue [*a task-related function*]. I guess I was afraid that I would alienate myself from the rest of you by doing something ‘unpopular’ “ [*expression of feelings*].

Several members (simultaneously to Member A): “Wait a minute. Where did this come from all of a sudden?” [*probably a defensive response*].

Consultant (to Member A): “If I am hearing it accurately [*an attempt to reach group members in a preventive move*], you seem to be saying that you were reluctant to perform a task function for the group, even though you thought it was needed, because you were afraid you would be risking the possibility of getting hurt by the rest of the group [*paraphrasing*]. Am I hearing you right?” [*double-checking*].

Member A (to Consultant): “That’s about it.”

Consultant (to Member A): “Well, it seems to me that an *additional* issue might be the *style* or the *manner* in which you were thinking of performing that function. By

saying what you wanted to say in the way you just expressed yourself, you probably *would* have given me, at least, a basis for feeling bad about myself, as if I had done something wrong. And that might have led to my wanting to hurt *you* or put *you* down or cut *you* off [*somewhat hypothetical personal feedback*]. I wonder if you can think of a different way of saying the same thing...a way that is less likely to result in your feeling cut off from the group?" [*an invitation to consider and experiment with an alternative form of performing needed task or maintenance functions*].

Member A (to the client group, after a long pause): "Yeah, I think so. Let me know how this comes across" [*unilateral negotiation for focused feedback*]. (Pause.) "It seems to me that we've gone over the same points several times. It's as if we've been recycling [*description of group behavior*]. I'm finding myself feeling unproductive, as if I'm not able to do anything that seems useful or helpful...and that leaves me pretty impatient." (Pause.) "Has anyone else been experiencing anything like this? If so, what do we want to do about it?" [*Considerably more self-disclosure and ownership of the speaker's ideas and feelings are publicly expressed here; also, instead of making a critical and punitive accusation about the other members of the client group, A is including himself as a part of the problem and is inviting the rest of the group to collaborate in dealing with it. Action, taken on the basis of the person's observations and feelings, carries the idea of implications one step forward: out of the hypothetical and into tangible reality.*]

Example B

Here is another example of a process-observation intervention:

Consultant (to the client group): "I've noticed that we've been spending a lot of time jumping from one issue to another without finishing any of them. For example, Sam raised the question about whether or not we wanted to spend our time giving one another feedback. Then Toni pointed out that we could handle feedback in a way that would enable the recipient to decide whether he or she wanted to renegotiate some interpersonal contracts with the person giving the feedback. In making this point, Toni seemed to direct the group's attention away from Sam—a kind of topic jump—about which Sam did nothing. Then, before the group responded to Toni's idea, Joe stated that he thought we ought to focus on some of the things that had happened three days ago during the general session, things that he thought were getting us hung up this afternoon—another topic jump [*a demonstration of the tracking or summarizing task-function*]. All of this seems to indicate to me that we're having trouble figuring out how we can make group decisions about what we're going to do with our time [*spelling out the apparent problem that is confronting the group*]. Now I'm finding myself rather uncertain about just what is going on and a bit impatient [*expression of feelings*] for a clear, explicit, group decision. Just what is it that we would like to do?" [*statement of expectations and a direct request to the client group's members to disclose their opinions and thereby flesh out the problem statement*].

Objectives

A process-observation intervention may have numerous objectives, including, among others, the following:

1. *It can heighten the client-group members' awareness of the distinction between the content and process dimensions of transactions occurring within a group.* In Example B, the consultant illustrated both *what* topics or issues the group was working on (the “content”) and *how* the group seemed to be operating—that is, jumping from topic to topic and avoiding explicit, group-level decision making (the “process”).

2. *Another kind of process observation might be intended to heighten the group's awareness of the implications and consequences of its members' actions.* For example, an individual's behavior may contribute to the creation or continuation of *normative standards (both functional and nonfunctional) governing group members' behavior*. In Example B, Toni's topic jump might have contributed to the creation of a group norm that it is permissible to jump from one topic to another and cut off another person; when Joe did the same to Toni, it was another contribution to the legitimization and continuation of that norm. A process observation can also be used to highlight implications and consequences by pointing out how the group is affected when needed task and maintenance functions are not being performed or what happens when different group decision-making procedures are employed.

3. *A process observation also provides an observable model of functional behaviors that demonstrate in a tangible manner how a group's movement in the direction of its objectives can be facilitated.* In Example A, the consultant modeled quite a number of functional activities, for example, paraphrasing, double-checking, personal feedback, and helping another person to experiment with new ways of behaving. In Example B, the consultant modeled tracking and summarizing, stating the issue, expressing feelings and expectations, and asking for opinions and information.

Timing

A process-observation intervention is likely to be most effective during the early phase of the consultative process. When any process observation has been modeled once or twice, the consultant should refrain from making further such interventions. This gives client-group members more opportunities to experiment with and to practice performing these facilitative functions. To the extent that they do this, they acquire increased self-sufficiency. This tends to preclude their becoming dependent on the consultant, the “expert,” to perform such functions.

If the client-group members do not assume responsibility for performing these functions after they have been modeled once or twice, the consultant might keep track of the implications and the consequences of this failure. Then, during a “stop-action” or some other designated process session, these data could be fed back to the group along with a question: “What, if anything, do we want to do about this situation?” This

explicitly invites and allows the clients to negotiate a contract among themselves (1) to ensure that needed functions are used when they would be most relevant and (2) to avoid the unnecessary, undesired consequences that have been observed to follow nonperformance of the functions.

Form or Style

In style, process observations should be personalized, invitational, and not punitive. But—almost by definition—this class of interventions usually takes a bit longer than others. The consultant is attempting to draw a verbal portrait of dynamic, constantly shifting group processes in order to help the clientgroup members to see what is happening “right now” and also to model behavior that the members themselves might attempt at some future time. To get this double message across adequately, sufficient care and time must be taken.

CONCLUSION

Saul Alinsky’s “iron rule”—“Don’t ever do anything for people that they can do for themselves”—comes to mind. If one or more client-group members have the skills and knowledge to act in a functional and objective manner, they are entitled to opportunities to use such skills and knowledge. The consultant should let them do it. If they do not possess such resources, they may require assistance in acquiring them. However, excessive “assistance” on the part of the organizational consultant—whether with process, theory, structured skill-practice activities, or simulations—leads to stultification, dependence, and indifference or apathy. In order to be as effective as possible, the consultant must learn the fine line between *not enough* help and *too much* help.

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■ DEFENSIVE AND SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

Gary W. Combs

Much of our time as teachers, parents, and workers is devoted to social influence. We attempt to modify the views of others and move them to action; others attempt to do the same with us. The quality and effectiveness of our efforts to influence one another depend on our styles of interaction.

A variety of prescriptions have been suggested for communicating effectively: speak clearly and thoughtfully, avoid stereotyping, maintain an attentive posture, be honest and timely, listen carefully, and repeat for emphasis and retention. These principles are important and useful for improving our skills of expression and listening, but climate is more fundamental to successful communication. *Supportive* climates promote understanding and problem solving; *defensive* climates impede them.

DEFENSIVE COMMUNICATION

As with weather climates, communication climates represent more forces than we can readily see. The dominant motive behind defensive communication climates is control. Although control can take many forms, it is often manifested by communication designed to persuade. The speaker may be friendly, patient, and courteous; the goal, nevertheless, is to convince the listener.

The speaker's conscious or unconscious desire to prevail in the situation elicits a characteristic set of results: *evaluation*, *strategy*, *superiority*, and *certainty* (Gibb, 1961). As the interaction continues, these behaviors become increasingly pronounced. Each party becomes less able to hear the other or to accurately perceive the other's motives, values, and emotions. In short, communication breaks down. An example of defensive communication follows:

Nancy Russell, director of administrative services, is talking with Bob Wheeler, director of finance. Wheeler asks Russell to prepare an additional weekly report that summarizes selected financial data. Wheeler balks at Russell's request and cites several reasons that an additional summary is unnecessary. Russell, who is determined that such a report be prepared, patiently answers Wheeler by explaining why she needs the supplementary data. Wheeler responds by defending his position.

What is likely to happen?

Originally published in *The 1981 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators* by John E. Jones and J. William Pfeiffer (Eds.), San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Company. This lecturette is based on "Barriers and Gateways to Communications" by C.R. Rogers and F.J. Roethlisberger, 1952, *Harvard Business Review*, 30, 46-52, and on "Defensive Communication" by J.R. Gibb, 1961, *Journal of Communication*, 11, 141-148.

Evaluation

If Wheeler continues to question the validity of Russell's request, one or both of them will inwardly or outwardly become critical of the other. Their dialogue may appear calm and friendly; they may or may not be aware of their own judgmental feelings, but these feelings will be obvious. The longer the conversation goes on, the greater their frustration will become until each begins to evaluate the other as stubborn, unreasonable, or downright stupid.

Strategy

As the conversation progresses, each will strategize and prepare rebuttals while the other is speaking. Energy will be focused on winning and overcoming rather than on listening and problem solving.

Superiority

One or both of the speakers will begin to feel superior to the other. Inwardly or outwardly each will start to question why the other cannot see the logic or "correctness" of his or her views and begin to think of the other as being inferior in intelligence and savvy.

Certainty

The energy of their arguments will lock the opponents into the correctness of their original views. Any feeling of tentativeness either may have had about his or her position gradually will be replaced with convictions of certainty.

We can predict that eventually one of the parties will withdraw or capitulate, that a compromise will be negotiated, or that the individuals involved will leave in anger. Regardless of the outcome, their feelings about each other are likely to be negative; and commitment to following through with agreed-on action will be low. In all likelihood, their feelings about each other will be manifest in future encounters. The "loser" will admit to having lost the battle, but not the war.

SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

The dominant goal underlying supportive communication climates is *understanding*. Supportive communication climates often facilitate a synergistic resolution to conflict. *Synergy* describes outcomes that combine elements of contrasting positions into a new and meaningful solution that satisfies the needs of both (a win-win situation). It differs from compromise wherein each receives only part of what is desired (a lose-lose strategy), because the emphasis is on integration. The speakers seek to establish a dialogue, to listen, and to appreciate and explore differences of opinion.

The results characteristic of such communication are *empathy*, *spontaneity*, *problem solving*, and *synergy*. As each speaker listens to and attempts to understand the other's

position, he or she, in turn, becomes free to fully hear and appreciate the first speaker's views of a particular situation. A supportive climate allows both to seek a creative resolution of their differences. A supportive communication climate could be illustrated by the earlier example, except that Russell could choose to explore Wheeler's objections. What is likely to happen now?

Empathy

If Russell listens and discusses Wheeler's reasons for not doing an additional report, she naturally will come to understand his position better. Her willingness to talk about their differences will convey to Wheeler her respect for his thoughts and her evaluation of his importance. If Wheeler feels understood and respected, his need to defend himself will diminish and he will feel free to hear what Russell has to say. The net result will be that each party will gain an appreciation of the other's point of view.

Spontaneity

If Russell is open and responsive, less energy will be focused on strategic rebuttal. Both will be able to concentrate on what is being said, and each will feel free to express his or her own thoughts and feelings.

Problem Solving

Russell's willingness to explore their differences will imply that she is open to collaborative resolution, and Wheeler will respond in kind. Once both are less concerned with winning, they will be more inclined to tolerate each other's perspectives and to settle the conflict in a way that is mutually satisfying.

Synergy

There is a good chance that Russell and Wheeler will find a way to satisfy Russell's concern for additional data and Wheeler's desire to keep down the number of reports produced, if they communicate in a way that allows them to appreciate, scrutinize, and fuse their respective—and respected—views into a new whole that is pleasing to both (Jones, 1973).

BARRIERS TO CREATING SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION CLIMATES

Supportive communication seems simple, but it is very difficult for those who are not in the habit of developing supportive climates. Our cultural training is a major barrier to creating such climates. We are often rewarded for developing skills of argument and persuasion. Little or no time is given to teaching us the attitudes and skills of listening and understanding. Therefore, it is necessary for us to practice the skills of supportive communication until they become second nature.

Lack of time and energy is also a barrier to supportive communication. Creating a positive milieu takes work! At least one speaker must assume responsibility for developing an atmosphere that permits both to understand and to respond to what is actually being said. It is often more convenient to respond superficially or inappropriately.

Supportive communication also involves risk. If we permit ourselves to know reality as others perceive it, we run the risk of being changed ourselves (Rogers & Roethlisberger, 1952). But such risks must be taken if we are to share our thoughts and feelings with one another authentically.

Additionally, it is difficult to give positive support to another person when one is feeling angry and hostile. One's inclination under these circumstances is to attack and hurt. Yet it is at such times that empathic communication can be most helpful. Sharing the other person's perspective defuses otherwise hostile environments and increases each party's appreciation for the other's point of view.

FACILITATING SUPPORTIVE COMMUNICATION

A genuine desire to define situations through interaction with others is the most important ingredient for supportive communication. If this desire is not genuine and a pretense of openness is made, it will be easily detected, others will no longer feel free to express themselves openly, and communication will break down.

Active listening is also essential to supportive communication. We must try to grasp the full meaning—both fact and feeling—of what others say and test our understanding by clarifying and checking.

We must also share our perspectives with others and, when there is conflict, search for an end result that will satisfy both our own and our partners' objectives. This requires a shift of thinking from "me versus you" to "how we can both gain in this situation." Pragmatically, supportive communication means moving from thinking in terms of preconceived answers to thinking in terms of the end results that we want to accomplish and then seeking solutions that satisfy those ends (Filley, 1975).

CONCLUSION

Supportive communication requires a sharing and understanding attitude. When speaking and listening supportively, people become less defensive and more open to their experiences and the experiences of others. They become more ready to integrate other points of view and seek solutions to conflict that satisfy the needs of both parties.

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■ ENCOURAGEMENT: GIVING POSITIVE INVITATIONS

Daniel G. Eckstein

Parents, teachers, and managers (hereinafter called “helping persons”) frequently ask how to motivate others more effectively. The philosophy and skill of encouragement are a means both of increasing motivation and of combating feelings of inadequacy.

Encouragement communicates trust, respect, and belief. Many psychologists contend that there are only two basic human emotions: love and fear. Encouragement communicates caring and movement toward others—love, whereas discouragement results in lowered self-esteem and alienation from others—fear. Yet, despite the intention to be encouraging, all too often helping persons are, in fact, discouraging in their communications with others. An example is the manager or parent who “lets things go” as long as they are going well and who comments only when things go wrong.

A crucial beginning to being a more encouraging person is to become more aware of and to eliminate discouraging messages. The five telltale signs that a message is discouraging are these:

1. *The “Red-Pencil” Effect, Circling the Mistakes of Others.* A frequent consequence of such “constructive criticism” is that the recipient of the message becomes preoccupied with his or her mistakes.

2. *The Vertical Plane of Interaction.* The vertical plane is characterized by “oneupmanship.” The horizontal plane, in contrast, is characterized by equality and a mutual respect for all; classification of people as superior or inferior and sexual, racial, and religious prejudice do not exist on this level.

3. *Overperfectionism.* The unrealistic notion that people should not make mistakes leads them to become overly critical of themselves and to want to discover that others are worse. If people cannot make peace with themselves, they never will make peace with others.

4. *Clinging to Old Patterns.* A primary principle of child psychology is that children are good observers but poor interpreters. When they observe death, many children, being egocentric at the time, conclude that they killed the person. Many such irrational decisions and conclusions are habits that are held over from the past. By means of a systematic lifestyle assessment, a counselor often gently confronts a client by

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noting, “Now that you are not a child anymore, perhaps you would like to look at some things differently.” Reinforcing a static philosophy (“You’ve always been that way; you’re not going to change”) can actually inhibit change or growth.

5. *Misused Psychological Tests.* For people who doubt their own abilities, an “objective, scientific” test can be the ultimate discourager. Such tests often “label” people and the people then act in accordance with the labels. Although all tests obviously are not harmful, it is wise to remember that we build on strengths, not weaknesses. Thus, it is important to focus on people’s assets whenever possible.

The goal is not to cease all discouragement completely; indeed, all helping persons at times need to confront others. The goal is to combine such confrontation with encouragement as a means of maximizing the ability to impact others positively. Dinkmeyer and Dreikurs (1963) note that the proper use of encouragement involves the following:

1. Valuing individuals as they are, not as their reputations indicate or as one hopes they will be. Believing in individuals as good and worthwhile will facilitate acting toward them in this manner.
2. Having faith in the abilities of others. This enables the helper to win confidence while building the self-respect of the other person.
3. Showing faith in others. This will help them to believe in themselves.
4. Giving recognition for effort as well as for a job well done.
5. Using a group to help the person to develop. This makes practical use of the assumption that, for social beings, the need to belong is basic.
6. Integrating the group so that the individual can discover his or her place and begin working positively from that point.
7. Planning for success and assisting in the development of skills that are sequentially and psychologically paced.
8. Identifying and focusing on strengths and assets rather than on mistakes.
9. Using the interests of the individual in order to motivate learning and instruction.

In addition, Carl Reimer (1967) lists ten specific “words of encouragement”:

1. “You do a good job of” People should be encouraged when they do not expect encouragement, when they are not asking for it. It is possible to point out some useful act or contribution of everyone. Even a comment about something that may seem small and insignificant could have an important positive impact.
2. “You have improved in. . . .” Growth and improvement are things we should expect from all. If any progress is noted, there is less chance of discouragement and individuals usually will continue to try.
3. “We like (enjoy) you, but we don’t like what you do.” People frequently feel disliked after having made mistakes or after misbehaving. A person, especially a

child, should never think that he or she is not liked. Rather, it is important to distinguish between the individual and his or her behavior, between the act and the actor.

4. “You can help me (us, the others) by” To feel useful and helpful is important to everyone. Most people need only to be given the opportunity.
5. “Let’s try it together.” People who think that they have to do things perfectly often are afraid to attempt something new for fear of making mistakes or failing.
6. “So you made a mistake; now what can you learn from it?” There is nothing that can be done about what has happened, but a person always can do something about the future. Mistakes can teach a great deal, especially if people do not feel embarrassed for erring.
7. “You would like us to think that you can’t do it, but we think that you can.” This approach can be used when people say (or convey the impression) that something is too difficult for them and they hesitate even to try. A person who tries and fails can be complimented for having the courage to try. One’s expectations should be consistent with his or her ability and maturity.
8. “Keep trying; don’t give up.” When someone is trying but not meeting with much success, a comment like this can be helpful.
9. “I am sure that you can straighten this out (solve this problem); but if you need any help, you know where you can find me.” Express confidence that others are able to and will resolve their own conflicts, if given a chance.
10. “I can understand how you feel, but I’m sure that you will be able to handle it.” Sympathizing with the other person seldom helps because it suggests that life has been unfair. Empathizing (understanding the situation) and believing in the person’s ability to adjust to the situation are of much greater help.

“Giving positive invitations” is another way to describe the process of encouragement. Such invitations help to increase people’s self-confidence by at least four different methods:

1. Self-affirmation—a renewed appreciation of one’s personal strengths, motivators, values, and peak experiences;
2. Self-determination—being able to take responsibility for one’s life without blaming others;
3. Self-motivation—setting goals and taking the action necessary to reach those goals by integrating one’s emotions and intellect with one’s body; and
4. Increased empathic regard for others.

Many people’s feelings of inadequacy can be overcome by prolonged exposure to positive affirmation. Of course, the process of encouragement may take longer with some people than with others. One may be tempted to admit defeat and discouragement much too soon. An optimistic rather than a pessimistic attitude and a proactive rather

than a reactive affirmation of the basic worth of all people can help anyone to be a more effective “helper.” Encouragement can assist people in rediscovering their values and joys, in identifying their strengths instead of dwelling on their mistakes, in challenging and changing old patterns, and in having the courage to be imperfect!

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■ CREATING CONDITIONS THAT ENCOURAGE MENTORING

Kathy E. Kram

The practice of mentoring (counseling and coaching of newer employees by experienced employees) has the potential to significantly benefit both the organization and the people in it. For people at midcareer and beyond, mentoring can provide an opportunity to meet generative needs, to stay informed about technological advancements, and to attain confirmation in passing on wisdom and experience (Dalton, Thompson, & Price, 1977; Hall & Kram, 1981; Levinson, 1978). From the organization's perspective, mentoring reduces the shock of entry for newcomers, facilitates preparation for advancement, and provides a socializing mechanism (Levinson, 1976). Members who are aided in becoming acquainted with the organization are less likely to leave in confusion, frustration, or alienation. These developmental relationships help the organization to nurture talent (Digman, 1978), to pass on central values and practices, and to reduce undesirable turnover (Dalton et al., 1977; Levinson, 1976; Missirian, 1982).

In addition to being responsive to the predictable dilemmas of each career stage, mentoring also can be a vehicle for addressing special concerns. For example, in organizations in which people tend to reach mid-career plateaus, encouragement to assume the role of mentor for younger colleagues can provide new opportunities for growth (Hall, 1980; Hall & Kram, 1981). In settings in which affirmative action is an important objective, mentoring can provide a way to counteract the inherent disadvantages of not being a member of the dominant group and can provide members of minority groups with access to important coaching, modeling, and career-counseling opportunities (Missirian, 1982; Phillips-Jones, 1982).

Certain conditions must exist in an organization in order for the potential benefits of mentoring to be realized. First, opportunities must exist for frequent and open interaction between organizational members at different career stages and hierarchical levels so that people can initiate and cultivate relationships that are responsive to their current developmental needs. Second, organizational members must have the interpersonal skills to build supportive relationships as well as the willingness to do so and an interest in doing so. Third, the organization's reward system, culture, and norms must value and encourage relationship-building activities as central to organizational goals and objectives (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Peters & Waterman, 1982; Tichy, 1983).

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These requisite conditions are not achieved easily, and a number of individual and organizational obstacles interfere with realizing them.

MAJOR OBSTACLES TO MENTORING

People in the organization may discount the importance of relationships at work or not have the skills needed to build supportive alliances. Studies of mentoring, superior-subordinate, and peer relationships in numerous organizational settings indicate several obstacles to establishing effective mentoring relationships (Clawson, 1980; Kram, 1980; Kram & Isabella, 1985; Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson, & McKee, 1978). These individual and organizational features, summarized in Table 1 and explained further in the following paragraphs, also have been noted by those who have attempted to set up formal mentoring systems (Klauss, 1979; Lean, 1983; Phillips-Jones, 1982).

Obstacle 1: A reward system that emphasizes bottom-line results and, at the same time, does not place a high priority on human resource development. The reward system of an organization significantly influences how people behave and what they consider to be valued activity (Lawler, 1977). In a “bottom-line” context, people are inclined to view relationship-building efforts as a distraction from work. Thus, any attempts to provide mentoring to junior colleagues or to seek out supportive relationships with other colleagues will occur because of personal needs (Kram, 1983). Criteria for promotion are related only to technical performance. It is unlikely that a person will embrace the role of mentor when there are no organizational rewards for doing so.

When recognition and rewards are tied to efforts to coach and mentor, people are more likely to seek out opportunities to do so. Research on well-managed companies has confirmed that rewards for subordinate development result in more attention to coaching and mentoring efforts and in an increase of highly talented managers for the organization (Digman, 1978; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Another aspect of the reward system that can hinder mentoring concerns the rewards available to those at mid-career who no longer have opportunities to advance in the organizational hierarchy. If there are no alternatives, people are likely to feel discounted and resentful (Hall, 1980). This contributes to self-doubt and to a lack of interest in supporting the growth of others. Indeed, the mentor relationship frequently becomes destructive when the mentor foresees no further advancement and no other rewards for his or her continued contributions to the organization (Kram, 1983).

Finally, although a reward system may encourage mentoring by promoting those who develop talent for the organization, this practice can encourage developmental relationships only for those who have been labeled as high-potential candidates, rather than for a wider range of organizational members. Indeed, the coaching and mentoring functions sometimes are explicitly assigned to people who are two levels above those who have been labeled “fast trackers.” This has the effect of making mentoring available only to those who have demonstrated high potential early in their careers.

Table 1. Obstacles to Mentoring

Feature	Potential Obstacles
Reward System	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pay and promotion decisions are based solely on bottom-line results. 2. No recognition exists for developing subordinates or building relationships that provide mentoring functions. 3. No rewards are offered to people in mid-career who might provide mentoring functions; they become stagnant, resentful, and withdrawn. 4. Relationship-building efforts are viewed as a distraction from the work.
Work Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The design of jobs provides little opportunity for junior workers to interact with senior workers. 2. Job definitions do not include the responsibility to provide mentoring functions. 3. Tasks are highly individualized, requiring little or no collaboration among those who may have complementary relationship needs.
Performance-Management Systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To legitimize and clarify predictable personal and professional dilemmas. 2. No performance-management systems exist; thus, there is little opportunity or encouragement to discuss objective, performance, and potential. 3. Formal systems exist but are not utilized effectively; little coaching or counseling is provided. 4. Formal systems exist, but organizational members do not have the interpersonal skills or the motivation to utilize them.
Organizational Culture	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Values and rituals support "results" and discount the importance of relationships in career development. 2. The leaders of the organization are concerned with short-term results and do not model or reward concern for personnel development. 3. Trust among organizational members, particularly at different hierarchical levels, is low.
People's Assumptions, Attitudes, and Skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Organizational members are not aware of the importance of mentoring in career development. 2. Organizational members lack the interpersonal skills to initiate, build, and maintain supportive relationships. 3. Self-confidence is low; junior workers are afraid to ask for guidance and coaching, or senior workers are too unsure of themselves to offer advice.

Obstacle 2: The design of work interferes with efforts to build relationships that provide mentoring by minimizing opportunities for interaction between people who have complementary relationship needs. In organizations in which work is highly individualized and the work-related reasons for contact with others at different hierarchical levels are few, the opportunities to initiate mentoring relationships are minimal. In contrast, in organizations in which work is accomplished by project teams, the work itself provides frequent opportunities for coaching and mentoring.

It is not uncommon for newcomers to be uncertain about their own competence and potential and about organizational norms, and this uncertainty causes them to be cautious about making contact with those in more senior positions. Unless jobs are structured to promote interaction with colleagues in other departments and at other

levels, it is difficult for people to initiate relationships that might provide a variety of mentoring functions.

In general, work that requires collaboration and interdependence also provides opportunities for developmental relationships. When junior workers are assigned to projects that involve more experienced employees, they frequently receive coaching on how to do the job, how to navigate in the organization, and how to prepare for advancement. A relationship that provides these developmental functions can expand to provide others as well.

Structuring work around teams invites mentoring and coaching activities. It does not, however, ensure that such relationships will emerge. If senior employees are viewed as evaluators rather than coaches, or if junior members are concerned about proving their competence at the expense of asking for guidance, effective mentoring connections will be difficult to attain. Unless the expectation exists that learning and development will occur through work on the team, one of the potential benefits of the job design will not be realized.

Job design also can determine the extent to which people find alternatives to a mentor relationship in their relationships with peers. The mutuality and reciprocity in a peer relationship that facilitates both people's development is enhanced by work that fosters collaboration rather than competition. When work is highly individualized and there is little reward for interacting with others, people are less likely to build supportive alliances with their peers.

Obstacle 3: Poor performance-management systems or those that do not provide a forum and specific tools for coaching and counseling. A human resource development (HRD) system has the potential to facilitate mentoring by legitimizing the discussion of career goals, plans, and dilemmas, and by providing the tools with which to conduct such discussions. When the system clearly communicates the expectation that managers are responsible for holding career discussions with their employees and that employees are responsible for assessing their own aspirations, skills, and specific objectives, discussions between managers and subordinates are likely to provide mentoring functions. However, if managers fear the consequences of holding such career discussions, they are likely to avoid the responsibility. Similarly, if employees view the system as ineffectual, they are not likely to do the background work that would make it beneficial.

The initial design and implementation of an HRD or career-development system largely determines whether it will effectively create a forum for meaningful career exploration and planning. If the system is viewed as being responsive to members' needs, if people feel prepared to carry out their responsibilities effectively, and if the reward system and the culture reinforce it as an important set of activities, employees and managers are likely to embrace it in ways that benefit the organization as well.

Similarly, performance appraisal and management by objectives (MBO) systems have the potential to reinforce a number of the mentoring functions by providing forums for discussion of performance, objectives, and accomplishments. For the subordinate, a performance appraisal provides an opportunity to receive coaching and feedback. The supervisor is given a structure in which to provide these important developmental functions and is trained in how to do so. Unfortunately, these conditions do not exist in many organizations.

Obstacle 4: The culture of the organization—through its shared values, systems of informal rules and rituals, and the behavior of its leaders—labels mentoring, and relationships in general, as nonessential. Like the reward system, the culture significantly affects whether people will invest time in developing relationships that support personal and professional growth (Deal & Kennedy, 1982). An organization whose leaders provide mentoring functions down the line, reward subordinates for developing their subordinates, and model effective mentoring behaviors, is likely to have a reward system that values relationships and developmental activities.

Equally important are the value messages conveyed by the culture about what types of communication are legitimate, the degree to which people can trust one another (particularly at different hierarchical levels), the extent to which openness and trust are valued and respected, and so on. Meaningful coaching, counseling, friendship, and role modeling are almost impossible in a situation characterized by low trust and minimal or purely political communication.

It is not difficult to assess how the organizational culture encourages or discourages mentoring. Observations of communication patterns and interviews with organizational members can provide insight about how the culture affects relationships.

Most organizations have not consciously assessed their cultures in relation to mentoring. Those that have generally have emphasized the importance of sponsorship and mentoring for those who have been identified as having high potential for managerial responsibilities (“An ‘Old Girl Network’ Is Born,” *Business Week*, 1978; Collins & Scott, 1978). Leaders of organizations consciously model what they consider to be appropriate behavior, and newcomers with high potential are linked with senior managers who are expected to provide a variety of mentoring functions. Such mentoring for an elite group rather than for a wide range of organizational members creates a significant loss for the organization.

The culture that most severely discourages mentoring is the one in which relationships are considered distractions from the work. Leaders model a results orientation, inquire only about the bottom line, and invest little time or energy in talking with employees about their jobs or personal lives. Concerns for efficiency, high production, and maximum use of technical resources do not include concern for the quality of work life or the development of human resources. Thus, people feel discounted and disaffected, the quality of communication and the levels of trust are low, and supportive relationships are almost nonexistent.

Obstacle 5: People's assumptions, attitudes, and skills interfere with relationships that provide mentoring functions: People assume that senior employees do not have the time or interest to coach and counsel others, and many people lack the interpersonal skills to initiate and manage such relationships. A major obstacle to initiating and building relationships that provide mentoring functions is the lack of awareness of the important role that relationships play in career development. Early in their careers, most people are concerned with mastering technical competence; the notion that relationships might aid in preparing for advancement is rare (Dalton et al., 1977; Louis, 1980; Webber, 1976). Similarly, people in mid-career and beyond frequently do not understand how providing guidance to others can support their own continued development. Without this recognition, any mentoring that does occur is a result of intuitive, rather than deliberate, action. Attitudes about one's own competence and career potential, assumptions about those in authority, and attitudes about the organization in general can affect the extent to which people will attempt to build relationships. A positive attitude generally is a prerequisite for proactive behavior.

People further along in their careers who have encountered blocked opportunity and/or the threat of obsolescence are likely to have attitudes that make them psychologically unavailable to provide mentoring functions to others. These may include resentment toward younger colleagues who face opportunities for growth and advancement. The organization's response to a person's mid-career dilemmas is critical in determining his or her potential value in helping to develop other employees.

Finally, lack of interpersonal skills can harm the supportive relationships that provide mentoring, even when attitudes and assumptions are positive. Skills in active listening, communication, building trust and empathy, providing coaching and counseling, and managing conflict and competition are essential to the maintenance of relationships that contribute to growth and development.

TYPES OF INTERVENTIONS

Systematic diagnosis, planning, and action steps can modify the reward system, culture, performance-management system, job design, and individual skills and attitudes within the organization. An open-systems perspective suggests that change in any one feature of an organization will affect other parts of the system as well (Beer, 1980; Nadler & Tushman, 1980; Rice, 1969). This perspective also suggests that there are several ways to achieve a desired objective; thus, the appropriate intervention strategy for a given situation will depend on which features are to be modified, where the readiness and motivation for change exist, the extent to which top management supports the objective, and what resources are available to support the effort (Beckhard, 1969).

There are two types of interventions to encourage mentoring. Educational interventions are training and development efforts designed to create awareness and understanding of mentoring and its role in career development and to develop relationship skills. Structural interventions are planned efforts to modify existing

structures and systems in the organization in order to elicit different behaviors from organizational members. Each type has advantages and limitations; in most instances, educational and structural interventions should be designed and implemented simultaneously or in sequence in order to reinforce each other.

Educational Interventions

In addition to increasing knowledge, skills, and positive attitudes, educational interventions can contribute to a change in the culture of the organization by reinforcing new values.

The intervention used will depend on the particular setting and the objectives that have been defined. For example, in a setting in which a career-development system is functioning well, education related to mentoring could be incorporated into training that supports the system. In a setting in which there is an interest in enhancing the quality and availability of mentoring for women and minority-group members, specialized training for these groups as well as for the potential mentors would be appropriate.

It is possible to outline the predictable issues, topics, and concerns that would be relevant for target groups at different career stages (see Table 2). Research on mentoring and on life and career stages indicates that a different training program would be appropriate for each age group or career stage (Baird & Kram, 1983; Hall, 1976; Levinson et al., 1978; Phillips-Jones, 1982).

For People in Early Career. This target group is likely to be concerned with learning how to function in the organization and/or preparing for advancement (Dalton et al., 1977; Hall, 1976; Schein, 1978; Webber, 1976). The primary training objective should be to educate these people about the importance of relationships with senior colleagues who can coach, guide, and sponsor them as they attempt to build competence in their new careers. This input may encourage these people to consider how they might develop supportive relationships in their work settings and also can help to legitimize their uncertainty about their competence, potential, or career plans at this stage.

Self-assessment and skill-development activities also are necessary so that people can assess their own developmental needs and their current relationships and set goals for their own development and for relationships that can support them along the way. Equally important is the opportunity to develop interpersonal skills through a variety of experiential methods that strengthen trainees' abilities to initiate and build supportive alliances.

For People in Mid-Career. This population varies considerably in terms of age and career experiences. Ranging in age from thirty-five to fifty-five, some of these people already may have reached a plateau in terms of future advancement while others still may be advancing. Each of these people has a substantial history in the organization or in a particular career, as well as a history of relationships. Mid-career generally is a

Table 2. Objectives of Educational Interventions for Different Target Populations

Target Population*	Major Objectives
People in Early Career	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To legitimize and clarify predictable personal and professional dilemmas. 2. To clarify the role of mentoring in career development, outlining the range of possible mentoring functions. 3. To highlight the mutual benefits of mentor relationships and the value of peer relationships as alternatives. 4. To provide an opportunity for self-assessment regarding relationship needs, current and potential relationships, and personal resources. 5. To provide an opportunity to develop the interpersonal skills needed to initiate and maintain relationships with senior colleagues and peers.
People in Mid-Career	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To legitimize and clarify predictable personal and professional dilemmas. 2. To clarify how assuming the role of mentor can be responsive to current developmental concerns. 3. To provide an opportunity for review of accomplishments, significant relationships, and concerns about the future. 4. To provide an opportunity to explore concerns about aging, obsolescence, and competence in a supportive context. 5. To provide an opportunity to develop the interpersonal skills needed to coach and counsel others.
People in Late Career	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. To legitimize and clarify predictable personal and professional dilemmas. 2. To clarify how the role of mentor can be responsive to current developmental concerns. 3. To provide an opportunity to review the past and to prepare for leaving the organization. 4. To provide an opportunity to discuss the experiences of late career with peers and to generate ways to pass on wisdom to younger colleagues.
<p>*In each target population, it may be relevant to add special-interest concerns to the agenda, depending on demographic and organizational objectives. For example, exploration of the complexities of cross-sex and interracial mentor relationships should be included when there is diversity in the work force.</p>	

period of reassessment and redirection (Levinson et al., 1978; Osherson, 1980). The training for this population should include a review of life and career goals as well as a perspective on the role of mentoring in developing people in both early and mid-career stages. The opportunity to relate one's own experiences and concerns to the educational input provides a forum for discussion about assuming the role of mentor in relationships with junior colleagues.

It is to be expected that these people will have different attitudes about mentoring, stemming from their personal experiences as well as from the organization's current treatment of people at this career stage. The opportunity to explore these attitudes in a supportive context increases the likelihood that participants will leave with an inclination to provide mentoring functions in a manner that is also self-enhancing. It is most realistic to assume that some, not all, will embrace the role of mentor with

enthusiasm. In settings in which employees in mid-career receive few rewards and little recognition, few are likely to want to actively coach and guide younger colleagues.

Opportunities for self-assessment and skill development are critical for this population. People can examine their own careers and state how mentoring either played a significant role or how it was missed at critical points along the way. Skill-development activities help them to develop confidence and competence in providing mentoring functions to junior colleagues and also in building alliances with peers and superiors who might provide developmental functions that are needed during the middle career years.

For People in Late Career. Members of this population are likely to be anticipating retirement or at least experiencing some conflict about how much to invest in the organization and how much to invest in other life domains (Kram & Jusela, 1978; Levinson et al., 1978). Concerns about what they will leave behind become salient. Mentoring can provide an important vehicle for passing on their wisdom and experiences to younger generations, and both individual and organizational benefits are derived from the process.

The educational design should encourage people to review their pasts, to identify positive and negative experiences (particularly in relationships), and to define opportunities to provide mentoring functions that would be mutually beneficial to themselves and to junior colleagues. With this group, cognitive input and skill training are not as critical as the opportunity to identify ways in which to create consultative roles for themselves (Hall & Kram, 1981). Of course, some members of this group already may be providing mentoring functions to junior colleagues.

Educational programs for employees grouped by age or career stage may not be practical in many instances. Although these have the advantage of bringing together people with similar developmental concerns and opportunities, heterogeneous groups have advantages as well. In training groups that include people at every career stage, people develop greater empathy for those with whom they are likely to develop mentor relationships.

For heterogeneous populations, the training designs must be more generalized. Perspectives on life and career stages and the role of mentoring in career stages are appropriate topics. It also is valuable to address special-interest topics with the group as a whole or in smaller discussion groups. For example, newer employees might discuss their concerns about “learning the ropes,” and women and men might discuss the complexities of cross-sex relationships. Clearly, particular groups will have concerns unique to their histories in the organization; an opportunity to explore these in an educational context contributes to the awareness, attitudes, and skills necessary for building supportive alliances in the work setting.

The appropriate objectives, designs, and target populations for educational interventions depend on the nature of the programs that currently exist in the organization, the role of training in the organization, and the readiness and needs of

organizational members. For example, some organizations integrate education about mentoring into existing career-planning workshops; thus, separate programs on mentoring are not necessary. Indeed, the integration with other programs gives greater credibility to the topic and its relevance for people at all career stages.

Regardless of the particular target population or special objectives, however, experience suggests that certain principles of laboratory education (see Figure 1) are important in developing new attitudes and behavioral skills (Bass & Vaughn, 1966; Porter, Lawler, & Hackman, 1975; Beer, 1980).

1. Define learning objectives for specific target population.
2. Emphasize exploration of attitudes about mentoring and the behavior required to initiate and manage relationships that provide mentoring functions. Supplement skill training and self-reflection with cognitive learning about life and career stages and the role of mentoring in career development.
3. Provide opportunities to practice the interpersonal skills of active listening, communication, building rapport, managing conflict, collaboration, coaching, counseling, and so on in role-play situations and/or in discussions of on-the-job relationships.
4. Provide opportunities for constructive feedback from facilitators and participants on interpersonal styles and on specific strategies for initiating relationships that provide mentoring functions.
5. Provide opportunities to experiment with new behavior and to observe modeling of effective coaching and counseling.
6. End with planning for back-home applications of learnings to current and future job situations and relationships.

Figure 1. Principles of Laboratory Education

These principles stress the importance of a focus on behavior and attitudes rather than on cognitive learning, although cognitive learning should be provided to support skill development. In addition to skill practice, the opportunity to obtain constructive feedback, to experiment with new behaviors, and to observe the modeling of effective coaching and counseling will reinforce the development of new skills and attitudes.

Because not all participants will be interested in or open to learning about mentoring, the educational program must be introduced with a clear rationale about how it fits with the participants' job situations and broader organizational objectives. If organizational structures and managers do not support the attitudes and skills developed in the educational program, the new learning is likely to fade rapidly (Argyris, 1970).

Educational programs of this type should be voluntary. Research has indicated that some people are more inclined to provide mentoring functions than others (Alleman, 1982; Kram, 1980; Levinson et al., 1978). At a minimum, within the learning context, it is important to acknowledge and address individual reluctance and anxiety about mentor relationships.

Coaching and counseling of people as they attempt to build supportive relationships with peers, superiors, and subordinates subsequent to the educational experience will help to facilitate the transfer of new attitudes and skills. If resources are available, the

opportunity to talk with a third party about their experiences will provide the support that people need as they venture into new relationship behaviors. Peer counseling can augment staff resources in this regard.

The support of senior management is critical in ensuring that educational interventions are viewed as legitimate and important. Top managers should state explicitly that mentoring efforts contribute to organizational objectives. In addition, they should model effective mentoring behaviors in their relationships with subordinates. Finally, senior management must ensure that the structural changes needed to encourage mentoring are implemented; the reward system, aspects of task design, culture of the organization, and features of performance-management systems are unlikely to change significantly without the active support of this group (Argyris, 1970; Beckhard, 1969; Beer, 1980).

Structural Interventions

Educational interventions focus on changing the attitudes and skills of organizational members. Structural interventions focus on changing the existing systems in the organization or on introducing new ones to create new stimuli and reinforcements to which members must respond. The primary advantage of structural interventions is that they produce changes in behavior rapidly (Beer, 1980). If they are supplemented by appropriate educational interventions, they have the potential to change organizational norms and practices in a direction that encourages mentoring for members at all career stages.

Educational and structural interventions should be implemented in sequence or simultaneously to reinforce one another. If an educational intervention is made but the reward system, task design, and performance-management systems do not support the behaviors and attitudes acquired through the learning process, the organizational members are likely to become frustrated, angry, and resentful as they attempt to implement their newly acquired skills. Similarly, when structural intervention is implemented without an educational intervention to develop the ownership and the skills needed to meet the requirements of the new system, the organizational members are likely to become uncertain, anxious, and resentful of the change (Tushman, 1974).

Table 3 lists structural interventions that can be used to encourage and support mentoring relationships.

Table 3. Structural Interventions That Encourage Mentoring

Intervention	Alternative Methods	Major Advantages	Major Disadvantages
Modify the Reward System	1. Base decisions about pay and promotion on both bottom-line results and how well people develop subordinates and build relationships with senior colleagues and peers.	Has high impact on people's behavior at all career stages	Is likely to engender significant resistance.

continued

Table 3 (continued). Structural Interventions That Encourage Mentoring

Intervention	Alternative Methods	Major Advantages	Major Disadvantages
	<p>2. Develop a human-resource accounting system to provide data for evaluating performance in developing people.</p> <p>3. Develop a formal process for eliciting feedback from peers and subordinate to be utilized in performance appraisal, development planning, and decisions about pay and promotion.</p> <p>4. Develop explicit rewards at mid-career for providing coaching and counseling to junior colleagues.</p>	<p>Operationalizes rewards for developing relationships and people.</p> <p>Provides qualitative data that can help to improve performance</p> <p>Reduces stagnation and withdrawal of people at mid-career while developing their potential to provide mentoring.</p>	<p>Specific measures that reflect quality of relationships are difficult to define.</p> <p>Is likely to engender significant resistance from organizational members who want to maintain one-way communication and feedback.</p> <p>It is difficult to determine which specific rewards would have value and be consistent with ongoing systems.</p>
Modify the Design of Work	<p>1. Modify space arrangements to encourage interaction among junior and senior employees who have complementary relationship needs.</p> <p>2. Modify newer employees' jobs to require more contact with clients and senior colleagues who can provide mentoring functions.</p> <p>3. Modify senior employees' jobs to include responsibilities for coaching and counseling younger colleagues.</p> <p>4. Create project teams that include individuals at different career stages who can learn from one another.</p>	<p>Affects daily interaction patterns. Is easy to implement.</p> <p>Legitimizes regular contact with potential mentors</p> <p>Legitimizes the role of mentor or coach, giving it value and priority.</p> <p>Provides an ongoing vehicle for mentoring activities as part of the work itself.</p>	<p>Is likely to change the frequency of interaction, but not necessarily the quality.</p> <p>People may not have the requisite interpersonal skills, or the new design may violate norms of interaction.</p> <p>Some people may not want to assume new responsibilities or may not have the interpersonal skills to do so.</p> <p>People may not have the requisite interpersonal skill, or the work technology may prohibit the change.</p> <p><i>continued</i></p>

Table 3 (continued). Structural Interventions That Encourage Mentoring

Intervention	Alternative Methods	Major Advantages	Major Disadvantages
Modify Performance Management Systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Introduce performance appraisal, MBO, and developmental planning processes if they do not exist. 2. Offer educational programs on the rationale and skills required for each system. 3. Allow other than immediate supervisors to provide mentoring functions. 	<p>Provides a forum for mentoring activities, including coaching, counseling, role modeling, and sponsorship.</p> <p>Changes attitudes and enhances interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Voluntary participation encourages positive interaction.</p>	<p>Is likely to engender considerable resistance, particularly without adequate skill training.</p> <p>Will be viewed with skepticism unless systems are endorsed by senior management.</p> <p>May threaten immediate supervisors.</p>
Introduce a Formal Mentoring Program	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Set up pairs of colleagues who are expected to build relationships that provide mentoring functions. 2. Define a target populations for whom formalized relationships should be established and provide a process for identifying and matching pairs. 3. Set up procedures for monitoring the pairs and providing feedback to the organization. 4. Offer educational opportunities to aid members in participating effectively in the program. 	<p>Ensures pairing and mentoring as assigned.</p> <p>Increases the likelihood that matches will work because they are based on similar values, interests, and interpersonal styles.</p> <p>Provides support the pairs and a vehicle for ending relationships that do no work.</p> <p>Changes attitudes and builds requisite interpersonal skills, preparing people to initiate and manage the new relationships</p>	<p>People may feel coerced and confused or anxious about their responsibilities; destructive dynamics may emerge.</p> <p>Those who are not selected are likely to feel deprived, resentful, and increasingly pessimistic about their futures.</p> <p>Evaluation can put people in the program on the defensive.</p> <p>Some volunteers may be ill suited for their new responsibilities.</p>

Modifying the Reward System

The reward system has tremendous impact on behavior because pay and promotion issues are so important to people (Beer, 1980; Lawler, 1977). In most organizations, this system is designed to reward performance and potential related to bottom-line results.

There are several ways in which a reward system can be modified to encourage relationship-building activities. Decisions about pay increases and promotion can be based not only on financial results but also on how well people develop subordinates and how well they build relationships with colleagues. Feedback from peers and

subordinates concerning how well a person provides development functions can become part of the data on which such decisions about rewards are based. Rewards other than promotion and pay, such as job enrichment and educational opportunities, can be made available to people in mid-career to provide them with encouragement and the incentive to assume the role of mentor. Finally, mentoring skills could become part of the prerequisites for advancement to managerial positions in the organization. A clear statement from senior management about the importance of mentoring in developing human resources within the organization is necessary to support such structural (or educational) interventions.

It is difficult to measure how well people assume the role of mentor. Bottom-line results are far easier to evaluate. Several organizations are now attempting to develop human-resource accounting systems to measure the costs incurred to recruit, train, and develop their human resources (Flamholtz, 1974). Such an accounting approach enables people to report the time they spend in mentoring activities, but does not reflect the quality of that relationship time. If a reward system truly is to acknowledge the importance of developmental relationships, subjective data concerning the quality of the mentoring or coaching experiences also must be considered.

Feedback from peers and subordinates is one important source of information. This may be difficult to implement in an organization in which the culture is authoritarian, with only top-down communication. However, in settings in which two-way communication is valued, feedback provides a powerful mechanism for helping people to improve their skills and for producing data that can be utilized in decisions about pay and promotion.

Changing the reward system is a complex task. It is important to educate members about the changes in expectations and to provide education and skill training that enable them to make mentoring activities a higher priority. If this is not done, members are likely to become anxious and resentful about the changes in the rules (Tushman, 1974). Resistance to changes in the reward system is predictable. Change creates fear and anxiety (Watson, 1969; Zaltman & Duncan, 1977). Perhaps the best way to introduce change into a system is to involve the members of the system in planning and/or implementing the change. This not only helps to ensure modifications that are relevant to those who will be affected but also helps to reduce some of the predictable resistance to the change (Beer, 1980; Lawler, 1977).

