

IMAGE

AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL
ON
PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

THE INSTITUTE OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS and LENS INTERNATIONAL

IMAGE

AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL ON PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

The Action Research Journal is written to communicate designs, formats and ideas of transformational processes which promote the human factor in private and public sectors. It is published by the Corporate Services Division of The Institute of Cultural Affairs: India for distribution through the Asia Network of ICA and LENS International organisations. These include ICA: India (Bombay, Calcutta, Chikhale and Pune), LENS Services Pvt. Ltd. (New Delhi), LENS International Malaysia Sdn. Bhd., ICA: Australia, ICA: Taiwan, ICA Associates (Hong Kong) and LENS International Japan.

The Action Research Journal will draw on a variety of sources including other ICA world-wide offices and affiliated professional consulting organisations to provide a spectrum of practical tools and constructs that facilitate individual and organisational transformation. We welcome comments and articles from our readers.

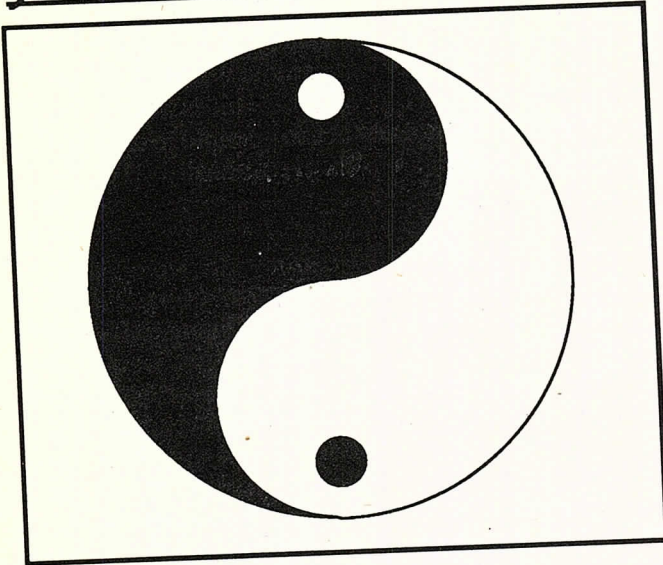
ISSUE EIGHT JUNE 1990

"IMPLEMENTATION"

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JOURNAL OVERVIEW



The Tao of Implementation

In a change process, it is not enough to know what needs to be done, but the how you do it that is most important. The LENS Process developed by the ICA is an effective tool for developing an action plan for any group. The success of the plan depends on the capacity of a group to see the final step, developing a 3 month implementation plan, as an act of creativity. It needn't be a LENS plan only; implementing a set of MBO's or KRA's requires the same type of creative thinking.

There are many key components in an organisational transformation process. Establishing a compelling vision, leadership at the top committed to change, a participatory culture and a set of values actively guiding the decision making are all necessary. But without an understanding of effective implementation and how to journey the organisation through its change stages, a plan remains more as potential than reality.

There are no standard things to do. Each organisation is unique, not only in its history and situation, but the operating environments, the workforce and its culture. Quality experts know what is needed, but have had limited success in transferring their insights into effective action. Business Management schools have numerous case histories on turnarounds and rapid growth companies, but most graduates would agree that it isn't possible to use someone else's way of succeeding in their own situation. Tom Peters, perhaps the most passionate spokesman today on the need to radically initiate change, is quick to admit that the how of change is elusive for his disciples. Many of the companies cited in his books and videos are no longer functioning as role models of transformation.

Harrison Owen comes closest to the key with his analysis of "Spirit" and the "Open Space" concept of transformation. We would most heartily agree. In our analysis, companies that have brought about significant change are those that begin to understand that underneath all real change is a fundamental shift in the spirit of the organisation. Where this has not happened, we have often seen "improvement" but not what would be called transformation.

With the term Spirit, we are talking about more than just the atmosphere or mood of an organisation, as in, "this is an informal and friendly place to work". Like the spirit of an individual, an organisation's spirit lies deep beneath the surface, like a template or archetype that manifests itself in maintaining certain modes of behavior and thinking. It resists change. An organisation takes its character from the values it holds, its sense of mission and purpose and perhaps most importantly, from its operating culture and environment.

Encountering Contradictions

When implementing actions change or counter "the way things are" they interact with the spirit of an organisation at different levels. We have called those encounters "Contradictions". At the surface level certain systems or procedures are malfunctioning. These structural contradictions are relatively easy to change and give you an improved situation. At the second level, attitudes and behavior patterns give relational contradictions. Inter-department conflicts in priorities, "turfism" and personal differences are signs of this level. These "closed" spirit issues are deeper, like a festering wound and require a sensitive healing touch by the change agent.