Modifying the Design of Work

Opportunities for interaction are essential for encouraging relationships that provide mentoring functions. Mentor relationships frequently begin as a result of two people's collaborating on a task and discovering a mutual liking and trust. Although modifications in the reward system generally are quite significant, and therefore subject to considerable resistance and scrutiny, modifications to the design of work in order to foster interaction can range from minor changes to a major reorganization.

The impact of the physical space of an organization on frequency and quality of interactions among organizational members often is overlooked (Steele, 1973; Steele & Jenks, 1977). Conditions that encourage relationship-building efforts can be created by making it easier for people to have informal discussions with those who have complementary developmental needs. Indeed, in some organizations, a conscious decision is made to have junior and senior engineers share office space, particularly during the first six months of employment for the newcomer (Phillips-Jones, 1982). Organizational members who have a commitment to mentoring can model effective management of physical space by creating an “open-door” policy through their own actions. Perceptions of availability appear to have a tremendous effect on people’s willingness to seek guidance from their senior colleagues.

The redesign of work need not be system wide; individual jobs also can be modified to meet individual and organizational needs. Jobs can be redesigned to include contact with clients, with other parts of the organization, or with senior colleagues who can provide feedback on performance. This enriches the job (Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Hackman, Oldham, Jansen, & Purdy, 1975), as well as increasing opportunities for interaction with people who can provide mentoring functions.

A more radical modification in the design of work involves the creation of project teams composed of people at different career stages who have complementary needs. This intervention has the potential to enhance productivity as well as the quality of relationships.

Modifications in the design of work to encourage mentoring are dictated by the nature of the work and the skills and attitudes of organizational members. As with the redesign of the reward system, the involvement of those who will be affected by the change is preferable.

Modifications to the design of work can have significant impact on the quality of interpersonal relations in the organization, the level of trust across hierarchical levels, and the general culture of the system, as well as on other structures and systems. Consideration of how other systems must change in order to maintain a “fit” among organizational components is essential for effective implementation (Beer, 1980; Hackman & Oldham, 1980; Nadler & Tushman, 1980).

Modifying the Performance-Management System

The performance-management system has the potential to provide ongoing developmental functions. Management by objectives (MBO) is a process in which the manager and employee regularly set and review achievable goals that are consistent with organizational objectives (Odiorne, 1965). Performance appraisal is a process in which the subordinate’s performance is reviewed and feedback is provided on both performance and potential. Finally, in career-development or performance-development programs, the subordinate and supervisor jointly assess the subordinate’s strengths and weaknesses and then develop a plan for his or her development. All of these activities

involve a range of mentoring functions, including coaching, counseling, role modeling, and feedback.

If one of these systems is in place but not operating effectively, it may be because the people involved do not have the skills to perform their required roles or because the system was not introduced and/or explained adequately. Strategies for modifying these systems so that they will encourage mentoring are dictated by the current state of affairs. If no formal system is yet in place, introduction should involve a planned, step-by-step process that includes the endorsement of top management; pilot projects that demonstrate success; and educational interventions that provide knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

If a system is in place but underutilized or not highly valued, a systematic diagnosis is needed to determine what is wrong. An educational intervention may be warranted, or the system's design may be inappropriate for the particular population, in which case changes in the system must be considered before an educational intervention would have positive impact. Organizational members may become unwilling to embrace the responsibilities that a performance-management system requires (Meyer, Kay, & French, 1965). The recognition that not all organizational members may be able to carry out the conflicting roles required by these systems is an important first step toward making performance-management systems more effective. A system may have to legitimize someone other than the immediate supervisor to discuss performance and plans for development. In one engineering organization, the role of "alternative advisor" was introduced in the context of a new career-development program (Lewis, 1982). The alternative advisors were managers who volunteered to be available for career discussions with employees who did not feel comfortable in talking with their immediate supervisors about personal and professional-development issues.

The Problems of Formal Mentoring Programs

A formal mentoring program consists of an explicit goal and set of practices for pairing junior and senior organizational members in order to facilitate the effective socialization of newcomers and to help them to prepare for career advancement (Phillips-Jones, 1982).

A variety of formal mentoring programs have been introduced in both the private sector and the Federal government. In the Federal government, the Internal Revenue Service, the Federal Executive Development Program, the Presidential Management Internal Program, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture have utilized formal systems in which the training and development staffs assign coaches or mentors to junior-level employees. In the private sector, the Jewel Companies assign each new manager to a senior manager for coaching and mentoring (Collins & Scott, 1978); AT&T Bell Labs have a junior and a senior engineer share the same office for several months; Glendale Federal Savings and Loan has voluntary leaders in each unit act as counselors for employees; and Merrill Lynch has bosses nominate employees who are then assigned to mentors (Phillips-Jones, 1982). Federal Express has a mentoring system that also

includes the education and involvement of the immediate supervisors of the junior employees, as well as an advisory board that monitors the system's effectiveness and deals with any problems that occur (Lean, 1983).

Although no systematic evaluation of these formal mentoring programs has been completed, there is sufficient evidence to raise a number of questions about their value in creating conditions that encourage mentoring. It appears that although their primary objective is to provide an effective socialization experience for newcomers (and, in some instances, for particular groups of newcomers such as women, minorities, and/or employees with high potential), they are not accomplishing this goal and, in some instances, have had destructive consequences for the people involved. Some of these negative results can be avoided through careful design and implementation of the system; others are the consequences of attempts to engineer relationships that must evolve naturally and voluntarily as a result of mutual attraction and interests (Kram, 1980).

When mentors and protégés are assigned to each other, they are likely to feel coerced into the relationship. Senior employees may begin to resent their responsibilities as mentors, and junior employees may resent the “patronized” aspects of their role or doubt the value of the relationship. Even if the partners see potential value in the relationship, they may experience anxiety or confusion about their new roles. Educational interventions can alleviate some of this anxiety and confusion by defining mentoring functions and providing interpersonal skill training.

Negative mentoring experiences can be minimized by making sure that participation in a formal mentoring system is voluntary. Screening procedures can help people to think through the decision to participate, and data can be collected to facilitate the match between potential mentors and protégés (Phillips-Jones, 1982). However, the very existence of a formal system that is endorsed by an organization's management makes it unlikely that the program will be genuinely voluntary.

Voluntary participation in a mentoring program can reduce the risk of destructive experiences; it cannot, however, eliminate the possibility of negative reactions from those who have not been selected to participate or from those who are affected by the relationships that have been arranged. For example, in a mentoring system designed for employees with high potential, those who are not selected are likely to feel deprived, resentful, and pessimistic about their own opportunities for development. Similarly, in a mentoring program designed to facilitate affirmative action, majority-group members may become resentful of the guidance and support being offered to special-interest group members. These side effects can affect relationships among peers as well as people's commitment to the organization.

Even if the formal mentoring system is available to all employees, the immediate supervisors of the juniors in the mentoring pairs may be threatened by the new alliances. The risk of losing influence over the performance and career decisions of a subordinate increases as the bond between mentor and protégé strengthens. It is essential to involve supervisors in the process of arranging the pairs in order to mitigate their resentment. At

the same time it must be realized that some of their responsibilities will be infringed with the formalization of the mentor relationships.

The risks of a formal mentoring system are significant, and the potential benefits have not been demonstrated clearly. There is some indication that certain preconditions can reduce some of the risks. First, participation should be voluntary; and some systematic screening procedure should be used to enhance the decision to participate as well as the matching of mentors and protégés. Second, the support of top management is essential to convey the serious intent of the program and its importance in developing human resources in the organization. Third, educational interventions should be provided in order to increase employees' understanding of mentoring functions and their interpersonal skills so that their anxiety about entering new relationships is reduced. Finally, there must be flexibility in the system so that mismatches can be remedied and pairs can continue relationships only so long as they are fulfilling mutual needs. These preconditions are feasible, but not easily achieved.

Research to date indicates that a mentoring relationship cannot be engineered but, rather, must emerge from the spontaneous and mutual involvement of two people who see potential value in the relationship (Kram, 1980; Levinson et al., 1978). The research also indicates that people are more likely to develop a *variety* of relationships that provide mentoring functions rather than attempt to meet all their developmental needs in one alliance (Rowe, 1980; Shapiro, Haseltine, & Rowe, 1978). It appears that a formalized mentoring program may be “unnatural” and, thus, basically unrealistic. It also seems that alternative structural and educational interventions ultimately may have greater positive impact. Opportunities for interaction and pairing of juniors and seniors can be created through appropriate task design, reward systems, and performance-management systems; and people can be offered the educational experiences to build the requisite interpersonal skills. These strategies increase the likelihood that people with complementary needs will find one another and decrease the risks associated with attempts to formalize such alliances.

DETERMINING A STRATEGY FOR INTERVENTION

Because effective mentoring requires considerable personal involvement and commitment of time, energy, and human resources, a strategy for intervention must be based on a thorough understanding of organizational members' attitudes, knowledge, and skills, as well as the nature of systems, structures, and procedures that can promote or interfere with relationship-building efforts. With this understanding, it is possible to define which educational and structural interventions are most appropriate.

The value of an organization development approach to determining and implementing interventions cannot be overstated. The process of organization development and change is a dynamic one; and the major phases of data collection, diagnosis, action planning, intervention, and evaluation do not occur in linear fashion but are reiterated over time (Kolb & Frohman, 1970). An intervention strategy is

necessarily defined over time, step by step, as learning occurs through each new cycle of data collection, diagnosis, intervention, and evaluation. This is necessary in order to ensure congruence among structure, people, process, strategy, and culture (Beer, 1980; Nadler & Tushman, 1980). The following is an outline of a systematic intervention strategy:

1. Establish the objectives and scope of the intervention.
 - Who is in need of mentoring?
 - Who can provide mentoring?
 - Are resources available for a system-wide intervention, or is a smaller, departmental intervention more appropriate?
2. Identify the features that create obstacles to mentoring and alternative methods for alleviating them.
 - Which features discourage relationship-building efforts? The reward system? The design of work? The culture? The absence of effective performance-management systems? Individual attitudes, assumptions, or skills?
 - Which educational and structural interventions are feasible? Which would address the obstacles identified?
 - Are there existing change efforts or established programs into which a strategy to encourage mentoring could be incorporated?
 - Who should be involved in choosing the appropriate intervention so that the support of management is assured and resistance is minimized?
3. Implement the intervention.
 - Which should happen first, an educational or structural intervention?
 - Who should be consulted and involved in the implementation?
 - What depth of intervention is required?
4. Evaluate the impact of the intervention and determine the next steps.
 - How did people respond to the intervention over time?
 - What other interventions are needed to support the desired changes in attitudes and behavior?
 - Who needs to be informed of the impact of the intervention in order to ensure long-term support for the change?

Systematic diagnosis of the situation enables definition of the potential obstacles to mentoring, including structures, processes, and people. The process of data collection, diagnosis, and action planning should involve the target population for whom mentoring is desired, members of the management group who must commit resources and support for change, as well as the internal and/or external change agents who have the knowledge and skills to orchestrate the process.

Data Collection

People at all career stages should be consulted about the factors that encourage or interfere with their efforts to establish effective relationships with colleagues, including

the organization's reward system, performance-management systems, task design, and culture. Through systematic interviews with members of the relevant groups, data can be collected to determine the appropriate objectives (for example, to provide mentoring for women and minorities, to enhance mentoring for all employees, to expand career-development processes in the organization), the appropriate subsystems to be involved (one department, one division, the entire organization), the willingness and capability of members to support the proposed objectives and required change, and the resources available to support the intervention goals and strategy (Beckhard, 1969).

The data-collection phase of such an approach lays the foundation for a collaborative effort so that organizational members develop a sense of ownership for the proposed changes (Beckhard & Harris, 1977; Beer, 1980). Resistance to change is then minimized (Alderfer & Brown, 1975).

Diagnosis and Action Planning

These phases include a synthesis of the information gathered and identification of possible alternative actions. For example, if the data show that only bottom-line results currently are rewarded, changes in the reward system are necessary. The data are likely to show factors that already encourage mentoring behavior; for instance, task design already may foster frequent interaction between junior and senior employees, or performance-appraisal systems already may require managers to provide some mentoring functions. These supporting factors should be built on during the action-planning process.

Alternative options must be assessed in light of other change processes and developmental efforts in the organization into which the development of mentoring relationships could be incorporated.

Intervention

There is no one right way to intervene in any situation; a number of strategies can lead toward the same end (Nadler & Tushman, 1980). The choice and sequencing of educational and structural interventions must be made on the basis of predicting the potential costs and benefits of each alternative. In particular, it is necessary to anticipate possible resistance and how it might be addressed (Kotter & Schlesinger, 1979; Watson, 1969; Zalman & Duncan, 1977). The potential mentors may be resistant because they have never received mentoring and/or they resent the opportunity provided to junior colleagues. The potential protégés may be resistant because they do not trust senior managers to have their interests at heart, they do not respect the competence and advice of senior colleagues, and/or they do not have the attitudes and skills required to initiate relationships with potential mentors. Senior managers may be resistant because their concern for "results" questions the energy that will be directed toward development of people. Each of these sources of resistance can become a focus for intervention (Bennis, Benne, & Chin, 1969; Lewin, 1951).

Harrison (1970) suggests that an intervention be no deeper than is required to achieve the objectives for change, nor should it surpass the energy and resources that can be committed by system members. Because mentoring relationships require that people have particular interpersonal skills as well as self-awareness and an understanding of the mentoring process, it is likely that an educational intervention will be necessary. If limited resources make it impossible for education to be offered, or if a change in the design of work or the reward system requires more study and human effort than currently can be allocated, serious consideration should be given to not initiating the process at all.

CONCLUSION

An organization development approach to creating conditions that encourage mentoring ensures that such efforts are relevant, acceptable, and have the intended impact (Beer, 1980).

This approach requires a systematic process of data collection, diagnosis, action planning, and careful evaluation. Interventions that are effective in one setting may be inappropriate in another.

An organization must consider its objectives and resources carefully when choosing among educational and structural interventions. Frequently, the inclination is to choose the intervention that appears most efficient in order to conserve resources. But that alternative may not alter the systems that create the most significant obstacles.

The introduction of a formal mentoring system, while apparently a direct solution to the lack of effective mentoring, may produce the most negative effects. Those who are matched may resent the formalized relationship; those who are not matched may feel deprived; and without adequate skill training and a reward system and performance-management systems that support mentoring behaviors, participants are likely to become frustrated even if they initially are enthusiastic and committed to the program.

This points to the need for systematic diagnosis of the situation and identification of the sequence of educational and structural interventions that will create the conditions for effective mentoring to evolve. If opportunities for interaction are lacking, changes in task design, performance-management systems, or norms relating to cross-hierarchical contact may be needed. If organizational members at each career stage do not understand the role of mentoring in career development or if they do not have the requisite interpersonal skills, educational intervention is warranted. Finally, if human resource development and relationship-building activities are not considered in performance evaluation and promotion decisions, changes in the reward system will have to be made before mentoring activities are encouraged.

An organization development approach to intervening involves organizational members in the diagnosis, action planning, and evaluation phases. A pool of representatives from every level (senior management on down to new employees)

should be invited to participate in the planning and implementation of educational and structural interventions (Alderfer, 1976; Beckhard & Harris, 1977; Beer, 1980).

Although a number of intervention strategies have been discussed, others are likely to be discovered as these are implemented. It is critical that evaluation be conducted in order to determine the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches. Evaluation research should include interviews and questionnaires to assess the impact of changes in systems and procedures or participation in educational events. As these data are collected, they will provide the basis for further diagnosis and subsequent interventions.

More basic research should continue as well. We have only begun to understand the psychological and structural factors that shape a person's willingness and capacity to initiate relationships with colleagues of another generation. There also is a gap in our understanding of how to manage cross-sex and interracial dynamics in developmental relationships; as we develop further insight, it will be possible to invent new strategies for overcoming these significant obstacles. Similarly, as our understanding of mentoring alternatives increases, interventions to enhance the range of relationship options available to organizational members will evolve.

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■ IMPROVING THE USE OF BEHAVIOR MODELING IN COMMUNICATION AND COACHING-SKILLS TRAINING

Dennis C. Kinlaw

Behavior modeling (BEM) is a widely accepted technique in the field of human resource development, especially in training. Behavior modeling can be defined as “a learning methodology that enables

learners to develop specific skills and the confidence to use those skills by viewing a model who uses a specific set of steps in a defined situation, enacting the behaviors demonstrated by the model, then receiving feedback on their effectiveness” (Robinson, 1982, p. 181). The general value of BEM programs is well established (Robinson, 1982; Zenger, 1980). It has become the method of choice in many interpersonal-communication programs, such as Coaching-Skills training and other programs that focus on skill acquisition and the practical application of learning.

Researchers and theorists have debated the strengths and weaknesses of BEM programs (Dobbs, 1983; Parry & Reich, 1984). Some problems result from the use of simplistic models that lead to participant boredom (Zenger, 1984). However, other behavior-modeling programs are less effective than they might be because they make only partial application of the theory from which they are derived, that is, the social-learning theory of Albert Bandura (1971). If the principles of this theory were to be applied more carefully, the training results of behavior modeling could be enhanced.

OVERVIEW OF THEORY

Social-learning theory (SLT) is a cognitive *and* behavioral theory of learning. One distinctive characteristic of SLT is that it differentiates the process of *acquisition* from the process of *performance*. Social-learning theory researchers emphasize that people typically acquire the ability to perform a certain skill by observing some model. Models may be behavioral, pictorial, or verbal. The process of acquisition, or learning from a model, is a cognitive one and takes place by means of mental coding and organization. Acquisition takes place *before* learners actually demonstrate the ability to perform the skill. People often “learn” a skill and rehearse its performance in their minds before actually having the opportunity to perform it.

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Social-learning theory also emphasizes that behavior or performance is part of the learning process and that performance, feedback, and reinforcement strengthen skill development. The dual nature (cognitive and behavioral) of SLT is apparent in three important subprocesses of observational learning identified by Bandura (1971): *attention*, *retention*, and *reproduction*. Each of these subprocesses is affected by a variety of factors, as outlined in Figure 1. (A fourth subprocess, motivation, is not relevant to this discussion.)

Social-Learning Subprocess	Factors Affecting the Subprocess
Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Distinctiveness or perceptual clarity of what is modeled ■ Complexity of the model ■ Learner's perceptions of the value of what is modeled ■ Learner's perceptual (mind) set ■ Learner's past reinforcement
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Symbolic coding ■ Cognitive organization ■ Symbolic rehearsal ■ Motor rehearsal
Reproduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Physical capabilities ■ Availability of component responses ■ Self-observation ■ Accuracy of feedback

Figure 1. Factors Affecting Behavior Modeling

Attention

This subprocess describes the way in which learners orient themselves. The presentation of a model does not ensure that learners will attend closely enough to the model, that they will select from the model the most relevant attributes, or that they will even perceive accurately what is being modeled. Attention is influenced by such variables as the distinctiveness or perceptual clarity of what is modeled, the complexity of the model, the learner's perception of the value of what is modeled, the learner's perceptual (mind) set, and the learner's past reinforcement patterns.

Retention

This subprocess of SLT emphasizes an element in observational learning that is ignored in theories of imitation (such as behaviorism and other reinforcement theories). Researchers have shown that when learners acquire a modeled response without performing it as it is modeled, they must be retaining the modeled response in some mental or symbolic form.

The process of retention includes symbolic coding, cognitive organization, symbolic rehearsal, and motor rehearsal. Long-term retention of modeled behaviors is

most dependent on coding. A simple illustration of coding is the way in which a person translates a set of travel directions into a series of left and right turns; that person may further code the directions by “R” for right and “L” for left.

In SLT, learners are not passive recorders who store replicated (isomorphic) representations of modeled events. Instead, they are active, cognitive agents who transform, codify, and organize modeled information into their own mnemonic schemes.

Reproduction

The behavioral aspect of SLT becomes apparent in the subprocess of reproduction, which refers to the performance of a modeled pattern. Reproduction includes the elements of physical capabilities, availability of component responses, self-observation; and accuracy of feedback.

In a behavior-modeling training program, successful transition through this subprocess depends largely on the availability of the component responses required to reproduce the model. Learning to reproduce a complex, modeled interaction requires that each of the constituent skills in the interaction be modeled for the learners and performed by them before they go on to the more complex behaviors required in the complete interaction.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING BEHAVIOR MODELING

Behavior-modeling programs expect more than mimicry. If merely producing imitative behavior were their goal, trainers could use a repeated model with corrective feedback and valued rewards and eventually evoke a matched response. The more complex objective of enabling learners to develop specific skills and the confidence to use these skills requires careful consideration of the three subprocesses of attention, retention, and reproduction to enhance the design and results of such programs. Figure 2 outlines the variables that can enhance the effectiveness of behavior modeling.

Attention

The modeled stimulus must be designed and presented in such a way that it is clear and free of ambiguity. One of the recurring problems in some BEM programs is confusion about what is being modeled.

Some programs use “behavioral models” to model rules, principles, values, and so on. More than a set of behaviors is being modeled, yet the models are discussed as though only behavior were being modeled. The use of behavior modeling to communicate more than a set of behaviors can be appropriate at times. However, regardless of the purpose, the more explicitly the model is presented to the learners, the more distinctive the modeled information becomes and the more the attention process is strengthened.

Not only can this subprocess be strengthened by increasing the distinctiveness of the modeled stimuli; attention also can be strengthened by more careful preparation of

Social-Learning Subprocess	Factors Enhancing Effectiveness
Attention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Clear design and presentation of modeled stimuli ■ Increased distinctiveness of the modeled stimuli ■ Learner preparation and awareness of what is to be observed ■ Use of an observation sheet requiring explicit responses ■ Reliability of the model and observation sheet ■ Absence of any elements in the modeled stimuli that interfere with attractiveness to learners
Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Distinctive model and rigorous definitions of what is to be observed ■ Graphic or pictorial models describing what is to be observed in the behavioral model ■ Learners' development of alternative graphic and verbal descriptions of what will be modeled ■ Use of generic cognitive models on which a variety of subsequent applications or related models can be built ■ Modeling and practicing of constituent skills prior to modeling and practicing a complex process ■ Post-modeling review of how observers coded and organized what they viewed
Reproduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Carefully designed practice activities ■ High-quality and well-timed feedback ■ Use of preliminary activities to ensure that the requisite skills have been modeled and learned ■ Participant practice with feedback skills.

Figure 2. Factors Enhancing Behavior Modeling

the learner to receive the modeled stimuli. Such preparation requires precision in the verbal descriptions of what is to be modeled. The observers need to know whether they are looking for principles, rules, values, or skills. Once this question has been answered, taking the following two steps can help to ensure that the model will serve its training purpose:

1. Develop an observation sheet with a format that requires the learners to make very explicit responses (the closer the observations can be reduced to “yes” or “no” responses, the better).
2. Test the model and observation sheet with observers and modify the model and observation sheet until consistent results are obtained and the reliability of the model and observation sheet have been established.

Another way to strengthen the attention subprocess is to be sure that the modeled stimulus is clear of any elements that make it unbelievable or unacceptable to the learners. One practical tactic is to use a video model that has a training setting rather than an authentic organizational setting. Such a model (for example, in an interpersonal-skills training program), could depict trainees in a training setting as they perform the skills that the observer-learners will be expected to perform after they have viewed the

model. This would prevent objections such as “That’s not the way it is in our organization.” Using a training setting for modeling also enhances the attractiveness of the model for learners, because they perceive the actors to be like themselves—in the same learning environment and facing the same learning challenges.

If the video model makes use of professional actors or people experienced in using the modeled behaviors, they should strive to act naturally (not perfectly); and the setting should be as generic as possible.

Retention

Observers learn from a model, first of all, by performing the cognitive processes of classifying, organizing, and coding. In the attention phase of learning, making the model distinctive and using rigorous definitions of what is to be observed enhance cognitive processes.

These processes also can be strengthened in the retention phase. One way to do this is to use graphic or pictorial models to describe what is to be observed in the behavioral model. If, for example, learners will be viewing a problem-solving situation, they will retain more if the process to be viewed is both diagrammed and described verbally.

Another useful method is to have learners develop their own graphic and verbal descriptions of what will be modeled. Then learners can rehearse with one another what will be modeled and check the accuracy of the cognitive preparation that they have made.

Some of the most useful aids to retention are generic cognitive models on which a variety of subsequent applications or related models can be built. For example, a generic interpersonal problem-solving model can be used to describe the core skills and processes involved in a whole series of specific supervisor-and-subordinate interactions, such as establishing work objectives, counseling on performance, and coaching (Kinlaw, 1981, 1989). Each model of each subsequent interaction is related to the generic model, resulting in better retention.

Retention also can be strengthened by modeling and practicing the constituent skills of a complex process before modeling and practicing the whole process. In a training program on coaching or interpersonal communication, for example, the BEM process is enhanced if skills such as probing, reflecting, and summarizing are modeled and are practiced individually before a complete interaction is modeled and practiced.

Post-modeling review of how observers have coded and organized what they have viewed is another way to enhance the use of behavior modeling.

One mistake that trainers in BEM programs often make is using videotape models to spark discussion about the content of the modeled interaction and encouraging learners to identify what would improve the model. These discussions, if not carefully controlled, can inhibit the retention process by creating indefiniteness about what is being modeled and imprecision about what is being learned.

Reproduction

The goal of BEM programs is that learners will be able to match the behaviors presented in the modeled stimuli. Reproduction is assisted, of course, if clear and distinct models are used, if the guidelines for observation are defined rigorously, and if accurate cognitive coding and organization of modeled behavior have occurred. However, the two critical elements in reproduction are practice and feedback. Behavior-modeling programs typically can be improved by designing the practice activities more carefully and by improving the quality and timing of feedback.

Most BEM activities are designed like the following example of a performance-counseling situation:

1. Participants create a role-play situation in which a supervisor interacts with an employee who has performance problems.
2. Participants practice a thorough and complete interaction of the performance counseling.
3. Participants receive feedback about their performance.

Several problems are inherent in this design. First, using real-life problems in order to increase the relevance of the training and to demonstrate its application usually confuses the learning process. The real-life situations distract the learners from the main issue, which is the correct reproduction of the modeled stimuli.

A second problem is that this design encourages global feedback concerning a large segment of behavior. The learner may receive too little specific feedback to be of use and too much global feedback to be remembered and used.

The third problem arises when participants do not have a chance to practice improved performance after the feedback. Some modular programs overcome this problem because participants are given the chance to build on the learning from each module and to modify their behaviors in the activities as the program progresses.

Practice activities and, therefore, reproduction, can be strengthened by ensuring that the requisite skills for an activity or an interaction have been modeled and learned in a series of preliminary activities.

Participants must be challenged to match the modeled behavior that they have observed. They cannot properly value the modeled behavior until they have demonstrated it. Furthermore, if learners are not able to match the modeled behavior during the BEM program, it becomes unlikely that they will apply the behaviors on the job.

Another element in the subprocess of reproduction that can be improved in most BEM programs is the use of feedback. Many programs pay little attention to teaching participants how to give feedback. Ironically, programs could use BEM very effectively to teach feedback skills to participants.

Inexpensive and efficient feedback training for participants can be achieved by means of the following process:

1. Give participants a verbal model of useful feedback (for example, it is concrete and concise, and it describes behavior).
2. Apply the verbal model to the observation guidelines used in each activity.
3. Ask the participants to practice giving feedback to the video or audio model who is demonstrating the behaviors for the practice activity. This means telling the participants to speak to the person modeling the behavior in the tape as though that person were a fellow participant.

Feedback can be further strengthened in BEM programs if it is given in regard to small performance elements, if it is given so that it can be acted on immediately, and if it permits new behavior to be tested and performance to be improved. One way to achieve all of these objectives is to use a stop-action process during the replay of a taped interaction. This process is as follows:

1. Stop the tape and give feedback about a specific behavior of the learner.
2. Ask the learner to demonstrate a behavior that more closely approximates what has been modeled previously.
3. Ask the learner to compare and evaluate the behavior used in the tape and the behavior used in the stop-action process.

CONCLUSION

Behavior-modeling programs have proven to be powerful learning technologies; they have made significant contributions to human resource development, especially in the areas of management and supervisory education and interpersonal communication. However, behavior modeling can be improved by careful attention to the concepts from which it is derived: Albert Bandura's social-learning theory (SLT). Three of the subprocesses in SLT (attention, retention, and reproduction) provide a standard for evaluating BEM program designs. Emphasizing these subprocesses enables trainers to identify practical ways to assert both the cognitive and behavioral elements in BEM, thereby improving its effectiveness.

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■ USING MENTORING FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

J. Barton Cunningham

INTRODUCTION

The mentoring process can take place in either a formal or an informal context. Levine (1985) estimates that formalized mentoring programs probably only constitute about 3 to 4 percent of the mentoring that is actually occurring. Informal mentoring, by far the more prevalent form, typically occurs when a protégé just happens to be chosen by a mentor who possesses much greater experience and expertise. This phenomenon is frequently described as “being in the right place at the right time to be noticed by the right person.”

However, formal mentoring programs, in which the organization assigns or matches mentors and protégés, are rapidly increasing in popularity in both the public and the private sectors. In a survey conducted in eight countries (Murray & Owen, 1991), 18 percent of those surveyed (sixty-seven companies) had some kind of formal mentoring program. Most reported that these programs were generally successful and that they planned to continue them.

In view of the reported success of formal mentoring programs, organizations would be well advised to consider them. In implementing a formalized mentoring program, however, an organization needs to resolve several issues: how to identify mentors and prospective protégés, how to develop a learning culture for succession planning and employee development, and how to recognize the skills and characteristics that people need in order to learn. This article provides a perspective on facilitating a formal mentoring process and developing a culture for mentoring. It describes the benefits of mentoring, discusses why informal mentoring and performance-appraisal systems are insufficient ways to develop employees, pinpoints some criteria for a successful mentoring program, and then discusses how to set up a mentoring program.

THE BENEFITS OF MENTORING

Mentoring offers benefits for the organization, for mentors, and for protégés. For example, it is critical for an organization to develop managerial and leadership talent among the ranks. Although it is true that organizations can easily recruit people from outside to fill their managerial needs, most organizations recruit from within. Recruiting

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from outside the organization not only can negatively affect morale and organizational loyalty but also can introduce new people who conflict with the organization's culture. Introducing new managers or employees into an organization is analogous to the introduction of new strains of bacteria into the body: Some strains can strengthen the immune system, but others can be dangerous. Similarly, in some cases new people in an organization can be a very positive influence, but in others the results may be catastrophic to the culture.

Obviously, the process of promoting from the ranks involves much more than choosing and promoting the most talented technical specialists. Talented line workers may possess high levels of skill in their areas of technical expertise, but such competencies are quite different from those required to create and manage teamwork within a work group. The process of developing competent leaders requires an awareness of the organization's personnel needs as well as mechanisms for developing managerial potential and ability (Sveiby & Lloyd, 1987).

Mentoring programs recognize that on-the-job experience and coaching are valuable ways to develop managerial capabilities. When people in organizations are asked to indicate the ways in which they learned most, they rarely mention university courses, management seminars, or on-the-job training. Rather, they mention on-the-job experience. This finding coincides with research indicating that effective leaders are most often "able to identify a small number of mentors and key experiences that powerfully shaped their philosophies, personalities, aspirations, and operating styles" (Bennis & Nanus, 1985, p. 188).

Mentoring also offers obvious benefits for protégés. A young, new employee, for example, forms an occupational identity and relationship with other employees during the initial stages of his or her career. This is the period during which questions of competence and ability to achieve future occupational dreams are most salient. The employee must learn how to function effectively within the organization by developing technical, interpersonal, and political skills as well as a sense of competence in his or her work. The necessary skills and a sense of competence are acquired primarily through interaction and feedback, and mentoring can be extremely useful in this acquisition process.

In addition, mentors benefit from the mentoring experience. During mid-career the more experienced employee is likely to be reappraising accomplishments and reassessing goals. Entering into a mentoring relationship with a new, ambitious worker provides the senior employee with an opportunity to redirect his or her energies into creative and productive endeavor. It also provides an opportunity to participate vicariously in another person's resolution of the challenges associated with a succession of difficult career stages. In addition, if the protégé is young, the mentor can help that young person to meet the challenges of early adulthood. A related benefit is that the protégé may enable the mentor to see issues, situations, and conditions in a new light.

WHY INFORMAL MENTORING AND PERFORMANCE-APPRAISAL SYSTEMS ARE NOT ENOUGH

Although informal mentoring has always occurred and will continue to do so, there are several reasons for not waiting for mentoring to “just happen” (Gray, 1983):

1. *A very small percentage of motivated and capable employees ever receive informal mentoring.* Often excluded from mentoring are women and minorities, groups that in many cases require the assistance of mentors the most. Instead, it is frequently the case that an organization either consciously or unconsciously endeavors to groom specific types of employees with distinct backgrounds for key management positions. This form of succession planning is often undertaken in order to reinforce the organization’s cultural norms, traditions, and underlying value system. However, this approach can perpetuate an “old boys’ network” whereby “who you know” is more important than “what you know.”

2. *Capable people who do not receive informal mentoring frequently feel envious of those who do and, as a result, feel bitterness toward the organization.* These negative by-products of informal mentoring can severely undermine the credibility of the merit principle within the public sector. Employees may perceive that career opportunities are determined in large part on the basis of one’s “connections” rather than on the basis of one’s perseverance, dedication, and acquisition of requisite skills.

3. *When human potential goes unrecognized and undeveloped, everyone loses.* Employees end up resigning or working far below their potential and capacity because they feel that no one is truly concerned about them or their career expectations. In turn, the organization may lose valuable human resources that are capable of making significant contributions.

Performance-appraisal systems also do not measure up to formal mentoring programs. They cannot foster an employee’s psychological growth in the same way that mentoring can, nor can they provide the opportunity to associate and identify with those who have experience, skill, and power. This deficiency may be due, in part, to the fact that many performance-appraisal systems are highly judgmental in nature and tend to inhibit meaningful two-way communication between a manager and an employee. Also, these systems are not always used in a regular and ongoing manner to facilitate employee learning and development; they may be used for evaluations alone. In addition, they are frequently perceived as the exclusive responsibility and prerogative of management, because management frequently establishes the performance criteria, standards, and objectives along with the evaluation schedule and location.

CRITERIA FOR A SUCCESSFUL MENTORING PROGRAM

Interviews with nine mentors and thirteen protégés suggested the following criteria for successful formal mentoring programs:

1. The program must have the support of top management.
2. Mentors and protégés must be carefully selected.
3. Mentors and protégés must undergo an extensive orientation program emphasizing the development of realistic expectations concerning the relationship.
4. The responsibilities of mentors and protégés must be clearly stated.
5. Minimums of duration and frequency of contact between mentors and protégés must be established.
6. The program should recognize and take into account the skills and characteristics required of mentors and protégés. (See “Developing an Awareness of Mentoring Skills” in this article.)
7. The program should recognize that the mentor-protégé relationship flourishes when the mentor and protégé share responsibility for the relationship; when there is regular, structured contact between mentor and protégé; when the mentor and the protégé respect each other; and when challenging and substantive issues and protégé assignments are dealt with.
8. The program should recognize that there are benefits for mentors, for protégés, and for the organization.
9. The program should recognize the advantages of the mentoring experience, including the development of plans for employee development and employee succession.
10. The program should also recognize the possible drawbacks to the mentoring experience, such as perceived favoritism and exploitation of mentor and protégé (Cunningham & Eberle, in press).

The successful mentoring program is one that takes these findings into account and includes plans to use and develop the skills and characteristics of both mentors and protégés, to foster the appropriate atmosphere and climate, to publicize and promote the benefits for program participants, to maximize the advantages of mentoring, and to minimize the drawbacks.

HOW TO ESTABLISH A MENTORING PROGRAM

To establish formal mentoring, an organization first assesses its needs for mentoring and then designs and implements a mentoring program. Many of the steps involved in assessing needs and in designing and implementing a program can be undertaken during a conference or a series of meetings attended by managers and possibly some nonmanagerial employees representing the different functions of the organization. In such a conference, task subgroups can meet and discuss the various topics within each of the planning steps. Subsequent steps of the planning process leading to program

implementation are undertaken after the task subgroups report their results to the total group.

Assessing the Organization's Needs for Mentoring

The initial steps of establishing a mentoring program are concerned with assessing the need for such a program: (1) identifying the organization's personnel needs, (2) developing a mission statement, and (3) establishing an organizational philosophy. If the conference participants determine that particular skills must be developed to meet future needs, that employee development is part of the organization's mission, and that the organizational philosophy supports mentoring, then proceeding with a mentoring program is appropriate.

Identifying the Organization's Personnel Needs

In assessing whether the organization really needs a mentoring program, first the conference participants must take a good look at the organization's personnel needs in the future and must determine the methods that the organization will use to meet these needs. This form of personnel or succession planning is dependent on defining the organization's future environment and identifying the skills that will be needed most in that environment. Both the external and the internal environments should be defined. Figure 1 offers a sample analysis of one organization's external and internal environmental trends. Four types of skills should be considered as necessary resources in connection with what is or will be happening in both environments:

1. *Problem-solving skills.* These skills are designed to help the organization raise questions about its strengths and weaknesses. The purpose of identifying and analyzing strengths and weaknesses is to determine and interpret present directions as well as future directions that may be possible with a more organized and deliberate plan. These skills are generally used after the problem or need has been thoroughly defined.

2. *Adaptive skills.* Unlike routine problem-solving skills, which are used to resolve only immediate organizational issues, adaptive skills incorporate new ideas from outside the firm.

3. *Coordinative skills.* These skills are brought to bear in improving the administrative system to keep up with new technologies and with changes of staff.

4. *Productive skills.* Productive skills focus on the regular, ordinary requirements for the survival and stability of the organization. They are generally used to help the organization to produce its products and/or to provide its services.

Different and often-conflicting needs and values are inherent in each of these skill areas. In a typical manufacturing organization, for example, these differences may manifest themselves in interdepartmental "warfare": The production department, which depends on productive skills, may fail to understand and appreciate the constant modification of products and plans that characterizes the research and development

EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1. **Technological Change.** The rapidly changing technological environment will hasten and aid the decentralization process. Technology improvements will provide the means for less direct centralized operational control and will permit effective decentralized functional control, while at the same time enabling senior management to obtain timely and usable financial information for decision making.
2. **Demographic Change.** The “baby boom” will slow down the rate of career progression and increase the need for “career development,” that is, changes in work assignment through lateral transfers.
3. **Economic Change.** Free trade zones will result in increased competitiveness in most countries. This competitiveness will increase the rate of change in the economy.

INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1. **Technological Change.** The focus of technology implementation will continue to shift from automating what we are currently doing to developing new and better ways of doing things and to improving the range and quality of services provided. Additional staff training in the use of computer technology will be required if we are to realize the full potential of existing and future computer hardware and software.
2. **Human-Resource Change.** The company has a good mix of age groups and should not be faced with a sudden turnover due to retirements. It will be an ongoing challenge to keep performance and morale up in a climate of increasing work loads, change, and uncertainty. There is a risk of cutbacks and freezes, particularly if there is a downturn in the economy.
3. **Work-Load Change.** The work load will continue to increase, and the work will become less routine.

Figure 1. Sample Environmental-Trend Analysis

department, which relies on adaptive skills. Such differences are a reflection of the conflict inherent in the tasks acted out by the different subsystems.

At certain times in an organization's life, it may be necessary to highlight certain skills over others. For instance, at times it may be appropriate to develop skills that assist in changing and adapting. Also, changes in one functional area (in one subsystem) will affect other areas. Thus, after a major change, it might be appropriate to emphasize problem-solving skills.

In most cases, the conference participants will be able to forecast skill responses to environmental trends by brainstorming answers to four questions:

- What skills will we need to respond to future changes?
- What skills will we need to improve our internal management?
- What skills will we need to improve our internal efficiency and cost effectiveness?

- What skills will we need to improve our maintenance and repair?

Those who participate in the conference can prioritize these skills in terms of the degree to which they will be required and the degree to which they are now present in the organization.

Developing a Mission Statement

An organization's mission statement describes its justification for existence, what it is in business for, the unique aim that sets it apart from others. If the mission statement establishes the organization's commitment to employee development, then the organization can support mentoring; if such a commitment is determined to be inappropriate and is absent from the mission statement, then a mentoring program is inappropriate. Figure 2 offers an example of a mission statement that incorporates employee development and, therefore, supports mentoring. To begin constructing a mission statement, the conference participants should answer the following questions:

- *Who* are the customers or client groups?
- *What* makes the organization distinct?
- *Why* do we have the goals and motivators that we have?
- *Where* are our facilities and markets?
- *How* are we carrying out production, marketing, sales, and distribution?
- *What* skills do we need?

The objective of the Government Branch of Accounting and Reporting are to achieve goals of excellence in service, accounting, and financial reporting and to create the working environment that will accomplish these goals.

Excellence in service is striving to meet the needs of our clients—taxpayers, Treasury Board, ministries, suppliers to government, etc.—in a manner that is efficient, effective, and friendly. Excellence in accounting and financial reporting is ensuring that there is an effective system for accurately recording government expenditures, revenues, assets, and liabilities on a timely basis and ensuring that financial information produced from records is accurate, timely, understandable, and useful to the reader.

The skills, ability, and dedication of our staff are our most valuable resources. This belief is supported by our commitment to enhancing the knowledge, skills, and experience of our people and by encouraging risk taking, greater two-way communication, more decision making, a greater sense of trust at all levels, and a better work environment overall.

We want our clients, as well as each staff member, to regard the Branch as professional, innovative, fair, efficient, and responsive and as providing leadership in the areas of our accountability, experts, and responsibilities.

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Figure 2. Example of a Mission Statement That Incorporates Employee Development

The participants in the conference also need to conduct what is called a SWOT analysis. The acronym SWOT stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. An analysis of these four areas provides a perspective on the organization's internal and external environments. The ideas of conference participants are particularly valuable in identifying the opportunities and threats impacting personnel development. Consequently, brainstorming and other idea-generation activities should be used to identify situations and trends that the organization will have to respond to in the short and long term as well as to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses in terms of resources and procedures. To conduct a SWOT analysis, the conference participants answer questions such as these:

- What are the organization's personnel strengths and weaknesses?
- What are some opportunities and threats connected with the development of our staff

Establishing an Organizational Philosophy

The test of an organization's commitment to establishing a mentoring program is whether that organization would rather develop its staff from within or obtain people from outside. To determine whether the organization is committed to developing from within, the conference participants should generate a philosophy statement, which describes the organization's values or the broad, general beliefs that it feels are realistic, credible, attractive, and desirable. Such a statement is one tool for developing an organizational culture; if the statement promotes a culture that emphasizes development from within, then the organizational culture will foster mentoring. The following is an example of an organizational-philosophy statement that expresses the desire to develop from within:

Of all the environmental influences in our organization, the most powerful ones are personal relationships

Of all relationships, it is the manager/employee relationship that leaves the deepest impressions and has the greatest effect on us

Fundamental to the work of this organization is a respect for the development of the employee through guidance. We believe that training should respond to our needs.

To construct a statement of organizational philosophy, the conference participants should answer the following questions:

- What are our values regarding achieving the organization's mission and service to customers or clients?
- What are our values and beliefs regarding employee development?
- If we want to encourage development from within, what are the mentor's responsibilities? What are the protégé's responsibilities?

The process of articulating a philosophy statement, like that of generating a mission statement, is just as important as the resulting words. The opportunity for thorough discussion should be provided so that the conference participants can learn what values others find important. Debate should be encouraged, and ultimately the participants should reach consensus.

After the conference participants have identified the organization's personnel needs, developed a mission statement, and established an organizational philosophy, they should review these issues before proceeding to design and implement a mentoring program:

- What environmental needs do we have that justify the need for a mentoring program?
- Are top-level executives prepared to commit time and energy? In what ways?
- At this stage what is the scope of the program with regard to target group, functional areas, hierarchical levels, duration, and size?

Designing and Implementing the Mentoring Program

Mentoring programs vary widely in terms of their formality. Perhaps the most important rule of thumb that the conference participants can follow is to make the program flexible and voluntary. The following steps encourage the design and implementation of such a program: (1) selecting mentors and protégés, (2) developing an awareness of mentoring skills, (3) creating an action plan for the mentoring program, (4) making the plan work, and (5) monitoring and evaluating the program.

Selecting Mentors and Protégés

Mentoring programs are more successful when people are not required to participate but do so because of their commitment to their career and life goals. This principle is necessary in order to ensure that only employees who are sincerely motivated, interested, and committed will participate in the program.

If employees are not willing to participate in their own career development, some investigation is warranted. Those who are reluctant may not trust the program's objectives or the people involved, or they may not understand the program. Alternatively, the conference participants might need to look at the people they are recruiting.

There are various ways in which the conference participants can recruit mentors, ranging from solicitation of volunteers to nomination by executives. One of the best strategies is to ask each potential protégé to nominate three people whom he or she thinks would make good mentors. When one of the three is matched with a protégé, the other two may be asked to be members of the mentor pool and considered by other potential protégés.

Developing an Awareness of Mentoring Skills

Obviously, there are certain skills and characteristics required of mentors and protégés, just as there are certain requirements of the parties of any coaching relationship (Murray & Owen, 1991). The following are skills and characteristics that mentors must have:

- Knowledge of the organization;
- Technical competence;
- Exemplary supervisory skills;
- Status and prestige;
- Personal power and charisma;
- Willingness to be responsible for someone else's growth;
- Personal security and self-confidence;
- Willingness to trust;
- Ability to generate trust;
- Openness;
- Ability to communicate effectively;
- Innovativeness;
- Willingness to share credit;
- Patience and tolerance;
- Ability to be introspective;
- Accessibility; and
- Willingness to take risks.

Some of the more important mentor assets are personal security and self-confidence, accessibility, the ability to generate trust, and openness to sharing experiences.

Protégés need these skills and characteristics:

- Desire to learn;
- Interest in people;
- Orientation toward a goal;
- Conceptual ability;
- Initiative;
- Ability to be introspective; and
- Assertiveness.

In addition, the nine mentors and thirteen protégés who were interviewed suggested that the mentoring relationship is best cultivated under the following conditions involving mentor and protégé behavior:

1. *Shared responsibility.* Mentors emphasized the importance of protégés' formulating their own strategies and solutions to problems prior to engaging the advice and wisdom of their mentors. Mentors also stated that protégés must recognize the interactive nature of the mentor-protégé relationship and that protégés have a responsibility to challenge their mentors' preconceived ideas and positions.

2. *Regular, structured contact.* Protégés placed substantial value on meeting regularly with mentors for specific periods of time; regular, structured meetings gave them needed access to their mentors. Mentors were more concerned with the quality of the interaction that took place during their meetings with protégés than they were with the frequency and duration of those meetings; consequently, they tended to emphasize the importance of creating a safe and supportive atmosphere that is conducive to open communication. The "quality" of interaction, as defined by mentors, implied the provision of appropriate psychological reassurance and affirmation, especially during periods of struggle and crisis.

3. *Mutual respect.* Mentors perceived mutual respect as encompassing re-respect for the protégé's desire to learn. However, mentors also emphasized the importance of each person's demonstrating respect for the professional and personal integrity of the other.

4. *Challenging and substantive issues and assignments for the protégé.* Mentors felt they should make sure that protégés develop an understanding of the broad, philosophical and conceptual issues that impact both them and the organization. Both mentors and protégés stated that mentors must teach certain necessary skills and career strategies and must help to ensure that protégés receive work assignments that are challenging and stimulating.

It is probably not possible to find all of the characteristics of the ideal mentor or protégé in a single person, nor is it possible to construct the ideal environment for mentoring. However, at the outset of the mentoring relationship, it is a good idea for a mentor and a protégé to prioritize the skills and characteristics that are most important for them to have and then to prioritize the elements of the relationship they desire. On the basis of this prioritization, it should be possible to construct a relationship that meets the established priorities. The conference participants may find it useful to conduct a group-orientation session for mentors and protégés for the purpose of assisting these people in identifying the skills and characteristics they find most important.

Creating an Action Plan for the Mentoring Program

The action plan is a list of steps to take in order to reach the objectives of the program. Although creating an action plan does not guarantee that the best means for achieving objectives will be selected, it increases the chances of success. Furthermore, the very act of planning is useful in that it may reveal that the original objectives have to be adjusted.

The conference participants can create an action plan by following this procedure (Bryson, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991):

1. *Determining ways in which mentors and protégés can acquire needed skills.* The conference participants should choose practical alternatives that provide a range of ways to learn skills. Two particularly useful alternatives are training programs and coaching. Another important consideration is that management must be willing to allow mentors and protégés to practice skills on the job. Regardless of the alternatives chosen for teaching skills, feedback must be a component; no skills can be acquired without adequate feedback.

2. *Identifying the negative factors that might keep a mentoring program from being successful.* The conference participants should identify potential difficulties that may be faced. It is important, however, to avoid associating those difficulties with a particular person or group of people. Lack of training, low morale, poor management skills, and other people-related deficiencies should be seen as problems to be solved, not as failures. Once these difficulties have been identified, the conference participants can determine actions to take to ameliorate them.

3. *Identifying the positive factors that might drive toward success in a mentoring program.* Several conditions or situations might be useful in implementing a successful mentoring program and strengthening the mentor-protégé relationship. These factors can be tangible (the plant, inventory, market share, salary levels, patents) or intangible (quality of management, employee loyalty, public support). The qualities of certain people might also be important strengths. The conference participants should pinpoint such factors and determine ways to capitalize on them.

4. *Choosing proposals and projects to implement the program.* Each proposal or project should correspond to one of the objectives of the program. The conference participants can begin by brainstorming proposals or projects and then discussing the possibilities, choosing those that are most feasible.

The initial proposals and projects will probably be vague and much larger in scope than is necessary. To test the feasibility of any one of them, the conference participants may want to talk to various people, look for examples of similar situations in other settings, and in general check to see if the idea will work within the organization.

5. *Identifying action steps and resources needed.* After the proposals and projects are outlined, the conference participants must determine specific action steps to be taken, who will take them, deadlines for all steps, and the resources (money, people, and equipment) needed to carry them out. The people who are assigned to each step can then identify the means to accomplish that step.

6. *Establishing criteria for judging the accomplishment of program objectives.* The criteria chosen by the conference participants should, in effect, serve as standards that mentors and protégés can use to focus their development. A good way to start in establishing criteria is to consider what the project will look like when it is fully

developed and successful: How will mentors and protégés be functioning? What kind of career progress will protégés be making?

Making the Plan Work

The six steps of creating an action plan should help to crystallize the roles and responsibilities of mentors and protégés, the goals of the program, the philosophy that mentors and protégés will use in working together, the skills they will try to use, the expectations they will have, and the methods they will use to report progress.

At this point the conference participants might want to prepare a suitable form to post to assist people in volunteering to participate in the mentoring program. This form should include information such as name, current location, education, experience, reasons for interest in mentoring or being mentored, type of mentoring relationship wanted, amount of time available for mentoring activities, and any constraints (Bryson, 1988; Murray & Owen, 1991). The rewards offered for participating will have a major impact on the success of the program. The surest way to encourage people to take the roles of mentor and protégé seriously is to tie these roles to the performance-appraisal process.

The conference participants also may want to have mentors and protégés summarize their roles and expectations in a document of expectations. Although formulating documents may sound formal and bureaucratic, such documents do provide a framework for discussing expectations, values, goals, and roles.

Various strategies or tactics can be used for implementing the mentoring plan: educational and training activities (in listening, problem identification, problem solving, and so on), communications and briefings, and changes in the organizational structure and the reward system. Generally, these strategies help to manage the process of change.

Monitoring and Evaluating the Program

Periodically it is appropriate to summarize the major outcomes and results of the mentoring program, including problems encountered, positive aspects of the experience, and areas in which changes might be needed. This kind of evaluation is conducted for the purpose of improving the program as opposed to determining whether the program is effective. It might be thought of as a series of systematic, information-gathering activities that facilitate the organizational change to a mentoring environment. In this sense, then, evaluation is not a separate activity that takes place after the program has been implemented; rather, it occurs at various stages of the intervention.

When monitoring and evaluating the program, it is useful to review some of the issues considered early in the process, before the decision was made to design and implement the program:

1. Will voluntary participation work here?
2. Are there enough mentors?
3. How will we recruit mentors?

4. How will we reward mentors and protégés?
5. How do we encourage and make it easy for people to volunteer for the mentoring program?
6. What will we include in the document of roles and expectations for mentors and protégés?
7. How can we guard against obstacles to success?
8. How do we orient mentors and protégés?

SUMMARY

The most important criterion of a healthy mentoring program is that it involves people appropriately in assisting personnel development. In any mentoring process, a critical mass of people is necessary to ensure implementation. The critical mass consists of those individuals or groups whose active support will ensure that the program becomes an important element in employee development. Their number may be small, but it is critical (Cunningham, 1993).

It would be unrealistic to maintain that mentoring will work in all organizations. There are circumstances in which the process is unusable. For example, mentoring is not suitable in an organization whose senior executives refuse to consider the input of organizational members or in an organization in which a union forbids its members to participate. Because the mentoring approach described in this article is built on participation, only companies that encourage employees to participate actively should consider instituting a formal mentoring program.

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■ **ATTRIBUTION THEORY: APPLICATIONS TO THE MANAGERIAL COACHING PROCESS**

J. Craig VanHouten

Abstract: Bernard Weiner's (1986) attributional theory of motivation and emotion is rich in potential applications to the human resource development (HRD) field. This article outlines its major premises and its possible applications to the managerial coaching process.

Success and failure usually are attributed to causes, such as ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty. There are three dimensions of achievement-related attribution: locus (internal/external), stability (stable/unstable), and controllability (controllable/uncontrollable). Some attributions are more advantageous than others because they increase the expectation of success at similar tasks in the future. Other attributions are disadvantageous because they increase the expectation of failure at similar tasks in the future.

Managers and employees give cues about their attributions and the effects that these have on their motivations and emotions (i.e., by demonstrating pride, anger, pity, guilt, or shame).

Managers who learn to recognize such cues can improve their own attributions and those of their employees and, thus, can more effectively coach employees to improve performance.

You have just walked out of a meeting with your organization's executives in which you presented a proposal for a major training program. You prepared more for this presentation than ever before because you think this training is greatly needed at this time. However, not only did the executives say no, they seemed totally unimpressed with the training proposed, which means a long delay before it can be proposed again. Whether you are aware of it or not, you are about to ask yourself, "Why did I fail?" Again, whether you are aware of it or not, how you answer that question may have a tremendous impact on your future success.

Success comes easily at times, but for most of us, successfully reaching our most important goals requires motivation, confidence, and persistence. These are particularly important when the challenge is great or when we fail initially. When we succeed or fail in an attempt to accomplish something important to us, we will usually ask ourselves, "Why did I succeed?" or "Why did I fail?" The answer will determine, to a large extent, our future success at achieving this objective and other related objectives because the answer helps to shape our perceptions of our ability. These perceptions then affect what we attempt and how we react if we attempt something and either succeed or fail. How the "Why?" question is answered is part of what allows some people to be successful while others fail again or even fail to try.

To return to the example at the beginning of this article, the answer may be: "These people only care about this quarter's profits; they will never spend a dime to invest in

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our employees.” Although this may be accurate, it is not an effective answer to “Why?” because it means that one would probably not attempt to implement this kind of training program in the future, perceiving it as an impossible task. Even attributing the failure to bad luck would be preferable. At least luck can change, leaving open the potential for future success.

Unfortunately, in such a situation a person might say, “I just cannot communicate with these people” or, even worse, “I am just not able to present a proposal effectively.” By attributing failure to a lack of ability, the person may undermine whatever confidence he or she had in his or her ability to accomplish similar objectives.

On the other hand, a different person might say, “I didn’t prepare enough information about the financial benefits of this training” or “I should have found out what their most immediate concerns are and focused the presentation on training solutions.” This person is attributing failure to a lack of effort or to the use of an ineffective strategy. This is a much more effective answer because it leaves the person with the opportunity and confidence to persist in attempting to accomplish the objective.

ATTRIBUTIONS AND MOTIVATION

According to Bernard Weiner (1986), an attribution is an answer to the question “Why?,” which we ask ourselves in order to make sense of events that happen to us and to others. In many ways, attributions are attempts to learn about ourselves and our environment. Of course, our perceptions of ourselves and our environment may differ from the perceptions of others; even our own perceptions are subject to change. Weiner’s attribution theory is first concerned with *when* we ask the question; second, it is concerned with the answer to the question and how it affects our subsequent thoughts and behaviors.

In achievement-related activities such as work, we usually ask “Why did I succeed?” or “Why did I fail?” when we succeed or fail to complete a task or achieve an objective. We most often ask “Why?” when we fail or when an outcome is other than expected. This may be because we have an answer for the expected.

Causal Explanations: Ability, Effort, Luck, and Task Difficulty

Although there are an almost infinite number of causal explanations, in achievement-related activities, ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty are the most common. Among these, ability (how competent we are) and effort (how hard we try) are most frequently used as explanations of our successes and failures. Because achievement is so important in many cultures, the search for the answer to “Why did I succeed?” or “Why did I fail?” is a common practice.

Dimensions of Attributions

There are three generally agreed-on dimensions of attributions: locus, stability, and controllability. Causal attributions may be classified according to where they appear along a continuum between the extremes of each dimension.

- For locus, the extreme points are internal and external.
- For stability, the extreme points are stable and unstable.
- For controllability, the extreme points are controllable and uncontrollable.

There are no absolutes here because the relative locus, stability, or controllability of any particular attribution is a function of the attributor's perceptions. However, the predominant attributions in achievement-related activities (ability, effort, luck, and task difficulty) can be classified within generally accepted ranges within the three dimensions (Figure 1).

Ability is most often considered to be internal, relatively stable, and relatively uncontrollable, particularly when it is thought of as aptitude. Ability also may be thought of as a combination of genetically inherited characteristics (e.g., aptitude) and learning, which makes it more controllable and less stable.

Effort is internal, controllable, and often considered to be unstable in the case of failure and stable in the case of success. For example, in the event of failure, one can choose to try harder and, in the event of success, one may think of oneself as a hard worker—a characteristic that is relatively stable. This makes effort a particularly effective attribution for either success or failure. Effort may be internal yet uncontrollable if, for example, it is a result of tiredness rather than choice. Effort may be external and uncontrollable if, for example, it is referring to the effort of a manager as perceived by a subordinate.

Luck is external, uncontrollable, and generally considered unstable. However, if we think of someone as being a lucky person we may perceive luck, in this case, as stable.

Task difficulty is external, stable, and uncontrollable. However, our perceptions of the difficulty of a task are influenced by our perceptions of our ability and expenditure of effort in relation to the task. Because our ability and effort may change, the relative stability and controllability of a task is also subject to individual interpretation.

Just as there are an unlimited number of possible attributions for success or failure, there are an unlimited number of perceptions of the locus and relative stability and controllability of any particular attribution. However, those listed previously are generally agreed on.

Advantageous and Disadvantageous Attributions

Some attributions are more advantageous than others because they increase one's expectation of success, which increases one's motivation and persistence. According to Weiner, attributing success to more stable causes and attributing failure to less stable causes generally increases persistence. Therefore, when one is successful, it is more

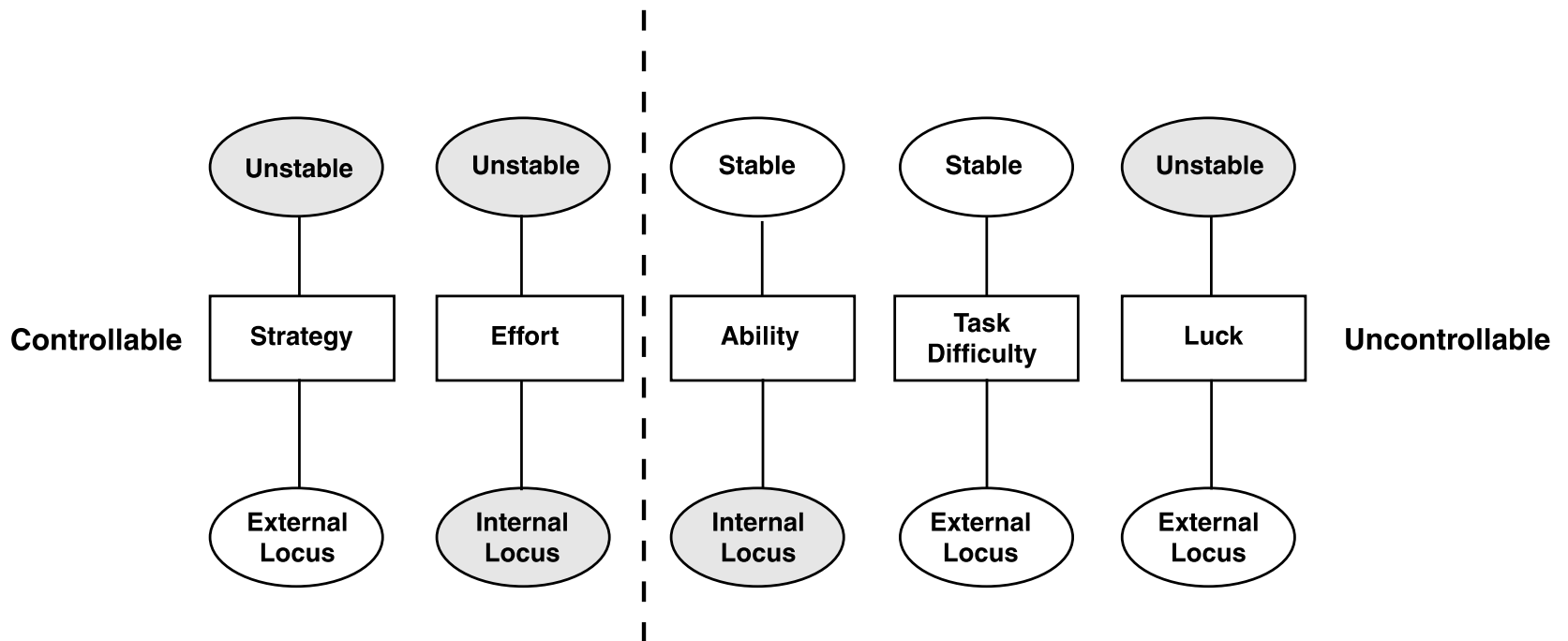


Figure 1. Dimensions of Attributions

advantageous to attribute the success to ability and effort (effort often being considered a stable attribution in cases of success). By doing this, the person increases his or her confidence in his or her ability to be successful in future attempts at similar tasks. If one attributes success to luck—an unstable attribution—one will not increase his or her expectation of success. In addition, attributing success to luck may indicate a lack of confidence in one's ability. Even though a person has succeeded, he or she may not persist if he or she fails in future attempts at the task. Success does not necessarily follow success.

After failure, it is more advantageous to attribute the failure to unstable causes such as a lack of effort or the use of an ineffective strategy. Although strategy is not one of the commonly used attributions, it can be particularly effective if the failure was preceded by a large expenditure of effort. This is because there is a perceived inverse or compensatory relationship between effort and ability.

For example, if a person is working hard to accomplish the same level of success as another person who appears to be expending little effort, the first person probably will assume that he or she has less ability than the other person. This is particularly critical in cases of failure. If a person works as hard or harder than others and still fails while the others are succeeding, the person often will be left with no other explanation than lack of ability. Thus, the person probably will not persist in an attempt to accomplish the task. However, by attributing failure to the use of an ineffective strategy, the person is more likely to persist.

There usually are many different ways to accomplish a task. Therefore, explaining failure as the use of an ineffective strategy is often correct as well as advantageous. Both explanations—lack of effort and the use of an ineffective strategy—will preserve a person's perception of his or her ability and provide the person with the option of either putting forth more effort or finding and using a different strategy in the next attempt. Both attributions will increase persistence.

Applications to the Managerial Coaching Process

Even when subordinates' objectives are clearly defined and subordinates are committed to achieving them, they may not persist in their attempts to accomplish those objectives. In many cases, it is not the subordinates' lack of commitment but their lack of confidence in their abilities in relation to the objective that determines whether they will initially attempt it and, if they fail, whether they will persist and make future attempts.

From a coaching perspective, it is important to accurately assess the abilities and efforts (including past effort as reflected in knowledge, skills, and experience) of subordinates and, when they fail or fail to try, to guide them toward additional training, effort, or strategies in order to help them persist in achieving their objectives.

Some subordinates may tend to explain their successes or failures in disadvantageous ways. A potentially effective motivational strategy would be to identify the subordinates' explanations for successes or failures and to suggest more advantageous causes. It has been demonstrated that simply suggesting more appropriate

and advantageous attributions for failure will increase individuals' persistence and performance (Weiner, 1986).

When success is observed, managers should be alert to unstable attributions and suggest stable ones. The following is an example:

Subordinate: "I was just lucky" (luck).

Manager: "No, you have good communication skills" (ability) or "No, you did your research" (effort).

When failure is observed, managers should be alert to stable attributions and suggest unstable ones. The following are examples:

Subordinate: "I can't motivate my team" (lack of ability).

Manager: "Yes you can, but you will need to complete your training in order to learn how" (effort, in this case, prerequisite learning).

Subordinate: "It is impossible to get this team to work cooperatively" (task difficulty).

Manager: "No it isn't, but you may need to try another approach" (strategy).

If a manager attributes a subordinate's failure to lack of ability rather than to lack of effort, lack of prerequisite knowledge, or use of an ineffective strategy, the manager may not persist in helping the subordinate to succeed by providing encouragement and/or additional training. A manager also may attribute failure to a stable "trait" (e.g., laziness), which will reduce the expectations of change and affect the way in which the manager interacts with the subordinate. It is much better to think in terms of less stable "states" (e.g., "He has not been working as hard this quarter"). Again, the less stable attribution for failure leaves open the opportunity for change.

As has been suggested, managers may communicate their perceptions of the causes of subordinates' successes and failures and, therefore, communicate their perceptions of subordinates' relative abilities. These communications can have a tremendous effect on subordinates' perceptions of their own abilities. Because of this, managers should be mindful of their own attributions as well as the attributions of their subordinates.

ATTRIBUTIONS AND EMOTIONS

Just as there is a powerful connection between attributions and expectations, there is a powerful connection between attributions and emotions. How we think influences how we feel and what we do. Our attributions and the perceived dimensions (locus, stability, and controllability) of those attributions influence our emotions. Because the relationships between some emotions and attributions are understood, emotions may provide cues about our attributions (Weiner, 1986). Although there is a wide range of emotional responses, for our purposes the emotions of pride, anger, pity, guilt, and shame are most relevant.

Pride reflects self-esteem. In order to experience pride, we must attribute success to internal causes (ability, effort, or personality) as opposed to external causes (ease of task or luck). Many of us have a self-serving bias that encourages us to take credit for success by attributing the success to internal causes (ability and effort) and to deny responsibility for failure by attributing the failure to external causes (task difficulty or bad luck). This allows us to enhance our self-esteem when we succeed and protect it when we fail.

The emotions of anger, pity, guilt, and shame are linked to the perceived controllability of the cause of an event. These associations are understood by children and appear to span cultures as well (Weiner, 1986).

Anger is elicited when failure of others is perceived to be caused by a controllable factor, such as lack of effort. Lack of effort accompanied by high ability elicits even greater anger. If one observes someone else failing and believes that failure is due to a lack of effort, one will most likely feel anger. If one thinks the other person is very capable, one may be even more angry.

Pity (sympathy) is elicited when failure of others is perceived as being due to uncontrollable causes, such as lack of ability. Pity also is associated with perceived fundamental differences. Because of this, expressing pity or sympathy when someone fails may communicate a perceived difference or deficiency. Thus, sometimes being caring and understanding sends the wrong message.

Guilt is elicited when someone perceives his or her own failure to be attributable to controllable causes, such as lack of effort. For example, we demonstrate feelings of guilt when we fail to produce reports on time because we put them off until the last minute. The guilt communicates that we attribute the cause of the failure to lack of effort or another controllable cause. Because the cause is unstable and controllable, we expect to do better next time.

Shame is elicited when someone attributes his or her failure to an uncontrollable cause, such as lack of ability. Using the same example, if we fail to produce reports because we lack confidence in our ability to write, we are more likely to feel ashamed. In this case, our shame communicates that we attribute our failure to lack of ability or another uncontrollable cause. In attributing failure to a stable and uncontrollable cause, we do not expect to do better in the future.

There are other ways to communicate attributions. For example, we tend to punish those whom we believe to have ability and who fail because of lack of effort more than we punish those whom we believe to have less ability and who fail because of lack of effort. We would not be as likely to punish failure if we were to perceive the cause to be lack of ability, which is uncontrollable. In cases of success, we reward low ability more than we reward high ability. Again, we may be sending the wrong message if we reward someone for succeeding at a relatively easy task.

Applications in the Managerial Coaching Process

Even the most well-intentioned manager can attribute a subordinate's success or failure to a disadvantageous cause, which may contribute to the subordinate's lack of confidence and achievement. Managers can communicate their disadvantageous attributions verbally (e.g., "You were lucky this time") or nonverbally through their emotional responses to subordinates' successes or failures. At the same time, subordinates can cue the managers about their own attributions through their emotional response to success or failure.

When a subordinate expresses pride after an accomplishment, the pride may cue the manager that the subordinate attributes the success to ability and/or effort—advantageous attributions. If a subordinate does not express pride following an accomplishment, it may cue the manager that the subordinate attributes the success to external causes, such as luck or task ease—disadvantageous attributions. If this is the case, the manager should suggest that effort and ability caused the success. Attributing success to these causes will increase the subordinate's confidence and motivation.

If a manager becomes angry with a subordinate, the anger may indicate that the manager attributes a failure to a controllable factor, usually lack of effort. At the same time, it may cue the subordinate that the manager has confidence in the subordinate's ability. Because anger provides a cue to perception of high ability, it may be a more effective response to failure in many cases, particularly if the manager follows up with a statement such as, "How can you expect to be successful when you have not taken the time to understand this? You're good, but you will have to work harder to succeed with this."

If a manager expresses pity when a subordinate fails, the pity may cue the subordinate that the manager lacks confidence in the subordinate's ability. Anger, followed by a suggested new strategy, may be a better response. This demonstrates confidence in the subordinate's ability and suggests an unstable factor—use of an ineffective strategy—as the cause of failure.

The subordinate's emotions also provide cues to the manager about the subordinate's perceived ability and effort. If the manager's anger elicits the subordinate's guilt, the guilt cues the manager that the subordinate has attributed the failure to a controllable cause and will probably be motivated to do better in the future. In this case, the subordinate and manager both attribute the failure to an internal, unstable, and controllable cause, such as lack of effort. Improvement is expected.

If the manager's anger elicits the subordinate's shame, the shame cues the manager that the subordinate attributes the failure to an uncontrollable cause such as lack of ability, and probably will not do better in the future unless the manager provides a more advantageous explanation. The manager could suggest that the cause of failure is lack of effort, demonstrated by a lack of prerequisite knowledge and experience. For example, if the subordinate fails to produce a report and expresses shame, the manager may say, "I have a good book on report writing that I use all the time. With that and a little experience, you'll do fine."

Often, finding an advantageous cause for failure is not enough. It also is important to search for the actual cause of failure. Attributing a subordinate's failure to the use of an ineffective strategy when, in fact, it was due to a lack of effort will not lead that subordinate to success. Even a new strategy without effort will likely end in failure, just as additional effort used with an ineffective strategy will seldom lead to success.

Managers need to be aware of their explanations of their subordinates' successes or failures as well as the subordinates' own explanations of their successes or failures. Understanding cues leads to asking subordinates, "Why do you think you failed?" or "Why do you think you succeeded?" The ability to identify disadvantageous attributions and the ability to suggest more advantageous attributions can be effective motivational strategies.

CONCLUSION

Bernard Weiner's (1986) attributional theory of motivation and emotion provides a rich resource for assisting HRD professionals in understanding individual, team, and organizational performance problems and in developing new motivational strategies for employees at all levels. It also provides the basis for an effective motivational strategy for managers to use in their own professional development as well as in the coaching process with subordinates.

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■ CONFRONTATION: TYPES, CONDITIONS, AND OUTCOMES

Robert R. Kurtz and John E. Jones

Interpersonal confrontation is one of the more potent experiences in human interaction. As such, it can be either growth facilitating or harmful to the people involved. Perhaps because of its potency, confrontation has come to have a negative connotation, as when a person yells at another or deliberately tries to hurt another. These examples represent popular misconceptions of the meaning and the purpose of confrontation in growth groups. Confrontation is not always negative. For example, it may be positive and directed toward another's strength or an encouragement to take action.

The purpose of this article is to explore the concept of confrontation and to discuss the conditions and processes that make it ultimately either a positive or a negative experience for group members.

A MODEL OF CONFRONTATION

Egan (1970) states that confrontation takes place when one person (the confronter), either deliberately or inadvertently, does something that causes or directs another person (the recipient of the confrontation) to reflect on, examine, question, or change some aspect of his or her behavior.

Berenson and his associates (Berenson, Mitchell, & Laney, 1968) have distinguished five major types of confrontation: (1) experiential, (2) strength, (3) weakness, (4) didactic, and (5) encouragement to action. These types of confrontation are defined as follows:

- *Experiential*: a response to any discrepancy perceived by the confronter between the recipient's statements about himself or herself and the confronter's own experience of the recipient;
- *Strength*: focused on the recipient's resources, especially if he or she does not realize them;
- *Weakness*: focused on the recipient's pathology or liabilities;
- *Didactic*: clarification of another's misinformation or lack of information; and
- *Encouragement to Action*: pressing the recipient to act on his or her world in some constructive manner and discouraging a passive stance toward life.

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The results of the research done on these types of confrontation suggest that effective helpers use experiential and strength confrontations more frequently, while less effective helpers tend to confront their clients' weaknesses. It may well be, however, that variables other than the content of the confrontation are more important factors in determining the outcomes of the confrontation.

CONDITIONS FOR HELPFUL CONFRONTATION

The purposes of helpful confrontation should be primarily to bring the recipient into more direct contact with his or her own experiencing and to create a situation in which it becomes possible for the recipient to explore and change those behavior aspects that hinder his or her own growth and development.

Whether or not a confrontation is helpful to the recipient depends on the confronter, the recipient, and the conditions that exist in the situation in which the confrontation takes place.

Confronter Conditions. A confrontation is probably more helpful if the confronter: (1) has a good relationship with the recipient or at least is sensitive to the quality of their relationship; (2) accepts the recipient and is willing to get more involved with him or her as a person; (3) phrases the confrontation as a suggestion or request rather than a demand; (4) directs the confrontation toward concrete behavior rather than toward motives; (5) makes the confrontation positive and constructive rather than negative; (6) states the confrontation succinctly and directly; and (7) represents facts as facts, hypotheses as hypotheses, and feelings as feelings.

Recipient Conditions. A recipient will probably benefit more from a confrontation if he or she: (1) accepts it as an invitation to explore himself or herself; (2) is open to knowing how he or she is experienced by others; (3) is willing to tolerate some temporary disorganization that may result from a confrontation; and (4) responds in different ways to different modes of confrontation rather than in the same, stereotyped way, to all confrontations (for example, by accepting all confrontations as truth or by dismissing all of them as worthless).

Group Conditions. Confrontation that takes place in a group situation is facilitated by a high degree of acceptance and trust. It is difficult to receive confrontation without being defensive if you do not trust or feel accepted by the group members. Confrontation is also better received if it fits the goals and purposes of the group. An interpersonal confrontation at a faculty meeting or at a social gathering, for example, can have disruptive effects. This is so because these groups are meeting for different purposes than the typical growth group, and the confrontation comes as a surprise.

Some behaviors that may not seem to be confronting can be. Sharing tender feelings about a fellow group member can have a confronting effect because this is something that some members experience little of in their everyday lives. Ignoring others or not reinforcing certain behaviors may have the same impact.

In summary, the purposes and motives of the confrontation have a strong effect on the outcome of that confrontation. If given with sensitivity and with the desire to help and if received in that vein, then the outcome is more likely to be helpful. As no one can predict with absolute certainty what impact a confrontation will have on another person, it is wise to elicit feedback from the recipient about the impact it had on him or her.

GAMES CONFRONTERS PLAY

Not all confrontation results from the altruistic motives mentioned in the helpful confrontation section of this article. Many confronters have ulterior motives similar to the ones described in Berne's *Games People Play* (1964). For example, the motive for a confrontation may be to give vent to jealous rage, to punish another, or to seek revenge. A game that Berne calls "NIGYSOB" (Now I've Got You, You Son-of-a-Bitch) fits the punitive motive. The confronter carefully watches the recipient until the other makes some mistake. After the confronter has caught the other in the mistake or has built enough evidence, he or she is justified in venting anger on the recipient. Some confronters (especially those in the helping professions) will rationalize this kind of behavior with expressions such as "I'm only trying to help you" or "I'm only doing this for your own good."

Sometimes a confronter will confront another to show off how perceptive or knowledgeable he or she is in psychology or psychiatry. Confrontations arising from this type of motive sound very clinical, interpretive, and aloof. The confronter may interpret why the recipient behaves the way he or she does or may pin some diagnostic label on the other. Regardless of the content, these inferences are of little use to the recipient. We have often wondered whether the operational definition of "passive aggressive personality" is that the clinician dislikes the client.

Some confronters will confront to relieve boredom or to ward off a possible confrontation directed toward themselves. These motives are often revealed by expressions such as "I only wanted to stir things up." A confronter may also manipulate other group members into confronting one another. This behavior is similar to Berne's game "Let's you and him fight." After engineering such a conflict between others, the confronter may assume the role of the "judge" who decides who is right. This is a variation of the game "Courtroom."

A confronter might take out frustration and anger on another member even though he or she is really frustrated with the facilitator or with the group as a whole. This type of confrontation is an example of scapegoating. Along similar lines, a confronter may blame another group member for all of the difficulties he or she is having in the group, thus relieving him or her of the responsibility. Berne labels this game "IWFY" (If It Weren't for You).

At the other extreme is the case in which group members avoid confronting another for fear that the other will be hurt or will be unable to handle the confrontation. Some group members handle others like "fragile vases" that will break if confronted. This may

have a confronting effect on the others as well. Being treated very gently may be the stimulus to wonder about why others are responding to you in such a manner. The group member who is treated in this way may conclude that others are saying he or she cannot handle the truth about himself or herself. Actually, most people are more resilient than we give them credit for being and are able to handle confrontation quite well.

Occasionally, when one member of a group receives a confrontation from another, other group members will add their comments, picking away at the recipient's sore points. The motive could be to build one's status as a group member at the expense of the recipient or to be accepted as similar to other group members. We believe that this kind of interaction can have harmful effects on the recipient and that it is important that a facilitator or some member intercede to stop it.

This has been an illustrative rather than an exhaustive list of the "ulterior motives" behind some confrontations and of the games confronters play. In general, when hidden agendas are involved, such as the ones discussed, the outcomes of the confrontation are more likely to be harmful to the recipient.

A SELF-EXAMINATION FOR CONFRONTERS

After reading about some of the games confronters play and learning that these types of confrontations probably have harmful effects on the recipient, the reader may have the impression that we consider confrontation something to be avoided. Actually, we believe that interpersonal confrontation is one of the most potent and therapeutic forces for members in growth groups if given under the right conditions and should be encouraged for this reason. Because of the potency of confrontation and because it can be harmful, we suggest that a confronter do some prior self-examining.

What should the confronter examine? We believe that a confronter should assess the conditions in the group at the time of the confrontation, should be sensitive to the recipient and to the relationship that he or she shares with that person, and should be aware of his or her own motives for confronting. We would like to propose a series of questions that confronters might ask themselves as a way to aid in this examination.

1. *What is the purpose of the group?* Is this group situation an appropriate place for a confrontation, and do the members expect to be confronted? How much trust and support exist in the group at this time? A confrontation given before a sense of trust and acceptance has developed is likely to be regarded as an attack and to be responded to defensively. Does the confrontation arise out of the group interaction? A confrontation that is not based on the here-and-now interaction in the group is less likely to be helpful because it is less concrete and immediate.

2. *What is the current psychological state of the person whom I am about to confront?* Is the recipient likely to receive the confrontation as an invitation to explore himself or herself, or is the recipient likely to react defensively? In other words, what is the confrontation likely to mean to the recipient? How close is my relationship to the person I am confronting? If my relationship is distant, he or she may be more inclined to

dismiss the confrontation and me as a person. Do I expect the person to change just because I confronted him or her? As I cannot possibly experience the world as the other person does, I cannot be sure that the change would be right for him or her. If I do not give the other the right to decide whether and how to change, I am imposing my values on him or her.

3. *What are my own motives?* Do I want to become more involved with the person I am confronting? If not, I am intruding on another person and prying into his or her life. Am I directing my confrontation to the right person? Am I confronting to relieve boredom or to ward off confrontation myself? To punish or to dominate? To show off my intelligence or perceptiveness? If I am confronting for these motives, I am attempting to meet my needs at the other person's expense; and my behavior may be harmful to him or her.

4. *Am I confronting behavior or the other's motives?* As motives must be inferred from the other's behavior and are much more difficult to describe accurately, confronting the other's behavior is more helpful. Am I making myself clear? Am I checking the impact that my confrontation is having on the other person?

Some of the answers to these questions lie within yourself. Some of the answers lie within the recipient and some within the other group members. The most effective way to find the answers is to be open to yourself and to elicit feedback as to how you are experienced by others.

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■ THE INTERPERSONAL CONTRACT

Clark Carney and S. Lynne McMahon

The idea of contracting for change in intimate relationships tends to elicit negative reactions from most people. In the United States the word “contract” often connotes an impersonal process of tough bargaining in smoke-filled rooms between declared opponents. “Negotiation” evokes a picture of wily diplomats jostling for power through subterfuge, manipulation, and hints of armed intervention.

Neither of these scenes is readily applicable to personal relationships. Yet all relationships involve negotiated agreements that vary according to explicitness, duration, and restrictiveness. Husbands and wives, for example, develop pacts about household chores, while neighbors contract to form a car pool. Roommates reach agreements about visitors, paying bills, and study times. Teachers and students specify individual learning objectives.

Given its prevalence in our daily lives, the interpersonal contract might be described as the mortar that binds relationships; it lends predictability to our interactions and provides us with a basis for trust.

IMPLICIT AND EXPLICIT AGREEMENTS

Most of the agreements that people work out among themselves are implicit and are rarely verbalized. People normally function on the basis of unwritten compacts, seldom recognizing that they have indeed negotiated an agreement.

The most fulfilling means of facilitating change in a relationship, however, occurs when partners make a conscious and consistent effort to negotiate their expectations openly in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect. In making a public commitment, both partners are more likely to carry out their agreements. Such explicit agreements are easily renegotiated and modified for the mutual benefit of participants.

PROBLEM-CENTERED PERSPECTIVE

People generally approach the process of contracting for change in a relationship from a problem-centered perspective: “We are doing all right, but we have a problem with....” The problem may be one of agreeing on family finances, learning how to express anger, or finding a satisfying means of completing a task. The situation is seen as lacking a necessary element or as an irritant to be remedied.

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Although creative growth is seldom given equal attention, it too can serve as a subject for an interpersonal contract. Partners can use their contracts to determine how much energy they will spend on problem solving and how much on creative development.

TWO APPROACHES

Regardless of the circumstance that prompts them to seek change, partners can use one or both of two approaches in negotiating an interpersonal contract. They can develop a *mini-contract* to deal with situations that have a restricted time limit or scope, or they can seek the more comprehensive goals of a *developmental contract* to maximize the growth possibilities for both people and their relationship.

A mini-contract might, for example, specify acceptable means of expressing affection for members of the opposite sex, provide for completing job assignments on time, determine grading procedures, divide household tasks, set up a homework schedule, or designate the children's vacation bedtime.

The developmental contract is more comprehensive, involving decisions about how to implement the ideals of the partnership, how to provide for future changes, and how to work through problems. A couple, for instance, might develop a contract to enhance growth and intimacy in a marriage. To share in the process of learning together, the marital partners could contract to attend marriage-enrichment workshops and free university classes. They might seek to provide a renewed basis for intimacy in their relationship by contracting to spend one weekend a month as a couple—camping, visiting nearby cities, or having a “tryst” at a local hotel.

GUIDELINES FOR NEGOTIATING AN INTERPERSONAL CONTRACT

The Process

Negotiating an interpersonal contract can be a rewarding and illuminating experience, especially when both partners agree to negotiate in an atmosphere that is free of coercion and manipulation. Sitting down and talking things through—sharing your aspirations as people and partners—offers you new insights into yourselves, your values, feelings, priorities, and personal viewpoints. It can also help you to find and realize rewarding new possibilities for your relationship.

If possible, find a quiet, private, *pleasant place*, free from outside disturbances, to negotiate and write your contract. While you are at it, be good to yourselves. Treat yourselves to a glass of wine, some freshly baked cookies, or any special treat.

Allow yourselves *ample time* to negotiate and write your contract; at least one hour per sitting is most helpful. Guidelines for implementing serious readjustments in a relationship are seldom developed in one sitting—take time over several sessions to let your ideas and feelings percolate and sort themselves out. Each of you could well spend some time alone defining, clarifying, and noting your personal behavioral goals before sharing them with your partner.

When you attempt to define and share your goals, consistently check signals with each other to make sure you have heard and understood what the other is saying. During the early stages of goal sharing, you may practice the art of listening and responding by following this exercise:

Step 1. One person, Person A, takes responsibility for initiating a conversation about a specific topic—in this instance “What I’d like our contract to do for us.” As A talks, B becomes actively involved in the process of listening by nodding his head when he feels he understands, sitting forward in his chair, taking note of things he agrees or disagrees with, and sorting out what he understands from what he does not.

Step 2. After A completes her statement, B responds, “I heard you say . . .” and repeats what A has said. After B summarizes to A’s satisfaction, they continue to the next step.

Step 3. B attempts to clarify their communication further by expressing his understanding of the feeling aspect of A’s message. He completes the sentence, “I think you mean (feel)”

Step 4. After B has completed the process of summarizing and clarifying his feelings, A responds with her thoughts and reflections: “My response is”

Step 5. The process is reversed, and B then engages in a monologue on the same subject.

Tape recording your conversations may help to promote effective communication between you and your partner, by giving both of you a more objective view of your interaction.

Most human behavior is guided by “self-fulfilling prophecies.” We often get what we expect out of a relationship simply because our expectations guide our behavior in ways that produce complementary responses from others. For example, if a man sees himself as being unattractive to women, he more than likely will approach them in a way that communicates his expectations of himself—“You wouldn’t want to go out with me, would you?”

Accordingly, as you enter your contract negotiations, it is important to consider your expectations for yourselves and each other and the influence they may have in determining the success or futility of your efforts. Some assumptions that facilitate or hinder interpersonal communication can be useful as a set of guidelines during your contract negotiations.

These are some assumptions that *facilitate* successful contract negotiations:

- *The Humility Assumption:* I am not perfect; I would like to improve my interpersonal relationships and am willing to learn from you.¹
- *The Human Dignity Assumption:* I value you and feel you are equal to me.

¹ This assumption and several of the others in this listing are taken from *The Interpersonal Game* (p. 4) by K. Hardy, 1964, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

- *The Confidentiality Assumption:* I will respect confidences that are entrusted to me.²
- *The Responsibility Assumption:* I will share equally with you in building and maintaining our partnership.
- *The Changeability Assumption:* I can change and am willing to try. Our relationship can change. We are not set in our ways.

Assumptions that *hinder* contract negotiations are as follows:

- One (or both) of us “needs help,” is mentally disturbed.
- Our relationship is poor, hopeless, doomed.²
- My partner does not know what he is really like. I am going to get him to see the Truth about himself.²
- All of our problems are my partner’s fault. She is the one who needs to change.
- My partner had better change, “or else.”
- My partner has hurt me. Now I am going to get even.
- We are the way we are. There is no sense in stirring things up.

It seems apparent, then, that an atmosphere of trust, respect, and understanding, in which successful contract negotiations thrive, is most likely to occur when people are willing to listen and respond to each other without feeling that they are taking the risk of being manipulated or coerced.

The Product

When writing your contract, strive to avoid either extreme rigidity or excessive generalization in your statement.

Try to *determine your personal priorities* before specifying your goals. Identify your nonnegotiables early in the process so that you can work with or around them.

Very useful, especially during initial negotiations, is an *outline format*; it reads easily and encourages succinctness and clarity.

In writing each section, go from a *general objective* to the specific steps that you will take to realize it. State your *action steps* so that both of you can understand your goal or purpose. Use *specific behavioral examples* to clarify what you mean. For instance, if you are experiencing difficulty in managing conflict, you might state “dealing with conflict” as a general objective. As action steps, you might list the following: “Both partners will define the issue before pursuing the argument”; “John/Margaret calls time out when he/she is no longer able to listen effectively”; “Margaret summarizes what has been said before presenting new information.”

² This assumption and several of the others in this listing are taken from *The Interpersonal Game* (p. 4) by K. Hardy, 1964, Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press.

It is also helpful to visualize a *sequence of action steps*. In the example given above, “defining the issue” logically preceded the other steps as it is important to agree on the subject for argument before beginning to discuss it.

To avoid confusion, separate each general objective and the action steps connected with it, just as you would a clause in a contract. If you are developing a method for dealing with conflict in one section of your contract, for example, you should not include guidelines for completing chores, unless the chores are directly related to your conflict.

The best way to change is to act differently *now*. People have a tendency to postpone remedial actions, especially when they seem difficult or costly, but the past cannot be relived. Specify your action steps in the *present tense* and in the active voice, such as “summarizes,” “clarifies,” “asks,” “takes,” “names.”

Have an objective outsider read your contract to make sure that your goals and terms are clear. Remember, however, that your purpose should not be to persuade this person to take sides with either partner on an issue.

Finally, specify a time in the future to *review your contract* and renegotiate it if necessary. When reviewing your contract, you might ask some of the following questions:

- Are the behaviors called for by the contract appropriate to the issue?
- Do the action steps adequately represent the behavior associated with the general objective?
- Is the contract too rigid or too flexible?
- As they are stated, are the objectives attainable?
- Do the objectives agree with the philosophy of our relationship and with the aim of shared responsibility?

Contracting explicit, negotiated interpersonal contracts can be a very useful device for change in intimate relationships. The success of the process requires an atmosphere of mutual trust, time, helpful assumptions about each other, clear objectives, and a sequence of specific action steps toward the goal of mutual change.

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■ ASSERTION THEORY

Colleen Kelley

A friend asks to borrow your new, expensive camera Someone cuts in front of you in a line A salesperson is annoyingly persistent Someone criticizes you angrily in front of your colleagues For many people these examples represent anxious, stressful situations to which there is no satisfying response. One basic response theory being taught more and more frequently in training programs is a theory called assertiveness or assertion.

Some important aspects of assertion theory include (1) the philosophy underlying assertion, (2) the three possible response styles in an assertive situation, (3) some means of outwardly recognizing these response styles, (4) some functional distinctions among the three styles, and (5) the six components of an assertive situation.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF ASSERTION

Assertion theory is based on the premise that every individual possesses certain basic human rights. These rights include such fundamentals as “the right to refuse requests without having to feel guilty or selfish,” “the right to have one’s own needs be as important as the needs of other people,” “the right to make mistakes,” and “the right to express ourselves as long as we don’t violate the rights of others” (Jakubowski-Spector, 1977).

THREE RESPONSE STYLES

People relate to these basic human rights along a continuum of response styles: nonassertion, assertion, and aggression.

Assertion

The act of standing up for one’s own basic human rights without violating the basic human rights of others is termed assertion (Jakubowski-Spector, 1973). It is a response style that recognizes boundaries between one’s individual rights and those of others and operates to keep those boundaries stabilized.

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For example, when one of her friends asked to borrow Jan's new sports car for a trip, she was able to respond assertively by saying, "I appreciate your need for some transportation, but the car is too valuable to me to lend it." Jan was able to respect both her friend's right to make the request and her own right to refuse it.

Nonassertion

The two remaining response styles, nonassertion and aggression, represent an inability to maintain adequately the boundaries between one person's rights and those of another. Nonassertion occurs when one allows one's boundaries to be restricted. In Jan's case, a nonassertive response would have been to lend the car, fearing that her friend might perceive her as petty or distrustful, and to spend the rest of the afternoon wishing she had not. Thus, Jan would not have been acting on her right to say no.

Aggression

The third response style, aggression, takes place when one person invades the other's boundaries of individual rights. Aggression, in Jan's case, might sound like this: "Certainly not!" or "You've got to be kidding!" Here, Jan would be violating the other person's right to courtesy and respect.

RECOGNIZING RESPONSE STYLES

Some helpful keys to recognizing nonassertive, assertive, and aggressive response styles in any given situation are (1) the type of emotion experienced, (2) the nonverbal behavior displayed, and (3) the verbal language used.

Emotion

The person responding nonassertively tends to internalize feelings and tensions and to experience such emotions as fear, anxiety, guilt, depression, fatigue, or nervousness. Outwardly, emotional "temperature" is below normal, and feelings are not verbally expressed.

With an aggressive response, the tension is turned outward. Although the aggressor may have experienced fear, guilt, or hurt at one time in the interchange, either this feeling has been masked by a "secondary" emotion such as anger, or it has built up over time to a boiling point. In an aggressive response, the person's emotional temperature is above normal and is typically expressed by inappropriate anger, rage, hate, or misplaced hostility—all loudly and sometimes explosively expressed.

In contrast to the other two response styles, an individual responding assertively is aware of and deals with feelings as they occur, neither denying himself or herself the right to the emotion nor using it to deny another's rights. Tension is kept within a normal, constructive range.

Nonverbal Behavior

Each response style is also characterized by certain nonverbal or body-language cues. A nonassertive response is self-effacing and dependent; it “moves away” from a situation. This response may be accompanied by such mannerisms as downcast eyes; the shifting of weight; a slumped body; the wringing of hands; or a whining, hesitant, or giggly tone of voice.

Aggression represents a nonverbal “moving against” a situation; it is “other-effacing” and counterdependent. This response may be expressed through glaring eyes; by leaning forward or pointing a finger; or by a raised, snickering, or haughty tone of voice.

Assertion, in contrast, is facing up to a situation; it is an approach by which one can stand up for oneself in an independent or interdependent manner. When being assertive, a person generally establishes good eye contact, stands comfortably but firmly on two feet with hands loosely at his or her sides, and talks in a strong, steady tone of voice.

Verbal Language

A third way of differentiating among assertion, nonassertion, and aggression is to pay attention to the type of verbal language being used. Certain words tend to be associated with each style.

Nonassertive words can include qualifiers (“maybe,” “I guess,” “I wonder if you could,” “would you mind very much,” “only,” “just,” “I can’t,” “don’t you think”), fillers (“uh,” “well,” “you know,” “and”) and negaters (“it’s not really important,” “don’t bother”).

Aggressive words include threats (“you’d better,” “if you don’t watch out”), putdowns (“come on, you must be kidding”), evaluative comments (“should,” “bad”), and sexist or racist terms.

Assertive words may include “I” statements (“I think,” “I feel,” “I want”), cooperative words (“let’s,” “how can we resolve this”), and empathic statements of interest in the other person (“what do you think,” “what do you see”).

Emotional, nonverbal, and verbal cues are helpful keys in recognizing response styles. But they should be seen as general indicators and not as a means of labeling behavior.

FUNCTIONAL DISTINCTIONS

Outwardly, the three response styles seem to form a linear continuum running from the nonassertive style, which permits a violation of one’s own rights, through the assertive style, to the aggressive style, which perpetrates a violation of another’s rights.

Functionally, however, as indicated in Figure 1, nonassertion and aggression appear not only very much alike but also very different from assertion. Nonassertion and aggression are dysfunctional not only because they use indirect methods of expressing wants and feelings and fail to respect the rights of all people, but also because they

create an imbalance of power in which the two positions may mix or even change positions with each other. The nonassertive responder creates a power imbalance by according everyone else more rights than himself or herself, while the aggressive responder creates a power imbalance by according himself or herself more rights than everyone else.