Deeper still are the misdirections of strategic contradictions. They reside in the sense of mission or lack thereof. Many times they are seen as leadership issues. They are forces taking the organisation in a certain direction and, like a locked gyroscope, they "keep the ship on course". Mediocre performance by individuals, "target mentality", where targets substitute for a sense of mission, and predictable performance patterns are indications that "major surgery" is required to root out the contradiction. Like a virus with a built-in immune system, these contradictions seem to reinfect the organisation. It takes more than a change at the top to alter them.

Finally, at the deepest level, are spirit contradictions. Perhaps even the word spiritual should be applied, for these contradictions reside in the very self-understanding of the organisation, its sense of purpose and how well it understands its profound role in the creative process of civilisation.

Change at this level is truly transformational and requires the institution to take on new paradigmatic modes of thinking and acting. Rooted in the values and philosophy of the organisation, it is also deeply intertwined with the prevailing culture.

Fortunately this level is being brought to the surface in our time in dramatic and challenging ways that enable the change agents within an organisation to draw on allied spiritual changes that are transforming other dimensions of our planet. But this is extremely deep work and the forces of spiritual change are often wild and unfriendly. A real mastery of change process is required. Pain for the organisation is inevitable, for as Harrison Owen points out, you are dealing with "death and life" issues here. A change agent can easily be mistaken for an enemy of the organisation and be turned out or isolated in a "damage control" position.

Implementation actions at this level are truly of the magical and miracle modality. Often the winning action can be described as simple and elegant. It has as much to do with "not doing" as doing. The key lies in the integrity and purity of the change agent, for it is in and through his/her spirit that change occurs. It is the Tao of Leadership. Quotes from this book are to be found throughout this issue. We would recommend it for those on the journey of transformation and see themselves as part of the unity forces operating now in all levels and parts of our global society.

This Issue

This issue of the Image Journal is about the spirit of implementation. It is meant to be more descriptive than prescriptive. But we have included practical procedures and ideas that we use in our LENS process to give the reader some ideas on what it takes in the way of transformative thinking and action to set the stage for their own unique journey.

The first article, **The Dynamics of Implementation**, describes what you need to understand about transformation once you have your change actions, or tactics in place. It is an edited version of the talk given in the last session of a LENS programme.

Our methods section describes how to build an **Implementation Plan**. Thinking yourself through on a plan requires paying attention to details and anticipating just what you will do and in what sequence. One of the keys to an action plan is **Doing That Follow-up!** We describe one format for a follow-up that keeps the spirit going and at the same time allows for mid-course corrections.

"We've got to do this together" could be the sub-title for the next part on **The Real Task of Task Forces** by William J Altier. This article is taken from

Sloan Management Review. **Handling Group Conflicts** will give you some insight on what it takes to deal with "people" problems. It contains some hints and advice for keeping the "team spirit" alive.

Phasing the LENS Journey Process describes how you can view spirit changing through a year of planned change. Each phase lends itself to a different "feel" of spirit and will have a different energy of movement. The article outlines the focus of each phase and the dimensions of the change process which need attention.

To illustrate how effective implementation can happen through team effort, we are including **Three Case Studies** of Indian companies that have made a long term commitment to a participatory change process.

In our book review section we are including excerpts and commentary on two books helpful for implementation, **Winning Through Participation** by Laura Spencer and **Leadership Is** by Harrison Owen. Finally, after each section is a transitional statement from **Tao of Leadership** by John Heider. It is to remind us that it is the spirit of the change agent that makes all the difference. It is the WAY (Tao) of your actions, not the What that you must guard.



Being a Midwife

The wise leader does not intervene unnecessarily. The leader's presence is felt, but often the group runs itself. Lesser leaders do a lot, have followers, and form cults. Even worse ones use fear to energize the group and force to overcome resistance. Only the most dreadful leaders have bad reputations.

Remember that you are facilitating another person's process. It is not your process. Do not intrude. Do not control. Do not force your own needs and insights into the foreground.

If you do not trust a person's process, that person will not trust you.

Imagine that you are a midwife; you are assisting at someone else's birth. Do good without show or fuss. Facilitate what is happening. If you must take the lead, lead so that the mother is helped, yet still free and in charge.

When the baby is born, the mother will rightly say: "We did it ourselves!"

THE DYNAMICS OF IMPLEMENTATION

We have arrived at the point of implementation and for better or for worse, this is the action plan. Not to implement at this point is more than inaction. Not to implement would be a violation. The hardest part is implementation - I'm not going to fool you. It takes something special to decide to implement your plan, because all those contradictions we talked about will be waiting for you when you get back. Remember the contradictions are there in the system. It's as though many things in the system want to keep things the way they are. It'll not change easily, I am certain of that. So, who's going to do it?

I worked for 15 years with an organisation as a research chemist. I never rose to a high position in management, though I made a significant contribution in terms of inventing products. There were a lot of things about the way the company dealt with people about which I had strong objections. My colleagues and I rarely encountered the people in power, the ones who kept things the way they were. I spent much of my time bumping my head against a brick wall. If I knew then what I know now about change, I would probably still be working for them. But I didn't, and the frustrations only grew.

How Does Change Happen?

There are four things about change you need to know. Change happens with 1) **Indirection**. It's the indirect methods that finally bring about change, rarely the coming at things directly. Learn to fight the "enemy" on your terms, not theirs. Gandhi knew the British had all the power so he changed things by indirection. His picking up a handful of salt changed the whole understanding of power. 2) **Catalysis**. Change happens through catalyzing action; action that when done can trigger a greater change. 3) **Participatory**. It is actions that involve people. The more you can involve people the better chance you have of making change happen. People don't like to have change imposed on them by someone else. So you get involvement. You may know exactly what needs to happen in a situation, but instead you do a workshop and get people's ideas out and arrive at a decision and people "buy into" the change process. 4) **Informal**. Most change happens around and in between events. Most ideas are tried on an experimental basis before they are structured. It happens around the edges.

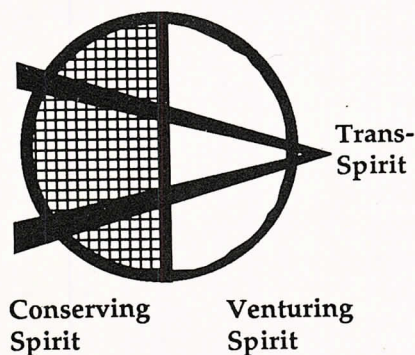
These four elements of change are incorporated throughout the LENS. We have built them into all our work. There is indirection built into the Vision - Contradictions - Strategic Actions sessions. In LENS a group steps away long enough to get a

clear vision, and, at the same time, analyse its contradictions. This helps give them a new perspective. Then you begin to think strategically. You align yourselves on what is the direction in which you are going to move, the specific actions that will get you there. Now, when you try to inject the implementation plan back into the system, guess what's going to happen? You'll get resistance. I guarantee that this will happen.

It is important to realise that in change you are always dealing with the question of Spirit. To bring about change you must develop a new spirit within the organisation that can counteract the prevailing spirit.

Spirit Forces

There are two "spirits" or forces present in all organisations. They are neither good nor bad - there are just there. One spirit is related to the structure as it has presently evolved. It is embedded in the policies, the present organisation chart, the standards and values. I call it the "conserving spirit". It's there. Most of us are hired to make sure that all those parts of the establishment are maintained. There is another force - and I don't want to convey that this is everyone else - this is a dynamic. It is an undercurrent for a sense that things need to change. I call it the "venturing spirit". Everyone finds themselves at moments being part of both of these spirits. Even the CEO of the company finds himself on both poles. On the venturing spirit side is



where I found myself. There was a barrier between people in the two different camps, having little way to relate. When these are the only two forces, war breaks out on the interface. Even if you succeed in establishing a "truce", war will break out again. What is needed in the organisation for change to take place is a third spirit. I want to call that the "Trans-spirit". People who embody this spirit see the needs of both sides of this barrier. They have one foot in

each camp and are willing to live in this tension to catalyse change. This "Spirit" appears or disappears as the need for change becomes acute. Their loyalty? The power of the Trans-Spirit does not reside in this circle. Most people's loyalty is inside the circle. For Trans-Spirit people, loyalty lies outside the circle - it lies with the future. These people mentally reside in the future. What does India need, or the world need? That's their loyalty. Their own context transcends the organisation, so they are in but not of the organisation.

Being the change force is sheer decision. One day you wake up to it. Nobody picked you, you discover this about yourself. I like to think of Gandhi - nobody ever said to him, "you need to lead people" and "here's your authority." No. He assumed it. Once you grasp this, then all power and authority are available to you.

What sustains you as the Trans-Spirit? For those within the circle there are plenty of good ways to be sustained. There are things to maintain loyalty, such as promotions and merit benefits. What we've found is that these people of the Trans-Spirit are sustained by organisations that produce with total excellence and by their own interior standards. Whatever that takes is what sustains them. Now, this is a small number of people, a small group that will bring about change, whatever it takes.