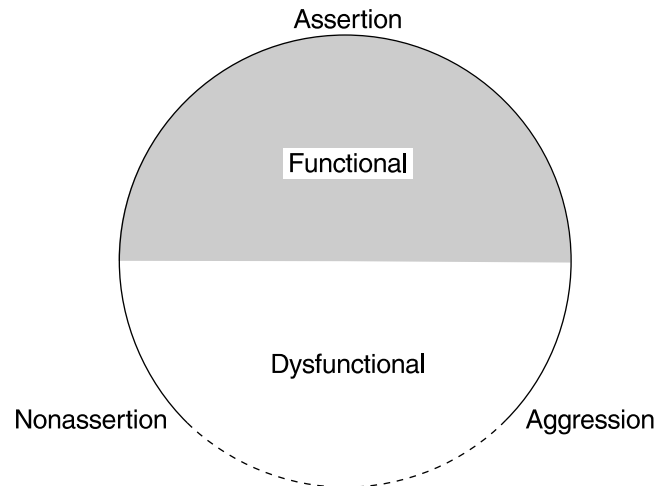


Figure 1. Functional and Dysfunctional Assertive¹

This power imbalance is unstable. The restricted nonassertive responder may accumulate guilt, resentment, or fear until he or she becomes the aggressive responder in a burst of rage; or this person may mix a nonassertive “front” with a subversive “behind-the-scenes” attempt to “get back” at another.²

The assertive responder seeks a solution that equalizes the balance of power and permits all concerned to maintain their basic human rights. Thus, an imbalance of power, caused by a failure to respect the rights of all people and perpetuated by the use of indirect methods, creates a very vulnerable position for both the nonassertive and the aggressive responders, while the more functional assertive responder respects all human rights, uses direct methods, and seeks a balance of power.

COMPONENTS OF AN ASSERTIVE SITUATION

Assertion theory can be helpful in situations in which a person is anxious about standing up for his or her basic human rights. These situations include saying yes and no with conviction, giving and receiving criticism, initiating conversations, resisting interruptions, receiving compliments, demanding a fair deal as a consumer, dealing with

¹ Adapted from J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones, 1972, “Openness, Collusion and Feedback,” in J. William Pfeiffer and John E. Jones (Eds.), *The 1972 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators* (p. 199), San Diego, CA: Pfeiffer & Company.

² The mixed or indirect response can range from guilt induction to subversion in style and is represented in Figure 1 by the broken-line area.

sexist remarks, and handling various other specific situations encountered in one's personal, social, and professional life.

A person may feel capable of being assertive in a situation but make a conscious decision not to be so, because of such things as power issues or the time or effort involved. Before making a decision to be assertive, it is helpful to examine the six components of an assertive situation:

1. The potential asserter's basic human rights and level of confidence that he or she has these rights;
2. The specific behavior to which the potential asserter is responding;
3. The potential asserter's "feeling" reactions to this specific behavior;
4. The specific behavior that the potential asserter would prefer;
5. The possible positive and negative consequences for the other person if that person behaves as the potential asserter wishes; and
6. The potential consequences of the assertive response for the potential asserter.

Once the situational assertive components have been determined, assertion training techniques provide a means of formulating and enacting an assertive response.

CONCLUSION

Assertion theory offers a model for those who wish to stand up for their own rights without violating the human rights of others. It is a model that can be used in all types of situations—personal, professional, and social—to facilitate honest, direct, functional communication.

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■ DEALING WITH ANGER

John E. Jones and Anthony G. Banet, Jr.

Anger is the first emotion that human beings experience, and it is the last one that we learn to manage effectively. As early as four months of age, the human infant's vague feelings of distress differentiate into recognizable anger; for many of us, a lifetime is spent in denying, suppressing, displacing, or avoiding this troublesome emotional experience. Because anger usually occurs within an interpersonal context, it is a frequent group phenomenon and presents a management challenge to all concerned.

Anger happens when we perceive an external event (object or person) as threatening or when we experience the frustration of unmet expectations. Although anger seems to be a response to something outside of us, it most often is an intrapersonal event: We make ourselves angry. But because anger is so unpleasant and human beings are so adept at projection, we usually attempt to locate the source of our anger outside ourselves with statements such as "You make me angry" or "You have irritating habits" or "You bother me."

ANGER AND THREAT

When we perceive an external event as threatening to our physical or psychological well-being, a cycle of internal movements is initiated. As the perception is formed, assumptions are made internally about the possible danger of the threat. The assumption is then checked against our perceived power of dealing with the threat. If we conclude that the threat is not very great or that we are powerful enough to confront it successfully, a calm, unflustered response can occur. But if we conclude that the threat is dangerous or that we are powerless to handle it, anger emerges in an effort to destroy or reduce the personal threat and to protect our assumed impotence. The anger cycle is graphically represented in Figure 1.

Resentment and Expectations

In the Gestalt view, anger is resentment, an experience accompanying a demand or expectation that has not been made explicit. Unanswered demands or unmet expectations are frustrating; they become another kind of threat, which trips off the anger cycle within us.

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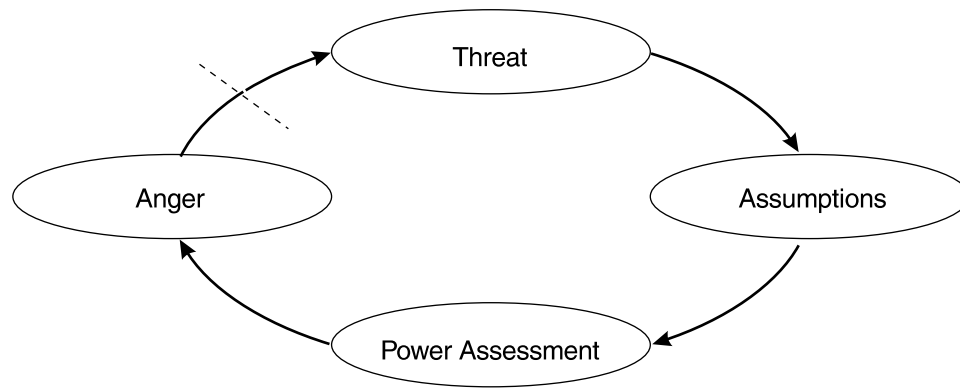


Figure 1. The Anger Cycle

Maladaptive Expressions of Anger

Unlike most other feelings, anger has no specific body organs for expression.¹ Physiologically, anger is accompanied by an increase in blood pressure and muscle tightness; psychologically, there are impulses to say aggressive words, strike out, commit violence. But the expression of anger can be so terrifying and threatening that, rather than express it outwardly, we sometimes turn it inward, against ourselves. This short-circuiting of the anger cycle produces distortions of another magnitude: Anger turned inward is experienced as guilt; guilt produces feelings of depression, incompetence, helplessness, and, ultimately, self-destruction.

Another common way to short-circuit the anger cycle is to vent the feeling, not at the perceived threatening event but at someone or something else that is convenient. We are angry at the traffic jam, but we snap at an innocent spouse. The children consistently refuse to meet our expectations, but we kick the dog. We are angry at the group leader, but we complain about the food. Such displacement of angry feeling serves to ventilate but not to resolve: the anger cycle still lacks closure. When displacement becomes generalized to the system, the government, or the state of our culture, we begin to see the whole world as hostile and we develop a wrathful, attacking behavior style.

Expression of anger can lead to violence; turning it inward produces depression. Displacement is ultimately ineffective and can damage innocent third parties. Repeated failure to close the anger cycle can produce a hostile, cynical, negative view of reality. And even though anger usually occurs in an interpersonal context, it is not an interpersonal event, but self-generated. We make ourselves angry, and there is no one else who can honestly be blamed. Suffering the anger often seems to be the only alternative.

¹ Bodily responses during anger and in sexual arousal are nearly indistinguishable; the only difference is that in sexual arousal, rhythmic muscular movement, tumescence, and genital secretion or ejaculation may occur.

DEALING WITH PERSONAL ANGER

The obvious way to eliminate anger from our lives is to become so personally secure that nothing threatens us. Short of that level of self-actualization, the procedures described here may help.

Owning anger. Acknowledging anger—claiming it as our own behavior—is a helpful first step. It increases self-awareness and prevents unwarranted blaming of others. Turning blame and attribution into “I” statements locates the anger where it actually is—inside us. This procedure can help to develop a sense of personal power.

Calibrating the response. Anger is not an all-or-nothing experience. It ranges from relatively mild reactions such as “I disagree,” “I don’t like that,” and “I’m bothered,” through medium responses such as “I’m annoyed,” “I’m pissed off,” and “I’m irritated,” to intense reactions such as “I’m furious,” “I’m enraged,” and “I feel like hitting you.” Learning to differentiate between levels of anger helps us to assess accurately our capacity for dealing with it.

Diagnosing the threat. What is frightening about the perceived threat? What do I stand to lose? Anger happens because we quickly assume that the situation is dangerous—so quickly that we frequently do not know why the stimulus is threatening. Diagnosing the threat frequently reveals that it is simply a difference in values, opinion, upbringing, or styles of behaving.

Sharing the perceived threat. Sharing is a way to make the internal anger cycle a public or interpersonal event. It diffuses the intensity of feeling and clarifies our perceptions. It permits us to receive feedback and consensual validation.

Forgiveness. Forgiveness involves letting go of the anger and canceling the charges against the other—and ourselves. Forgiving and forgetting clean the slate and constitute a way of opening yourself to future transactions. Forgiveness is a magnanimous gesture that increases personal power.

DEALING WITH ANOTHER’S ANGER

In interpersonal situations we often respond to another person’s anger, whether or not we have occasioned it by means of threatening or frustrating behavior. It frequently happens that we receive another’s anger just because we happen to be there. Laura Huxley (1963), in her aptly titled book *You Are Not the Target*, views the anger of another as negative energy that is dumped on us, just as ocean waves dump their energy on the beach.

Anger from another has high potential for hooking us into what is essentially someone else’s problem. If we view another’s anger as threatening, we start the anger cycle in ourselves; and then we have our anger to deal with, as well as the other person’s. To be angry simply because someone else is angry makes no sense, but it frequently happens anyway. Contagion is a usual by-product of intensity.

Anger from another, if responded to appropriately, can increase interpersonal learning and strengthen a relationship. The following steps may be helpful.

Affirm the other's feelings. An old Jules Feiffer cartoon devotes nine panels to one character's building up his anger toward another. Finally, he verbally confronts the other with "I hate you, you son of a bitch!" The other character replies, "Let us begin by defining your terms." To affirm another's anger is to acknowledge that you are receiving it and to express a willingness to respond. Disallowing another's anger usually heightens its intensity.

Acknowledge your own defensiveness. Let the other person know what you are feeling. Acknowledge that your own tenseness may lead to miscommunication and distortion. Develop an awareness of the impact of received anger on your body.

Clarify and diagnose. Give and request specific feedback. Distinguish between wants and needs. Check expectations. Discover together who owns what in the situation. When interpersonal needs and wants are on the table, the resolution of anger becomes more probable.

Renegotiate the relationship. Plan together how similar situations will be dealt with in the future. Contracting to practice new behavior may help to eliminate the sources of friction. Acknowledge regret and exchange apologies if that is warranted. Agree on a third-party mediator to help if the two of you are getting nowhere.

Anger does not disappear if we refuse to deal with it; it continues to grow within us. If we deal with anger directly, the discomfort and unpleasantness are mitigated by the new learning and self-strengthening that occur. If we deal with it indirectly, we easily trap ourselves into polarization, passivity, "gunnysacking," name calling, blaming, gaming, and viewing ourselves and our adversaries as weak and fragile. Anger is not the worst thing in the world. It is a powerful source of energy, which, if creatively and appropriately expressed, leads to personal growth and improved interpersonal functioning.

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■ CONTRACTING: A PROCESS AND A TOOL

Francis L. Ulschak

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?” “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the Cat. “I don’t much care where—so long as I get somewhere,” Alice added as an explanation. “Oh, you’re sure to do that,” said the Cat, “if you only walk long enough.”

Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland

Contracting may be used by a facilitator (therapist, consultant, leader, and so on) to accomplish certain goals:

1. To clarify and define the relationship between the facilitator and the client (the person or organization seeking the facilitator’s services); and/or
2. To clarify with a client where the client is presently, where he or she would like to be (goals and objectives), and alternative ways (strategies) for getting there.

In the first case, contracting is used as a process to explore and define the relationship between the facilitator and the client. The client’s wants and needs for services are detailed along with the range of services that the facilitator is willing and able to provide. This period is a time of deciding (1) what the various parties involved want from each other, (2) whether they have the ability and resources to provide what is wanted from the relationship, and (3) whether they are willing to enter into the relationship.

In the second case, contracting is a specific tool that the facilitator can use with a client to assist the client in evaluating the present situation (A), the desired position (B), and how to get to the desired position. Holloway and Holloway’s (1973) contracting model depicts the client’s present and desired positions and the decision that the client needs to make in order to move from one to the other. The “decision” can be seen as the choice of a strategy (strategies) that will accomplish the movement from A to B.

The facilitator can understand contracting both as a process and as a framework that may be used (1) to establish a relationship with the client and to set mutual goals and objectives and (2) as a specific technique to involve the client actively in detailing A and B and the possible strategies for moving from A to B. This latter use encourages the client to take active responsibility for his or her present condition and future state.

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Contracting as a Process

Contracting can be seen as a dynamic process along a time line, as opposed to a single event. The facilitator and client begin with a “directional” contract, part of which may include the intent to recycle the contract: “In six weeks we will review the contract and update it.” Thompson (1974, p. 31) refers to “process contracting” and states that “the original ‘contract’ can be an agreement to work together to progressively define the relationship and to communicate desired ‘changes’ to one another as each party sees more clearly the development of its interests.” Part of contracting as a process is defining the relationship; one vital aspect of this is keeping the other parties involved in the contract explicitly informed of any changes.

Contracting as a Tool

Contracting is also a useful tool that can be used at various levels. At one level, the intrapersonal, an individual experiencing an inner conflict may use the model as an aid in deciding on strategies that will result in clarifying and eliminating the conflict.

A second level of contracting involves two or more people. For example, in a group setting, one person may feel that she dominates the discussion and may make a contract with other members of the group that (1) they will tell her when they experience her as dominating the discussion and that (2) she will check with them when she experiences herself as dominating the discussion. A third level of contracting may be between the facilitator and the client, group, or organization. In this case, contracting may involve specifying issues such as time commitments, finances involved, or group-maintenance issues.

TWO APPROACHES TO CONTRACTING

Two general approaches to contracting can be useful as guidelines. The first approach concentrates on establishing the relationship between the client and the facilitator. The second approach attends to defining the relationship between the client and the problem. In this approach, the facilitator assists the client in moving from A to B. Although there is a great deal of overlap between these two approaches, they are presented separately. Depending on the setting, the facilitator may find one approach or the other more useful.

Negotiating the Relationship

A basic structure (Steiner, 1971) for using contracting in therapy can be used for negotiating roles, expectations, and mutual benefits in nontherapy settings as well. There are four requirements for this negotiation: (1) mutual consent, (2) valid consideration, (3) competency, and (4) lawful object.

Mutual consent means that both parties have an adequate understanding of the agreement. What both want and expect from the relationship should be clearly detailed. The facilitator needs to provide the client with possible time involvements, financial

costs, courses of action, methods that may be used, expectations, risks involved, and so on. The client provides the facilitator with information concerning expectations, the nature of the problem, objectives, people to be involved, time commitments, and so on. It is important that both the client and the facilitator give each other sufficient information so that both will be able to make informed decisions. The three ingredients of *valid information, commitment, and free choice* (Argyris, 1973) are necessary considerations.

Valid consideration involves an explicit statement of the benefits that each party to the contract will confer on the other. Benefits for the facilitator might include money, additional experience, enhanced reputation, or publishable material. For the client, they might mean new information, the alleviation of the problem, or training.

Competency concerns the ability of the parties to enter into the relationship. For the facilitator, the question is whether he or she has the competencies and the background to do what the client is requesting. For the client, competency may relate to his or her authority to enter into an agreement. Does the client have the position and the sanction of the organization to enter into such an agreement?

Lawful object requires very simply that what both parties are agreeing to is legal.

With the framework of these requirements, a checklist of questions can be provided for the facilitator and the client in order to explore their relationship.

Mutual Consent

What are the time requirements?

What are the financial costs involved?

Are there any risks that the client/facilitator should be aware of?

Who will be involved?

What are the expectations of the facilitator?

Are there any ethical concerns involved?

What methods might the facilitator use?

If there is research involved, how will the information be used?

Valid Considerations

What will the client pay the facilitator?

Are there rewards other than financial ones? If so, what?

What rewards will the facilitator provide for the client?

Competency

Is the facilitator competent to do what the client is asking? What kinds of backup services are available?

Is the client in a position to enter into the contract?

Does he or she have the authority to do so?

Lawful Object

Is the agreement legal?

Clarifying Goals and Strategies

In the second approach, contracting focuses on the client and the “problem.” This approach asks four questions: (1) What are the client’s wants? (2) What is the client willing to do to meet these wants? (3) What are the client’s criteria for success? (4) What benefits does the client gain on completing the contract?

Determining the client’s wants involves a clarification of both the present situation and future goals and objectives. The more specific and behavioral the terms of the descriptions are, the easier it is to determine whether and to what extent they have been met. Sometimes the client may feel totally lacking in goals or objectives. In this case the first “want” in this first step may be to “determine goals.”

To find out what the client is willing to do to meet his or her wants involves strategies and action plans. There may be many ways of moving from A to B, and part of this step is weighing the various alternatives. Again, it is important that the answer to this question be expressed in the most specific, behavioral, and measurable terms possible.

Criteria for success are essential in order to evaluate results; and, in order to determine whether the criteria have been satisfied and to what extent, the criteria must be specific.

The question of benefits is linked to motivation. If the client completes the contract successfully, what will that mean to him or her? Will the client think differently? act differently? feel differently? have more income? Are these outcomes pleasing?

This approach, focusing on the client and the problem, can provide the facilitator with a frame of reference. Although the questions are presented sequentially, they are interrelated; and in practice the facilitator may experience a good deal of overlap. Both the facilitator and the client also need to be aware that the contract may be recycled at any time.

ADVANTAGES TO CONTRACTING

Contracting has advantages on many levels. First, within the contracting process, the client’s integrity and autonomy are respected. The first approach emphasizes how important it is for the facilitator and the client to “level” with each other. Both need to reveal hidden agendas, and both are held responsible for their actions.

Second, and closely related, contracting may clarify the “helpee-helper” syndrome, a relationship filled with pitfalls. The charismatic helper may leave the client floating on a magic cloud but with no understanding for self-help when the cloud disappears. The “helpless” client may seduce the facilitator into solving the problem and then discount the solution with “Yes, but...” (Berne, 1964). Contracting avoids some of these pitfalls by asking the parties to level with each other and to state expectations clearly.

A third advantage to contracting is that it can function to detect and/or eliminate latent conflict at an early stage. The emphasis on clear understanding helps here, as well as the recycling points built into the process. Contracting can also be used as a specific tool for controlling or managing conflict.

PROBLEMS WITH CONTRACTING

Although the advantages of contracting are clear, problems may arise. These can be categorized as follows:

- Problems relating to condition A, that is, the present condition. The client may not know what the difficulty is.
- Problems relating to condition B, that is, goals and objectives. The client may have a very confused understanding of what the future will look like.
- Problems relating to the strategies involved in moving from A to B. The client may have a clear understanding of both situations but be unaware of alternative strategies for moving from one to the other.
- Problems relating to one or more of these elements.

Problems can be identified as structured or unstructured (Thompson, 1972): Structured problems have only one unknown (for example, the desired condition [B] may be unknown, but the present condition [A] and strategies are known), while unstructured problems have at least two unknowns (for example, the present condition [A] is known, and the desired condition [B] and strategies are unknown).

The facilitator and client who are faced with one or more categories of problems have options. When condition A is unknown, a contract might detail a process for determining A, for example, the use of a research instrument. When condition B is unknown, a contract may be formulated for goal setting or long-range planning. When strategies are unclear, the contract may deal with problem solving, for example, the use of force-field analysis to examine alternative strategies. When the problem combines several elements, a contract can identify a critical starting point and then proceed with “action plans.”

Problems that arise within the contracting process may become the focus of the process itself; contracting can then be used as a problem-solving tool for contracting. It is important that the facilitator be sensitive to the problems that the client experiences with the contracting process. When the problems are identified, contracting may be used to resolve or control them.

CONCLUSION

The Cat's answer to Alice provides an excellent model for contracting: Which way you go depends on where you want to go. Contracting is a tool and a process that can help people find answers to where they are, where they want to go, and how to get there.

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■ ENCOURAGING OTHERS TO CHANGE THEIR BEHAVIOR

Judy Corey Morton and D.M. Blair

The idea of “getting other people to do what you want them to do” raises uncomfortable feelings for many individuals. Yet many people (health professionals, teachers, managers, parents, and counselors) are expected to have the ability to encourage others to change certain aspects of their behavior. The following model suggests one way to help individuals make decisions about whether, when, and how to help others change their behavior. Although there are no guaranteed ways to change another’s behavior, it is possible to increase the likelihood that others will change. The likelihood of change is affected by the strategy chosen.

ASSUMPTIONS

This model is based on a number of assumptions:

- People are capable of changing their behavior (that is, they can lose weight, learn to climb mountains, and so on).
- People cannot be made to change; they must have a part in deciding if they will change—and, if so, how.
- People like and need to make their own decisions and solve their own problems, and they have a right to do so.
- Intervening is one way of expressing care and respect for others.
- In some cases people have a right to impose their will on those around them.
- The interpersonal relationship is a tool that can be used to assist others in considering behavioral change.

DEFINITIONS

Three basic terms are essential to understanding the model:

1. *Intervention.* This is the process by which a person enters into a situation for the purpose of assisting another (others) to consider changing his or her (their) behavior.

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2. “Must” *intervention*. A “must” intervention is one that people feel they must perform for one or both of two reasons: (1) Someone else is doing something that concretely and tangibly affects the intervenor, and/or (2) it is part of the intervenor’s job to encourage others to change aspects of their behavior. For example, a teacher may feel he or she must intervene in a situation in which a student is talking so loudly that others cannot hear the class discussion. In such a case, the talking student’s behavior may be affecting the teacher’s ability to hear what other students are saying. The teacher may also consider it part of his or her job to ensure that all students can hear what is being said.

In a must intervention, the intervenor must be satisfied with whatever alternative behavior is decided on. Although a situation requires a must intervention, it can be discussed at a time convenient to both parties.

3. “Can” *intervention*. A “can” intervention is one that people feel they can perform because they (1) have a strong enough relationship with the other person to have a reasonable chance of being heard, (2) have information that may be helpful to the other person, or (3) want to help the other person. For example, an employer may notice that one of her employees is standing so close to a client that the client is uncomfortable. If she has a strong enough relationship with the employee, she may feel she can intervene because she has information that may be helpful to the other person and because she would like to help the person.

In a can intervention, it is up to the other person to decide how or if the information will be used. It is not necessary that the intervenor know or approve of the behavior that takes place after the intervention occurs.

It is important to remember that there is no situation that inherently requires either type of intervention. If three people observe the same situation, one might decide that it calls for a must intervention, another might feel that a can intervention is most appropriate, and the third might feel that no intervention is required. It is important for each intervenor, however, to understand which type of intervention he or she feels the situation requires. This decision determines which strategy will be more effective in making the intervention. If the intervenor believes that a must intervention is called for, he or she should use a must strategy; a can strategy would be much less effective.

GUIDELINES FOR A MUST INTERVENTION

The proposed strategy for an intervenor in a must intervention is as follows:

1. *Initiate the communication*. In a must situation, the situation affects you enough that you must assume the responsibility for changing it. Although you must initiate the communication, you can encourage the other individual to share in deciding when and where the intervention will take place.

2. *State your concern*. When doing so, it is helpful to be as descriptive as possible and to include a statement about your feelings. If there is a question of whether it is your

business to intervene, you might make a brief statement about why it is part of your job to be concerned or how the action that is happening concretely affects you.

It is very easy to describe your concern in a damaging way. Consider the following statements, none of which specifically describes what is happening or why it is bothersome to the speaker: “Your brother would never do that!” “Stop that or you’ll get a spanking!” “Mommy doesn’t like it when you behave badly!” “I’m telling your father tonight!”

3. *Involve the individual in the solution.* Statements or questions that involve the other person in the solution increase the chances that the proposed solution will be implemented and that you, the intervenor, may learn a new solution to a problem. It is important to enter into this solution-finding stage without knowing how the problem will be resolved.

4. *Ensure that you are satisfied with the solution.* While it is hoped that you will enter into the negotiating stage with an open mind, you must ensure that the outcome of the negotiation is satisfactory to you, the person affected. If you know the minimal result you want to happen, it is easier to ensure your satisfaction.

Being satisfied with the solution also means that you are willing to follow the situation to its logical conclusion(s) should the other person choose not to define a mutually acceptable solution. An example is the patient who decides to seek another medical opinion because he or she is not satisfied with the physician’s response to his or her concern. It is important to remember that all interventions do not work. If the situation is truly a “must,” you must be prepared to carry your intervention to its logical consequences and have the power to do so.

5. *If you feel resistance, shift to active listening.* Active listening involves showing the individual not only that you heard what was said, but also that you recognized the feeling associated with what was said. When the person with whom you are talking feels resistant, it is difficult for him or her to consider alternative solutions. Active listening helps that person to express further how he or she is feeling. Once the other person has expressed these feelings and feels that you have heard him or her, problem solving is easier. To complete the must intervention, however, you must then return the focus to finding a solution with which you can be satisfied.

Other Helpful Hints

Because attempting to change behavior is likely to be stressful for both parties, it is important for the intervenor to be as descriptive as possible and to avoid language that labels the other person’s behavior. It is also important to avoid creating a situation in which other individuals feel that they have to defend their behavior (that is, “Why did you do that?”).

Harmful

“What did I tell you yesterday?”

“That was a bad thing to do.”

Better

“Please follow the instructions I gave you yesterday.”

“I’m upset with you for being thirty minutes late.”

GUIDELINES FOR A CAN INTERVENTION

Although a can intervention is not vital to the intervenor’s needs, it may allow the other person to increase his or her options. The intervenor, in this case, chooses to intervene because he or she:

- Cares about the other person;
- Feels he or she has information that may be helpful to the other person; and
- Has a strong enough relationship with the other person to have a reasonable chance of being heard.

The proposed strategy for a can intervention is as follows:

1. *Ensure that you have built a relationship with the other person before attempting to intervene.* A strong relationship increases the likelihood that whatever information you have to share will be carefully considered. One of the best ways to build a relationship with others is to utilize your listening skills. Showing other people that you hear what they are saying and the feelings behind what they are saying is an extremely effective way to build a relationship.

2. *State the general nature of your concern and ask the person’s permission to share some information.* Signaling the nature of your intent and allowing the other person some control over whether he or she wants to talk about it—as well as where and when to talk about it—increases the chances that the other person will be ready and receptive at the time of the intervention.

3. *Wait until the other person gives you permission to go on.* It is important to refrain from intervening unless it is clear that permission has been granted. Sometimes the other person may nonverbally show reluctance to discuss the issue. If you sense any reluctance, assume that permission has not been given.

4. *Share your personal concern(s).* This kind of information not only can help the intervenor feel more comfortable, but, more importantly, decreases the likelihood that the other person will feel threatened and therefore helps him or her to focus on the content of what is being said.

5. *Be specific.* The more specifically the behavior or circumstance is described, the more likely it is that the other person can do something to change.

6. *If you encounter resistance, shift to active listening.* This approach allows the other person to say more about his or her concern. It also lets that person know that you are trying to understand what he or she is saying. Remember that if the situation is truly a “can,” you do not have to make the intervention at all.

7. *Be brief and state your concern only once.* This helps avoid the appearance of nagging, and it also allows the other person to assume the responsibility for asking for more information—if it is wanted.

8. *Allow the other person to decide how or if he or she wants to act on your intervention.* With a can intervention, it is not necessary to know how or if the other person decides to act on your information. If the person wants to discuss it further with you, he or she will do so.

If the intervenor encounters resistance and/or notices no significant change in behavior, three things might be considered:

1. The intervenor’s assessment of the strength of the relationship was not accurate.
2. The intervenor could have improved the manner in which the information was presented.
3. The individual considered the information and decided not to do anything about it. (This also includes the possibility that he or she might be right.)

SUMMARY

The key to this model is for the intervenor to understand how he or she feels about a given situation. There is no situation that inherently requires a must or a can intervention. Whether a must or a can strategy should be used is based on the intervenor’s set of values and/or work situation. The wrong strategy could put the intervenor in a worse position than he or she was in originally. For example, assume someone is stepping on Mary’s toe. If Mary asks that person for permission to speak, and he says “No,” what does Mary do?

The act of intervening implies personal risk. Possible negative consequences that could occur as a result of ineffective interventions include no behavioral change on the part of the other person and/or a worsening of the relationship between the two individuals. However, if done appropriately, intervening can result in behavioral change and a deepening of the relationship between the intervenor and the other person.

The two strategies suggested here are ways of increasing the likelihood that other people will consider changing their behavior. Ultimately, people will decide for themselves how and if they will change. Thus, these strategies will not guarantee behavioral change; they can only increase the chances that it will occur.

■ CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATION

Willem F.G. Mastenbroek

TWO DIMENSIONS OF NEGOTIATING BEHAVIOR

The behavior of a negotiator can be characterized by two dimensions of key importance. The first dimension is *how the negotiator balances the tension between cooperation and “fighting.”* The negotiator’s style in this respect will be determined by the degree to which he or she, in attitude and behavior, demonstrates mutual dependence and solidarity rather than aggressive and dominating behavior. The vital significance of this behavioral polarity has been described elsewhere (Mastenbroek, 1980). The two behavioral poles are summarized schematically in Figure 1.

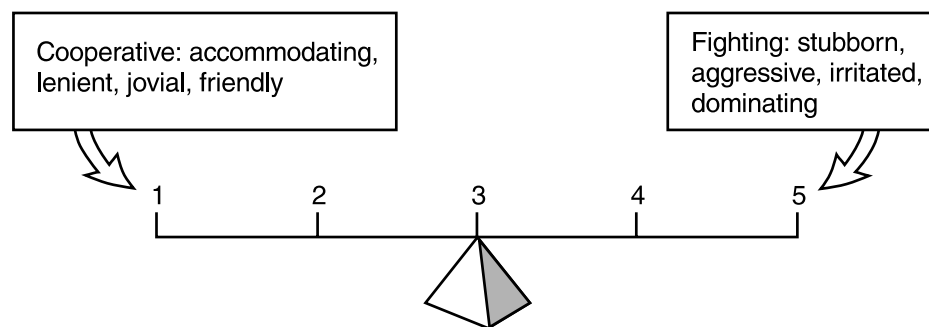


Figure 1. Negotiating as the Balancing of Cooperation and Fighting

The second dimension is *how explorative the negotiator is.* Some negotiators search persistently for solutions that are relatively satisfying to both parties. This can be done without a tendency to make concessions. For this purpose, people need certain procedures, and they must be able to use these procedures in a flexible way. Examples are exchanging extensive information, trying out experimental solutions, thinking aloud, and questioning informally. The integrative potential of the situation then will be fully utilized. Exploring means searching for common interests and presuppositions, determining whether small concessions might be possible (which might mean a great deal to the opposite party), and asking whether a combination of mutual advantages

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could be created in a package deal. The basic idea in this type of negotiating is interdependence.

Interdependence

Interdependence implies common interests. The two poles of this behavior are indicated in Figure 2.

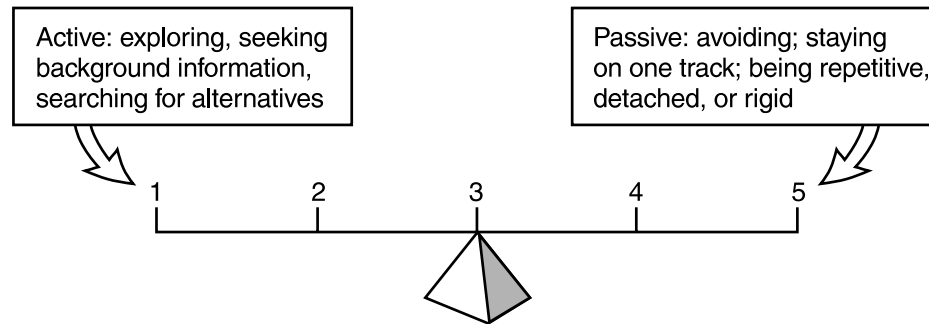


Figure 2. Procedural Flexibility: Active Versus Passive

Practitioners as well as researchers (Pruitt & Lewis, 1977) stress the importance of an active, strategic attitude for skillful negotiating. To understand the active versus passive dimension, one must realize that one can be passive in an *apparently active manner*. One can repeat the same arguments in different words, stick to one's original premise even when new information is presented, defend one particular solution in all situations, or make the issue a question of principle. This behavior can be effective as long as one realizes that one is entrenching oneself and (temporarily) no longer looking for integrative possibilities. This entrenchment can be very active but is, in fact, an avoidance of the search for a compromise.

These dimensions have been seen as fundamental in numerous other studies on interpersonal behavior. Schutz (1966) differentiates between three basic interpersonal orientations: "inclusion," or behavior that varies from very intensive involvement (active) to complete distance (passive); "control" (fighting); and "affection" (cooperation). Horney (1945) distinguishes between "moving away" (passive), "moving against" (fighting), and "moving toward" (cooperation). Zaleznik and Kets de Vries (1975) use these dimensions in their work on managerial power. The dimensions also can be found in well-known behavioral science instruments such as the "Managerial Grid" of Blake and Mouton (1969), which charts managerial behavior, and in the "Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument" of Thomas and Kilmann (1974), which clarifies conflict-management styles.

There are four aspects of the cooperative-fighting dimension (Mastenbroek, 1980). Each is characterized in a different way by the tension between cooperating and fighting. Each presents its own dilemma. These dilemmas differ from one another in that each involves special activities proceeding from a different intention. Table 1 summarizes the four types of activities and their related dilemmas.

Table 1. The Four Aspects of the Cooperation-Fighting Dimension

Negotiating as four types of activities, each proceeding from a different intention	Negotiating as dilemma behavior based on the balancing of cooperative and fighting tendencies	Examples of tactics
I. Obtaining results by dividing costs and benefits in a favorable way	<p>Conceding vs. stubborn</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>lenient, tenacious hard, indulgent stubborn</p>	Firm presentation of facts and arguments but margins are self-understood. Tests the interest of the other party to get to priorities. Allows impasses to occur and uses them as a test; relatively small concessions are part of the game. Works step by step toward compromise. Uses time limits.
II. Promoting respectful personal relations and a constructive climate	<p>Jovial vs. hostile</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>confidential, credible, irritated, jovial solid unpredictable</p>	Promotes informal discussions, shows interest in personal matters, uses humor moderately, displays consistent behavior. Shows interdependence ("What solution will we find?"). Avoids causing loss of face.
III. Establishing a favorable balance of power	<p>Bending vs. domineering</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>minimal preserving a trying to resistance certain balance dominate</p>	Tries to adjust the balance by means of facts and restrained pressure. When challenged, reacts proportionally. Is alert to alternatives to improve one's position <i>within</i> the present relationship. Combines a recognition of manipulations with appropriate counteractions. Keeps the initiative.
IV. Consolidating one's position as representative	<p>Uncommitted vs. overcommitted</p> <p>1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>no commit- tries to enlarge is just ment to maneuvering carrying out rank and space instructions file</p>	Avoids a strict mandate but stays in contact and influences "opinion makers." Prevents stereotyping. Is moderate in expectations of rank and file. Provides possibilities for "showmanship." Uses an isolated location for negotiation.

The four aspects of the cooperation-fighting dimension, together with the active-passive dimension, comprise a model of negotiation. The model can be used to describe the behavior of negotiators. It is also prescriptive because it can specify what constructive negotiation is.

A MODEL OF NEGOTIATION

Figure 3 summarizes the primary elements of the negotiation model. This model enables negotiators to better understand and to react more effectively to activities at the negotiating table, including their own behavior.

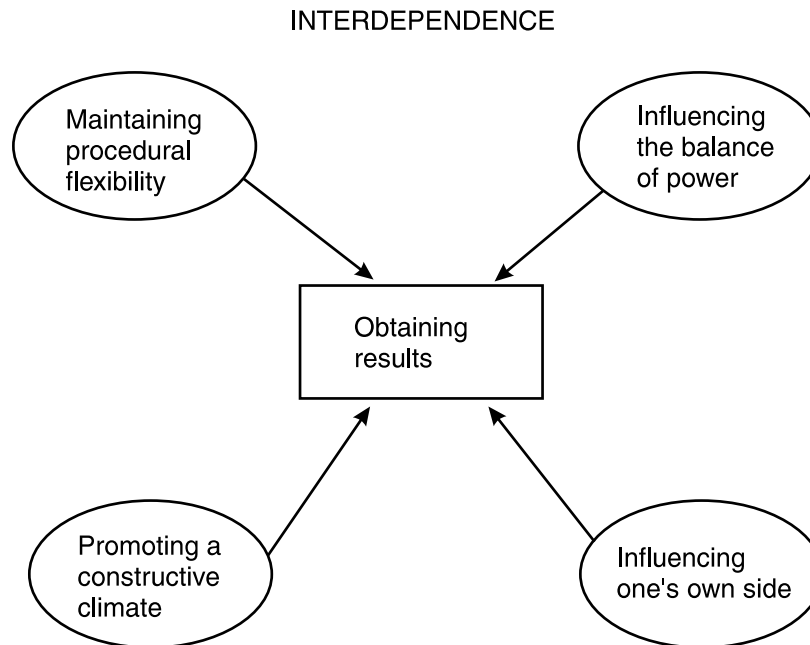
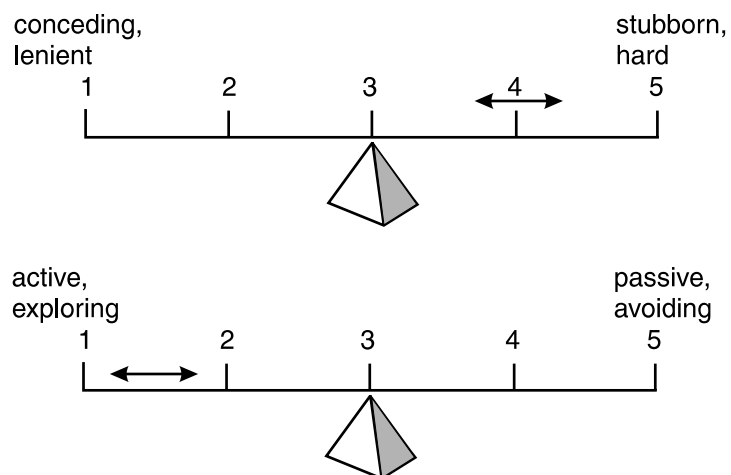


Figure 3. Primary Elements of the Negotiation Model

A PROFILE OF CONSTRUCTIVE NEGOTIATION

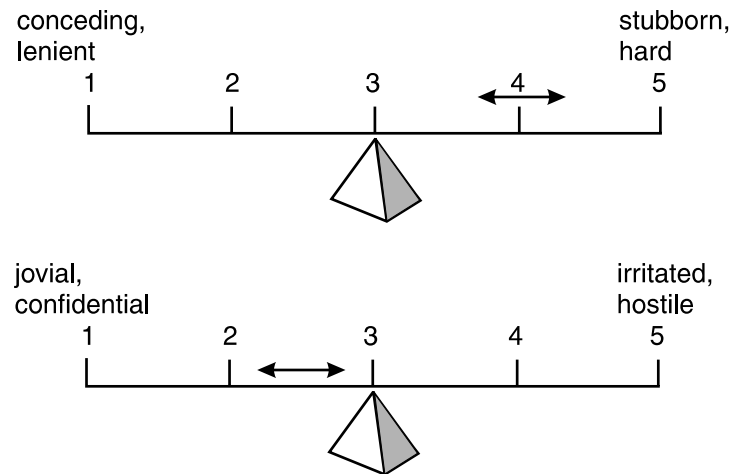
1. Be flexible but firm. This is a golden rule of experienced negotiators: Link tenacity of purpose to procedural flexibility.

Schematically:



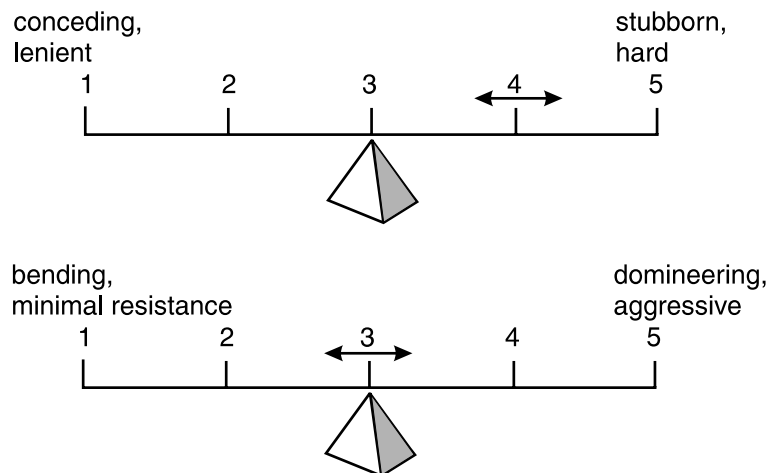
2. Firmly defending your own interests can be paired with respect for the other side and a positive climate.

Schematically:



3. Firmly defending your own interests does not mean engaging in a power struggle. Scoring points, pushing, using threatening behavior, presenting endless arguments, manipulating, and other such behaviors have little to do with negotiating.

Schematically:



4. Assess the behavior of the opposing side in proper proportion. By not distinguishing the specific intentions of certain behaviors, one often allows the situation to escalate. If one is able to place certain actions in a proper perspective, effective negotiation becomes easier. One then is able to focus on the real interests of the parties involved and is not hampered by a deteriorating atmosphere or an endless power game. Several examples of this principle can be offered.

- Exploratory moves often are preliminary or informal. A negotiator should not misuse them by attempting to use them against his or her opponent. Exploratory behavior is neither weak nor soft; it provides some opportunities but not the opportunity to become dominating.
 - It is unwise to become irritated by one who negotiates firmly, although it may be usual to prefer another style. A more sophisticated response is “If I were in that position, I might not do it better.” The relationship must be separated from the content!
 - Negotiation always involves some trial of strength and some testing of mutual dependence. If challenged, one is wise to show resistance; the chance of a material compromise or a constructive atmosphere will not necessarily be endangered. If one does nothing, one may encourage exploitative behavior. Sometimes an attempt to gain power is disguised. A pathetic approach (for example, “We wouldn’t dare take that solution to our people!”) is one example. Another is to behave as if one’s proposal is a matter of course “based as it is on the report of top experts.”
5. Keep impasses within the content area. If both parties are firm in striving for results that are favorable to them, impasses and crises are unavoidable. Reproaches, ranting, injured behavior, and so on may release some personal tension and irritation, but will have an escalating effect. It is important to prevent result-oriented behavior from contaminating other aspects of the negotiation. Ways of containing an impasse within the content area include these:
- Adjourning;
 - Asking for a summary of the different points of view;
 - Making or suggesting a small concession;
 - Exploring the possible alternatives and consequences of allowing the impasse to continue;
 - Altering the composition of the delegation;
 - Changing the location;
 - Offering a revised proposal;
 - Postponing the difficult part of the negotiations;
 - Calling in a third party;
 - Conducting an informal study-consultation or brainstorming session on possible solutions;
 - Selecting a small part of the package and trying to reach agreement on it;
 - Systematically placing the possible solutions next to one another; and
 - Sounding out a key figure in the other delegation during a break.

The most important tactic is to view impasses as normal and legitimate means of testing the arguments and the proposals of the opposing parties. This provides a stimulus for exploring other possibilities; it confronts both parties with the consequence of a permanent deadlock. In this way, an impasse becomes a constructive event that compels both sides to look for alternatives.

6. Negotiate with your own side. One's relationship with the people whom one represents is also a negotiating relationship. This can be kept open by the following means:
 - Working to prevent a strict mandate that, in effect, allows no room for negotiation;
 - Moderating demands by providing information about what is attainable;
 - Keeping people with unrealistic expectations outside the actual negotiations (for example, by keeping the negotiating team small or by assigning the team members to subcommittees); and
 - Using one's personal power to "sell" the settlements.
7. Be aware of your own behaviors. It is always a good idea to assess one's own style and to develop those areas or capabilities in which one is not strong. Score yourself on the dimensions of negotiating behavior. In what ranges do you usually operate? What do you tend to do under pressure? How do you think your opponents would score you?
8. Remember that negotiation always involves dilemmas. All negotiators wonder whether they have been too stubborn or too lenient, too open or too closed, too friendly or too irritable, and so forth. Most negotiators learn to live with these feelings. Many of them like their role because they have found ways to stay relaxed and in contact with their own feelings *and* simultaneously alert and competitive.

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■ THE NUTS AND BOLTS OF ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

Beverly Byrum

Assertiveness is a topic that continues to be of interest to practitioners of human resource development (HRD) and to the general public. In addition, it continues to be the focus of many organizational-training efforts. The purpose of this article is to explore the topic and various issues involved in assertiveness training, such as definitions of “assertiveness,” assertive rights, assertive techniques, values underlying assertiveness, consequences of assertiveness training, and the method of change advocated by assertiveness.

BACKGROUND

“Assertiveness” is a communication technique designed to demonstrate respect toward oneself and others and to allow the expression of a full range of behaviors. The term came to prominence within the general framework of behavior therapy in 1949, and the technique was first used as a counterconditioning procedure for anxiety (Alberti, 1977). With the beginning of the women’s movement in the Sixties, assertiveness was adopted by many as a basis and a means for upholding women’s rights. In fact, many of the books on assertiveness that were sold at that time were written specifically for women (Baer, 1976; Phelps & Austin, 1975). If assertiveness suggests to some that “anything goes” and that being “pushy” is the objective, these ideas can probably be traced to the influence of the militant extreme of the women’s movement.

If assertiveness did have a bad name, much has been done in recent years to dispel the notion that it is solely for women who want to move from passivity into aggressiveness. Books and articles approaching assertiveness from a management perspective began to surface in the late Seventies and early Eighties (Back & Back, 1982; Burley-Allen, 1983; Cawood, 1983). Since that time assertiveness has apparently been legitimized in the world of work and has been adopted by training professionals as a skill worthy of teaching (Batten, 1979; Meier & Pulichene, 1980; O’Donnell & Colby, 1979; Paul, 1979).

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THE PURPOSE OF ASSERTIVENESS TRAINING

Assertiveness is not an end in itself. Taking all perspectives into account, the purpose of assertiveness training is four-fold:

1. To maintain respect for self and others;
2. To keep lines of communication open;
3. To achieve goals; and
4. To engage and develop human resources.

Although purposes 1 and 2 can be viewed as ends in themselves, they can also be seen as the value-based means to achieving goals and engaging and developing human resources.

Purpose, being general in nature, needs to be elucidated by the tools and techniques of assertiveness. Assertive methods provide particular and unique means to achieve the four-fold purpose of assertiveness training. The “nuts and bolts” of assertiveness involve the following six dimensions.

1. The Values of Assertiveness

If assertiveness training is being conducted by organizations that hold the common HRD values of valid information, free and informed choice, and commitment to and support for change (Argyris, 1970), then the values implied by assertiveness training are consistent with such humanistic underpinnings. A critical word here is “implied,” for values are not often overtly stated in assertiveness literature of any kind, be it texts, articles, or training brochures. The values can, however, be easily derived from the definitions of assertiveness and the discussion of the need for and benefits of assertiveness training.

The values most often implied are self-awareness, self-acceptance, honesty, empathy, responsibility, and mutuality. Although these values are not espoused by all of the literature, they occur frequently enough to warrant considering them as integral to assertiveness. Although most people would recognize these terms easily, the definitions provided here are specific to assertiveness:

1. *Self-awareness*: knowledge of one’s own goals and behavior and the reasons for them;
2. *Self-acceptance*: positive self-regard in the face of one’s natural human weaknesses and mistakes;
3. *Honesty*: congruent and truthful verbal and nonverbal expression of thoughts, feelings, and intentions;
4. *Empathy*: understanding and accepting others’ experiences and feelings as valid from their points of view;
5. *Responsibility*: assuming ownership of one’s thoughts, feelings, desires, needs, and expectations as well as ownership of the consequences of one’s actions; and

6. *Mutuality*: accepting another person as equal and demonstrating willingness to negotiate issues from a win-win stance.

These values provide a foundation for assertiveness training that is similar to the values foundation underlying current trends in human relations, customer service, and communication-skills training; they are also consistent with recently published directions in HRD and organizational philosophy and culture (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Naisbitt, 1982; Peters & Austin, 1985; Naisbitt & Aburdene, 1985).

2. The Definition of “Assertiveness”

Assertiveness is generally defined as the ability to express oneself honestly without denying the rights of others. This definition holds the notion of appropriateness in that there are limits to self-expression; those limits are the boundaries of others’ rights to be treated decently, without demands, coercion, or judgment. Therefore, one is not assertive without being conscious of the means by which one expresses oneself. Also, the definition does not carry the mandate that one *must* express oneself; one is not compelled to say one’s truth at every turn. Instead, one has the right to talk about the full range of thoughts and feelings if so desired, as long as that talk is not punitive to others.

Some definitions include additional behaviors, such as being direct (Back & Back, 1982), listening to others (Cawood, 1983), and expressing positive feelings (Alberti & Emmons, 1975). Other definitions include how to express oneself, such as by feeling a low degree of anxiety (Cawood, 1983), exercising assertive rights (Smith, 1975), and maintaining self-respect (Baer, 1976). Still others focus on acting in one’s own best interest as the rubric under which assertiveness falls, which may mean *not* expressing oneself honestly (Alberti, 1975). Finally, assertiveness is often defined by saying what it is *not*: aggressiveness, passivity, or passive-aggressiveness (see Figure 1). The concept of assertive rights mentioned in some definitions brings us to the third dimension.

3. The Scope (Rights) of Assertiveness

Assertive rights are derived from our basic democratic rights. As human beings, we are born with certain rights, allegedly supported by our democratic tradition. The assertive rights that follow are those generally delineated in the literature:

1. *To express thoughts and feelings*. For example, an employee has the right to say to his or her supervisor, “I’m angry because I didn’t get any overtime this week.”
2. *To have thoughts, feelings, and rights respected*. For example, the employee in the previous example has the right to expect the supervisor to respond, “I respect your right to your feelings in this matter.”
3. *To be listened to and taken seriously*. For example, the same employee also has the right to expect the supervisor to respond, “I understand that you’re angry that there was no extra work; perhaps you can have overtime next week.”

FACTOR	STYLE			
	Passive	Aggressive	Passive-Aggressive	Assertive
Treatment of Rights	Gives up own	Usurps others'	Sneaks to usurp others'	Maintains own
Metaphor	Doormat	Steamroller	Doormat with spikes	Pillar
Verbal Behavior	Qualifies, apologizes	Blames, accuses	Uses sarcasm, indirect putdowns	Speaks mind openly, directly
Nonverbal Behavior	Averted gaze, soft voice draws back	Stares, loud voice, invades space	Sideways, glance, sarcastic tone, shifts	Direct gaze, varied voice, balanced stance
Response	Flight	Fight	Hit-and-run	Engagement

Figure 1. Contrasting Style Behaviors

4. *To ask for what one wants.* For example, a customer has the right to say, "I want this merchandise replaced because it is faulty."

5. *To make mistakes.* For example, a secretary has the right to make a typographical error.

6. *To ask for information.* For example, a client has the right to ask, "What is the purpose of this team-building technique?"

7. *To say "no."* For example, an employee has the right to say, "No, I will not work late tonight."

8. *To make a decision on one's own terms.* For example, a vice president has the right to say, "I'm not attending the retirement party tonight."

9. *To not feel guilty.* The person behaving assertively has the right not to be made to feel "wrong" or "bad" for his or her action by receiving a comment such as "You're letting me down."

10. *To choose not to be assertive.* Every person always has the right to decide in terms of his or her own best interest whether to speak up or to say nothing and simply tolerate the situation.

Common sense would suggest that if one went around exercising rights 1 through 9 indiscriminately, one could easily reap negative results, even though the other party may grant one's right to do so. Right number 10 seems to be included for the purpose of allowing people to assert their rights with conscious choice of appropriate action, depending on the predicted consequences.

Rights also imply responsibilities (Back, 1982; Chenevert, 1983). For example, if I have a right to be listened to, then it should follow from assertive values that I also have the responsibility to listen to others. In respecting others' rights as well as my own, I would have the responsibilities to respect and take seriously others' thoughts, feelings, and wants; to provide information when I can; to allow others to make decisions based on their own best judgment; and not to judge or punish others for making mistakes or saying "no" to me. Often assertive rights are likened to money in one's savings account: It is there if it is needed, but one does not draw on it impulsively or indiscriminately.

The rights just explained provide some initial examples of the techniques and skills taught in assertiveness training.

4. Techniques That Should Be Taught in Assertiveness Training

Short Statements and Questions

Exercising assertive rights appropriately requires skill. One of the simplest approaches to developing skill is to teach one-line statements and questions and then to demonstrate how they can be combined in various scripts designed to suit the situation. There are three kinds of statements to be learned: "I" statements, "you" statements, and "we" statements.

1. *"I" statements.* "I" statements express thoughts, feelings, impact, wants/needs, expectations, preferences, decisions, and consequences; in question form, these statements express requests. The following are examples:

- *"I think* Tom Johnson is the top candidate for the new marketing position."
- *"I feel* disappointed that you are behind schedule on developing the new product line."
- *"I am put at a disadvantage* because I haven't received the necessary technical updates from you before our meeting with the user."
- *"I want* you to give me an explanation for your absence at the task-force meeting."
- *"I need* your help in getting this order processed on time."
- *"I expect* you to inform me when you have someone else take your shift."
- *"I would prefer* that you come to talk to me instead of writing me memos when you are upset with me."
- *"I have decided* to have Mary help us with the specifications."
- *"The consequence will be that* I will put you on report."
- *"Would you proofread this brochure for me?"* (request for help).

- “*Would you give me an example* of how the new accounting system would work for exempt employees? “(request for clarification).
- “*Would you ask me* if I mind staying late instead of assuming that I will?” (request for a change in behavior).

2. “*You*” *statements*. “*You*” statements express empathy or understanding of the other person’s situation or experience, grant the other person’s position or truth, or describe the other person’s behavior. Examples are as follows:

- “*You’re feeling* under a great deal of pressure.”
- “*Your position* has some validity.”
- “*You interrupted* me three times during the meeting” (criticism).
- “*You handled* the customer’s complaint very efficiently” (compliment).

3. “*We*” *statements*. “*We*” statements express mutual options or alternatives, compromises, decisions, or actions. They also affirm the relationship or, in question form, request mutual problem solving. Here are some examples:

- “*We could* stay late today, come in early tomorrow, or work through lunch to complete this inventory on time.”
- “*We can compromise* by your showing me the agenda and my letting you run the meeting, then debriefing together afterward.”
- “*We’ve decided* to pilot the new training program with two departments in March.”
- “*We’ll begin our agreement* Monday by allowing fifteen minutes at the end of the day to plan the activities for the next day.”
- “*Our relationship* is important enough to work through this power issue.”
- “*How can we solve* this staffing problem to our mutual satisfaction?” (request for mutual problem solving).

Many of these statements can stand on their own, while others, to make sense, need to be combined with additional statements. For example, “I want that regional sales report by 5:00 p.m. today” can easily stand on its own, whereas a statement of consequences such as “Or I will tell everyone involved that I wasn’t informed” needs to be preceded by a preference statement such as “I would prefer that you check with me before announcing that I agree with the decision.”

Many of the most commonly taught assertive techniques are single statements (Smith, 1975):

1. *Broken record*. “I want my vacation when you promised it...I want my vacation when you promised it . . .” (repeating a comment as often as necessary to obtain what is desired).

2. *Fogging*. “I can see how you might say that I come on too strong with the engineering division” (defusing criticism by agreeing with the critic’s perception of the facts, without accepting accompanying judgment).

3. *Negative assertion*. “I failed to get my yearly projections to you on time” (admitting behavioral mistake without conceding personality flaws).

4. *Negative inquiry*. “Would you like to tell me what it is that you dislike about my management style?” (asking a question to allow someone to vent negative feelings and doing so without taking it personally).

5. *Free information*. “You said that you quit your last position because you didn’t agree with the CEO’s philosophy; would you elaborate on that?” (using a previous comment as a base for gathering more information, in either a professional or a social situation).

6. *Self-disclosure*. “I feel excited about having the opportunity to work with you” (positive disclosure) or “I wish you wouldn’t tell me I’m wrong in front of other people” (negative disclosure revealing information about self that is unknown, in either a professional or a social situation).

Scripts

Once the different types of short statements and questions have been taught, they may be combined into “scripts.” The most common script used in assertiveness training is the DESC Script (Bower & Bower, 1976). In four sequential statements, it does the following:

1. *Describes a behavior* that has a negative impact on the speaker: “When you tell me you’ll contact the customer about a shipping date and then don’t follow through”
2. *Expresses a feeling in response to the behavior*: “. . . I feel angry.”
3. *Specifies the desired change in behavior*: “I would prefer that you make good on your commitment”
4. *Gives consequences if the desired change does not occur*: “. . . or I will look for someone else to work with me.”

Designed for the purpose of aiding a person in maintaining his or her own rights, this script works best in encounters in which the ongoing relationship is not of importance. There is also a self-protective tone to the four statements. The tone makes sense when we remember that initially assertiveness training was intended to help passive people become assertive. Recently, however, assertiveness training has broadened its base to help aggressive people move toward assertiveness. Five additions can modify this script when used by an aggressive person or by someone who strongly values the relationship in question: (1) expressing empathy, (2) providing an explanation, (3) offering the possibility of positive consequences as well as negative,

(4) affirming the relationship, and (5) requesting mutual problem solving. These additions both soften the tone and establish the importance of mutuality. The modified product looks like this in script form:

1. "I think I understand that you . . ." (statement of empathy).
2. "But when you . . ." (description of behavior).
3. "I feel . . ." (expression of feeling).
4. "Because . . ." (explanation of impact).
5. "I would prefer that you . . ." (specification of desired behavior).
6. "And if you do, I will . . ." (positive consequences of desired behavior change) and/or "If you don't, I will . . ." (negative consequences of lack of desired behavior change).
7. "I am concerned because . . ." (affirmation of the relationship).
8. "How can we work together to . . . ?" (request for mutual problem solving).

Learners of assertiveness can be taught to complete the script using hypothetical case studies or their own personal "problem" situations. A completed script may take this form:

"I think I understand that you have orders backlogged; but when you tell the sales department that it's my fault for writing so many new orders, I feel angry because I can't meet my quota unless I make those sales and write the orders. I would prefer that you talk with my manager to see if we can get some consistent standards. If you do, we can reduce the pressure on both of us and have fewer angry customers. (If you don't, I'm just going to continue doing what I'm told I have to do.) I am concerned because I want to work with you rather than against you. How can we work together to accomplish this standardization?"

This script provides a complete picture of the situation from the speaker's perspective and yet demonstrates respect for the other person's position. As such it is consistent with the values of assertiveness training.

Other, shorter scripts can be designed to vary with and meet the requirements of any given situation. Three examples of such variations are as follows:

1. *Expressing empathy while using the broken-record technique, when a need is to be met.* "I think I understand that you are not a field engineer; however, I need to have this machine running." If the recipient of the comment replies with an excuse or reason, the expression of empathy can be changed to fit the reason; the basic assertion will stay the same. "I understand that all of the field engineers are on calls, and I need to have this machine running."

2. *Describing behavior with expression of feeling and explanation of impact, when specifying a change or consequences is not appropriate.* "When you put me on the task force without asking me first, I felt overwhelmed because I already have commitments to two other projects."

3. *Stating a need with a request for mutual problem solving, when the other party's participation in the decision is desirable.* "I need those figures for advertising by Thursday. How can I help you get them completed for me?"

It is important that trainees be taught to be *specific* and *concrete* in all of their statements and requests. The more clearly a statement or request is composed, the better the chance of achieving the desired result. For example, the statement "I feel discouraged when you get defensive" would be better stated as "I feel discouraged when you justify your lateness by blaming your alarm clock and telling me I don't understand all of your home responsibilities."

Other Skills

Three additional skills can be taught (Bolton, 1979). The first two focus on protection of rights; the third focuses on improving the mutuality of the relationship by improving the communication between the parties.

1. *Ignoring undesirable behavior.* Instead of specifying behavior that is objectionable, asking for change, or discussing consequences, the person ignores the other's negative behavior. This is useful in situations in which bringing attention to the negative behavior seems to intensify or prolong it by reinforcing it. For example, it may be more useful to ignore chronic complaining than to try to understand it, object to it, or make sanctions against it.

2. *Modifying the environment.* This technique can be likened to that of a mother who crawls into a playpen to escape from her baby for a while and get some rest. It involves restructuring the environment to get as close as possible to the desired result, and it is useful when obtaining the other person's cooperation is impossible. For example, an administrative assistant who can hear gossip that he or she does not want to listen to can turn on a radio or transcribe dictation from a dictaphone.

Although it is preferable to try communicating before using either this technique or that of ignoring undesirable behavior, these nonverbal approaches can be used when all else fails and the person involved is "between a rock and a hard place."

3. *Metacommunication.* Metacommunication is the process of "communicating about communication." This technique is useful when the *way* in which communication is occurring is the problem that precludes solving the issues at hand. For example, if two people are discussing strategies for a new marketing campaign and one of the two consistently distorts the other's words to support his or her own ideas, this process can be pointed out and dealt with. The person whose words are being distorted might say, "It occurs to me that every time I mention an idea about the new campaign, you somehow turn it around to support your ideas. For instance, when I suggested that we get a major athlete for testimony, you picked up on the idea of testimony to support your own desire to use a rock star."

5. An Effective Change Model for Assertiveness Training

The wide range of skills addressed in this article can be used in virtually any situation—personal, social, or professional. These skills can be taught; but whether they are practiced, learned, and used is a different issue.

One particularly effective method for applying skills is derived from a typical behavioral-change model. The following outline presents an eight-step model that can be used to assist people in practicing, learning, and applying assertiveness skills. Although it is not necessary to follow all of the substeps indicated in the outline, each one serves a purpose in “imprinting” assertive behavior.

1. Gather baseline data
 - a. Inventory behavior
 - b. Inventory anxiety-producing situations
2. Discriminate among behaviors
 - a. Case study
 - b. Role play
 - c. Quiz
3. Demonstrate assertive behavior through behavior modeling
4. Practice
 - a. Role play
 - b. Rehearsal of real situations
5. Feedback
 - a. Coaching
 - b. Videotape
 - c. Peer feedback
6. Action plan
 - a. Set goal and apply
 - b. Contract
7. Follow-up
 - a. Journal
 - b. Support group
 - c. Real-life situations
8. Evaluation
 - a. Self-report
 - b. Observation

We can follow Les, a fictional participant in an assertiveness-training workshop, through these eight steps. Instead of being interviewed by a qualified instructor to determine baseline data (one option), Les completes a paper-and-pencil inventory that assesses his present level of assertive behavior and his present level of anxiety. The inventory indicates that Les has an inclination to be aggressive—to explode and blame people. His anxiety about being discovered in making a mistake is high, while his anxiety about being liked is low. Les indicates that his “explosions” have had negative consequences and expresses a desire to change.

The participants are then given case studies that help them discriminate among four types of behavior: Passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive, and assertive. They take a quiz, and Les learns from the results of his quiz that he has a tendency to confuse passive-aggressive with assertive behavior.

His confusion is somewhat cleared when he sees a videotape that further demonstrates the differences among the behaviors and shows the advantages of assertive behavior. Subsequently, Les joins a subgroup with three other people, and the subgroup members take turns role playing the four different behaviors in the form of four approaches to solving a company’s financial difficulties. The role play is videotaped so that afterward Les can see how well he produced each of the behaviors. He notices that although he can demonstrate each one when called for, his voice tends to sound belligerent when playing the assertive role. He is coached by his instructor about how to change his vocal tone. Les is also aware that he feels “out of control” when he takes the assertive role, and he and his group members discuss possible causes and alternative ways of viewing assertive behavior.

Ready to experiment with assertiveness, Les is encouraged to set a small, achievable goal to which he can apply his learnings. He decides that the next day he will talk with his secretary about her abrupt telephone behavior. Les writes this goal in the form of a contract specifying who, what, when, how, why, the desired consequences, the rewards from those consequences, and the obstacles that may interfere with achieving his goal. Then he has a fellow subgroup member sign the contract and promise to call him the next day about completing it.

As follow-up, Les is encouraged to keep a journal during the month after the workshop. In this journal he is to describe each problematic situation that arises, the type of response he used, and what he could have done differently to make that response more assertive. Les is asked to bring this journal when he meets with the training group at the end of the month for a progress review.

Finally, when the group meets again, Les retakes the original inventory and discovers that his aggressive behavior has, in fact, been reduced. His anxiety about the behavior remains high; however, he is now convinced of the positive consequences of assertive behavior, so he makes a new contract to work on some anxiety-reducing behaviors. Additional follow-up and support are scheduled for the next three months, and he is invited to call the instructor or his fellow group members with any problems.

6. Dealing with the Consequences of Assertive Behavior

It is obvious that there are both advantages and disadvantages to any newly acquired behavior; some people will like the change and some will not. Thus, the consequences of assertive behavior should be discussed during assertiveness training. The most effective method of leading such a discussion is to elicit the different consequences from the trainees themselves. If they offer only reasons that assertiveness will not work (disadvantages), the trainer can lead them to see the individual, group, and organizational advantages through behavior modeling, role play, and self-appraisal.

Some of the most common consequences cited by trainees are as follows:

Disadvantages

If presently passive:

- “People will think I’m pushy.”
- “People won’t like me.”
- “People will get mad at me.”
- “I wasn’t brought up to act that way.”
- “I’d be fired.”

If presently aggressive:

- “People will think I’m weak.”
- “People will think I’m insincere.”
- “I’ll be out of control.”
- “I’ll never get anything done that way.”
- “People will walk all over me.”

Advantages

- “I’ll feel better about myself.”
- “I’ll get more cooperation.”
- “It would help the team effort.”
- “I won’t be under as much stress.”
- “I can start being honest.”
- “People will know where I stand.”
- “It would show others that I care about them.”

SUMMARY

This article has discussed what assertiveness is as well as some preferred methods for teaching assertiveness. Assertiveness is a dignified approach to human interaction that preserves the esteem of all parties while, at the same time, accomplishing a particular objective. Although other training programs may cover some of these skills, effective assertiveness training packages skills in action-oriented modules designed to change behavior so that it supports both task and relationship goals in the organization. Assertiveness training meets ongoing needs; it is not simply a passing fad. The concept of mutuality addresses many of the equality issues that are important in organizations and demonstrates a way to honor oneself as well as others. Assertiveness fully supports human resource values and is still a valid and useful training topic.

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■ A POSITIVE APPROACH TO RESISTANCE

H.B. Karp

In most modern organizations there is a strong value system that stresses the need for collaboration, cooperation, and trust. Although this viewpoint certainly has much to recommend it, a problem has arisen in that this emphasis on “positive” reactions leads to a tendency to discount “negative” reactions such as competition, anger, and resistance. The reality is that there are no inherently negative reactions.

Given the proper circumstances, every human reaction has the potential to be expressed in an appropriate and effective manner. To discount any reaction when human interaction is concerned is to limit resources and to reduce the range of alternatives that are available. Such limitation is hardly a prescription for individual or organizational growth and effectiveness. There is a time to listen and a time not to listen, a time for contemplation and a time for action, and a time to grow and a time to stand firm. It is always the situation that determines what is appropriate, what is effective, and sometimes even what is ethical.

The reaction that probably is most under fire today is resistance. If cooperation is seen as a universally good reaction, then resistance as its opposite is usually seen as bad or negative. Everyone has heard admonitions such as “Don’t be defensive,” “You’ve got to learn to compromise,” or “You’re thinking of your own welfare.” Employees need to know when to express resistance, how to express it appropriately so that the results are positive for all of those concerned, and how to deal with another person’s resistance.

The ability to resist can be seen as a personal asset in that it keeps one from being hurt and from overloading oneself. It also allows one to make clearer choices about what is good for oneself, and it helps in blocking out unimportant distractions that would hinder the achievement of one’s goals. Resistance also can be seen as an organizational asset in that it allows systems to differentiate talent, provides new information about what might not work well, and produces a lot of needed energy.

Because resistance has traditionally been disparaged, most managers tend to use one or more of the following low-yield strategies to deal with it:

1. *Breaking it down.* The attempt to break down resistance is usually carried out by threatening, coercing, selling, or reasoning.

2. *Avoiding it.* This strategy is pursued through deflection, “not hearing,” or attempting to induce guilt.

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3. *Discounting it.* This approach involves dismissing the resistance as unimportant, promoting tradition as the alternative to the resistance, or appealing to the resister's need to conform.

Although the low-yield strategies may work to some degree in that they may evoke positive responses from resisters for the moment, they rarely provide lasting solutions and are often quite costly. In some cases, such as with threats and attempts to induce guilt, they may even produce more and deeper resistance at a later time.

DEALING POSITIVELY WITH RESISTANCE

Two basic assumptions underlie a positive approach to dealing creatively with resistance:

1. *Resistance is.* People will always resist, knowingly or not, those things that they perceive as not in their best interests.

2. *Resistance needs to be honored.* It must be dealt with in a respectful manner.

If resistance is handled from a perspective that incorporates these two assumptions, it becomes an organizational asset and can enhance rather than injure a relationship between any two employees, be they supervisor and subordinate, peers, or line and staff. Another condition must exist in order for the positive approach to work: The demander—the individual who confronts the resister—must be absolutely clear about what he or she wants from the resister and must be as specific as possible in relating this information to the resister. When the demand is stated in terms of time frames, specific outcomes, potential benefits, concrete behaviors that are needed, and so forth, the probability that the demander will achieve compliance from the resister is great. Even if compliance is not possible, the resistance will become more workable.

The positive approach consists of four separate steps: (1) surfacing, (2) honoring, (3) exploring, and (4) rechecking. Each step should be completed before moving to the next step.

Surfacing the Resistance

After the demander has clearly stated what he or she wants from the other party, the first—and probably most difficult—step is to get the resistance out in the open. Many people intentionally withhold their resistance for a number of reasons: experience with a past heavy emphasis on the low-yield strategies, mistrust, a poor interpersonal relationship, or a lack of awareness of their own resistance. The surfacing of resistance can be approached easily and effectively by keeping two guidelines in mind:

1. *Make the expression of resistance as "safe" as possible.* The demander should state clearly—and publicly, if possible—that he or she wants to hear the resistance. It is a good idea to include an explanation of why the resistance is important and to be straightforward. Once the resister is aware that he or she is not going to be attacked,

punished, or “sold” on what the demander wants, the demander has a much greater chance of exposing the real source of the resistance.

2. *Ask for all of it.* Listening to a resister’s statement of what he or she does not like about the very thing that the demander wants is rarely a pleasant experience. Nevertheless, it is the best approach to resistance. When the resistance exists, it is much better to hear all of it than to try to work through the situation in partial ignorance.

Honoring the Resistance

Honoring involves the following process:

1. *Listen.* When a person states resistance openly, he or she provides the demander with a vital source of information about what the demander wants and the potential pitfalls in achieving what is wanted. In addition, the resister is making a personal statement about who he or she is. Any attempt to discount the information not only stops the information but also carries a clear message to the resister that his or her opinion does not matter; the resister will interpret this to mean that he or she does not matter. It is of critical importance at this stage that the demander make no attempt to reinforce his or her original position, to sell, to reason, or in any way to imply that the resister should not feel as he or she does. The correct approach is simply to listen.

2. *Acknowledge the resistance.* The act of acknowledgment does not imply that the demander agrees with the point of resistance. It is a simple affirmation of the resister’s right to resist. Statements such as “I see how that could be a problem for you” or “You certainly have a right to be concerned” allow the demander to respond to the resister’s concern without relinquishing anything. The demander should acknowledge the resistance, but not agree with it.

3. *Reinforce the notion that it is permissible to resist.* The demander should keep in mind that openly resisting in a safe environment may be a new experience for the resister. Periodically reinforcing that the resistance is valuable and that the resister is safe and appreciated for stating his or her resistance creates a positive atmosphere. Statements such as “It’s really all right that you don’t like all of this” or “I can see why you are angry” maintain the demander’s control of the situation while making the environment continually safe for the resister.

Exploring the Resistance

Exploring involves the following tasks:

1. *Distinguish authentic resistance from pseudo resistance.* Authentic resistance is directed toward the specific demand that has been made; pseudo resistance is real but has nothing to do with the demand. Pseudo resistance usually originates in feelings such as resentment of authority, old grudges, the need for attention, and lack of clarity about one’s desires. The demander’s task is to uncover the authentic resistance. If the demander is having difficulty determining which kind of resistance is manifesting itself,

he or she can simply ask the resister, “What is your objection?” The resister either will or will not be able to state clearly what the specific objection is. It is best to address the cause of the pseudo resistance later rather than at the moment unless it is blocking progress.

2. *Probe the resistance.* Once the resistance has been surfaced, honored, and judged authentic and the resister has realized that he or she is safe, the demander can help the resister to assume a proactive stance by simply asking, “What would you prefer?” In responding to this question, the resister works with the demander *toward* the objective rather than against it. The resister will suggest alternative approaches to meeting the demand in ways that provide the demander with what is wanted and permit the resister to obtain something for himself or herself at the same time. At this point it is a good idea to encourage negotiation and to keep in mind that something must change positively for the resister in order for the resistance to be permanently reduced. The end point of probing should be the development of some kind of agreement about the action to be taken.

Rechecking

Before the meeting is over, the last step is to recheck the status of the current resistance and the agreements that have been made. This step is essential because it provides closure to the issue and ensures that no agreement will be forgotten. If there is to be a second meeting, rechecking provides a basis on which to start the next meeting so that the entire process of dealing with the resistance does not have to be repeated.

CONCLUSION

The demander should always keep the following points in mind when confronted with a resister:

1. The objective is not to eliminate *all* resistance because it is not possible to do so. Instead, the objective is to work with and reduce the *needless* resistance. The reduction is usually enough to allow proceeding with the demand effectively.
2. Always keep paper and pencil handy to make notes during the process. When the problem is recorded, the resister’s objection is honored and there is less chance that important points will be forgotten. Making notes also facilitates the last step, rechecking.
3. Once the resistance is at a workable level, thank the resister and move on. It is important not to try to persuade the resister to *like* the demand. It is enough that the resister is willing to agree to it.

This approach has universal application. It can be used in any situation in which resistance is an issue, such as in managing conflict, scheduling work, or raising teenagers.

■ FOUR CULTURAL DIMENSIONS AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR NEGOTIATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

B. Kim Barnes

Abstract: Geert Hofstede (1980) has identified four important cultural dimensions. These dimensions are particularly relevant to anyone who is involved in negotiation with people from different cultural backgrounds or in conflict resolution around issues of cultural diversity. This article describes the cultural values and conditions that result from high and low prevalence of the four dimensions and presents implications for negotiation and conflict resolution in regard to each.

In his book *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*, Geert Hofstede (1980) identifies four different cultural dimensions that have implications for anyone who is working with people from cultures other than their own. Other cultural factors have been identified by other researchers, including attitudes about time and the structure of national or professional languages that orient their speakers toward certain concepts and make others difficult to grasp. Because of the great numbers of people from diverse backgrounds in the United States and other countries, and with today's increasingly global marketplace, knowledge of cultural preferences and differences, including Hofstede's research, is needed—or soon will be needed—by members of almost all organizations.

A major use of Hofstede's findings is in cross-cultural negotiation and conflict resolution. This may occur in international negotiations, in business relationships, in diversity training in organizations, and in a host of other situations. Following are a few indicators for estimating where a group (national cultural group, organization, or subgroup) lies on each of the four dimensions and some implications for negotiation and conflict resolution.

The four dimensions of culture identified by Hofstede are:

- Power distance,
- Uncertainty avoidance,
- Individualism, and
- Competitiveness.¹

For each dimension, a group can be rated on a scale from “low” to “high.” It is important to note that neither position is intended to be presented as “good” or “bad.” Any such implication is a result of the author's cultural limitations.

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¹ Hofstede calls this dimension “masculinity.” The author has taken the liberty of renaming it for greater specificity.

You are invited to compare your own preferences on Hofstede's dimensions with the preferences that characterize organizations in (or with) which you work. Note any differences between your own preferences and a party or group with whom you are working or negotiating. Add your own observations to the "implications for negotiation and conflict resolution" for each of the four dimensions. Then adjust your approach, taking the differences into account.

FOUR DIMENSIONS OF CULTURE

Power Distance

Power distance is the degree of fixed inequality of power between the more and less powerful members of a group.

Low Power Distance

When power distance is low, the following conditions exist:

- Decisions are made after consultation with all parties.
- Inequality is seen as bad. Hierarchy exists for convenience, not for the routine expression of power of one group over another.
- Those in lower-status roles may disagree with those in authority and may express their disagreement.
- Trust among members of one's peer group is high. Those in authority are often mistrusted.
- Personal power is emphasized. Expert power is accepted.
- Change occurs by redistributing power.

High Power Distance

When power distance is high (i.e., there is a high degree of fixed inequality of power between the more powerful members and the less powerful members), the following conditions exist:

- Decisions are made by those in authority.
- Everyone has a rightful place. The hierarchy represents reality.
- Those in lower-status roles are reluctant to disagree openly with those in authority.
- Trust among peers is low. Those in authority are often trusted.
- Positional power is emphasized. Referent power also is important.

- Change occurs by dethroning those in power.

Implications of Power Distance for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

In low power-distance cultures, negotiators should specify ground rules that equalize power during the negotiations. Expert power will be accepted, but “pulling rank” may make agreements difficult. Proposals that involve the redistribution of existing power may be considered. Negotiators are more likely to be able to make agreements without gaining approval from their superiors.

In high power-distance cultures, one should expect authority to be an issue. Defer to and protect the positions of those in power. Use or borrow authority to press for a solution. Make proposals that protect existing control of power while bringing a better balance to the situation. Seek or provide formal methods for the redress of grievances.

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty avoidance is the degree to which members of a group prefer to avoid uncertainty or ambiguity.

Low Uncertainty Avoidance

Cultures that have low uncertainty avoidance are typified by the following:

- More risk taking and less resistance to change.
- A preference for broad guidelines but few rules.
- An appreciation of generalists and of “common sense.”
- A view of conflict as natural, and a resultant acceptance of dissent.
- A willingness to make decisions and to take action based on less evidence.
- A high prevalence of innovation and informality.

High Uncertainty Avoidance

In cultures where avoidance of uncertainty is high, the following is typical:

- More resistance to change and less risk taking.
- A preference for clear requirements and specific regulations.
- An appreciation for specialists and expertise.
- The view that conflict is undesirable; therefore, consensus is sought.
- A requirement for more evidence before making a decision.
- A prevalence of ritual, tradition, and formality.

Implications of Uncertainty Avoidance for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Where uncertainty avoidance is low, negotiators can make broader, more flexible agreements. Informal agreements may be acceptable. Innovative ideas for exchange will be considered.

In situations where uncertainty avoidance is high, it is necessary to use more structure and to emphasize one's expertise. Agreements must be made specific and enforceable. (It is helpful to stress a past history of success with similar agreements.) One should be extremely careful in planning and should be prepared with back-up options to deal with every possible contingency.

Individualism

The dimension of individualism reflects the degree to which members of a group prefer to operate and make decisions independently, as opposed to collectively.

Low Individualism

When there is a low degree of individualism, the following conditions exist:

- There is dependence on and identification with the group.
- Group decisions are considered superior to individual decisions.
- A high value is placed on security, conformity, and duty.
- There is an emphasis on belonging—a “we” consciousness.
- Opinions and values are considered to be predetermined by one's reference group.

High Individualism

A high degree of individualism produces the following conditions:

- Self-reliance and independence are valued.
- Individual decisions are considered superior to group decisions.
- Autonomy, variety, and freedom are valued.
- There is an emphasis on individual initiative.
- Opinions and values are considered to be personal and individual.

Implications of Individualism for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Where individualism is low, negotiators should stress common interests and the interests of the larger community when making proposals. It is wise to emphasize organizational needs and traditional solutions.

Where individualism is high, a thorough exploration of differences is acceptable. Encourage individual initiative in finding creative solutions. Identify and respond to individual needs.

Competitiveness

Competitiveness is a measure of the degree to which members of a group are motivated by achievement and competition, as opposed to service and cooperation.

Low Competitiveness

In cultures with low competitiveness, the following are typical:

- Relationships, service, and social atmosphere are valued.
- There is a preference for cooperation and interdependence.
- Intuition and feelings are trusted.
- Sex roles are more fluid and more equal.
- Conflict may be avoided or win-win solutions sought.

High Competitiveness

In cultures with high competitiveness, the following are typical:

- Achievement, recognition, and advancement are valued.
- There is a preference for autonomy.
- Analyses and data are trusted.
- Sex roles are more defined; men dominate.
- Confrontation is common, and win-lose situations are accepted.

Implications of Competitiveness for Negotiation and Conflict Resolution

Where competitiveness is low, the need for harmony in relationships is probably high. Your tactical attitude should reflect this. Cooperation is valued, and attentive listening will be appreciated.

In more competitive cultures, achievement is highly valued. Anything that you can do to “save face” for your opponent will be helpful in achieving agreement. Benefits should be tangible and clear. Time limits should be respected. “Toughness” is respected as long as you are perceived as being fair.

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■ COMMUNICATION PATTERNS IN ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE

Dave Ford and Ord Elliott

Anyone who has contact with organizations cannot escape the omnipresent phenomenon of organizational structure. A new employee comes face to face with the imposed condition of structure as soon as he or she is told, “You report to Mr. Smith.” Structuring the organization is generally accepted as an important factor influencing how people perform their vital functions.

In one sense, “structure” means the relatively fixed relationships among the members of an organization. (The typical organizational chart is a diagram of fixed relationships.) However, factors that affect interaction patterns and coordination efforts cannot be illustrated with a typical, static chart. Therefore, in another sense, “structure” can be a diagram of interpersonal processes drawn at a particular point in time.

IDENTIFYING STRUCTURE

Structure may be imposed, or it may emerge as a group of people interacting over time. If structure is imposed, it usually is called *formal* structure. If structure emerges from interpersonal interaction, it is sometimes called *informal* structure. In addition, structures that emerge within a formally structured organization may be called *operating* structures. The demands of task, people, and setting involved in performance-supporting interaction usually give rise to operating structure, particularly when the formal structure is insufficient, unrealistic, inefficient, or out of date. Thus, identifying the operating structure is crucial in understanding performance.

Many managers today are concerned about whether patterning of relations significantly influences group or organizational performance and the social reactions of members. In some organizations, sequential work-flow and assembly-line arrangements have caused problems involving performance, productivity, and satisfaction.

EXPERIMENTS INVESTIGATING STRUCTURE

Insight into problems created or facilitated by various structures has been gained from laboratory experiments, utilizing the concept of a *communication pattern*, to investigate effects of structure on performance and morale. These studies showed the following:

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1. The structure of a communication pattern affects the accuracy of messages communicated.
2. The structure of a communication pattern affects the task performance of groups.
3. The structure of a communication pattern affects the satisfaction of group members.

Four communication patterns investigated are called (1) radial, (2) hierarchical, (3) “Y,” and (4) leader centered. In the diagrams in Figure 1, each letter represents a person and each line a potential communication link. For example, in the radial pattern, person A may communicate with persons B and E but not with person C or D.

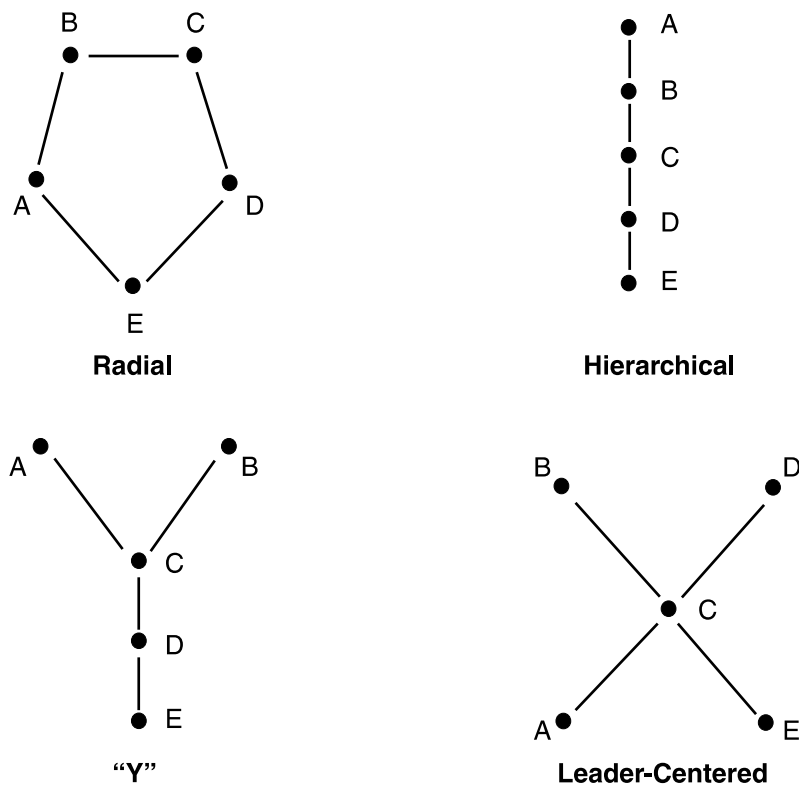


Figure 1. Four Communication Patterns

One way of characterizing communication patterns is by centrality. Centrality measures a person's closeness to other people in a particular pattern. The most central position is the position closest to all other positions. Position C has the greatest centrality within the hierarchical, “Y,” and leader-centered patterns. In these, position C has the greatest degree of centrality in the leader-centered pattern, less in the “Y,” and still less in the hierarchical pattern. No position in the radial pattern has greater centrality than any other. Within any pattern, centrality limits the independent action of some group members and, therefore, primarily determines the leadership role, variation of activity, and group-member satisfaction.

In a star pattern (leader-centered) group, for example, the only person who may be enjoying the situation is the leader, person C; the others will probably feel bored and left out. In a circle (radial) group pattern, however, almost any member can, at one time or another, be the “leader.”

A leader-centered group is likely to be faster at a specific task than a radial group. But the radial group is likely to demonstrate higher morale and more enthusiasm than the leader-centered group. A radial group also seems more capable of coping with change (Leavitt, 1972).

Knowledge of patterns can aid a leader in developing an accurate and task oriented pattern that influences job satisfaction positively. Formal and informal communication patterns in real organizations do have many characteristics discovered and analyzed by researchers. However, one must remember that the regulation of communication flow and the imposition of restrictions in a laboratory setting are *techniques*, not intended to be a close analog of particular groups or organizations. Communication patterns are important potential tools for investigation. However, insight into other aspects of structure—such as span of control, formalization, specialization, and organization size—should complement an understanding of communication-link patterns.

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■ SOCIAL INTERACTION AND ORGANIZATION DEVELOPMENT: AN INTEGRATED PERSPECTIVE

Thomas H. Patten, Jr.

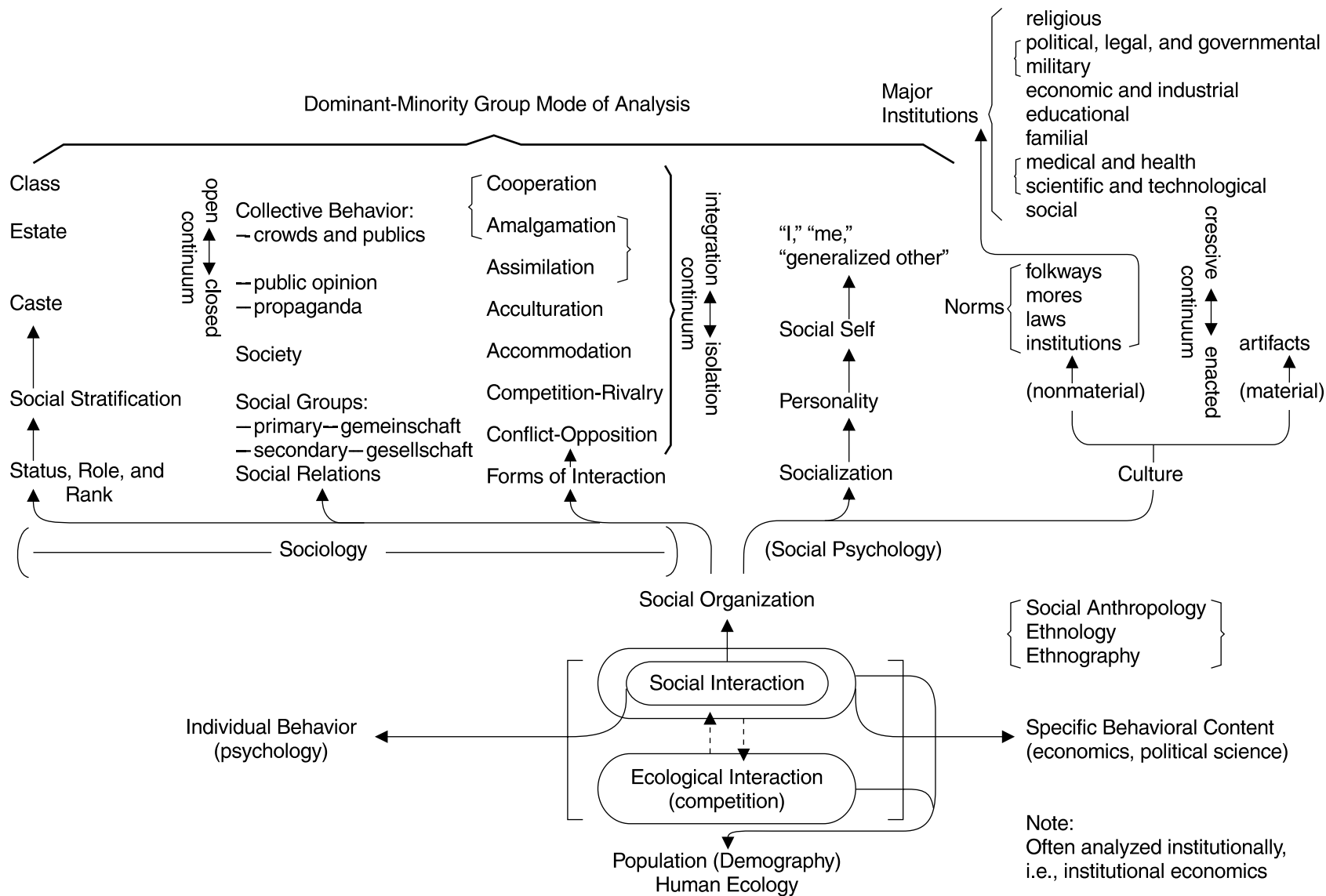
The presentation and handling of behavioral-science theory by organization development (OD) facilitators, even though a particular theory may be appropriate and timely, is often partial, out of context, and perhaps even misapplied. Participants in an OD program may need more background and may wonder whether OD facilitators really know what they are talking about.

It is valuable for the professional to take the trouble to integrate fundamental theory, but being challenged on the foundations of theory in an OD learning environment can be disastrous for a group facilitator if he or she is unable to respond and identify his or her intellectual basis. A working knowledge of the roots and conceptual foundations of the behavioral sciences—and of the relationship between social interaction and organization development—is very desirable for OD facilitators. These roots are primarily in sociology, social psychology, and social anthropology, as well as human ecology and individual psychology; but they also include economics, history, and statistics in important ways. The key concepts can be identified and interrelated as shown in Figure 1. This schematic and a review of fundamental thinking in the behavioral sciences can explain where OD comes from—not as a recapitulation of history and concrete events (see Bradford et al., 1964), but as a discussion of key concepts and their interrelationships.

SOCIAL INTERACTION

The common meeting ground of the behavioral sciences is found in social interaction, as can be determined by the centrality of this concept in Figure 1. Social interaction is behavior caused by the mutual awareness of human beings. The concepts and phenomena identified with arrows in Figure 1 are abstracted from the study of this central phenomenon. The identification and systematic articulation of these concepts is the primary concern of the behavioral sciences. For example, sociology is concerned with interaction in general rather than with the specific aspects of interaction in which the other social sciences specialize. Although this implies that there are no subspecialties in sociology, indeed there are many, of which the following are only a sample: the

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family, the community, race and minority-group relations, social stratification, industrial and organizational sociology, collective behavior, and demography. In addition, sociology is sometimes used to analyze education, art, music, and knowledge (Merton et al., 1959).

Social Organization

One of the major abstractions drawn from social interaction is the concept of social organization (which appears above the double-circled central concept of social interaction in Figure 1, signifying the importance of social organization in the behavioral sciences). The arrowed concepts branching to the left indicate the essential domain of sociology as an academic discipline. The arrowed concepts branching to the right display the essential domains and core concepts of social psychology and social anthropology (including ethnology and ethnography).

Social Psychology

Although it is true that social psychology includes more than what is displayed on the schematic, still sociologically oriented social psychology, rather than psychologically oriented or psychoanalytically oriented social psychology, has played the greater role in OD. Also, considering that concepts such as the Johari Window (Hanson, 1973) and tools such as the FIRO-B (Pfeiffer, Heslin, & Jones, 1976) are exceptionally widespread in OD programs, the delineation of social psychology in Figure 1 should be more acceptable to the professional social psychologist who sees his or her field in the broadest and deepest terms (Lindzey, 1954). The T-group, in the forefront of OD efforts a decade ago, was a socialization experience focused on the social self and the development of an open, authentic, and confronting type of social personality. Mead's concepts of the "I," "me," and "generalized other" are implicit in the various quadrants of the Johari Window (Mead, 1934). Books on self-disclosure, such as Jourard (1971); on transactional analysis, such as Berne (1964), Harris (1973), and Jongeward et al. (1973); and on self-actualization, such as Shostrom (1967), are in accord with the sociologically oriented social psychology relevant to OD.

Social Anthropology

A second abstraction from the concept of social organization is found in social anthropology, with the key concept of culture subdivided into the traditional categories of material and nonmaterial. Many group facilitators would argue that the goal of OD efforts is to change nonmaterial work cultures into some other configuration, a transformation that often involves action-research interventions to change norms. In reality, culture may be defined as learned ways of doing things and thinking about things. It is an abstraction drawn from the observation of people's behavior, that is, doing things in patterned ways. Observations are most accurate when they are of concrete behavior patterns performed by live people rather than of artifacts and records

of defunct cultures. However, some parts of anthropology, such as archeology, essentially focus on the latter.

We know that material culture affects the nonmaterial (and vice versa): Artifacts and technological systems affect social systems, and interventions should be recognized as sociotechnical by their very nature.

It is possible to differentiate on a continuum the extent to which norms grow naturally or are enacted. Ways of doing or thinking, that is, folkways, are norms that grow slowly and possess the least moral implications. They are *crescive*, meaning that they are increasing or growing. Mores are folkways with moral imperatives and are more rational (Barnes, 1948). Laws are formally enacted; when a sufficient number exist in one sphere or domain, they become institutions (see the upper-right corner of Figure 1). Many of these mammoth institutions socialize people in work cultures that are pathologically bureaucratic and have been prime targets of OD efforts over the past two decades. Beckhard and Harris (1977) have recently reported on some of the dimensions of planned change in large industrial and medical institutions. Commonly, OD has tried to intervene in such institutions through their constituent parts (for example, in industry, through a given company or social organization in the company) and has focused on changing aspects of interpersonal relationships in order to change work cultures and institutions.

In making interventions, OD has often been charged with ignoring the power distribution and naively assuming that changes in interpersonal relations will bring about institutional change, in the belief that institutions are nothing more than interpersonal relations “writ large” (which, of course, they are not). Organization development efforts have sometimes culminated in proposed changes in the formal organizational structure that turned out to be cosmetic rather than substantial because the norms were not modified, the personalities involved were merely shifted around or given new titles, and the overall impact was business as usual (Patten, 1975).

In summary, social organization is a basic concept not only in OD but in sociology, social psychology, and social anthropology.

ECOLOGICAL-SOCIAL INTERACTION

The abstractions that branch to the left of social organization in Figure 1 are of prime concern to OD professionals. To understand the integration-isolation continuum, which bears on opposition and cooperation among people, within groups, among groups, and within human society, it is necessary to grasp also the connection between social and ecological interaction.

Ecology is concerned with relations between human beings and the environment, including the material culture and spatial world (and, in recent years, the nonmaterial and social). Ecology focuses on “units” and their interaction. The ecological unit that interacts with others and occupies a spatial position in any areal order may be (1) a living organism; (2) a group that produces or consumes as a unit; or (3) any specialized

function, such as a store, agency, or factory, that occupies a spatial position of its own in a geographical location.

Ecology is as concerned with processes as OD is with interpersonal and group processes, but ecology has a broader perspective. One important basis for classifying ecological processes involves the distinction between (1) relations in which units influence one another simultaneously during a given moment of time and (2) relations in which the related elements take place at successive moments of time. In (1) any influencing occurs in the mathematical moment, which is too short to have any duration and contains only the present—neither the past nor the future. No change can occur without the passage of time, but this mathematical moment sustains the types of reciprocal relations among coexisting units out of which all changes in interaction arise. Any concrete instance of ecological interaction necessarily involves both (1) and (2), but different types of processes give greater weight to one or the other.

As a number of ecological processes can be characterized in terms of the types of reciprocal relations that exist among interacting units, so opposition can be distinguished from cooperation on this basis. Opposition implies the incompatibility of goals, in which the success of one unit necessarily interferes with the success of others. In contrast, cooperation involves a reciprocal relation in which, as any one unit succeeds, it increases the chances of success for its cooperators. There are many concrete examples of these contrasting forms of ecological interaction in everyday life. All involve a sequence that results in the success or failure of participating units, but it is the relationships of coexistence among the interacting units rather than the differences in sequence that are the principal basis for distinguishing among them.

Relationships of coexistence distinguish the ecological from the social interaction. Ecological interaction is an impersonal relationship in which each unit influences the others merely by increasing or decreasing some scarce type of environmental resource or by changing its ecological distance from the others. This type of influence occurs in the external environment without human mental interstimulation and response. The social type of interaction, instead, necessarily involves mental interaction among human beings, frequently in such arbitrary symbols as language.

The social and ecological types of interaction generally occur together in human existence, but they can be analytically separated. It is possible to argue that the ecological is more basic because it emphasizes among living organisms an impersonal, continuous, universal cooperative competition that selects and distributes the population and institutions of a geographical area. This interaction also results in a basic underlying areal structure that serves as a foundation for normative consensus in social organization. We can thus see how the ecological structure, which is biotic or symbiotic rather than cultural, arises, functions, and influences social interaction.

In looking at the second major type of ecological processes—those that involve sequences in which change occurs over time—we shift from analytical to descriptive concepts. Changes that occur at successive moments of time may be described as natural histories; as unique, nonrecurrent events; or as scientific regularities (laws). Whatever

form they take, these sequences describe a related series of conditions through which an individual or a group passes during a particular period of time. One stage of a sequence does not necessarily result in the following one, although typical sequences that recur may repeat their stages. The causes underlying sequences may be found in ecological and social interactions among people, in biological processes that result in birth and mortality, and in various processes that change the physical environment (Quinn, 1950).

In Figure 1, ecological interaction is shown as influencing social interaction and as being influenced by it. Ecological interaction has traditionally been viewed as Darwinian competition, but many types of ecological interaction involve cooperation. For example, in order to interact competitively (or even conflictively), opponents will reach a consensus on a minimum number of ground rules that will govern the situation. Therefore, ecological interaction is best characterized as involving opposition and cooperation rather than competition.

Those who study ecology as a specialty have abstracted demography and human ecology from ecological interaction. Few OD facilitators concern themselves with these specialties, although, in working with groups, many have a keen awareness of the interconnection between ecological and social interaction, particularly in such interventions as “conflict management,” main office/subsidiary team building, and the like.

THE OPPOSITION-COOPERATION CONTINUUM

The continuum of opposition-cooperation deserves greater attention in organization development than it has been given. It is a useful focal point for the study of groups and action research involving groups and can offer a helpful perspective for the OD practitioner. It is also a continuum of social integration and isolation, as suggested by Figure 1.

The opposition-cooperation continuum manifests itself in everyday life in interpersonal relations. For example, cooperation is apparent when two people walk down a wooded path side by side, physically separate as persons but headed in the same direction and mutually aware of each other. Opposition is apparent when the two break contact with each other and go their separate physical ways while simultaneously becoming socially and emotionally disengaged. They may harbor negative feelings of each other; or their feelings may, in time, soften and lead to a *rapprochement*, culminating in the reestablishment of face-to-face relations. On the other hand, in human affairs the breaking of physical contacts may not imply any corresponding negative feelings but merely signify that one or the other parties is required physically to separate himself or herself, because of status and role requirements, from other institutional domains to which the person belongs. Length of time is used to distinguish mere separation from opposition. Thus, the opposition-cooperation continuum is often the social reality with which we are concerned in organizational and group life.

Conflict-Opposition

Conflict, the first point on the opposition-cooperation continuum, is an ever present process among people. It may be solved on one level, as when there is agreement on ends, and break out anew concerning means. It may be partial or total (Davis, 1949), implying that there is no level of agreement at all and that, consequently, the only method of relating is to injure, damage, or destroy the other (or, in a balance-of-power situation, engage in a stalemate until such time as the power equalization is temporarily upset and one of the opponents reenters the field in an effort to try again to destroy the opponent). Conflict thus can exist at the interpersonal, intergroup, interorganizational, intraorganizational, and other levels of social relations.

One of the most remarkable aspects of conflict is that contradiction and conflict not only precede unity but are operative at every moment of its existence (Simmel, 1955). The difference between the extreme ends of the opposition-cooperation continuum is, therefore, in one sense razor thin.

Questioning this notion of conflict, Coser (1956) asked, "If conflict unites, what tears apart?" He answered his question by proposing some conditions leading to destructive conflict and other conditions leading to unifying conflict. He suggested that conflict is disruptive in groups with intimate relations, diffuse functions, high emotionality, unchanging status structures, assigned status, and some legitimized inequities in rewards. In such groups, conflict is especially disruptive if it concerns the norms in the culture and the reasons for the group's existence. On the other hand, conflict is unifying in groups with distant and loose relations, specific functions, low emotionality, flexible status structures, achieved status, and no legitimized inequities. Furthermore, Coser says that a conflict is more likely to be unifying if it concerns peripheral norms or the means of achieving the agreed-on goals of the group.

In relating this line of thinking to OD, Glidewell (1975) has delineated how conflict fulfills various psychosocial functions in T-group interventions. Specifically, most T-groups after a few meetings can be characterized as showing high emotionality, close relations, and diffuse functions. At this time, there is danger of disruption from conflict. Yet T-groups also show achieved status in a flexible structure and do not consider inequities in individual outcomes to be legitimate. This second set of characteristics could lead to unification through conflict. Also, the danger of serious disruption from conflict is mitigated by the fact that the intimacy has a peculiar character, which, while strongly felt, does not produce the long-term binding commitments for support that are common to more permanent groups, such as the family. Accordingly, using Coser's theory, we might predict that overt conflict would, in spite of the high emotionality and diffuse functions, contribute to and be a part of the development of unity in the pattern of resource exchanges and the feeling of solidarity in the members of a T-group.

Seeing unity as an outcome of conflict in a T-group can be understood if we consider, for example, the instrumental outputs of a conflict over power. Each aspirant to power in the T-group finds himself or herself challenged to defend and strengthen the validity of his or her point of view. Accordingly, the person cultivates and tries to

present as varied a support for his or her opinions or proposals as can be mustered. This represents a significant shift in the basis for verification, from “authority” (based on the personal opinion of a person in a position of relative power) to “plausibility” (based on the consensual validation of others). From another standpoint, this shift may be said to represent the beginning of a movement from legitimate power, based on institutional position, to competence power, based on group participation and the pooled expertise of group members.

As conflict accelerates, the psychological safety of the individual person becomes increasingly precarious. This is particularly true for T-groups, which are likely to include some members with strong needs for psychological safety. In the terminology of Bion (1974), those members are regularly shifting from fight to flight. They change the subject, make a joke, call for a recess, or provide overly rational analyses of problems. Such acts temporarily relieve tension, and the resulting relief allows for some relaxation in the defensive posture of the opponents. In turn, this relaxation may extend the receptivity of the opponents so that each becomes aware of the divergent ideas of others. Through pairing and improved dyadic relations, others in the T-group may lay a foundation for enlarging the pair to a generalized other, such as the total T-group. Finally, using Bion’s last type of reaction to a group, dependency, we see that some people may become counter-dependent by holding the group at bay and adjusting to the group by being devil’s advocates. Such people are typically more devil than advocate, but they serve the useful function of strengthening the solidarity of the group and its adherence to shared norms.

Continuing conflict requires that each opponent interfere with the outcomes of others and be prepared to pay the costs in time, energy, and the utilization of resources. In the most extreme and durable manifestation of conflict, the opponents invest more energy in reducing the outcome of others than in increasing their own outcomes. In this case, the total outcome is a negative win-lose situation. Protracted internecine conflict is limited by how long the opponents can continue to suffer losses. The costs of such conflicts ultimately become the primary limiting factor.

As the costs of conflict mount, collective outcomes are reduced, the group experiences little or no progress, and breaks appear in the vicious cycle of mutual attack. As breaks in the conflict appear in a T-group, for example, a few members offer succor to one another, support an opinion or action or proposal, and even endorse the self-disclosure involved in the active fight behavior of the more aggressive opponents. These forms of support may provide the beginning of a shared regard, a recognition of the wide range of divergent ideas, an extension of the resources that are potentially complementary and reciprocal, and the awareness that varied and complex resources are needed. The extended repertoire of explicit resources is brought into active consideration; commitments to old ways of relating are less tenable; and conditions for the modification of all relations are now favorable. Accommodation appears, at first in awkward fragments, then in coordinated actions, and finally in consensually validated settlements (Glidewell, 1975).

Conflict is universally deprecated, and yet it is everywhere. In fact, there are some institutions that are created to build in and control (or “institutionalize”) conflict among opponents, such as American legal institutions that regulate union-management relations.

We have continuing conflict because human society is not a tightly integrated entity but a loosely knit social organization. Moreover, human society is integrated not on a biological but on a mental level. Its integration must be constantly maintained through psychic processes such as socialization, consensus building, and cooperative behavior. It rests on the common and extra-personal goals possessed by society’s members, goals that cannot come from the biological nature of human beings but only from communicative contact between people. Goals thus differ greatly from one society to another because they are part of the differences between cultures, thereby providing the first major basis of conflict, ethnocentrism—the dislike of people with a different culture and different ultimate goals (Davis, 1949).

Communication between people or groups in conflict tends to be suspended because of the sense of threat and an increased concern for internal solidarity. For example, when union-management conflict is intense, union leaders avoid all except the most official and circumscribed contact with employees in order to avoid criticism.

Although it is sometimes believed that conflict is caused by poor interpersonal communication or that conflict arises because people do not understand one another, the roots of conflict often lie deeper. Many conflicts are grounded in the mutually inconsistent goals of groups. In these situations, increased contact and improved communication may intensify conflict by making groups highly aware of their differences, increasing their fears, and revealing opposing goals that seem unchangeable (Broom & Selznick, 1958).

As for internal and partial conflict, every group strives to eliminate it insofar as possible because conflict precludes the degree of cooperation needed for efficiency. However, it is not possible to eliminate all conflict because, despite the presence of shared norms and goals, there are goals that relate to each person alone. People are never carbon copies of one another even when similarly socialized.

As available means are scarce, a person usually attains his or her personal goals at the expense of another; hence, conflict easily arises unless it is partly controlled by banning outright physical conflict and internecine interactions. Society reserves for itself the use of force and forbids it for purely individual private ends. Any permissive use of force is likely to be closely circumscribed, ritualized, and structured so as not to result in the death of opponents. Sporadic outbursts of conflict that occasionally occur are not likely to last long but can seldom be entirely eliminated (Davis, 1949).

However, the suppression of open conflict does not mean that partial forms of conflict have been eliminated; it means simply that conflict is less than total. For example, there are many ways of getting the best of an opponent without actually doing him or her bodily harm: the opponent may be downgraded in his or her job, banished to

a remote outpost or office location, repeatedly embarrassed, publicly rebuked, treated with disrespect, or avoided as a pariah.

There are elements of conflict in almost all situations. Conflict is a part of human society because of the kind of phenomenon that society is. There is no social mind, only the minds of individual human beings. There are no social goals, only the goals of individual people filling positions of different importance and worth. Agreement among individual minds thrives best where there is a clear and present external danger—when the group's common goals for survival are pitted against the common goals of another group (Davis, 1949). Indeed, a high degree of internal integration seems to be a function of an external threat (as President Franklin D. Roosevelt was so consciously aware when he virtually waited for the Pearl Harbor attack in order to solidify the American people and attain a consensus on a declaration of war).

Competition-Rivalry

In contrast to conflict, which aims to destroy the opponent or at the very least remove him or her from the field of action, competition simply aims to better the opponent in achieving some mutually desired goal. Competition implies that there are normative rules applicable to the interaction to which the opponents must conform and that behind these norms (or perhaps embedded in them, justifying and maintaining them) is a common set of values superior to the competitive interests. It also implies a total absence of coercion. Usually, the norms dictate that the goals of the opponents must be obtained by methods other than fraud or physical force. If competition exceeds the norms, it transforms itself into conflict. Thus, there is no such phenomenon as “unrestricted competition,” for this would be a contradiction in terms: Competition is always limited (Davis, 1949).

Competition has both an ecological and social dimension, as was previously discussed. Competition is a form of interaction that need not involve direct social contact; it may be ecological, impersonal, and “unconscious.” For example, cotton farmers in the Mississippi delta of the United States compete with cotton growers in Egypt; but they may be unaware of one another. When groups become socially aware that they are in competition, they are rivals. Rivalry is thus a form of conscious competition in which the interaction is social and direct, with mutual awareness and use made of rational strategies and tactics. When the clash between opponents is so keen that they seek to destroy each other, competition becomes conflict. Competition can arouse intense feelings; and, as a result, the rules governing competitive and rivalrous interaction may be abandoned (Broom & Selznick, 1958).

Competition is an extremely dynamic form of interaction because it stimulates achievement by throwing many domains open to rewards and penalties, by lifting people's levels of aspiration through the freedom to compete, by threatening failure and insecurity as well as success and security, and by adding the element of rivalry. Competition thus creates a particularly important motivational context for changing complex urban-industrial societies. However, nowhere do people submit themselves to

“cutthroat” (virtually unregulated) competition because the interaction could become too intense and thwart the purpose of the opponents’ encounters, perhaps leading to internecine conflict.

Accommodation

The forms of social interaction shown in Figure 1 refer to ongoing sequences whose related parts take place at successive moments of time rather than relations in which units, people, or groups influence one another simultaneously during a given moment of time.

Accommodation is a type of interaction in which opponents are mutually adjusted so that they retain their own identities or interests. Accommodation is often the form that a resolved conflict takes; opponents in everyday life may “agree to disagree.” For example, once a contract is signed between union and management, for the duration of that contract the opponents agree to cease and desist from harmful actions and live in an accommodative way as provided by the terms of the contract.

In an unstable accommodation, the interests of the opponents remain antagonistic; but a temporary adjustment is made. The opponents find a way to survive despite the continuance of unresolved issues. The main problem in accommodation is to discover what is essential to each opponent for him or her to cease hostilities and offer the minimum cooperation that is required for mutual survival and benefit.

On the other hand, a stable accommodation resolves the major differences of interest and achieves a basis for deeper harmony. Opponents can then enlarge and deepen the density of their interaction patterns and perhaps eventually come to think of themselves as sharing a single identity (Broom & Selznick, 1958). Organization development has the potential to help opponents move from conflict to accommodation.

Acculturation

Acculturation is a denser form of interaction than accommodation and refers to opponent A’s taking on elements from the culture of opponent B. Usually both cultures in a contact situation are changed, although one culture may be more profoundly influenced than the other.

Union-management relations once again provide an example in which the quality of work life in industrial plants changed when labor unions and managements moved from an adversarial stance to a more cooperative stance. In some acculturations the union profoundly affected management’s culture, and in others management affected the union’s culture. In either case, significant change took place (Batt & Weinberg, 1978).

Assimilation and Amalgamation

Assimilation, another point on the continuum toward cooperation, may be defined as the process by which the identity of opponents is fused. Communication barriers are broken down, and one opponent is absorbed by the other. In contrast to acculturation, in which

the culture of the opponents is modified, assimilation produces a new culture different from that of either opponent.

There are few examples of assimilation in industrial life, although the history of General Motors Corporation might suggest that GM has come about as an assimilation of many early automobile manufacturing firms (Sloan, 1964). Perhaps other entrepreneurs are engaging in assimilation when they build corporate empires through acquisitions and mergers, but this would have to be tested.

Amalgamation is the biological counterpart of social assimilation: Not only have the opponents worked out a new culture different from that of each, but the population itself has intermarried and become biologically homogeneous.

Cooperation

Cooperation may be defined as agreed-on joint action. The opponents no longer oppose each other but work together to accomplish goals that both desire. The agreement to cooperate may be based on a realization of similar aspirations; or opponents may find that they have a common enemy and thus have temporary convergent interests; or opponents may agree upon a set of norms that so completely regulate their competition that they in effect join forces. The amount of communication that takes place among the former opponents will depend on the basis of the cooperation. For example, when people act together out of loyalty to the family or the community, there is much more communication than in the case of a limited alliance to defend themselves against a temporary threat from the outside.

In all cases, cooperation is associated with win-win behavior. Each former opponent gains—either with an immediate advantage or indirectly in seeing its ultimate goals advanced. Opponents need not gain equally, and weak opponents usually gain more from cooperation than do strong ones. Therefore, the latter are often reluctant to enter cooperation agreements with weaker opponents.

Interestingly, cooperation (like conflict) can threaten the independence of opponents. For example, communication between opponents will increase, the boundaries of group membership may become obscure, and leaders may be required to justify the independent existence of their organization. If pressure is generated for amalgamation, the vested interests of the leaders as well as the long-run goals of opponent groups may be threatened. This is why cooperation is not often fully endorsed as an unmitigated good. For example, top management in the military branches of the U.S. Department of Defense carefully examines proposals for administrative cooperation with other agencies to determine what the consequences will be for the sharing of public credit, the justification of independent budgets, and the maintenance of the loyalties and outlooks of their staffs. These branches have so far successfully resisted acculturation, assimilation, amalgamation, and cooperation and probably will continue to do so. Cooperation is, in theory, to be highly valued; the word easily becomes a respected rallying point. In practice, however, opponents are likely to ask “Cooperation for what and with whom and at what price?” (Broom & Selznick, 1958).

In summary, the opposition-cooperation continuum offers a way of thinking about forms of interaction that are frequently topics of concern in OD efforts. Where there is much conflict, opponents are isolated from one another; where there is much cooperation, there is a high degree of group integration.

SOCIAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

In Figure 1 arrows extending to the left of the opposition-cooperation continuum point to types of social relations and to status, role, and rank. Many references have been made to social groups and such phenomena as power, authority, and prestige that relate to the political, economic, and social differentiation of individuals (Bendix, 1960). OD facilitators seldom, if ever, deal directly with systems of social stratification that have cross-societal implications, although they do deal with hierarchical structures and design OD efforts that take status, role, and rank into account. Societal systems can be distinguished on a continuum of relative openness closedness from a social mobility standpoint. Caste systems are the most closed; class, the most open; and estate, somewhere in-between. Psychologically oriented social psychologists concerned with role theory also have an interest in this area, but it is probable that OD facilitators have the greatest interest in social relations.

Social groups can be categorized as primary and secondary or *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, to cite the concepts of Cooley (Dewey, 1948) and Tonnies (Heberle, 1948) respectively. Primary groups are small, face-to-face groups in which individuals interact very intensively and deeply. Secondary groups cover all aggregates from the large group to bureaucratic organizations of all sizes. Society is, of course, a group of groups. Primary and secondary groups and society have a common denominator in that they are structured by culture. On the other hand, collective behavior, as seen in the behavior of crowds and publics and the phenomena of public opinion and propaganda, is relatively unstructured. The degree of relative structure in social relations has important implications for the OD facilitator.

Group behavior is a function of both the individual and the social situation. Neither, alone, is adequate for interpreting group behavior. The group considerably modifies the behavior of its members and exerts on them influence that can be harmful or beneficial. A person's role and rank in the group may determine how others behave toward him or her. If we knew more about the dynamics of groups, as Lewin noted forty years ago, we might learn how groups could be made to serve more socially desirable ends (Marrow, 1977). We do know that a person who joins a group is often changed as a consequence. A strong group can bring great pressure to bear on its members, while a weak group may not have much molding or socializing power. To effect any change in the goals or outlook of a group, the group must be appealed to as a whole, with recognition of its cohesiveness.

Cohesiveness may be defined as the result of the forces that keep members together, including the positive forces of reciprocal attraction and the negative forces of reciprocal

repulsion. Groups become cohesive when their activities strengthen the individual person's chances to achieve his or her own goals. In time certain standards develop in any group, and each member expects the others to conform to group standards. What is important is not how similar or dissimilar a group's members are but how dynamically interdependent they are: a group can be a "Gestalt"—a whole containing dissimilar parts. However, a person is more often apt to be a member of a group to whose members he feels similar or wishes to be similar.

Belonging is signified by adherence to a group code: those who belong obey. In this way group pressure regulates the conduct of possibly deviant group members. For a member to change his or her behavior or point of view independently of the group would get that person into trouble with his or her fellow group members; as a consequence, this rarely takes place (Marrow, 1977).

At the top of Figure 1 is a large bracket displaying the range of the dominant-minority group mode of analysis. This means that all of the concepts of social interaction below it are potentially applicable to the analysis of power and interpersonal relations among members of dominant groups and minority groups in any society. Many OD practitioners work with organizations on problems of institutional racism, equal employment opportunity and affirmative action, and upward mobility for women and minority-group members. These experiences prompt facilitators to work on problems related to the integration/isolation, openness/closedness, and crevice/enacted continua as well as problems of organizational solidarity, consensus, and work culture. Although some observers might remark wryly that such OD facilitators are working on problems beyond their professional purview, Figure 1 suggests that, to the contrary, they are very much on familiar intellectual turf.

INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOR AND SPECIFIC BEHAVIORAL CONTENT

Organization development facilitators, by and large, avoid individual therapy, amateur psychologizing, and the analysis of there-and-then behavior; consequently, no attention is given to individual psychology as a traditional field of study or basic social science in the behavioral-science configuration. Thus, it may appear strange that OD facilitators think they can change human institutions when they intervene in organizations by using action-research models or seminars/workshops that involve groups or teams but ignore individual people as such. Yet this bypass is common; T-groups, encounter groups, and Gestalt groups, with their personal, individual orientations, are seldom used today in OD.

The specific behavioral content that can be abstracted from social interaction and that forms some of the intellectual content of the less-behavioral social sciences, such as economics and political science, is also of little direct interest to OD facilitators. Specific behavioral content is often analyzed institutionally and becomes the content and subject matter of many of the disciplines and subdisciplines taught in universities today, such as education, religion, medicine, science, law, and the like.

CONCLUSION

The schematic configuration displayed in Figure 1 should be helpful to group facilitators who require or desire a reexamination of the territory of the behavioral sciences. Considerable emphasis has been placed on the opposition-cooperation continuum in identifying the forms of social interaction because this part of the behavioral sciences has been relatively neglected by group facilitators, who stress openness, authenticity, and a problem-solving orientation—perhaps even when the main issue is conflict management.

It seems clear that OD, as of the late 1970s, remains more of an art than a science, although, like medicine, it draws on a scientific base in theory and research. It is hoped that the practitioners of the art can find a way to communicate to clients how the various pieces of theory fit into an overall configuration of concepts.

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■ COMPETENCE IN MANAGING LATERAL RELATIONS

W. Warner Burke and Celeste A. Coruzzi

Accomplishing things in a pyramidal organization is not quite as simple and effective a process as it was a number of years ago. It is fairly clear that the pyramid is not working as well as it once did, primarily because people have changed their values and their attitudes about work. It seems that people who were teenagers in the Sixties are now more dedicated to their chosen professions than they are to their organizations.

This trend is made apparent by the steady increase in the number of individuals who are obtaining advanced degrees in a variety of professions. As a result, people are entering into organizations at older ages and with higher levels of expertise required to achieve work outcomes. In addition, they bring with them value systems that have been nurtured outside their organizations and that are not necessarily in accord with company policies and procedures. Consequently, corporate norms are being challenged.

As Douglas Bray (1986), formerly with AT&T Corporations, says, individuals are not choosing management as often as before; instead, they are choosing professions. This shift has great implications for the ways in which people are managed. We are in a different stage of the pyramid today than we were in the past, so the traditional focus on monetary rewards and obedience to authority needs to be altered. In order to cope with the shift, people in organizations need to be able to influence one another in ways other than those connected with monetary or position power.

With the recognition of this need, several important questions arise:

- How can work be accomplished through other people when one does not have a formal position of authority?
- How can one influence people who are at the same hierarchical level but whose motivations are different from one's own?
- How can one influence people who are at higher levels in the organizational hierarchy?

Most formal education with regard to management development and training has focused on managing subordinate relationships. However, the changing attitudes just discussed require a different focus. One's effectiveness in leading people without being in a position of authority or status rests in his or her ability to influence. The issue of influence as a form of leadership is the focus of this paper; the authors' conclusions

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about how to develop and use influence are based on their study of program managers at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA).

THE NASA STUDY

The authors have been working with NASA since 1976. Their work has focused primarily on investigating the management competencies indicative of successful manager-subordinate relationships at two levels of management, the executive level and the middle level. Thus, management competence has been examined from a vertical standpoint. Recently, however, a new kind of manager has developed at NASA; and this individual, the “program manager,” does not fit the traditional management mold. Management practices previously identified as related to effective interpersonal relationships are inappropriate for successful interaction involving program managers.

The program-management function involves the accomplishment of a broad scientific or technical goal in NASA’s long-range plan through the management of a series of related projects that continue over a period of time, normally years. Program managers are staff officials who are connected with all of the NASA administrative activities that their programs comprise. Their basic responsibilities include developing and administering the guidelines and controls within which projects are conducted, competing with other program managers for resources allocated, preparing testimony and justification for Presidential and Congressional authorization, and monitoring project execution and relating that execution to NASA’s overall objectives (Chapman, 1973).

What is unique about this position is the fact that program managers must manage relationships between and among different organizational units without the power of position or the power to reward. Program managers must interact with managers who are of equal or higher status and who have responsibility and decision-making authority for their own organizational units. Therefore, program managers must be able to influence others if they are to accomplish their objectives. Without having direct control, they must affect different people’s behavior and attitudes.

The program manager’s dilemma is considerable. At the outset of a program, the manager goes to Congress to vie for that program, explaining the need to investigate the particular area of aeronautical and/or space research involved. Thus, the manager must present convincing and technically sound arguments for the pursuit of his or her objectives, explaining how these objectives fit within NASA’s overall goals. Assuming that the program in question is funded, the program manager must see to it that the program plans go through the proper administrative channels for authorization. At this point the manager has funding for his or her program and, consequently, is in a position of power in NASA—at least temporarily.

Then the program manager determines which of NASA’s field centers can best fulfill the program’s technical and research requirements. Once this has been determined, the manager must “sell” the program plans to the personnel at the chosen

center. Field centers have great latitude in choosing their assignments and projects; it is through negotiation and discussion that the program manager and the field-center director agree on the terms of managing the program. Subsequently, the field-center director assigns a technical manager to carry out the program objectives; and the program manager allocates resources to the center.

After this transaction has been completed, the program manager is left with little or no control over the spending of the money funded; however, he or she remains responsible for overseeing the program's development. The program manager's primary responsibility is managing the relationships among the technical managers, on the one hand, whose positions are hierarchically equivalent to his or her own, and the headquarters administrators, on the other, whose positions are higher but who view the program manager as the expert in managing the program concerned. In the absence of a traditional hierarchical reporting structure, the program manager's ability to influence other organizational units rests largely in his or her ability to understand the limitations and constraints of the work situations involved as well as what other people expect from him or her.

The authors' study focused on the following questions:

- How does the program manager influence individuals in other parts of the over whom he or she has no formal power?
- What competencies distinguish the program managers who are viewed as more successful from those who are viewed as less successful?

The authors asked people who are the objects of program managers' influence attempts to rate the effectiveness of these managers. This inquiry focused on the network of individuals who are at the same and higher status at NASA. Three conceptual models were used to analyze the influence attempts made by program managers: personal power strategies, transformational versus transactional leadership, and empathy versus perspective taking.

Personal Power Strategies

At OD '80, the University Associates (now Pfeiffer & Company) conference on organization development that was held in New York, San Diego, and London in 1980, Harrison (1980) delivered a presentation and subsequently wrote a paper about his work on personal power. His presentation focused primarily on people in organizations who do not have the traditional forms of power that are associated with positions in the hierarchy. Such individuals include staff, product/program managers, and consultants who act as resources to operating managers. In the absence of positional power, these people have to rely on what Harrison calls *personal power*. Harrison states that in order to make optimum use of personal power, one must be responsive to the "psychological energy" of the individual, group, or organization with whom he or she interacts. When one person tries to change or affect another, something analogous to physical energy or force is involved; energy is required to overcome the inertia of the other person and to

produce movement or change. Harrison describes four energy modes in interpersonal relationships on which a model of influencing behaviors may be based: joining, attracting, pushing, and disengaging.¹

1. *Joining*. In joining, a person adds his or her energy to that of others in order to enhance or supplement it. Joining can be accomplished by encouraging, empathizing, understanding, reflecting the ideas of others, and expressing willingness to cooperate and reach agreement. By joining, one builds an atmosphere of trust, support, and personal acceptance. The influence strategy associated with a joining response is that of *facilitator*. Responding to another person's needs can result in a strong sense of power, and this method is used to a high degree by facilitators in the area of OD consulting.

2. *Attracting*. In attracting, a person behaves in such a way that others are drawn to join or follow that person. One who attracts other people functions as a *visionary*, inspiring and energizing others and creating a sense of common purpose. This person's vision about what *can be* is a strong source of influence based on ideals and values.

3. *Pushing*. In pushing, one directs energy toward influencing others to change in some way, to adopt different attitudes, or to perform according to certain standards. This person attempts to move, induce, teach, or control others by suggesting, prescribing, and directing. In its more extreme form, this behavior results in arguing and debating. The influence strategy associated with pushing is that of *expert*.

4. *Disengaging*. In disengaging, a person avoids or deflects others' energies in order to diminish their impact. This behavior consists of trying to influence others by keeping them from doing what they want. One disengages by withdrawing, humoring, failing to respond, or changing the subject. For example, a conflict is postponed or delayed rather than dealt with; and conflicts are depersonalized by making reference to rules and regulations. Harrison refers to the influence strategy associated with disengaging as being that of "system worker"; but for the purposes of this paper, the authors prefer to label it *deflector*. This form of personal power can be extremely effective, especially if one is in a position in the organization to use it. Staff personnel are often seen as deflectors; this may be the case because preventing others from doing something is the only source of power these individuals believe they have. In other words, the source of their power comes from their feeling of powerlessness (Kanter, 1985).

In the authors' study, the Harrison schema was used, in conjunction with data received from initial exploratory interviews with a sample of program managers at NASA, as the conceptual basis for the establishment of program-manager practices. The authors developed an instrument that included the four influence strategies of *facilitator*, *visionary*, *expert*, and *deflector* as well as other personality measures. This instrument was administered to a sample of program managers and individuals with whom they

¹ The four paragraphs that follow have been adapted with permission from "Personal Power and Influence in Organization Development" by R. Harrison, in *Trends and Issues in OD: Current Theory and Practice* by W.W. Burke and L.D. Goodstein (Eds.), 1980, San Diego, California: Pfeiffer & Company.

interact on a continual basis (project managers, program-manager supervisors, project-manager supervisors, and headquarters associates).

The findings were simple and straightforward. Strong positive correlations were found between the effectiveness of program managers and their use of the first three influence strategies (*facilitator, visionary, and expert*). In other words, the more program managers used these three strategies, the more they were rated as effective by their associates and superiors. In contrast, a strong negative correlation was found for program-manager effectiveness and use of the fourth influence strategy (deflector). This finding suggests that the more program managers deflect others, the less effective they are perceived to be.

Transformational Versus Transactional Leadership

Another conceptual schema used by the authors to develop an understanding of program-manager effectiveness was the distinction between “transformational” and “transactional” leadership. *Transformational* leaders are characterized by their focus on change, influence, and inspiration. They are more interested in long-range issues than in day-to-day concerns, and they are more interested in ends than in means. In addition, they are creative and may be reluctant to accept traditional ways of viewing situations. *Transactional* leaders, on the other hand, are characterized by their concern for equity in their relationships with followers, the practical issues of work, the assurance of clarity, and the completion of short-term goals. For them, leadership is a transaction: If you do this for me (follow), I will do this for you (promote).

Transactional and transformational leadership are not necessarily polar concepts. However, they are inversely related; they represent the types of thought processes indicative of all leaders, but practiced in inverse proportions.

The authors’ hypothesis was that because program managers are not managers in the traditional sense (in that they are not responsible for planning, organizing, rewarding, and evaluating the work of others), their success would be characterized as transformational in nature rather than transactional. The findings supported this hypothesis. The more program managers were rated by others as transformational leaders, the more they were perceived as effective.

To confirm this conceptual distinction, the authors looked at transformational versus transactional leadership under various work situations. They found that under most conditions, those program managers who were rated as more effective scored higher on both transactional and transformational leadership. These relationships, however, were contingent on several factors, such as the development phase of a program, which ranged from “start-up” to “up-and-running,” to “downhill,” and program stability, which ranged from “stable” to “unstable.”

For programs operating in a *start-up* phase, individuals viewed program managers acting as transformational leaders as more effective than those acting as transactional leaders. As programs matured to the *up-and-running* phase, the more effective program

managers were seen as transactional leaders. Finally, as programs proceeded into the *downhill* phase, effective program managers were viewed as transformational leaders.

In addition, the authors examined stable versus unstable program conditions and found that effective program management in *unstable* conditions was associated more with transformational leadership, while under *stable* conditions it is associated with transactional leadership.

Empathy and Perspective Taking

The authors' third step in studying program managers was to analyze the impact of empathy on perceived effectiveness. Two scales were used in the instrument to assess the multidimensional concept of empathy: the "empathic-concern scale," which taps a person's tendency to become emotionally involved while observing events in which others participate, and the "perspective-taking scale," which taps a more rational form of relating in which the person tends to understand the experiences of others without necessarily having strong emotions. The empathic-concern scale is predictive of helping behavior, and the perspective-taking scale has been shown to predict accuracy in interpersonal judgment and skill in bargaining situations.

The authors examined the impact of empathy on people's perceptions of program-manager effectiveness in stable and unstable situations. The findings suggest that under *stable* conditions, program-manager effectiveness is based on being empathic with another, sustaining and maintaining the other's energy and direction. However, under *unstable* conditions, program-manager effectiveness is associated with perspective taking and the ability to look at the overall picture.

IMPLICATIONS

More and more frequently it is the case that managers within organizations have no formal or traditional power and must accomplish things through personal power. Like the program managers at NASA, people are beginning to see personal power as a positive force in organizational life and are beginning to cultivate it. The results of the authors' study indicate that under stable work conditions, the individual who wants to be influential must maintain and sustain the flow of events. Facilitating, acting in a transactional-leadership role, and being empathic seem to be appropriate responses to stable conditions. However, when the work situation is unstable, such a manager might be perceived as more successful by acting as a visionary, taking a transformational-leadership role, and assuming perspective and examining the overall picture.

These findings may be generalized to other types of roles, such as that of organization development or human resource development consultant. It appears that people who are in the role of influencing others are not evaluated solely in terms of being facilitators. One who wants or needs to influence others in an organizational setting first should ascertain the particular conditions under which he or she must operate:

- Is the project involved characterized by stability or instability? (Under stable conditions, transactional leadership and an empathic approach may be more effective; under unstable conditions, transformational leadership and concentrating on the overall picture may be more effective.)
- Is the project in a “start-up,” an “up-and-running,” or a “downhill” phase? (During the “start-up” and “downhill” phases, transformational leadership may be preferable; during the “up-and-running” phase, transactional leadership may be a more viable approach.)
- Does the situation necessitate the role of facilitator, visionary, or expert? (All three of these roles can be effective, depending on the circumstances involved.)

As indicated in the results of the study, each of these situations requires a different emphasis and combination of influence strategies. It is the authors' belief that any person put in the position of influencing others can exert the appropriate strategy to elicit the appropriate response. Thus, the focus of attention should not be exclusively on how good one is at being a facilitator, visionary, or expert, or whether one by nature prefers transactional versus transformational leadership or an empathic approach versus one that emphasizes perspective; instead, the focus should be on how accurately one characterizes the situation so that the appropriate influence strategies are used.

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■ DESIGNING MORE EFFECTIVE ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

Daniel C. Feldman

Almost all organizations run some type of orientation program to teach new recruits corporate practices, policies, and procedures. Recent surveys suggest that over 70 percent of the major organizations in the United States provide formal, organized orientation programs (Zemke, 1982). However, orientation is typically seen as a less important, or less vital, activity than skills training. Much less time and effort are expended on it. Indeed, despite the fact that most organizations have orientation programs, the attention that has been devoted to these programs has been noted as “woefully inadequate” (Cascio, 1986). This article deals with several fundamental issues involved in designing orientation programs and presents the following:

1. The common problems that organizations face in running such programs;
2. Three innovative orientation programs that have circumvented these problems; and
3. Some ways in which organizations can better implement their orientation programs.

COMMON PROBLEMS IN ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

The typical orientation program consists of a one-day seminar run by the human resource department. In practice, orientation usually consists of delivering pep talks, having new recruits fill out personnel forms, taking the new people on a brief tour of the facilities, introducing them to other personnel, and giving them employee handbooks and other rule books. When current orientation programs are reviewed, several common problems emerge (Lubliner, 1978; McGarrell, 1984; St. John, 1980):

1. *Emphasis on paperwork.* Early on the recruit’s first day he or she is confronted with a stack of forms to complete. This frequently creates a first impression of a bureaucratic, impersonal organization.
2. *Information overload.* Probably the most common complaint about orientation programs is that they try to give too much information to new recruits too quickly. New employees simply cannot absorb all of the data that are being given to them, and they feel intimidated.

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3. *Information irrelevance.* Too often in orientation programs the information given new recruits is not relevant to their new job assignments. Either the information conveyed is on topics of little interest, or the treatment of a topic is too superficial to be of much use (Feldman, 1987).

4. *Scare tactics.* Some organizations try to intimidate new recruits by telling them that their chances of success are low or that they will need to work seventy or eighty hours a week just to stay even. These tactics raise already-high levels of anxiety and interfere with real learning.

5. *Too much selling.* Frequently an organization tries to use the orientation program to instill corporate loyalty or a “gung-ho” feeling about the company. Given the fact that any new recruit has been an organizational member for literally a matter of hours, this is not a realistic goal. Furthermore, many new recruits are put off by such a heavy-handed approach.

6. *Formal, one-way communication.* Very often the orientation program consists of a series of formal presentations by a group of top managers and human resource officers. Recruits are given little or no opportunity to ask questions or mingle informally with these speakers. This often gives the impression that supervisors are not readily accessible and discourages recruits from seeking help (Feldman, 1987).

7. *“One-shot” mentality.* One of the most common problems with orientation programs arises from the idea that all orientation should be done on the recruit’s first day. Any information that a new recruit could ever want is presented during that one day instead of provided gradually over a series of days or weeks. Organizations fail to give new recruits information as they need it and can absorb it.

8. *Lack of diagnosis and evaluation of orientation programs.* Once an orientation program is put together, it takes on a life of its own. Companies do not periodically change the content, style, or format of their orientation programs to meet the changing needs of their new recruits.

9. *Lack of follow-up with new recruits.* During orientation most of the people whom the new recruits meet tell them to stop by with questions. However, there is very little systematic follow-up to see how new recruits are doing. Many of them take this lack of interest after the first day as a sign of insincerity on the part of the orientation staff (Feldman, 1987).

10. *Over-reliance on professional and occupational training.* Even employees with extensive educational background and/or work experience need to learn how their particular jobs are practiced in a new organizational setting. Assuming that these employees can “hit the floor running” without any training is often a mistake.

11. *Lack of contact with immediate supervisors and colleagues.* Orientation programs run mainly by managers outside the new recruits’ immediate work group tend to be ineffective in easing the recruits into the work place. There is not enough

consistency in linking newcomers with the people who can be the most helpful to them and can make them feel most welcome; too often this linking is done on a purely random basis.

INNOVATIVE ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

Although a number of organizations are attempting to revise their orientation programs, the efforts at Texas Instruments, Corning Glass, and the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University have been particularly successful. They also nicely illustrate some of the basic design and implementation principles of effective orientation programs. These programs are described in the following paragraphs.

Texas Instruments

A pioneering study by Gomersall and Myers (1966) at Texas Instruments changed the way in which most managers and academics viewed the impact of orientation programs. At that time, the usual orientation for electronics-components assemblers consisted of a two-hour orientation seminar. In this seminar the new recruits received detailed information about work schedules, insurance, parking, work rules, and employee services. This session also included warnings about the consequences of failure to conform to organizational expectations. Following this two-hour meeting, each new assembler was introduced to his or her supervisor, who would typically be too busy to give the new employee anything more than five minutes of complicated instructions. Because coworkers were being monitored on their output, no one else had much free time to train the new recruits, either.

Interviews with participants in the standard orientation program revealed that they were very anxious about their ability to learn the job and perform it adequately, and many left Texas Instruments within weeks because of this anxiety. Moreover, interviews with supervisors of the new recruits uncovered similar feelings. Supervisors, too, were anxious about handling new recruits and often became uncommunicative or defensive as a result.

Because anxiety was such a major issue, Gomersall and Myers designed an alternative orientation program to overcome that feeling. Following the two-hour orientation conducted by the personnel department, new recruits were kept separated from other employees for the rest of the day so that they could not be “initiated” by their peers. They were told that there would be no work on the first day, that they should simply relax, and that they should use the day to become acquainted with one another and ask questions about their concerns.

Throughout the question-and-answer session, four key points were stressed:

1. *“Your opportunity to succeed is very good.”* For instance, the recruits were given data to show the high percentage of new employees who successfully mastered the job; and they were told that it would take a few weeks to feel fully competent.

2. *“Disregard the hazing and rumors.”* The recruits were told that veteran employees often exaggerated allegations about work rules and disciplinary actions to make the job as frightening to the newcomers as it had been to them.

3. *“Take the initiative in communication.”* The recruits were told that their supervisors expected them to be unsure of themselves and somewhat lost in the beginning and that their supervisors would not consider them incompetent for asking questions.

4. *“Get to know your supervisor.”* Employees were given realistic information about their supervisors, including tips on how frequently the supervisors wanted to be informed of work problems.

Following this day-long orientation, the recruits were introduced to their supervisors and their training operators. Training then commenced as usual.

The results of this program were impressive. The new employees felt less anxious and established better two-way communication with their supervisors. Moreover, there was an immediate financial return to Texas Instruments. Productivity in the group with the revised orientation was triple that of the group oriented under standard procedures. The absenteeism and tardiness rates for the experimental group were only 25 percent of those for the regularly oriented group. Waste was reduced 80 percent; product costs were cut 25 percent; training time was cut 50 percent; and training costs were cut 66 percent.

Corning Glass

In designing its orientation program, Corning wanted to eliminate the confusion and disorganization of the first day on the job. New recruits reported feeling let down by such treatment, especially after the “red-carpet” treatment received during recruitment. Corning also wanted to reduce the turnover of new recruits and to shorten the time required for new employees to learn the job. The company had two additional goals for its orientation program: (1) to increase understanding of the company’s objectives, strategies, and human resources philosophy and (2) to increase positive attitudes toward the company and its community (McGarrell, 1984).

To achieve these goals, Corning devised an orientation process that began before a new employee arrived for work and lasted over a fifteen-month period. That program and its timetable are briefly described as follows:

1. *Immediately after hiring.* The new employee was given a pamphlet with extensive information about the upcoming orientation and a more detailed guide about his or her own job.

2. *Prior to arrival on the job.* The immediate supervisor initiated contact with the new employee, helped him or her with any housing problems, discussed the goals and objectives of the new job, and prepared the new employee’s office.

3. *First day at work.* The new employee had breakfast with his or her supervisor, filled out basic personnel forms, attended a seminar called “Corning and You,” read the workbook for new employees, toured the building, and met his or her coworkers.

4. *First week.* The recruit had one-on-one interviews with his or her supervisor and coworkers. The new employee also received some on-the-job training from the supervisor and worked with the supervisor to finalize the goals and objectives of the job for the first six months.

5. *Second week.* The new employee began regular job assignments.

6. *Third or fourth week.* The new employee attended a seminar about the community and an employee-benefits seminar. Spouses and guests were also invited.

7. *Second through sixth months.* Work assignments became more challenging, and every two weeks the new employee had progress reviews with the supervisor. The new employee also attended six two-hour seminars at regular intervals on special topics, such as quality control, productivity, employee relations and equal employment opportunity, and technology. At each seminar the new employee completed workbook questions and later reviewed answers with the supervisor.

8. *Sixth month.* The employee reviewed his or her progress toward goals with the supervisor and received the first performance review. At the conclusion of the sixth month, the employee received a certificate of completion for Phase I orientation and made plans for Phase II orientation.

9. *Months seven through fifteen.* During this period the employee was oriented to his or her functional area and the division, continued with some educational programs, and received further performance and salary reviews.

After this orientation program had been followed for two years, the voluntary turnover among new recruits had been reduced 69 percent. Corning also estimates that there has been a 16-percent decrease in time needed to learn the job (Cascio, 1986; McGarrell, 1984).

J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management

There have also been innovations in the orientation programs of not-for-profit organizations. Notable among these is that of the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois.

At universities the first few days of school have traditionally been chaotic and frustrating. Students spend large chunks of their time waiting in lines, filling out forms, and trying to gain entrance to the classes they want. By the time the first week is over, many students are disenchanted with their university experience.

At the J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management, administrators and faculty wanted to decrease the amount of time spent by students in completing paperwork and contending with bureaucratic details during their first week. They also wanted to

develop or increase positive student attitudes toward the business school and to build rapport among new students. Additionally, the administration and faculty wanted to generate enthusiasm among the students for the courses and programs of study that the students were about to begin. The orientation program that was implemented took place over a nine-month period, with intensive efforts at the beginning of the process. The following is a brief description of the new program:

1. *Pre-arrival.* The new students were called and welcomed by second-year students from the same alma mater or home town. They were also sent extensive information and advice about housing, parking, and transportation. In addition, the new students were asked to complete many of the bureaucratic forms (for example, health forms, forms for directory information, and requests for course waivers) over the summer so that they would not have to bother with them on their first day at school. The student organization organized crews of second-year students to help newcomers to move into their apartments, have phones installed, and so forth.

2. *First week.* The new students participated in a program called “Conceptual Issues in Management” (CIM). They were divided into small teams to play a computer-simulated business game that required making decisions in finance, marketing, operations, human resource management, and other functional areas. Before each decision the students listened to a short lecture from the professor who would ultimately teach them in each functional area. With this approach the students were briefly introduced to topic areas and faculty members in a motivating, nonthreatening way.

The program for the first week also included extensive social gatherings and picnics. In addition, there were periods of free time scheduled so that students could have time to buy their books, acquire last-minute furniture and clothing, and so forth.

3. *Second through fifth months.* The students attended a series of “Career Nights,” which consisted of seminars that introduced them to a variety of career paths and to alumni and executives in different functional areas. During the seminars there was extensive opportunity for questions and answers and informal interaction.

4. *Sixth through eighth months.* The students participated in a series of workshops on the subject of job-search skills. The placement director explained sign-up procedures and school policies. The students received both group and individual instruction on résumé writing and interviewing skills. Group and individual sessions on career planning and job-search strategies were also held.

These orientation activities were very well received by the incoming students. Voluntary turnover among first-year students in the graduate school was very low (less than 5 percent), and the placement rate for summer internships and permanent positions was very high (greater than 90 percent).

IN CONCLUSION: ELEMENTS OF EFFECTIVE ORIENTATION PROGRAMS

The Texas Instruments, Corning Glass, and J.L. Kellogg Graduate School of Management examples demonstrate that well-run orientation programs can be extremely helpful to new employees and that at the same time they can save organizations substantial amounts of money in terms of labor, material costs, and turnover. In reviewing what made these three programs so successful, one can make several generalizations about effective orientation programs (Cascio, 1986; McGarrell, 1984; Milkovich & Glueck, 1985):

1. *A well-run orientation program is conducted on a “need-to-know” principle.* Participants are given the information they need as they need it, and they are subjected neither to cram courses nor to superficial treatments of topics. The most relevant and immediate kinds of information are provided first.
2. *The program takes place over a period of days and weeks.* Although the intensity of the orientation program is greatest on the first day, all of the program objectives cannot be met successfully in that time frame. A good orientation program begins even before the participants arrive and continues well beyond the first day (Feldman, 1987).
3. *A good orientation program presents a balance of technical and nontechnical information.* The content of the program should include information not only about the new job or endeavor but also about the social aspects involved.
4. *A great deal of two-way interaction is allowed.* The successful socialization of new recruits depends very heavily on the establishment of helpful, trusting superior-subordinate relationships; a good orientation program with sufficient interaction between participants and their superiors can facilitate these relationships.
5. *The first day should make a lasting, positive impression.* Each participant remembers the initial impressions of the first day for years. Therefore, the first contact with participants should be carefully planned and implemented by individuals with good social skills. Filling out paperwork should be kept to the bare minimum on that day (Feldman, 1987).
6. *The responsibility for the participants’ adjustment should rest with their immediate superiors.* Although personnel officers and other staff members can serve as important resources, each participant needs one steady source of guidance and support. Moreover, the immediate superior is in the best position to see potential problems that the participant is facing and to help him or her to resolve those issues.
7. *An effective orientation program facilitates the participants’ adjustment by helping them to become settled in the community and in new housing.* When the logistics of living are unresolved, it is difficult for participants to concentrate fully on their work assignments. For this reason many organizations provide new recruits with assistance in house hunting and include spouses or significant others in several orientation activities.

8. *The participants are gradually introduced to the people with whom they will interact.* This is a better approach than a superficial introduction to all coworkers on the first day (Feldman, 1987).

9. *New recruits are allowed sufficient time to “get their feet on the ground.”* Demands on new recruits are not increased until it is clear that they are ready to handle the responsibility involved.

10. *A well-run orientation program is relaxing to the participants.* Anxiety is decreased rather than increased. People who conduct an effective program create positive attitudes toward the organization by demonstrating helpful and supportive behavior, not by delivering high-toned speeches.

11. *The needs of participants are systematically diagnosed, and the effectiveness of the program is systematically evaluated.* New topics and issues are added to the orientation program when needed, and phases of the program that are shown to be less worthwhile are improved or eliminated.

Figure 1 incorporates these principles into a brief check list for designing an orientation program for a business organization.

Immediately After Hiring

1. Welcome letters from immediate supervisor and second-level manager are presented.
2. Information about the community is provided (maps, recreation, and so forth).
3. Information about real estate is offered (house listings, neighborhood information, apartment listings, school districts, and so on).

One Month Before Arrival

1. The personnel department sends the recruit routine bureaucratic forms to complete (health forms, directory information, insurance forms, payroll forms, identification cards, security clearance data, parking-sticker applications, and so forth).
2. The immediate supervisor sends the recruit a schedule for the formal first day/first week orientation program.
3. The immediate supervisor makes arrangements for the new recruit's work space, phone, and materials.

First Day

1. Representatives of the personnel department, functional areas, and top management make welcome speeches.
2. The goals of the organization, its main products and services, and its structure are presented.
3. The new employee's department and its relationship to the rest of the organization are described.
4. Human resource specialists present information on pay procedures, fringe benefits, and important work rules and policies.

Figure 1. Checklist for Designing an Orientation Program

5. The new employee has lunch with his or her immediate supervisor.
6. The new employee meets with his or her immediate supervisor in the afternoon. The following activities are included:
 - A discussion of the new employee's job description;
 - A presentation of a broad overview of job duties;
 - A tour of the department and facilities; and
 - A brief introduction to coworkers.

First Week

1. The new employee begins on-the-job training with his or her immediate supervisor.
2. The new employee lunches with various coworkers in the same department or unit.
3. Efforts are made to reduce the new employee's anxiety.
4. The new employee is given work assignments of relatively low difficulty.

Weeks Two Through Four

1. The employee begins regular job assignments.
2. The immediate supervisor checks with the employee for questions every two or three days.
3. The employee is introduced to various staff personnel outside the department and to key employees in other units.
4. The employee attends a company-run seminar on the community; the employee's spouse or guest is also invited.

Months Two and Three

1. The employee attends a company or department-run seminar on special topics such as unions, safety, career planning, or quality assurance.
2. After three months on the job, the employee has an informal performance review with his or her immediate supervisor.
3. At the end of three months, plans are made for any additional training that the employee needs.
4. After three months the employee and his or her immediate supervisor set goals for the employee's performance and discuss formal procedures for performance appraisal.

Sixth Month

1. The employee receives his or her first formal performance review.
2. The immediate supervisor provides coaching and training as needed.
3. The end of the employee's entry period is symbolically recognized, perhaps by the removal of probationary status.
4. The orientation program is systematically evaluated.
5. Plans are made for revisions in the next orientation program.

Figure 1 (continued). Checklist for Designing an Orientation Program

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■ **LEGENDARY CUSTOMER SERVICE AND THE HRD PROFESSIONAL'S ROLE**

Gary M. Heil and Richard W. Tate

The service that customers receive today is, at best, average. To sustain a competitive edge, an organization must do more than simply satisfy the customer. It must provide service that is unique, faster, more reliable, more responsive, and more caring than ever before. It must provide service that demonstrates an understanding of the customer's needs and expectations.

The following ten fundamentals (see Figure 1) have evolved from the authors' consulting work in helping a wide variety of organizations to improve their service. They provide a framework for creating a culture of continual service improvement.

1. Make a commitment to service; create uniqueness.
2. Develop an all-out recovery strategy.
3. Ensure continual improvement.
4. Listen.
5. Facilitate the changing role of management.
6. Define the playing field.
7. Provide autonomy.
8. Measure.
9. Hold everyone accountable.
10. Celebrate.

Figure 1. The Ten Fundamentals of Improving Customer Service

FUNDAMENTAL 1: MAKE A COMMITMENT TO SERVICE; CREATE UNIQUENESS

The returns on investment for companies that impress their customers with value-added service can be staggering. These returns are the result of providing service that is perceived by customers to be not just good or excellent, but unique.

Almost any mission statement or annual report written this year will contain a slogan about the importance of service. Throughout every organization, managers, supervisors, customer-contact employees, and unions agree that service is a prerequisite

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for survival. Too often, however, an organization's commitment to service is limited by its need for predictability. Many organizational leaders are unwilling to change current systems, structures, and priorities to achieve a culture of continual service improvement.

Achieving service that is unique requires a serious commitment from every employee in an organization. Leaders must redefine the way in which business is conducted; they must realize that changing customer requirements, new technologies, decentralized structures, and greater employee flexibility are now the norm.

Do Not Just Satisfy; Create a Story

A company's service reputation is shaped not only by customers' experiences with the company but also by stories that people have heard from customers. Many people have strong opinions grounded in stories told to them by friends, relatives, and acquaintances; in fact, many are willing to argue and aggressively defend opinions about companies with which they have had no personal experience.

The authors have found that the stories people tell about a company's service can create a more lasting impression than advertising or any statistics that the company might share with customers. If an organization wants to know how its service is being received, it need only listen to the stories that customers are telling. To be successful in the service business, an organization must proactively create the basis for stories that prove that the company can provide service that is better, faster, and different from what any competitor can provide.

It is not sufficient to "satisfy" customers. The term "satisfy" implies meeting expectations—a far cry from what is required to create a reputation for service uniqueness. This kind of reputation arises when an organization exceeds customers' expectations to such a degree that they are willing to tell others. Consequently, an organization must delete the word "satisfy" from its service goals and must instead think in terms of exceeding expectations. As Bob Small,¹ executive vice president of Disney Resorts, says, a company must provide service "that is the standard by which everybody else in the country judges their own performance."

FUNDAMENTAL 2: DEVELOP AN ALL-OUT RECOVERY STRATEGY

Almost everyone can tell a story about a company that did not measure up to expectations. In fact, customers often exaggerate the facts and many potential customers believe those exaggerations. The fastest way for an organization to improve its service reputation is to improve its process of recovering when a customer perceives that he or she has received unsatisfactory service. The authors have found that a high percentage of stories told by customers of companies that are famous for excellent service are recovery stories. Customers are impressed by a company that makes a proactive, unmistakable effort to recover.

¹Presentation delivered at Disney Resorts in Orlando, Florida, November 1988

These efforts dramatically communicate to customers that the company cares, that it is sensitive to the customer's business, and that it will stand behind its product or service—no matter what. The personal responses to complaints at Marriott Hotels and Resorts, the unquestioned return policy of Nordstrom, the price reductions that Domino's gives for late deliveries of pizzas, the guaranteed satisfaction offered on products sold by L.L. Bean, and the money-back guarantee of the power-quality program at Pacific Gas and Electric distinguish these companies from their competitors. Statistics show that recovery efforts pay big dividends (see Table 1).

Table 1. Return on Investment by Corporate Complaint-Handling Units

Industry	Return on Investment
Package goods	15-75 percent
Banking	50-170 percent
Gas utilities	20-150 percent
Consumer durable goods	100 percent +
Electronic products	50 percent
Retail	35-400 percent
Automotive service	100 percent +
From <i>Consumer Complaint Handling in America: An Update Study, Part II</i> by Technical Assistance Research Programs, March 31, 1986.	

Certainly, the benefits of recovery depend on the industry, the company's commitment to finding disgruntled customers, the number of people in the company involved in recovery, and the autonomy given to customer-contact employees who must act on the spot to transform a dissatisfied customer into a company advocate. Nevertheless, the benefits of a well-developed recovery strategy far exceed the costs.

Unfortunately, most recovery processes are much less effective than they could be. Most companies attempt recovery only after a customer initiates a complaint, yet a great majority of customers do not complain even when they have significantly dissatisfying experiences. A study by Technical Assistance Research Programs (1986) indicates that as few as 4 percent of dissatisfied customers complain, leaving 96 percent of them to tell their negative stories to others and simply not return. An effective recovery strategy requires that a company encourage its people to find disgruntled customers and reward the people who do find them.

FUNDAMENTAL 3: ENSURE CONTINUAL IMPROVEMENT

A common failing of many companies that have suffered significant reductions in market share in the last decade is that they expect the performance that made them successful in the past to work equally well in the future. The only thing certain about the future is that tomorrow will not look like yesterday. In view of the fact that so many companies are focused on improving their service, any company that is not improving daily will be perceived by customers as getting worse. Rapid, continual improvement is no longer an option; it is a necessity for survival. Any organization that fails to involve everyone in the daily improvement of every product and service is taking an unaffordable risk.

Ted Levitt's (1980) "total product concept" outlines some of the challenges facing service companies in the next decade. Levitt states that the purchased product or service is only part of what the customer expects from the transaction; customers' prior experiences have led them to expect certain warranties, services, and conveniences. He also suggests that many additional services and product improvements are possible but are unexpected by the customer. Great service companies provide high-quality products or services, meet or exceed all customer expectations, and routinely redefine the customer's experience in unexpected ways.

In a recent focus-group meeting conducted by a gas and electric utility, customers spent the first thirty minutes talking about how the utility had redefined the delivery of gas and electricity in unexpected ways. There was no mention of therms of gas or kilowatt hours of electricity. However, when the marketers asked the customers about the importance of product reliability, the customers' answer was firm: "We will not tolerate any outages or disruptions in service." However, an organization that meets this customer expectation should not assume that great stories will develop. The elements that redefine a service reputation are the unexpected service innovations, such as newly appointed, highly trained customer representatives and money-back guarantees. Every organization must work simultaneously to provide both the expected and the unexpected. Failing to attend to the expected creates customer frustration and a reputation for poor quality, and failing to do the unexpected guarantees service mediocrity.

Service improvement is an incremental process that requires the participation of every employee. It is the cumulative effect of a thousand small improvements made daily at every level in the organization. The secret of successful companies like Disney, Honda, and Wal-Mart may be that they never finish improving. In these corporate cultures, new technologies and innovative ideas are not perceived as intrusions but are viewed as exciting opportunities to redefine service. The most difficult part of service innovation and improvement is changing the organizational culture from one that accepts the status quo to one that is excited about change and continual improvement—a culture that demands continual, small improvements from everyone.

FUNDAMENTAL 4: LISTEN

The fact that listening is fundamental to building relationships with customers seems obvious. Everyone knows that listening is the foundation of all good relationships and a prerequisite to business success. What is surprising is how few companies systematically listen to customers, suppliers, employees, and competitors.

Companies fail to make listening a priority for a variety of reasons. For example, the more technically competent a group is, the harder it is for that group's members to listen. Because they often know better than the customer how to solve the customer's problem, they tend to become impatient, to leap to conclusions, and to give the customer what they think he or she needs—which is not necessarily what the customer wants. Often, their reward for being technically correct is one less customer to serve.

Improve Customer-Information Systems

The radical service improvements required in the next decade will necessitate the development of more specific customer-information systems. Knowing nearly everything about a customer's business allows a company to become the customer's strategic partner and, therefore, to customize service more effectively. In expanding their customer-information systems, organizations too often fail to quantify information that has been gathered by service professionals. Because of the amount of time they spend with customers in determining needs and expectations, in solving problems, and in listening to stories, service professionals should be a primary resource for updating customer information. One approach is to require every customer-contact person to ask at least three customers per day for one suggestion about how to improve service. Then the organization can use the collected responses as an integral part of its customer-information system. It is amazing to see how much money some companies spend on market research while neglecting the most inexpensive and obvious way to achieve a competitive advantage—involving everyone in listening to customers, suppliers, other employees, and competitors; quantifying what is heard; and acting quickly to achieve continual improvement.

FUNDAMENTAL 5: FACILITATE THE CHANGING ROLE OF MANAGEMENT

Service problems are leadership problems. It is easy to leap to the conclusion that service problems are attributable to errors made in front-line performance, but the authors have never seen a service-improvement effort fail due to the lack of front-line effort. More often management is unwilling to change reporting structures, to reduce the number of inflexible policies and procedures, to set higher goals for themselves and their work groups, and to spend more time on customer-related issues. Management creates the structures and systems that perpetuate the present culture. If improvement is desired, then managers must rethink their roles.

The “Too Much, Too Little” Syndrome

Much has been written in recent years about the need to empower employees to customize service for customers. Yet most companies are still organized according to their functional responsibilities, and most perpetuate strong hierarchies. In a traditional organizational hierarchy, customer-contact employees do not know where to focus their actions. Although they are told that serving the customer is their most important task, they receive a different message—less explicit but perhaps more powerful—that responding to the boss’s concerns and adhering to policies and procedures are the best ways to earn promotions and to stay out of trouble. This confusion in priorities is not only frustrating to service professionals; it also results in inconsistent and inflexible service to customers.

In an attempt to overcome this confusion, many companies have adopted an inverted-pyramid organizational structure that puts the customer-contact employees at the top of the organizational chart. These companies also redefine the role of management in such a way that the primary responsibility of managers is to be responsive to the needs of the service professionals. Rigid rules are replaced with flexible guidelines so that employees will be better able to serve the customer.

Although changing the leader’s role from “controlling” to “responsive” is a prerequisite to successful service delivery, it is not enough. The authors have found that many service-improvement efforts fail despite the change in management’s role because leaders have not effectively set the stage for people to be responsible and accountable for their service efforts. An organization must ensure that the desired service outcomes are well defined, that the service-delivery process is clearly communicated and perceived to be flexible, that core values governing every employee’s actions are established, and that every employee understands his or her role. Otherwise, front-line employees are often unwilling or unable to take the risk necessary to embrace their changed roles and to deliver service in a way that consistently exceeds customer expectations. A culture that enables the delivery of successful service is one that balances direction and autonomy, flexibility and accountability, and the freedom to customize and a predictable delivery process.

FUNDAMENTAL 6: DEFINE THE PLAYING FIELD

People’s reactions to being introduced to a new game are predictable: “How do you score? Which actions are permitted and which are not?” No matter what game is being played, people demand to know how the winners and losers will be judged.

Similarly, front-line employees must understand the rules of play and how to win before they can successfully customize service. There must be a clearly defined direction (a goal line that indicates how to score) and predefined parameters (the “rules” or boundaries) that outline the limits of responsibility and decision making. Employees must feel secure that within these boundaries they are free to use their intelligence, creativity, and direction to exceed the customer’s expectations.

Every organization must judge its ability to score by its ability to influence the perceptions of the customer. For too long, performance goals and accountability systems for customer-contact professionals focused on adherence to predetermined, inflexible policies and procedures. As customers, we have all felt the frustration of being told, “I’d like to help you, but I can’t. It’s our policy.” The goal for service professionals must be defined in terms of perceived quality and service, not in terms of process activities.

This is not to say that process is unimportant. Process guidelines provide boundaries for actions, predictability for employees and customers; they also promote consistency in service delivery. Many service problems are caused by redundant and ineffective processes. Despite the best efforts of employees, an organization’s failure to improve the service-delivery process on a continual basis can result in a steady stream of disgruntled customers.

The service professional can perceive deviating from policy or standard procedure as risky if he or she does not understand the boundaries that frame individual autonomy. Outlining such boundaries may be one of the biggest challenges facing service leaders. If boundaries are established in terms of correcting mistakes after they happen, employees learn to focus on avoiding mistakes rather than on creativity and customization. If an organization wants to provide better service, it must clarify the goal and boundaries before service professionals are put in the game.

FUNDAMENTAL 7: PROVIDE AUTONOMY

Creative, enthusiastic service professionals who routinely make business decisions and improvise when necessary provide the foundation for an excellent service company. Yet many companies ignore the benefits of engaging the talents of their work force. In essence, they tell their front-line people, “Deposit your brains outside when you come to work each day because you won’t need them here.” Often front-line employees are excluded from the service-planning process and are told to obey a litany of rules devised to systematize the customer’s experience and to protect the company from employees and customers who might take advantage. This inflexible routine bores employees and dulls their sensitivity to customers.

Serious efforts at service improvement must include meaningful employee involvement in service planning, innovation, and process improvement. This approach requires that leaders, employees, and unions trust one another. It also requires that the organization make a firm commitment to educate every employee in basic finance, the competitive issues facing the company, and the costs of poor service and quality.

The fate of service-improvement efforts depends on management’s ability to create a sense of ownership among employees. In the past, organizations were often characterized by a preoccupation with centralized control; each function within a company performed only a small part in the service process. These structures often encouraged interdepartmental competition, turf battles, and boss-sensitive reward systems instead of cooperation and customer-sensitive reward systems. No one felt

responsible for service; therefore, no one felt a sense of ownership about the quality of service provided. An effective alternative is to form service teams consisting of people from various functions within the company and to make those teams responsible and accountable for delivering service to wider segments and for demonstrating continual service improvement. This approach makes people feel that they own their small pieces of the organization; consequently, they feel a strong investment in the service provided by those areas.

FUNDAMENTAL 8: MEASURE

In many companies the primary emphasis is on productivity, budget compliance, and other cost-related factors. Employees in these companies are accountable for their performance on these issues, which is measured in terms of calls answered per shift, “tags” completed per day, or sales per hour. Although increased productivity is fundamental to sustained competitiveness, the fixation with easily quantifiable, financial measures of performance leads managers to ignore service-related measures, which are equally important. Every employee must enthusiastically embrace the idea of simultaneously reducing costs and improving service. Cost reduction measures should be balanced with measures of service such as customer satisfaction, first-time service quality, employee flexibility, continual service improvement, and leadership effectiveness.

The most valid measure of service quality is the subjective opinion of the customer. Although measures that report the speed of service to the customer, the percentage of line items in stock, the percentage of repeat customers, and the number of complaints are important, without customer evaluation they paint an incomplete picture. Each service experience is a unique interaction, and only the customer can evaluate that interaction in light of his or her expectations. Much of what constitutes service is a visible demonstration that an employee cares enough to provide the most individualized service possible. Often an average technical performance provided by an enthusiastic employee results in an outstanding service review from a customer. Only when service employees are actively involved in every facet of the service business can an organization hope to foster the creativity and enthusiasm needed to radically enhance service delivery.

FUNDAMENTAL 9: HOLD EVERYONE ACCOUNTABLE

Front-line service employees are not the only ones who must be held accountable for continual service improvement. Managers must hold themselves accountable, despite the temptation to explain shortfalls in terms of factors that are outside their control (the product is not competitive; the price is too high; the promotional material is out of date; the union is inflexible; employees are not as competent as they used to be). A lack of accountability on the part of managers allows them to avoid focusing on ineffective managerial practices, such as adhering to time-wasting routines, failing to set goals that

test their talents, and failing to change ineffective reporting and promotional structures. Yet such practices may be the very factors that preclude radical service improvement. Managers must become accountable for improving service without additional resources and without asking for tradeoffs in other areas; they must be required to look to their own leadership actions for answers.

FUNDAMENTAL 10: CELEBRATE

An organization that emphasizes continual service improvement might be called a culture of “celebrated discontent.” It is characterized by a feeling of joy and a simultaneous desire to improve. Too often, though, organizations have created an almost schizophrenic “either/or” mentality; they celebrate one minute and are emphatically discontent the next. People find such an environment confusing and uncomfortable. They begin to discount celebration as an insincere introduction to the real agenda—usually a push for more productivity.

The authors have found that many organizations whose service is legendary celebrate often and sincerely, honoring those who are responsible for service improvement; yet their people simultaneously demand greater things from themselves. For example, Nordstrom employees strive for daily service improvements and innovations; but they set aside time each morning for “morning heroics”—a celebration honoring the previous day’s top performers. At Toyota “kaizen” (continual improvement) is demanded from suppliers as well as employees, yet the company continually finds new ways to celebrate even the smallest improvements. In each of these cases, an attitude of “celebrated discontent” creates an environment that encourages continual service improvement.

CONCLUSION: HOW THE HRD PRACTITIONER CAN HELP TO PROMOTE LEGENDARY SERVICE

In the coming decade, HRD practitioners will need to meet the challenge of helping companies find ways to stay healthy in changing times. This means not only encouraging individual employees to develop the attitudes and skills needed to perform well in a service economy but also encouraging management to establish the structures and systems that will enable employees to perform well.

The practitioner can offer valuable input when management evaluates compensation systems from a service perspective, creates performance measures that reflect employees’ service contributions, and develops rewards to foster continual improvement. The practitioner can advocate performance-appraisal systems that reward the contributions of service providers and that reflect measures from the customer’s point of view. In addition, the practitioner can encourage management to assess whether the company’s appraisal systems reflect how managers are serving their employees.

The practitioner should strive to be actively involved in the “people issues” of the organization. For example, the practitioner can help to evaluate the recruiting process,

which is critical to the success of the organization. To create an exceptional service-improvement process, an organization must ensure that job descriptions are written in such a way that the playing field is defined but does not restrict employees' judgment. The practitioner can help management as it strives to create job descriptions that are explicit but still provide sufficient latitude for employees to function autonomously.

The practitioner can play a particularly important role in helping employees to understand the role of service as a competitive weapon. Employees whose work experience has been entirely with traditional organizations may need a great deal of encouragement. They will need reassurance that creative—and perhaps unusual or avant-garde approaches to problem solving—are not only accepted but welcomed. Similarly, management may need reassurance that employee creativity will lead not to chaos but to important dividends in terms of market edge.

Finally, the practitioner must help management to assess its commitment to service. This may necessitate a reeducation effort. For example, it may be necessary to hold individual conferences with managers or to conduct training to ensure that managers understand the importance of creating an empowering environment, praising employees for doing things right, and differentiating positive and negative performance issues. It is important that managers understand their responsibility to model legendary service through their actions with employees. If employees see that management fails to provide essential resources, they will conclude that it is acceptable to follow suit.

A company with a consistently promoted orientation toward legendary service is a wonderful place to work. Its people are proud and loyal, and they like what they are doing. Being part of such an environment is a positive experience not only for employees but also for the HRD practitioner who helps to create it. Work is a big part of most people's lives, and the HRD practitioner who assists in the implementation of the service orientation discussed in this article derives a unique satisfaction from knowing that he or she has enhanced the work experience.

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■ HOW TO MAKE NEW-EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION A SUCCESS

Jean Barbazette

New-employee orientation (NEO) is a planned welcome to the organization that usually is shared by the human resource function or department and the new employee's supervisor. The Training Clinic of

Seal Beach, California, surveyed more than one hundred United States and Canadian companies during a six-year period and subsequently identified twelve key factors of successful orientation programs. According to the survey results, successful orientation programs have the following characteristics:

1. *The orientation is conducted as an ongoing process, not just as a one-day program.* The orientation process, which usually begins with the hiring decision and continues well into the first year of employment, encompasses other programs that include performance reviews and skills training. When orientation is held over a period of time, overwhelming a new employee with information on the first day becomes unnecessary.

2. *Information is given to new employees in a timely manner, when it is needed.* For example, if an employee's health benefits vest thirty days from the start date, a benefits orientation is not needed during the first day or first week of employment. In fact, many companies separate benefits from other orientation information. If a benefits meeting is held in the evening, for instance, the spouses of new employees may attend and be provided with firsthand information about the choices available for a health plan. (See the checklist at the end of this article for suggestions about the timing of specific orientation tasks.)

3. *The benefits of orientation are clear to both the new employee and the company.* The company might identify benefits such as reduced turnover or improved productivity. A new employee might note benefits such as feeling valued, "fitting in" easily and quickly, and being sufficiently relaxed to avoid making mistakes on the job.

4. *The organization's culture (its philosophy, mission, values, and norms) is clarified.* New employees need to be told the company norms, customs, and traditions. For example, if informality is a norm, the orientation should specify this fact so that a

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new employee knows that having coffee at his or her desk or leaving work on the desk overnight is acceptable. In contrast, if organizational rules are strictly enforced, the orientation must include not only this information but also specifics about such issues as dress code and the timing of breaks and lunch.

In some companies all employees are addressed by their first names. In other companies a strong sense of formality demands the use of surnames only. Sharing expectations and common definitions of “what is normal” contributes greatly to a successful orientation process.

5. The employee’s first day is a welcoming experience that helps the employee to feel useful and productive. When a new employee arrives, his or her desk, chair, office space, phone, and supplies need to be ready. In addition, people in the organization need to be available to direct the new employee’s activities and to teach the job to him or her. If the necessary supplies are not ready and/or people are inaccessible, a strong negative message is sent.

Several companies with successful orientation programs plan a welcome, an introduction process, and then a tour that ends in the new employee’s work area. The new employee is then paired with an experienced “buddy” who teaches a specific task. In this way a new employee can perform a simple task that contributes immediately to the department’s production.

6. The supervisor’s role in NEO is clear and well executed, with the human resource department or function providing assistance. The supervisor and the human resource function share responsibility for the successful orientation of the new employee. It is important to determine which kinds of information and assistance ought to come from the supervisor and which need to come from the human resource department or function. Supervisors usually prefer to explain safety rules, reporting requirements, and job tasks, whereas the human resource department or function is usually better equipped to describe company policy, history, and benefits. The division of tasks must be negotiated between the supervisor and the human resource department or function if these tasks are to be shared successfully. (See the checklist at the end of this article for a method to divide the tasks.)

7. Orientation objectives are specific and measurable, and the timetable for achieving those objectives is reasonable. The objectives must focus on the new employee’s acquisition of specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes; and there must be some means of measuring the level of acquisition. The pacing of orientation—the rate at which a new employee is expected to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes—is also critical. Poor orientation programs often involve information overload that overwhelms new employees. Successful programs, on the other hand, are characterized by a balance of activity and pacing that makes orientation interesting, not overwhelming or boring.

8. *Adult-learning concepts guide the orientation.* If an organization wants its employees to use their initiative and exercise judgment, then a self-directed NEO is appropriate. Several successful NEO programs give a new employee a list of tasks to accomplish, a deadline, and the time and resources to complete the tasks. For example, one manufacturing company gives each new hourly employee a checklist to be completed in five days; items on the checklist include completing forms and finding bulletin boards as well as safety and first-aid supplies. Another organization gives its new middle managers and staff people a list of key coworkers to interview along with a self-directed workbook that suggests interview questions such as these: What do you expect from me when we work together? What are your job and task goals, and how do they affect me?

Many unsuccessful NEOs spoon-feed all information to a new employee. This process says to the employee, “The organization will tell you everything you need to know; just wait for management to come to you.” If an organization wants new employees to work independently, at least part of their orientation needs to be their responsibility.

9. *Guest speakers (live or on videotape) are used.* Many successful NEO programs use speakers who are well prepared, present only essential information with specific objectives, and employ good presentation techniques. In a number of cases, the personnel or human resource function coaches these speakers, outlines or scripts their talks, and provides professional-looking visual aids. When guest speakers are ill prepared, they may fail to meet their goals, digress from their subjects, or arrive late (or not at all).

10. *Audiovisual components of the orientation program lend emphasis to the program and provide a positive message.* In successful orientation programs, video or slide presentations frequently are used to describe the organization’s culture, history, and philosophy. Guest speakers who deliver a consistent message and find it impossible to attend every session of NEO are good candidates for video.

Although the temptation is to put as much as possible on video, the content needs to be lasting. Information that changes often, such as information about benefits, is best presented “live.” The organization chart, with the members of the current executive group named, is best provided in written form.

11. *The results of the NEO process are evaluated by participants, supervisors, and the human resource department or function.* Participants give their reactions to NEO and offer suggestions about the process and the timing of content delivery. Supervisors determine whether NEO information is used on the job and, as a result, to what degree the orientation program needs revision. A successful NEO process is also characterized by evaluation for bottom-line results. For example, by conducting a systematic NEO, one manufacturing organization was able to reduce turnover by 69 percent in the first three years. Similarly, a bank was able to reduce the time required for orientation and skills training for new tellers from six weeks to two weeks.

12. *Information is provided to the employee's family.* Providing information can include welcoming gestures, letters or company newsletters, and even more. Many companies welcome families at work one day each year. Others, as mentioned previously, schedule benefits orientations during the evening so that family members can attend. One organization even has a corporate "welcome wagon" that visits families of new employees.

These twelve characteristics suggest that NEO is a process that needs to be refined and customized for each organization. For example, in planning an orientation program, an organization ought to consider such issues as when orientation is first conducted and how many new employees are hired at one time.

The checklist that begins on the next page can be useful in identifying appropriate content and timing for the new-employee orientation process. This checklist has been designed to assist those who conduct NEO. It offers a comprehensive list of topics to help the new employee function productively. To avoid overwhelming the new employee on the first day, the person with primary responsibility for designing the orientation needs to identify the best timing for each item and follow the resulting schedule. It is important to remember that information is most beneficial when it is given to a new employee in a timely manner, closest to the time when it is to be used.

A critical step in the NEO process is to identify who is the best source of each kind of information to be provided. Some information is best learned and retained if the employee "discovers" it himself or herself; most standardized information is best delivered by the human resource department or function; and information that changes from one department to another is best given by the new employee's supervisor. To achieve consensus regarding the responsibility and timing of tasks, a discussion involving human resource personnel, supervisors, and new employees is advised.

ORIENTATION-CONTENT CHECKLIST¹

Instructions: To designate who will be responsible for covering each item in the checklist, choose the appropriate letter from the following code and write it in the blank in the "Who" column next to each item:

E = employee
S = new employee's supervisor
HR = human resource representative

To designate when each item is to be done, choose the appropriate letter from the following code and write it in the blank in the "When" column:

D = first day
W = first week
M = first month
F = follow-up after first month

Who	When	
ORGANIZATION		
_____	_____	Our History
_____	_____	Company Philosophy
_____	_____	Company Objectives
_____	_____	Our Organization
_____	_____	Our Industry
_____	_____	Our Products and Services
_____	_____	Our Customers
_____	_____	Your Department
_____	_____	Facilities
COMPENSATION		
_____	_____	Pay Schedule
_____	_____	Time Card
_____	_____	Salary Reviews
_____	_____	Overtime
_____	_____	Payroll Deductions
_____	_____	Forms, Forms, Forms
_____	_____	Charities
_____	_____	Workers' Compensation

¹ This checklist appeared in "Designing a Successful Orientation Program" by J. Barbazette, 1991, in *Human Resources Policies and Practices*, New York: Warren Gorham Lamont. It has been used here by permission and may not be reprinted or photocopied without prior written permission from Warren Gorham Lamont.

ORIENTATION-CONTENT CHECKLIST (continued)

Who	When	
BENEFITS		
_____	_____	Medical Plan
_____	_____	Dental Plan
_____	_____	Insurance
_____	_____	Pension Plan
_____	_____	Credit Union
_____	_____	Savings Plan
_____	_____	Incentive Programs
_____	_____	Service and Recognition Awards
_____	_____	Employee Purchases
_____	_____	Tuition Reimbursement
_____	_____	Training and Development Programs
_____	_____	Profit Sharing
ATTENDANCE		
_____	_____	Work Hours
_____	_____	If You Are Late, Sick, or Absent
LEAVE AND HOLIDAYS		
_____	_____	Holidays
_____	_____	Leave Policy
_____	_____	Vacation
_____	_____	Jury Duty
HEALTH AND SAFETY		
_____	_____	Emergency Procedure
_____	_____	First Aid
_____	_____	If You Have an Accident
_____	_____	Childcare Program
_____	_____	Wellness Program
_____	_____	Employee-Assistance Program

ORIENTATION-CONTENT CHECKLIST (continued)

Who	When	
SECURITY		
_____	_____	Security Procedures
_____	_____	Restricted Areas
_____	_____	Confidentiality
_____	_____	Name Badge
_____	_____	After-Hours Procedure
_____	_____	Keys
_____	_____	Fingerprinting
_____	_____	Loyalty Oath
INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS		
_____	_____	Company Newsletter
_____	_____	Company Bulletin Board
_____	_____	Employee Handbook
TRANSPORTATION		
_____	_____	Carpool/Ridesharing
_____	_____	Parking
_____	_____	Travel Policies
_____	_____	Travel Expenses
_____	_____	Permits, Restricted Areas
YOUR COMFORT		
_____	_____	Rest and Meal Breaks
_____	_____	Cafeteria/Break Facilities
_____	_____	Smoking Policy
_____	_____	Restroom Locations
_____	_____	Safeguarding Your Personal Belongings
_____	_____	Lunch the First Day

ORIENTATION-CONTENT CHECKLIST (continued)

Who	When	
PERFORMANCE		
_____	_____	What Is Expected of You
_____	_____	Quality
_____	_____	Ethical Standards
_____	_____	Conflict of Interest
_____	_____	Probationary Period
_____	_____	Dress Code
_____	_____	Telephone Procedures and Courtesy
_____	_____	Promotions
_____	_____	Performance Reviews
_____	_____	Discipline Process
_____	_____	Causes for Termination
_____	_____	Personal Calls and Visitors
_____	_____	Suggestions
_____	_____	Equal Opportunity
_____	_____	Sexual Harassment
_____	_____	Accepting Gifts
_____	_____	If You Have a Problem

■ **SEXUAL DIFFERENCES IN THE WORKPLACE: THE NEED FOR TRAINING**

Arlette C. Ballew and Pamela Adams-Regan

THE WORK FORCE IS CHANGING

Since the Second World War, women have entered the work force in increasing numbers. Sex-role expectations have changed as a result of economic necessity. Women have become a factor in the success of business and industry in most Western nations and in many other parts of the world as well.

In the U.S., Canada, and the U.K., the increased number of women in the work force has prompted legislation regarding sexual discrimination and harassment. But legislation alone cannot help men and women to learn to work together.

Making the transition from a home environment to a business environment has been difficult for some women; they also need help in “catching up” in terms of job skills, professional connections, and job opportunities. Making the transition from a male-dominated work environment to a male-female work environment has been difficult for some men; they need help in learning to deal with women in a manner that is appropriate to the business environment.

The success of many women in today’s businesses and industries reinforces the fact that women are an integral part of today’s work force; it also may increase some men’s feelings of resentment and resistance regarding the encroachment of women into the workplace. Without a doubt, women will continue to be a major presence in modern business life. Trainers and consultants will have to address the unique challenges of integrating women into the workplace if the full productivity of men and women, as they work together, is to be realized.

MALE-FEMALE DIFFERENCES CREATE ISSUES IN THE WORKPLACE

In training and developing women to take positions in the work force and in management, trainers need to focus on more than just traditional areas of employee development: career management, résumé writing, presentation skills, interviewing techniques, technical skills, project management, and meeting management. These areas of training are just as relevant to men as they are to women, although men tend to

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receive more information about them in school and from the mentoring process. Trainers and training programs also must begin to address the interpersonal differences and the relationship issues that create problems between and for men and women in the workplace.

In *Developing Women Through Training*, Willis and Daisly (1991) claim that training activities in the U.K. are “planned by men, set up as a male-oriented venue in every way.” They say that if women attend, they are there as an afterthought. According to them, trainers in the U.K. do not focus particularly on male/female generic training; they focus on male training. If women want to be trained, they have to learn the “male way.” In other words, women are expected to learn to work like men rather than to work like workers. To some degree, this probably is true wherever women work.

However, with the increasing awareness of the existing inequality in the workplace for women, and with the increasing governmental action on both sides of the Atlantic to promote equality, it is of critical importance to address the male-female issues that can arise when men and women work together on the job. These issues can be addressed in a number of ways: as communication issues, as value issues, and so on. For example, past training groups have generated the following perceptions of basic differences between men and women:

- Men tend to be highly oriented toward the task.
- Women tend to be highly oriented toward the maintenance of the relationships with the people and environment that impact the task.
- Men tend to be comfortable with or, at least, expect competition. (Most of them have been raised with team sports in some form or another.)
- Women tend to be less comfortable with even friendly competition and take the competitive aspect of work much more seriously.
- Men tend to tease one another a lot as part of ongoing relationships.
- Women tend to take kidding more seriously, especially when it may reflect on their sense of competency in a job.
- Men play one-upmanship games with one another. When men try to play this game with women, such behavior can translate as discrimination.
- Men are rewarded for showing emotion only about sports and other “male-acceptable” pursuits; they are confused when emotion is shown at work in regard to tasks and teamwork.
- Women sometimes can deal better with personnel issues because they listen well and take care in maintaining relationships.
- Women often are trained in the model of successful men, rather than successful women. They may, therefore, be unsympathetic toward other women’s problems in the workplace because they have been rewarded for male-like behavior. They

may even suppress female-oriented behavior and penalize other women for exhibiting it.

- Women in the workplace may feel isolated from the mainstream of business because men exclude them regularly from mentoring and “bonding” activities.
- Women do not grow up being rewarded for successful confrontation (saying how one feels about something or facing a situation or person head-on). Instead, women tend to be rewarded for serving as the peacemakers; therefore, they may have to learn the confrontation skills that are necessary in order to keep tasks on track.
- Men can learn to share their skills, their task-management strategies, and their teamwork expertise with women in order to create a better work environment.
- Women can learn to share their relationship and listening skills, their multiple-task management skills, and their detail orientation with men in order to create a better work environment.
- Women can learn to express their emotions in ways that focus on task-related issues.
- Men can learn to focus more on implementation, rather than just on “the big picture.”

Many of the perceived differences between men and women are, in fact, backed up by research. Gilligan (1982), a psychologist and professor at Harvard University, studied developmental differences between men and women. She concluded that men and women speak differently—hence the title of her book, *In a Different Voice*. Gilligan also maintains that the theory of separation or “individuation” from the mother as a developmental process has been formulated by men (Erikson, 1963; Levinson, 1978), whose theories assume that development then proceeds toward autonomy. Gilligan argues that this focus emanates from a male point of view but that, in reality, males and females experience maternal contact differently. Mothers perceive sons as being different from themselves. Consequently, separation and the formation of “ego boundaries” are more emphasized with males and they become more associated with the internal world. Mothers experience female children as being like themselves, so they tend to parent them differently. Female separation and individuation occur at a slower rate; thus, female children perceive themselves as less differentiated from others, as more connected to the external world. Gilligan concluded that these primary parenting differences lead to a strengthened capacity for empathy among women, along with a stronger basis for experiencing the needs of others.

In other words, young males and females experience relationships and issues of dependency differently: Masculinity is defined through separation; femininity is defined through attachment. Women define themselves in terms of relationships, are threatened by separation, and have difficulty with individualization. Men define themselves in the context of individualization, are threatened by attachment, and have difficulty with

relationships. Gilligan does not say that one or the other is preferable; she merely presents the data in the hope of increasing understanding.

Lever (1976) has documented that attachment to and separation from others often are expressed in the games of children. Males more often play outdoors, in large groups with a wide age range. Females more often play indoors, in smaller groups with a narrow age range. Males more often play games that emphasize competition, and they quarrel more often. Females more often play games that emphasize relationships; and when quarrels or disputes arise, they often end the games. Furthermore, males play with enemies and compete with friends, in accordance with the rules. Females play mostly with friends in smaller, more intimate groups that are more willing to make exceptions to the rules.

The best-selling book *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation* (Tannen, 1990) also cites the basic differences between the orientations of and assumptions made by men and women. These assumptions cause them to view things differently and, in fact, to communicate in "different languages." Among other things, men are concerned with data, and women are concerned with interrelationships (between things as well as people).

Interpersonal training has revealed that there may be significant differences between men and women with regard to how they perceive their own work styles, as well as what they perceive as acceptable work styles in others.

Malcolm Hornby (1992), Director of Delta Management in the U.K., says that in his interpersonal-skills training programs, he finds that "Men expect themselves to be seen as drivers, or task-oriented individuals who are tough-minded decision makers with strong leadership styles. But men see women as more amiable, less assertive, and more emotionally responsive. This can cause men to regard women as more indecisive and participative in their leadership approaches."

Hornby goes on to note that a woman sometimes can be perceived unfavorably by both sexes if she demonstrates more task-oriented, driving behavior. "She may be seen as unresponsive, single-minded, aggressive, stubborn, hardnosed, unfeminine, insensitive, selfish, and threatening," he says. "Many of these attributes would be seen as strengths in her male counterparts. But from a woman, it can sometimes break the man's paradigm of expected female behavior."

On the other hand, men who exhibit analytical or emotionally responsive behaviors may be viewed as indecisive, amiable, chatty, soft, and unbusinesslike. The essential element in interpersonal skill development is to recognize that all work styles are needed to make a productive workplace. "When one worker's behavior does not conform to another worker's expectations, it is the worker with the expectations who needs to demonstrate greater versatility in his or her own work style," explains Hornby. In other words, learning to understand and to value other people's approaches to work can be invaluable in enhancing overall productivity.

Clearly, if men and women are to work together effectively, they need to understand some of the basic psychological differences between them; and they need to

learn to respect and to deal with those differences in a way that provides a win-win opportunity for both. If they do not do this, people will suffer, the work will suffer, the organization will suffer, and the overall productivity and health of the economy will suffer.

SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE: AN URGENT ISSUE

Sexual harassment in the workplace has received increased attention lately in the U.S., Canada, and the U.K. There are several types of sexual harassment. The most common, of course, is sexual discrimination. In short, this is any action that does not extend to a woman the same job conditions, courtesy, benefits, salary, training and development, and advancement opportunities as are extended to a man.

Some sexual discrimination (for example, paying a woman less than a man for the same job) is built into an organization's system. Some of the more subtle forms—which include exclusion from job-based benefits such as equal access to professional affiliation—are receiving increased attention. Although all forms of sexual discrimination and harassment are based on the fact that the harasser is of a particular sex, not all are “sexual” (Pfeiffer & Company, 1992).

Much sexual harassment is based on an unwillingness of those in positions of power or control (for example, males) to share that power or control with others whom they perceive as different from themselves (for instance, females). This type of harassment is more about “keeping women in their place” than it is about sex. Women who are most vulnerable to being sexually harassed on the job are the pioneers—the first of their sex to break into an area of employment. When women make up less than 25 percent of the work force, the number of complaints amounts to about two per one thousand women. The complaint rate drops by half when women make up more than 50 percent of a corporate population. Thus, females who enter previously male-dominated positions often find themselves to be the objects of harassment. Female police officers, firefighters, gas and electric workers, maintenance and repair persons, and so on report a wide array of discrimination and harassment techniques. Many of these are intended to actually cause the harasser to be fired or to resign from the job. It has been found that men who are pioneers in occupations typically held by women also are more vulnerable to harassment. It is likely that the first male nurses or telephone operators, for example, may have experienced harassment.

Other forms of sexual harassment are related to sexuality. They are intended to initiate some type of interchange between the harasser and the harasser. Some are motivated by feelings of power, anger, or cruelty; some are motivated by sexual desires.

There also is evidence that men tend to exclude women from mentoring and other developmental opportunities in the workplace.

In the U.S.

Training magazine (Lee, 1992) reports the following:

- The National Association of Female Executives surveyed its members in 1991 and found that 53 percent of the 1,300 women had been sexually harassed or knew someone who had been.
- A survey conducted by *Working Woman* magazine in 1988 found that 90 percent of *Fortune 500* companies had received sexual harassment complaints; one-third had lawsuits filed against them; and 64 percent of their personnel officers said most complaints were valid.
- The American Management Association surveyed 524 of its member companies in November, 1991, and found that 52 percent have dealt with allegations of sexual harassment in the past five years.

Additionally, the U.S. Navy recently suffered a major embarrassment when it was revealed that Navy aircraft carrier aviators who were attending a 1991 “Tailhook” convention had sexually harassed and assaulted female Navy personnel at the convention. Two women who were present at the 1991 Tailhook convention took photos of male attendees who were exposing themselves and demonstrating other lewd behavior. At least thirty-six women claimed to have been molested by men lining the third-floor hallways. The resulting scandal led to the resignation of Navy Secretary H. Lawrence Garrett II in June, 1992, and to an intensive investigation of sexual harassment within the armed forces.

In the U.K.

In his book *Mind Your Manners: Managing Culture Clash in the Single European Market*, Mole (1990) states that 45 percent of the U.K. work force is made up of women. This is the largest percentage of female workers in any of the European Community countries, despite the fact that female workers in the U.K. have the lowest maternity benefits and negligible child-care facilities.

The *Financial Times* reported in March, 1992, that “Three quarters of female company directors believe women are discriminated against in the workplace, according to the first survey by the Institute of Directors of the views of its members” (Summers, 1992). A third of these directors said that they had had a direct experience of sexual discrimination, particularly in the early stages of their careers. Male attitudes at work and employers’ failure to take into account the child-care and domestic responsibilities of their employees were blamed as the chief causes of the discrimination.

The Independent reported in March, 1992, that despite years of campaigning and some legislation designed to advance equality, women in the U.K. still remain almost invisible in the top of public and commercial businesses and institutions (Mills, 1992). There are no female House of Lords judges and no female Cabinet ministers; and before the recent appointment of Barbara Mills as Director of Public Prosecutions, there were

no female permanent secretaries in the civil service. In addition, only one in every two hundred company directors are women, even though more than 40 percent of private-sector workers are female. *Labour Research* magazine published a report early in 1992 that showed that although women represent 49 percent of all nonindustrial civil servants in the U.K, fewer than 7 percent are at the levels of under-secretary or above (Mills, 1992).

THE COSTS OF SEXUAL DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The costs of sexual discrimination and harassment are many (Gracy-Robertson, Grant, Richmond, & Woodard, 1992). First, the effects on the victims include psychological damage, loss of productivity, loss of wages and other benefits, loss of employment and future benefits, and so on. If a claim or lawsuit is filed, there may be compensatory or punitive damages. Second, the effects on others in the work force include psychological damage (such as anger, resentment, fear), loss of productivity, loss of esteem for the harasser and/or supervisors involved, and possible formation of factions in the work environment as people “take sides.” All of this can severely impact the contribution that workers can make to the organization.

Investigating or dealing with a complaint also has costs: People may need to be reassigned or removed from positions; inquiries or in-depth investigations may need to be conducted; in-house personnel may be required to spend time on this or outside personnel hired to conduct briefings, interviews, and so on; there are administrative costs; and there are counseling costs (which may be both internal and external). Other costs include absenteeism; rescheduling; training of new employees; impact on other workers, supervisors, and personnel relationships; and loss of morale.

In an article entitled “Sexual Harassment: After the Headlines” in *Training* magazine, Lee (1992, p. 25) states, “Most corporate sexual-harassment training programs aim to protect the company from litigation by familiarizing employees with the company’s policy and internal complaint procedures. Often that knowledge brings a jump in the number of reported incidents—considered a positive sign.” Later in the article Lee says, “Lawsuit costs are high...to everyone involved.... Everything you can do to prevent sexual harassment before a lawsuit occurs is worth every penny” (p. 25).

LEGISLATION ADDRESSES THE ISSUES (BUT NOT THE CAUSES)

The U.S., Canada, and the U.K. all have legislation that prohibits discrimination based on factors such as gender, race or national origin, age, disability, and so on. All three provide remedies for sexual discrimination and sexual harassment. Furthermore, all three hold the employing organization responsible for the actions of its employees and for establishing a working environment that is free from unlawful discrimination and harassment.

U.S. Initiatives

The U.S. government passed the Civil Rights Act of 1991 in order to extend the provisions of Title VII of the existing Civil Rights Act to “protect against and deter unlawful discrimination and harassment in the workplace,” including sexual discrimination and harassment.

The U.S. law defines sexual harassment as follows:

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment; or
2. Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

These definitions cover both men and women and apply to all types of job-related interactions. A third party also may file a complaint if such behavior offends him or her, even if neither of the two people involved has complained. For example, if two people are telling sexual jokes in the work setting and a third person who overhears them is offended, that person may complain.

In recognition of the lack of developmental opportunities for women (and other minorities) in the workplace, the U.S. Congress included the “Glass Ceiling Act” in the Civil Rights Act of November, 1991, stating that “despite a dramatically growing presence in the workplace, women and minorities remain underrepresented in management and decision-making positions” and citing “artificial barriers exist to advancement . . . lack of access to credential-building developmental opportunities and the desirability of eliminating artificial barriers to their advancement” (Pfeiffer & Company, 1992, p. 53). This act establishes a commission to study the artificial barriers to the development and advancement of women and minorities, the manner in which business fills management and decision-making positions, the developmental experiences that foster advancement to such positions, and the compensation and reward structures currently used in U.S. business.

Two Types of Harassment

Two types of sexual harassment have been defined in the U.S. (Carbonell, Higginbotham, & Sample, 1990). *Quid pro quo* harassment occurs when a sexual act is the prerequisite condition to employment, promotion, or any other job benefit or when refusal to engage in a sexual act results in being fired, being denied promotion, or having a job benefit withheld.

Hostile environment harassment occurs when the work atmosphere is made intimidating, hostile, or offensive (for instance, by such things as unequal treatment of the sexes, nude pinups, off-color jokes and remarks, sexually based staring or gestures, repeatedly asking a coworker for dates after initial refusal, and so on) and when such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment.

Harassment can include insulting, degrading, hurtful, or rude comments; offensive talk, language, pictures, or physical actions; bad reviews; and attempts to force the person out of the job.

In the case of *Hall v. Gus Construction Company* (1988), three female employees were subjected to repeated acts of harassment by male coworkers. Although the harassment included requests for sexual favors, the majority of it consisted of obscene or hostile acts whose apparent intent was to force the women out of their jobs.

Sexual harassment must be based on the harassee's sex, but the type of conduct can vary; it need not be amorous or involve a request for sexual favors. The conduct can be physical (such as touching), verbal (such as lewd or suggestive comments), or visual (such as the display of pornographic pictures). It may occur in the office or outside the workplace during business-related events. The harassment need not be directed at the victim; something that is overheard or seen can affect the motivation and work environment of those whom it upsets or offends. Harassment directed at men by women or at homosexuals also may constitute unlawful sexual discrimination.

A single event may constitute harassment (Baxter & Hermle, 1989), as in *Boyd v. James S. Hayes Living Health Care Agency, Inc.* (1987), in which the incident occurred during an out-of-town business trip, and in *Joyner v. AAA Cooper Transportation* (1983). The most significant factors in judging whether an act constitutes sexual harassment are the nature of the conduct, the degree to which the conduct relates to the victim's terms and conditions of employment, whether the conduct is an isolated incident, and how seriously the conduct was intended or perceived.

Canadian Initiatives

The Canadian Human Rights Act, Section 2, states that "Every individual should have an equal opportunity with other individuals to make for himself or herself the life that he or she is able and wishes to have, consistent with his or her duties and obligations as a member of society." It prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex and nine other characteristics. It covers discriminatory acts in employment, employment applications and advertisements, pay, employee organizations, provision of goods and services, reasonable accommodation, discriminatory notices, harassment, and so on. The Canadian Human Rights Commission investigates complaints; monitors annual reports filed by Federally regulated employers; monitors programs, policies, and legislation affecting designated groups; and develops and conducts information programs to promote public understanding of the provisions of the act.

Harassment is defined as any unwelcome physical, visual, or verbal conduct (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 1991). It may include verbal or practical jokes, insults, threats, personal comments, or innuendo. It may take the form of posters, pictures, or graffiti. It may involve touching, stroking, pushing, pinching, or any unwelcome physical conduct, including physical assault. Unwelcome sexual acts, comments, or propositions are harassment. Offensive acts such as leering or similar gestures also can constitute harassment. A person does not have to be touched or threatened to have been harassed. According to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, any behavior that insults or intimidates is harassment if a reasonable person should have known that the behavior was unwelcome.

In the case of *Bonnie R. v. the Department of National Defence*, the department was held responsible for the acts of a foreman. The Supreme Court of Canada stated that an employer has a responsibility to provide a work environment free of harassment and added, “. . . only an employer can remedy undesirable effects [of discrimination]; only an employer can provide the most important remedy—a healthy work environment” (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 1991, pp. 45).

U.K. Initiatives

In 1990 Prime Minister John Major launched a business-led campaign called “Opportunity 2000” to increase the quality and quantity of women’s participation in the work force. This program provides a manual of “how-to” instructions to assist organizations in planning how to utilize women more effectively in organizations. A key factor is the development of training that helps them not only to prepare for business and the workplace but also to optimize the unique skills that women can bring to a male-oriented work environment.

In March, 1992, *Today* reported that in the U.K. “Sex pests are in for a shock under new Government guidelines. They will be hunted down by a new generation of ‘sex spies’ and then taken to court” (“Spies in Office,” 1992, p. 2). The government is charged with ordering firms to set up teams to crack down on sexual harassment at work. More than 40,000 firms will be issued guidelines by Employment Minister Robert Jackson. *Today* goes on to say that firms will be urged to “pull down girlie pinups, stop wolf-whistling, and end dirty talk that can lead to humiliation for women” (“Spies in Office,” 1992, p. 2). Jackson has said that he is “determined to show that women do not have to put up with sexual harassment” (“Spies in Office,” 1992, p. 2).

Under the Employment Protection (Consolidation) Act of 1978, it may be possible for a U.K. employee to claim constructive dismissal where sexual harassment results in working conditions that are so intolerable as to cause the person to leave. The person also may make a claim under the Sex Discrimination Act whereby, in addition to employees’ liability for their own actions, employers can be held liable for the discriminatory actions of their employees. Furthermore, sexual harassment may amount to indecent assault (a hostile act accompanied by circumstances of indecency). In this

instance “hostile” means that the person receiving the act is an unwilling victim, and the act is a criminal offense.

The European Community

The European Community Code of Conduct, which was formally adopted on November 27, 1991, seeks to encourage the development and implementation of policies and practices that establish working environments free from sexual harassment and create a climate at work in which women and men “respect one another’s integrity.”

WHAT TRAINING NEEDS TO DO

Obviously, the extent of these laws will raise many questions. How is one to know where to draw the line? One answer is to ask whether the harasser’s wife/husband or daughter/son would want to be treated in such a way. Another way is to help harassers to realize the true motivation for some of their “kidding” behaviors. This may be difficult for some people; they must learn to differentiate among complimenting, patronizing, and soliciting. They must be given specific examples of what is and what is not considered sexual harassment, so that they have some concrete standards by which to judge their own behavior.

Women, too, have a responsibility for dealing with sexual harassment and will need training in learning how to do this. Trainers should help participants to practice making and receiving complaints. Furthermore, women have to learn how to confront undesired behavior openly the first time it occurs. This may be as simple as saying assertively, “When you (describe actual behavior), it makes me uncomfortable/offends me, and I would like you not to do it again.” Role playing can help people to learn how to respond to harassing behaviors (for example, how to discourage harassers) and what behaviors of theirs might actually be encouraging harassers.

Women must learn which behaviors of theirs are sending confusing messages to their male coworkers. For example, passive reception of sexual harassment may be a stalling tactic on the part of the harassee but may be interpreted as acceptance on the part of the harasser. This understanding on both sides will require some honest communication about past assumptions and present confusions. The input of other participants also can help to clarify situations and perceptions.

Rationally talking about responses to the issues of sexual discrimination and sexual harassment in the safety of the training session (such discussions should be confidential to the training setting) often leads to greatly increased awareness and sensitivity about what is generally considered to be an embarrassing topic. During sessions, participants may learn that they share some of the same reactions and fears.

Care must be taken not to make anyone hypersensitive to dealing with male-female issues, as this could lead to “backlash” behaviors. People should not be led to become paranoid about working with or being friendly with someone of the opposite sex.

It is becoming more and more obvious that women are an integral part of the work force. It is equally obvious that many people, both male and female, can benefit from training that is designed to facilitate the acceptance and development of women on the job.

MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS ALSO NEED TRAINING

Business owners, managers, and supervisors also have much to learn. Businesses must establish policies regarding sexual discrimination and sexual harassment and must convey those policies to all employees and supervisors. Both supervisors and organizations can be sued if sexual harassment occurs on the job, even if they were not aware of it, because it is their responsibility to see that it does not occur.

Managers and supervisors must understand, communicate, model, and enforce the organization's policies. They also must be trained in the procedures to be followed in receiving complaints, investigating them, and enforcing policies. Moreover, they must establish an atmosphere in the workplace in which people are not afraid to ask for guidance or to report harassment. They also must ensure that there are no reprisals, either for the alleged harasser or the harassee, while the complaint is being investigated and that there are no reprisals for the harassee or for any witnesses afterward.

In addition to establishing policies and procedures, organizations must require that supervisors treat all employees (including complainants) with respect and dignity. It has been suggested that some organizations may want to train some supervisors or workers as change-agent seeds—people (men and women) who take on the responsibility for calling subtle or not-so-subtle instances of discrimination or harassment to the offender's attention. Of course, this should be maintained as a learning experience and not be allowed to become a "Gestapo-like" operation.

UNDERSTANDING OF ISSUES LEADS TO GREATER PRODUCTIVITY

Much interpersonal training is based on the assumption that effective communication and clarification of differences contribute to increased understanding, which leads to greater harmony and increased ability to focus on the task. In any training session designed to explore and clarify male/female issues, an emphasis should be placed on listening and feeling free to express feelings about those issues. This may be easier for women to do than it is for men; consequently, helping the male participants to express their beliefs, attitudes, and feelings is one of the trainer's major goals. Similarly, the trainer must ensure that the women have the opportunity to express their views and are not overruled or cut off by the men, who may not be used to such sharing.

Some of the training objectives in such a situation are as follows:

- To increase listening skills;
- To become aware of one's own values and assumptions;

- To learn about the values and assumptions of others;
- To practice constructive confrontation techniques;
- To learn to use third-party intervention;
- To learn to use direct statements and “I” statements;
- To distinguish between thinking and “feeling” statements;
- To explore and understand different social styles; and
- To understand others’ task focus.

WHY EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING IS WELL-SUITED FOR SEXUAL-HARASSMENT-AWARENESS TRAINING

The experiential learning process, in which participants—both male and female—can “experience” a business activity in a comfortable, facilitated environment, is a productive means of exploring underlying issues and of learning communication and listening skills, problem-solving skills, and so on. In the safety of the educational environment, people can sort through their feelings, their assumptions, and their values as they hear about and relate to the values of others.

Training activities that are experiential in nature are well-suited to sexual harassment-awareness training. In such designs the participants learn from their own experiences, including their emotional responses, reflections, insights, and discussions with others. This differs substantially from didactic learning, in which predetermined “facts” are imparted to the learners. In experiential learning, although the situation is structured, much of the actual learning content is elicited from the participants themselves. Such an outcome takes skill on the part of the trainer; it is the part of training that often is called “facilitation.”

The popular Adult Learning Stages cycle described by Kolb (Kolb, Rubin, & McIntyre, 1971)—and subsequently developed and packaged by Honey and Mumford—has been used extensively throughout the U.K. in many training programs. In the U.S., Pfeiffer & Company has developed the “Experiential Learning Cycle” or ELC (Jones & Pfeiffer, 1975; Pfeiffer & Company, 1990), which elaborates on Kolb’s model. In brief, the ELC is as follows:

Experiencing. In the “activity” phase, participants do something that generates a common data base to be discussed, or “processed,” in the later stages. The activity may be making something, solving problems, sharing information, giving and receiving feedback, ranking, competing or collaborating, role playing, and so on. This is not the most significant part of the overall activity; if the process is shortchanged after this stage, it is simply a “game,” with learning left to chance.

Publishing. During this step people share their experiences—what happened to them and what their reactions (behavioral, emotional, and cognitive) and observations were

during the previous stage. In this way, all members of the group know “what happened.” It is important to stick to reactions and observations at this point and not to skip ahead to generalizing.

Processing. This step is a systematic examination of what happened, achieved by discussing patterns and dynamics. It can be done by means of reports given by process observers; thematic discussions; questionnaires; or other activities that help to identify recurring topics, trends, key dimensions, and the effects of particular behaviors within the artificial situation set up by the experiencing phase.

Generalizing. At this point the focus is taken off the initial activity and put on what happens in the real world. The emphasis is on “what tends to happen,” not on “what happened in this group.” The participants now are ready to take what they have learned and generalize it to broader situations. These generalizations may include styles of interaction and their effects, situations that evoke common behaviors, and basic “truths.” This is the part of the activity that answers the question “So what?” It is a good idea to have the participants create lists or other visual products to show what has been learned. If the trainer/facilitator wants to introduce conceptual data at this point, such data must be linked directly to the points that have been generalized by the participants.

Applying. The question in this stage is “Now what?” This is the time to plan effective use of what was learned. The trainer/facilitator can help the participants to apply their generalizations to actual situations in which they are involved. This increases the chance that the learning actually will be utilized. Participants can engage in subgroup discussions, goal setting, contracting, consulting, and practicing in order to reinforce planned applications. This is the end of the activity, but it is not the end of learning. Going out and “doing” something differently afterward is the experiencing step of a new learning cycle.

Activities that ask a question about sexual values can be very useful in encouraging the training participants to examine their own values and assumptions and to listen to others as they communicate theirs. It is best if the situation on which the activity is based is artificial, so that it does not threaten specific participants or relate too closely to their particular work environment(s). In this way the discussions can be focused on values, concepts, and feelings, rather than on past incidents or old resentments. Other activities that can be useful include listening and communicating exercises; surveys and questionnaires that generate discussion; structured role playing; and activities that demonstrate different approaches to communicating, relating, problem solving, and so on.

Although free-form role playing can be inflammatory, structured role playing can be quite revealing to the participants, especially if each role player plays both roles in order to experience both sides of the issue.

The trainer must be prepared to handle the questions that will arise. In many cases this does not mean answering the questions directly, but saying, “What do you think?” or encouraging the group members to volunteer their own answers. This is especially

helpful if the question does not have just one answer but is one of the realities of everyday life that must be assessed in terms of the situation.

CONCLUSION

Integrating the skills of both men and women in the workplace is a challenging task for any employee-development professional. Developing training that can meet the needs of both men and women will help significantly to maximize the productivity of the combined work force. Particularly if issues such as male-female differences and sexual discrimination and harassment can be explored and diffused with awareness training, the greater will be the chance that men and women will learn to treat each other with more understanding and respect.

This will accomplish much more than avoiding undesired or unproductive behaviors. It will allow both men and women to work together in a professional manner that enhances both their own careers and the overall productivity of the organization. Sooner rather than later, our society will require that everyone grow and change. Trainers in the next decade will have the great responsibility of helping people learn to understand, communicate with, solve problems with, and work with one another. Now is the time to begin.

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■ FROM VISION TO ACTION: DETERMINING THE IMPACT OF A MISSION STATEMENT

John Geirland and Eva Sonesh-Kedar

Abstract: A successful, thriving organization is created to fulfill a specific purpose and is sustained by a vision. Often the purpose and vision are incorporated into a mission statement intended to provide behavioral guidance for the members of the organization.

But how does an organization know whether employees are interpreting the mission correctly and consistently and whether they are translating it into appropriate action?

This article defines potential difficulties associated with a mission statement, presents a case study describing how employees in one organization interpreted its mission, and offers a step-by-step procedure for creating and administering a survey similar to the one used in the case study.

A mission statement is intended to be the guiding force behind an organization, providing employees with a direction, purpose, and context for their activities. But how can an organization determine whether its mission statement meets this intended goal?

In this article, we offer a powerful tool that organizational leaders can use to assess whether employee behavior is aligned with the organization's mission.

POTENTIAL DIFFICULTIES

The task associated with aligning employees and mission consists of much more than writing a good mission statement, distributing it, and explaining it carefully. The mission statement and its fulfillment present several potential difficulties that must be taken into account:

1. *A mission statement is necessarily general and, thus, open to interpretation.* Well-intentioned individuals may interpret the mission statement differently and end up working at cross-purposes. For example, consider an organization whose mission is to produce state-of-the-art computer technology. Given this mission, which activity carries more value, generating new designs or refining current designs? Both activities are important and have value; both are consistent with the organization's mission. How do employees decide which activity should be emphasized?
2. *A mission statement involves one-way communication.* As a result, management may have difficulty in determining whether employees have perceived the message as intended.
3. *Strategies for fulfilling the mission must change over time, in accordance with changing circumstances.* For instance, new strategies may be needed to deal with marketplace changes. And during a transition in top leadership, the new leader may

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define strategies that are strikingly different from those of his or her predecessor. Strategy changes, although necessary, often conflict with deeply ingrained organizational attitudes and behaviors. Consequently, they may be met with resistance.

These potential difficulties give rise to some important questions that an organization needs to answer:

- How is the mission statement being interpreted by employees? Are employees at different levels interpreting the mission statement differently?
- How are employees translating the mission statement into specific activities?
- How are employees incorporating new strategies into their understanding of the organization's mission?

One way to obtain answers (and subsequently provide corrective feedback) is to develop and administer a survey. The remainder of this article describes our intervention in a particular organization, which led to the creation of such a survey, and our recommendations for organizations that want to try the same kind of survey approach.

A CASE STUDY

New Leadership, New Strategies

We were asked to assist in the transition of leadership in a firm located in southern California. This organization was managed for over twenty-five years by David Pynchon,¹ a competent, no-nonsense leader with extensive experience and technical knowledge.

After David retired, Karen Pizzi was brought on board as David's replacement. Karen was a highly talented professional with years of experience working for a large consulting firm. She was considered an innovator in her field.

Karen soon discovered that although the general mission was well understood, the organization's basic structure and strategies had changed little during the past ten or fifteen years. Many members of the management team had been in their jobs for ten, fifteen, even twenty years. None had ever been expected to think innovatively, and Karen wondered if they knew how. Karen wanted to introduce new strategies for fulfilling the existing mission.

Karen was convinced that all employees needed to be more proactive in dealing with clients, building relationships, and solving problems. She also believed that the organization's current management practices and attitudes reinforced specialization and fragmentation of effort; as a result, only a few managers had the kind of larger business perspective that she thought was vital. Karen wanted the managers to adopt the larger

¹ All the names in this case study have been changed. Details about the nature of the company's work have also been kept vague to protect confidentiality.

perspective, and she wanted both managerial and nonmanagerial employees to provide clients with a more integrated set of services.

In a series of meetings with employees, Karen began espousing the organization's mission and her strategies for achieving that mission. These meetings were well received and useful. But later, in subsequent meetings and interactions, Karen found that many employees were still thinking and working in the old ways.

Survey Development

We began to work with Karen to develop a survey that would clarify how people were interpreting the mission statement and translating it into action. Our first task was to identify activities that were general enough to be relevant to most employees, but specific enough to be easily identified and related to everyday work experience. We used information from our previous interviews with employees to generate a representative sample of activities.

Then we worked with Karen to revise and refine the list. We made an effort to include activities that varied in their consistency with and support of Karen's strategies. Some activities represented behaviors that Karen wanted to see more widely adopted, while other activities represented older practices that Karen wished to deemphasize.

We decided that respondents would be asked two questions with regard to each activity:

- How is the activity currently valued in the organization?
- How should the activity be valued in the organization?

Survey Administration

We had asked Karen to complete the survey first, as we intended to use her value scores for comparison to those of other groups and levels in the organization.

Subsequently, everyone in the organization was given an opportunity to complete the survey. Participation was voluntary, and responses were kept confidential. The response rate was close to 90 percent.

After the surveys were completed, we were able to show Karen how well (or how poorly) her message was getting across. We broke out the data according to levels of the organization and departments. What we discovered was that, not surprisingly, the managers who reported directly to Karen were more in alignment with her values than were front-line employees. However, we also found several important activities for which there were dramatic differences between Karen's value scores and those of her top managers. As a result of our analysis, Karen knew which parts of her message she needed to emphasize and with which groups.

As can be seen in Table 1, Karen placed very little value on consistency with past practices and methods, whereas her managers placed somewhat greater value on consistency and the staff (nonmanagerial employees) highly valued consistency. Karen showed that she highly valued risk taking, whereas her managers and staff were far more

Table 1. How Activities Should Be Valued
Scale: 1 = Low Value; 10 = High Value

Activities	Karen	Managers	Staff
Remaining consistent with past practices and methods	1.00	2.29	6.14
Being cautious in decision making	3.00	4.57	7.40
Taking risks	9.00	7.00	5.93

risk averse. It was clear that for employees to be more proactive in dealing with clients, building relationships, and solving problems, they needed to abandon old practices and take more risks.

CREATING A CUSTOMIZED SURVEY

The development of a customized survey similar to the one used in our case study involves the following steps:

1. *Review the organization's mission statement.* If the organization has a written mission statement, review it and any memos or documents relating to how the mission statement was developed. Interview the organizational leader to clarify current thinking about the mission, vision, and values to be promoted.
2. *Generate a pool of activities.* Conduct interviews with organizational managers and nonmanagerial employees. Ask general questions about what people do on a daily basis, how they spend their time, and what activities they feel are important.
3. *Create a survey form* Activities will vary in their specificity, but try to end up with ones that are general enough to apply to most people in the organization, yet specific enough to be easily identifiable. Include activities that are consistent with the leader's espoused strategies as well as ones that are inconsistent. Also include some past practices that the leader suspects are still being pursued, despite adding little value in light of the leader's desired strategies. Work closely with the leader in developing and refining this survey. A sample survey form is provided in Figure 1.
4. *Have the organizational leader complete the survey, assigning numerical values to the activities.* The leader should indicate how he or she feels each activity is *currently valued* in the organization as a whole and how it *should be valued*. We recommend a ten-point scale, where 1 = "Low Value" and 10 = "High Value."

Instructions: Rate each of the following fourteen activities on a scale from 1 to 10, where 1 represents *low* value and 10 represents *high* value. Be sure to assign a rating in each column, showing how each activity *is currently valued* and how it *should be valued*.

Activities	How Activities Are Currently Valued in the Organization	How Activities Should Be Valued in the Organization
1. Remaining consistent with past practices and methods	_____	_____
2. Being cautious in decision making	_____	_____
3. Writing reports	_____	_____
4. Meeting deadlines	_____	_____
5. Being friendly	_____	_____
6. Collaborating with other departments	_____	_____
7. Making suggestions for improvements	_____	_____
8. Being accurate	_____	_____
9. Taking risks	_____	_____
10. Helping clients solve problems	_____	_____
11. Challenging existing work practices	_____	_____
12. Developing a broad business perspective	_____	_____
13. Taking initiative	_____	_____
14. Doing quality work	_____	_____

Figure 1. Sample Survey Form

5. *Administer the survey throughout the organization.* The survey may be administered in the form of a stand-alone instrument; or, as in the case study, the items may be incorporated into a larger survey instrument. Results may be summarized for different levels, departments, functions, or job classifications—usually in the form of mean (average) value scores. Compare these mean scores to the scores obtained from the organizational leader. Small differences indicate areas in which employees and the leader are in alignment; large differences indicate areas in which the leader’s message may not be getting through.

6. *Discuss value scores in a series of feedback sessions with managers and nonmanagerial employees.* Feedback sessions provide an opportunity to reinforce those activities that are aligned with the leader’s vision and to point out activities that should be deemphasized or abandoned. Include action planning in these sessions, when appropriate.

CONCLUSION

The results we obtained in Karen’s organization stimulated a lively and productive discussion about the need to abandon or deemphasize some older practices and embrace new ones. Subsequently, the organization moved in a direction that was closer to Karen’s strategies but still in keeping with the organization’s mission. She later told us, “I think they got the message.”

The methods described in this article offer the following potential benefits to organizations:

- A powerful tool for communicating a leader’s strategies and priorities throughout the organization;
- Feedback on people’s alignment with the organization’s mission, vision, and values;
- A clear idea of which parts of the organization are “getting the message” and which parts need help or attention; and
- The basis for creating a performance-review instrument.

SUGGESTED READING

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■ OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS: AN AID IN BENCHMARKING QUALITY

Elizabeth A. Smith

Abstract: The use of operational definitions broadens, clarifies, and improves the precision and scope of concepts used to benchmark quality and resulting quality standards. “Best” quality practices and standards can then be selected and used to foster and reinforce continuous quality improvement.

When processes used to define, assess, implement, and monitor quality are understood, the quality of all levels and types of work efforts and relationships within and beyond the organization is gradually improved and extended.

The article discusses and illustrates information sources, operational definitions and their uses, guidelines for using and developing operational definitions, using operational definitions in benchmarking, quality definitions and standards, and practical applications of operational definitions and benchmarking.

The 1990s have been and will continue to be the decade of quality. Most Fortune 500 companies have some type of quality assessment and improvement program in place. Efforts to recognize, measure, improve, and report quality are now being built into the visions, mission statements, and strategic plans and goals of most organizations. Quality and associated improvement efforts are slowly being ingrained in the way people in the organization think and perform.

Organizations that adjust to change slowly, or do not have an adequate model for change, have a difficult time introducing and implementing any form of improvement effort, quality or otherwise. It is common to adopt one or even a number of quality initiatives, like Total Quality Management, to streamline operations, increase productivity, and reduce cost. No one method works for all, or works the same way in different organizations. There is rarely an immediate payout on quality. Often five or more years are required to realize substantial gains in quality.

Concerns

A prime concern in the quality effort is to determine whether efforts to benchmark quality actually focus on and adequately measure significant key business areas of vital concern to organizational stability and future success. Although selection criteria may be broad and carefully developed, as organizations expand their operations to include partners and alliances with other organizations, the number of sources of information steadily increases. Growing customer demands and increased competition in the

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marketplace also must be considered. Major factors from within and beyond the organization influence organizational performance in a variety of unexpected and often unpredictable ways.

A second concern is whether, once key business areas are selected, like quality, efficiency, or sales, descriptions and definitions of these key areas are conveyed in clear, concise terms that are readily communicated and understood. Benchmarking, the prime tool of quality improvement and change efforts, often establishes what is benchmarked, how it is benchmarked, and how results are obtained, interpreted, and used in the organization. Is this too much to expect of benchmarking?

A third concern involves the obtaining of a representative sample of information on key business areas from throughout the organization. Standard questions include the following: “Information from whom?” “Where should we look?” “How shall we obtain this information?” “Is it what we are looking for?” “Is it valid information?”

This paper discusses and illustrates (1) information sources; (2) operational definitions and guidelines for using and developing them; (3) the use of operational definitions in benchmarking; (4) quality definitions and standards; and (5) practical applications of operational definitions and benchmarking.

INFORMATION SOURCES

Prime information sources are people at all levels of the organization, key-result areas, and sources outside the organization. It is important to obtain quantitative, or numeric, data and qualitative, or descriptive, information (Smith, 1991). It is necessary to differentiate between product-based and service-based industries. Efforts to assess and benchmark quality began in product-based industries; these same methods seldom work well in service-based industries (Smith, 1995a).

People Doing the Job

The information people provide about their jobs reflects the broad spectrum of work efforts and activities in the entire organization. Work activities and outcomes range from simple, general, or clerical work to the complex, specific activities of performing medical research in space.

The best and most reliable or predictable overall sources of information in any area, including quality, come from people doing the job. They know more about it than anyone else; their descriptions of their jobs provide details that could not be obtained any other way. People, if asked and listened to, know how to change and improve their jobs and also how to achieve and enhance quality.

Customers and Other Significant Contributors

It is vital to get information from anyone involved in the development, production, and delivery of services and products. All types of “involved customers,” partners, suppliers,

and end users now define and redefine what they want, when they want it, how much they will pay, and what they will want in the future.

When customers know you are sincerely interested in their input, they will be delighted to supply all you want to know (and more). Some of the most important information comes from personal contact, like face-to-face conversations or telephone discussions. Thinking like customers and communicating one-on-one helps bring “suppliers” closer to their “customers.”

Surveys, questionnaires, and interviews designed for specific suppliers or developers of products or services are also useful. Valuable information often comes from “reading between the lines.”

Standards used for products and services should consider customers’ needs and expectations. Major sources of standards from within the organization are based on input from the work force who delivers the services and creates the products. Additional standards from the customer’s point of view include cost, cycle time, status of technology, and competition in the marketplace.

Key Results

Systems methods and models are commonly used to determine key or end results. Major variables in a system exhibit a sequence or flow of input, throughput, and output and/or outcome activities. Feedback, which is designed for monitoring, improvement, and control, can be recycled through the system.

Areas of key results are unique to each organization, as no two entities, departments, or separate units are exactly alike. Traditional key-result areas are usually end results or output. Examples include efficiency, effectiveness, service, sales, and financial return (Bain, 1982). In most organizations, key-result areas are incorporated into mission and goals statements.

Outcomes, the far-reaching, possibly negative, effects of change efforts in general, like downsizing and reengineering, are seldom considered logical examples of end-result areas. Outcomes such as “good will,” the recognized reputation of a company, or spin-off from customer services, on the other hand, can be seen as opportunities.

The key-result areas for the 7,500 employees in the Property and Casualty Division of the United Services Automobile Association, an auto and homeowners insurer, which generates 75 percent to 80 percent of the company’s revenue, are listed in descending order of priority: (1) service, (2) profitability and financial strength, (3) competitive advantage, (4) operating efficiency and productivity, (5) loss control, (6) human resources, and (7) growth (Teal, 1991).

In a start-up business, key-result areas are critical, as a prime concern is to develop a strong customer base. In an established company, the focus may be on the logistics of expanding into uncharted waters. As organizations grow and mature, key-result areas and accompanying definitions and standards for quality must grow and change to reflect new visions and goals.

Soft Data

Most soft data are subjective and difficult to define, collect, and analyze. Examples of soft data are work habits, work climate, feelings, and attitudes.

Other sources of soft, or qualitative data, are observations, discussions, interviews, and various types of job-related documents or records, like job descriptions and performance appraisals (Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Patton, 1990). Soft data are gaining recognition as a major source of valuable information (Smith, 1995a).

Hard Data

Quantitative data, or hard data, represent measurements often based on output, like the number of units produced and the time, costs, and quality involved (Phillips, 1983) or the number of customers served in a specific period of time.

Quantitative and qualitative data used to measure or assess the same variables can be compared to determine reliability. It is extremely important to determine the reliability and validity of data sources. *Reliability* is a measure of consistency throughout a series of measurements, observations, or repeated activities. *Validity* represents how closely a measuring instrument indicates or measures what it is supposed to measure. Validity is discussed in detail in a following section.

Product-Based and Service-Based Areas

The line that formerly separated products from services is growing fainter. Often products come with a built-in service, like a laptop computer with software already installed.

Products

A product is defined as "...a transformation of energy and matter into a presumably desirable form, at desirable locations, and at an appropriate time" (Schwartz, 1992). Most products are the tangible results of some manufacturing or materials-processing industry. Products and their attributes and deficiencies, like defects, deviations, and cycle time, can be measured and documented in numeric terms (Smith, 1995a).

Services

A definition of services includes all those economic activities in which the primary goal is neither a product nor a construction (Quinn & Gagnon, 1986). A service is also an intangible performance that customers interpret in different ways. The quality and value are judged, for example, by courtesy, speed, and competence (Smith, 1995a).

Although 70 to 75 percent of the gross national product of the United States is spent on services, many measurement and evaluation systems are based on products. Most service industries provide intangibles, like advice (legal and financial) and opportunity (education). It is very difficult, if not impossible, to define "advice" and "opportunity"

in meaningful ways. Each definition incorporates the frame of reference, beliefs, attitudes, education, and work experience of the person developing and using it. Definitions may also reflect a service or product orientation and incorporate aspects of the organization's culture.

Key-result areas apply equally to services and products. Information from the product area is relatively easy to obtain, measure, and document. Customers readily compare cars, computers, and clothes on a wide range of standard, often well-known and accepted dimensions. The descriptive information from service areas is more elusive.

Validity

Simply stated, a measure is valid when it is designed to measure something, and it does exactly that. For example, a measure of mathematical skills is valid if good mathematicians perform well on the test. The proof is in the performance.

Measures are considered basically valid when they are sufficiently well constructed or fine tuned to detect small differences in what they are measuring, whether it is mathematical skills, quality, or personal or organizational attributes. Appropriate use of valid techniques produces valid or meaningful results. Organizations with successful quality and improvement programs have developed valid models for organizational change and also for quality.

Validity of Definitions

Validity of definitions can be verified by determining whether those using the definition understand it and whether they can define the concept in very similar ways. This information can be obtained through conversations, either in person or by telephone, and surveys and questionnaires.

Some definitions may appear to address a specific factor or variable but actually measure only the outward or surface representation of quality, like "looks good." These invalid measures should be discarded.

Data from readily available information or records should be used only if they are considered to be valid. Easy paths to information seldom lead in the right direction. When in doubt, ask the person doing the job about the meaningfulness of the data and also ask those using the product or service.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Operational definitions are not new concepts. Bridgeman, a physicist, used operational definitions early in the 20th Century. The most common use and application are in benchmarking, the core of total quality management.

Major topics are (1) descriptions and uses of operational definitions, (2) guidelines for developing and using operational definitions, and (3) using operational definitions to benchmark.

What Is an Operational Definition?

Operational definitions are one way to explain or clarify the meanings of words, ideas, concepts, and processes that people normally take for granted but do not really understand. These definitions employ concepts according to how they are used. For instance, operational definitions can be used to describe job content and work processes using precise terms people understand.

When people ask “What do you really mean?” they usually want more information or a better explanation. They may want another definition or more detail. Everything can be described more clearly. Simple words that are easy to comprehend can help. Operational definitions specify the content of the definition and the process or ways in which the definition is used. This two-pronged approach increases the depth and range or scope of the definition. We must be able to describe something before we can understand it or know how important it really is. Understanding precedes agreement. When we know how major concepts are used at work, we then add them to our vocabulary and start to use them with confidence.

A Common Language

Operational definitions enable people in different departments, even different organizations, to use a common language to describe and assess quality. Understanding any factors or processes in depth requires having a clear working definition for the basic concepts involved.

When key concepts related to quality and associated areas are operationalized, the value and usefulness of these definitions can be expanded and enhanced. The resulting definitions provide focus, guidelines, and consistency.

For instance, the gap between the 99-percent customer satisfaction that is expected and the 90-percent customer satisfaction that is achieved means there are problems. Developing clear expectations and precise standards for specific key output and processes is one solution. By clearly defining goals, objectives, and standards, an organization can minimize variances in results, and the gap can be reduced.

It is precisely this discrepancy or gap between what customers want or need and what they really get that causes the majority of customer dissatisfaction. For example, customers and suppliers seldom agree on the exact meaning of “good” or “excellent” service.

Clients, customers, end users, partners, suppliers, and others have their own ideas or standards for “service” and “quality.” For example, Federal Express believes in nothing less than 100-percent customer satisfaction.

Uses of Operational Definitions

Operational definitions can be used in various ways:

1. *To build a base of information* and standards for dealing with internal and external customers in a wide range of areas and industries. In general, definitions

built on shared expectations and knowledge of suppliers and customers incorporate common concepts and standards. This helps cement a foundation for developing contracts, building partnerships, and forming alliances.

2. *To develop a common language* that everyone throughout the organization understands. It should provide standard, base terms that unify concepts and reduce disagreement. The only universal language of business is financial accounting (Senge, 1990). Using a language that is primarily numeric is a beginning point, but not an effective way to communicate complex issues. Descriptive definitions can be used to supplement the numeric definitions or standards.
3. *To operationalize concepts* in a given area or unit to ensure the uniformity of scope, content, or level of complexity, for instance. These procedures provide a unified framework to examine factors affecting the design, development, and provision of products and services. Such standardization is extremely beneficial when working with suppliers and partners who may be next door or around the world. This common framework helps facilitate two-way communication. The ultimate goal is to create a set of definitions that enhance understanding and communication and streamline business interactions, yet provide a strong base for quality.
4. *To fine-tune existing definitions* of key activities and results that have been benchmarked, thereby increasing the precision, flexibility, and scope of definitions in numerous product and service areas. The goal is to enhance end user and/or customer satisfaction and ultimately increase quality and productivity.
5. *To make it possible to analyze work methods* and accomplishments by grouping work done on the job into areas that describe various types and levels of work activities, such as clerical, support, professional, specialist, or knowledge workers. Separate operational definitions could be used for each category. This process could be applied to analyzing jobs, developing job assignments, doing performance appraisals, and cross-training.
6. *To clarify major job objectives* in order to make it easier to determine and describe job-related standards for quality. Since every person does his or her job in a slightly different manner, it is critical to recognize and document uniquenesses or individual differences and accompanying standards for quality.
7. *To describe the fine points of products, processes, and services.* When common terms emerge, all parties experience a feeling of unity. This process works well when creating ground rules for a new project, when current projects start to bog down, or when it is necessary to clarify meanings of concepts and processes to reach consensus.

8. *To recognize and appreciate other people's special talents, professions, experiences, and points of view.* Users select a “best” or “most appropriate” definition, which is often one they understand best or one in which they have a vested interest. Differences are frequently based on personal preferences, type of organization, culture, or nationality. Globalization of business requires customers and suppliers around the world to communicate accurately and effectively.

Guidelines for Using Operational Definitions

People who work together to develop operational definitions to be used in benchmarking learn a great deal from the various processes of working together. Group discussions, disagreement, and communication in general broaden the variety and scope of resulting definitions. Defining and redefining similar words to achieve the “best” definitions increases the precision of the end result. Those who work together learn together.

Group Methods

Brainstorming and Nominal Group Technique are two of the group methods that can be used to generate operational definitions (Smith, 1995a).

Assumptions underlying the use of group methods are based on material previously discussed, including the use of key-result areas; the need for adequate information sources from representative people and types of output; and the benefit of a wide range of definitions on which consensus is gradually reached.

Brainstorming

This fast-paced, unstructured group technique is one way to obtain as many basic ideas as possible in a short time period. Group members call out their ideas or answers as quickly as they think of them. No one criticizes or evaluates other people's contributions. Recorders write down what is said.

1. People can brainstorm individually by writing out as many synonyms or short definitions for quality as they can in five or ten minutes. They can also brainstorm as a group. Lists may have ten to fifteen items, like “excellence,” “superior,” “high grade,” “outstanding,” “superior,” “best,” “supreme,” or “top-of-the-line.” At a later date, or in the next group meeting, each synonym is defined in terms of how it is used or what it really means.
2. People meet in a group and evaluate each definition. A rating scale may be used to evaluate and rank each definition along the dimensions of relevancy, clarity, or contribution to value. Individuals or groups select or rate definitions that most closely fit their work group or standards for quality or meet other important job-related criteria.
3. Group members then discuss each definition until they either reach consensus or “agree to disagree.” Lack of agreement indicates that there are different

interpretations of the same or similar concepts or processes. This is due to uniquenesses or to wide individual differences in how people do their jobs and how they feel about quality standards. For example, one person may readily accept 95-percent accuracy while another person always strives for perfection.

Nominal Group Technique (NGT)

This group decision-making process, developed by Delbecq and Van de Ven in 1968 and further refined (Van de Ven, 1974; Delbecq, Van de Ven, & Gustafson, 1975), is a gradual process of discussion within work groups, often to achieve consensus.

Groups use this structured, participative decision-making approach to clarify ideas and develop decentralized measurement and evaluation systems. NGT works best when group members know one another or routinely work together (Van de Ven, 1974). An ideal group size is six to eight people. Two to three hours of time may be required.

NGT is used to generate ideas on a given topic and to create goals, objectives, and methods for specific purposes, like developing various forms of standards or measures. Standard steps are the following: (1) a clear, unambiguous problem statement is developed; (2) each group member silently generates and records ideas; (3) the Round Robin technique is used to record ideas on a flip chart; (4) the facilitator directs the discussion and helps clarify each person's ideas; and (5) final decisions are reached by each member silently ranking or rating each item and voting on priorities.

Guidelines for Developing Operational Definitions

Developing operational definitions in groups (Smith, 1995a) utilizes group processes resembling those used in most problem-solving groups.

1. Unless existing definitions are still current and relevant, update or expand them to reflect new and different standards.
2. Ensure that experienced and less-experienced people work together. Encourage cross-functional teams to develop definitions based on common understanding, which are unique to their discipline or current focus. Cross-functional associations offer the benefits of learning and communication and have the synergistic effect of adding value.
3. Set ground rules and clarify what needs to be done. When work teams from various disciplines (cross-functional teams) first meet, they will need to develop a common framework to examine concepts with which they are unfamiliar.
4. Involve as many people as possible from the entire cycle of contact, for example, idea people to customers. Broader, more complete definitions are created by groups that have a wide focus and a broad experience base. Definitions must be equally appropriate for internal organizational customers, like marketing, and for external customers.

5. Use representative work activities and outcomes from service and product areas. Distinguish between services and products where possible. Try to view products and services from the “other” person’s perspective.
6. Encourage people to take ownership in both the process of developing a definition and the definition itself. People who believe in the definitions they help create are likely to use them.
7. If possible, determine where the organization is in its growth cycle. Mature, fully functioning organizations, for example, will have a strong culture; their visions, missions, goals, and strategic plans will be different from those of new, energetic, flexible, start-up companies.
8. Look for cultural differences in operating procedures, viewpoints, and leadership style; in spin-off, newly merged organizations or organizations in which outsourcing is common, determining a clear-cut culture can be difficult.
9. Use a systems feedback approach to generate definitions and keep them current. Follow the sequence of (1) input, (2) throughput, and (3) output. Feedback that cycles through the system may re-enter at any point. Feedback on the “fit” of the definition may be directed to customers, clients, partners, and numerous end users.
10. Ensure that definitions incorporate the changing nature of work and the workplace. However, avoid improvement that is an end unto itself.

USING OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS TO BENCHMARK

Applying the process of developing operational definitions to benchmarking naturally begins with defining benchmarking. This key process in quality change and improvement initiatives reflects many personal and organizational factors, including the service sector, in product-based and materials-processing industries (Smith, 1995a).

Benchmarking

“Benchmarking,” a term first used in surveying, is a standard or point of reference from which measurements can be made. In organizations, benchmarking is a continuous, systematic process of measuring a company’s current business operations and comparing them to the operations of “best practices” companies.

Benchmarking plays a prime role in total quality management and is a key factor in many processes that organizations use to evaluate “quality status.”

Definitions of benchmarking and benchmarking processes are still evolving. Some examples of operational definitions of benchmarking follow (Pulat, 1994):

- In 1979, Xerox redefined benchmarking as a continuous process used to measure products, services, and practices against those of companies recognized as world leaders or competitors.

- Benchmarking is “. . . the process of identifying, understanding and adapting outstanding practices and processes from organizations anywhere in the world to help your organization improve its performance” (O’Dell, 1994).
- Ford Motor Company has a structured approach for learning from others and applying that knowledge; 3M, a tool to search for enablers that allow a company to perform at a best-in-class level in a business process; AT&T Benchmark Group, the continuous process of measuring current business operations and comparing them to best-in-class companies.

Benchmarking targets key areas within a company, department, or unit and focuses on jobs that can be improved. This process identifies and studies the best practices others use in these same areas, and it implements new processes and systems to increase quality or productivity or to make other major improvements.

Benchmarking provides a methodology that can be tied to any financial or nonfinancial measure. Eccles (1991) believes that benchmarking has a transforming effect on managerial mind-sets and perspectives. For instance, in successful “organizations of the future,” new mind-sets and models that reflect shared understandings of interrelationships and patterns of change will replace linear, short-term thinking (Senge, 1990). Benchmarking these somewhat intangible concepts will be a challenge.

The main types of benchmarking are

- *Internal or operational*: the most common type, an in-depth, internal analysis and comparison of an organization’s functional operations in critical success areas. An organization’s high performing units or functions known to be performed well can be benchmarked by other units within the same organization.
- *Competitive*: competitors and/or others are identified in industries that demonstrate high-level performance in some area, like chip manufacture, and then the organization’s own performance is compared to theirs (Eccles, 1991).
- *Strategic*: critical success factors or outstanding business strategies in any industry are identified, regardless of the nature of products or services.

Overall, benchmarking requires a high level of self-knowledge, clear objectives, and customer awareness. Without appropriate mechanisms to measure performance and implement change anywhere in the company, most benchmarking efforts will fail (Mittelstaedt, 1992).

Quality

Definition

Many people define quality in terms of their work world. Definitions for quality must adequately represent the strong emphasis on service areas. Estimates of the percentage of service workers in the U.S. range from seventy to nearly ninety percent. Some people

work in both areas, and separating products from their service components is seldom easy. Common definitions of quality include the following elements (Smith, 1995a):

1. *Conformance to standards* represents the degree to which a service or product complies with a predetermined set of standards. Examples could be a specific numeric standard, such as “Three or Four Sigma” or “zero defects.” A descriptive standard could be a customer’s definition of “high quality.” Standards may originate with the developer, supplier, or vendor or be a one-of-a-kind prototype.
2. *Timeliness* means that the customer does not have to wait for goods or services.
3. *Fitness for use* could either imply (in descriptive terms) or specify (in numeric terms) a product’s or service’s convenience, availability, or durability.
4. *Value in the marketplace* is a bottom-line standard for acceptance. Customers and competitors are the ultimate judges of value or overall usefulness.
5. Quality is also based on *perceptions and expectations*, as “in the eye of the beholder” implies. Customers define quality by value, cost, and by their own gradually increasing standards for quality and service.

Standards

Standards for quality may be outlined in key-result areas and also specified in mission or vision statements. They may also be incorporated into the strategic plans of the organization.

A common numeric term used to express quality standards is the number of defects or errors per total number of units produced, like one defect per hundred thousand units. Motorola’s Six Sigma, or three errors per million, is a longstanding, well-known standard. The Six Sigma level is one way to express literally hundreds of elements of vital numeric and descriptive information in the entire flow of a manufacturing process (Smith, 1996).

Numeric end-result or output variables used to represent standards are relatively easy to understand and communicate to others. Using numbers to make comparisons over varying period of time, like months or years, is standard operating procedure.

For instance, customer satisfaction is measured in percentage points: 98- or 99- or 100-percent satisfaction. The type of industry often dictates the type of quality measure. Service industries usually relate to customer or end-user satisfaction. Product-based industries often use ratios of scrap or waste or damaged units to total number of units produced.

Once people understand quality and what it means in terms of their jobs, they can gradually develop expectations and standards for quality in their work. These same expectations and standards extend to the work of others and to the overall quality of services and products. Quality cannot be judged without uniform baselines or realistic, carefully developed standards. Increasingly, standards are set by discerning, demanding customers.

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

We usually have more information available than we use. Now, more than ever before, we should make every attempt possible to apply what we know and to use our expertise to develop creative, cost-effective solutions for our everyday problems. Some practical applications can be suggested:

- Use carefully developed, realistic, valid definitions of quality and accompanying quality standards to measure and to make meaningful comparisons in any area, not just in quality. Operational definitions and benchmarking are the major tools, but how carefully the tools are used is the critical issue.
- Benchmarking can be used to improve customer service, reduce delivery time, improve financial performance, enhance product and service development cycles, and encourage and reinforce top management commitment. Any application of benchmarking must use the knowledge gained to build a base of operational plans that meet and surpass industry best practices.
- Operational definitions used as a basis for benchmarking and recording results can be documented in a “clearinghouse” of “best” or most frequently used definitions and specifications. Definitions of important activities can then be used to make between- and within-industry comparisons. Resulting information may be used to develop more reliable and valid assessments of bottom-line benefits, like customer satisfaction, product demand, competitive position, and last but not least, profits.

SUMMARY

Benchmarking and the use of operational definitions can become a way of life. Once operational definitions are jointly developed, acceptable standards incorporating quality, cost, cycle time, and other critical variables form a strong base for benchmarking and developing quality standards in other areas. Notable examples are customer satisfaction, customer forums, and free and open communication between customers and suppliers. These efforts will produce innovative ideas, relationships, and encourage the formation of partnerships for mutual gain.

With effort and direction, an organization can develop its own definitions of various key concepts. These concepts will gradually work their way into its culture, where they will be accepted by the workforce. When people throughout an organization determine what basic elements are important and what the key results should be, and they use a common terminology to describe what they are doing, they will have traveled a long way on the unmapped, endless road to quality.

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