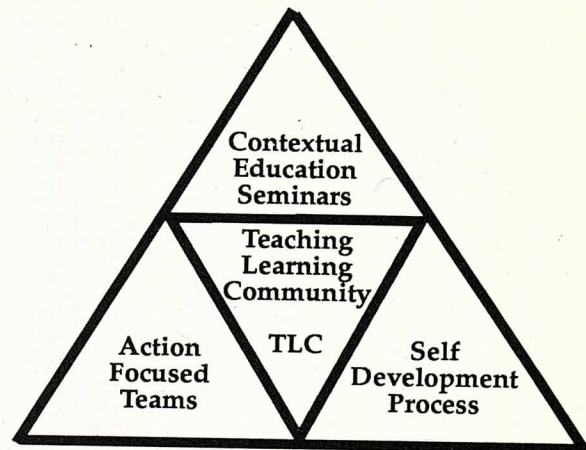
Teaching Learning Community

What form does this take? The best image I have at the moment is that this small group becomes a "Teaching Learning Community". There are 3 forms the TLC takes:

One form is Action Focused Team. If you anticipate crisis and see it coming, you get a group of people together and figure out what you can do about it. It is a short burst of creative energy, and you get your hands dirty.

The second form is Contextual Education Seminars. It is important that this group spend the time to constantly explore the "edge" of change management. This means taking time to read, study and share with each other broodings both about what must change and the process of change itself.

The third form has to do with Self-development. The trans-spirit must have a home, deep within individuals. All who see themselves part of this TLC must chart out a course for their own development. It means that you find ways to increase your own potential and capacities. It is essentially a spirit task. But it also involves mundane activities like visiting the customer, listening to people's problems and getting to know about other aspects of the



business. Finally it means taking responsibility for the spirit that is generated at the LENS. Maybe you meet over lunch and just talk about how things are going. Try to keep a pulse on the whole picture. Fill gaps and hold people accountable for their decisions. I have no doubt that if you operate with these three dynamic forms of the TLC that you will succeed in your transformation.

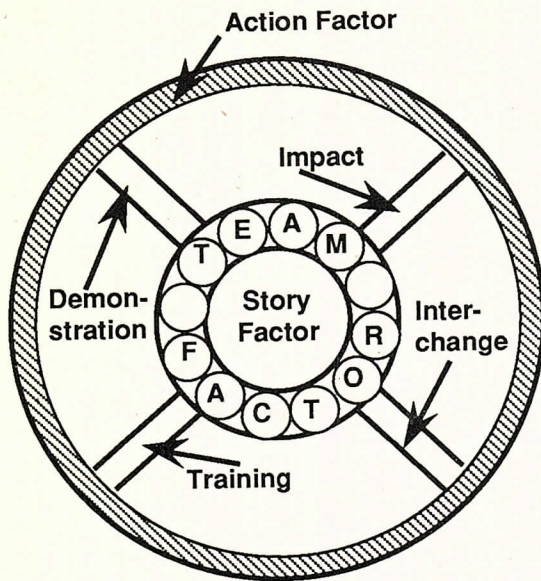
Spirit Generating Chakra

What do you do? Ensure that the following "Spirit Generating Chakra" is in operation. There are four **Systems** to get spinning and three **Factors** to care for. The first system is (1) - Demonstration - if you want things to change, you have to first demonstrate how it will work. Build a model and see if it flies. You need some demonstration that it is worth the investment of everyone's time and money. In a change process it works that way also - you choose one Department or a line and you demonstrate what is possible so that there is no longer any question about what can be done.

(2) - Impact - There's no use demonstrating if people aren't awake. Impact is all about waking people up. People fall asleep. You have to create awareness, get their heads up. But what happens when you put up a sign or a banner? After awhile people just walk right by it and fail to notice. So, Impact is a constant job. One company which had a priority task to accomplish had the team responsible wear green buttons with the word "Help" on it. Everyone else wore a red button saying "How can I help?" This is what catalyses change. It's the small wins. Open up people's eyes.

(3) - Interchange System - You need a system similar to a network. This enables people to

Transformation



exchange or share approaches that work. I'm not talking about something structured like a newsletter, but a more informal system that effectively lets people know what is working. Talk to each other!

(4) - Training - Again, I'm not talking about HRD or a formal training department. I'm talking about the skills of facilitation, running workshops, leading people in discussions, brainstorming and equipping people to lead others.

All four of these systems can be built into your planning today and you don't have to have special permission or change one thing in the organisation for this to happen.

In addition to the systems, there are three factors to care for. The first factor is the Action Factor - this is your action plan. It is the wheel itself, a set of actions that are constantly being updated and evaluated. Second is the Teamwork Factor. This is the hub, the "bearings" that allow the wheel to move. We are fanatics about teamwork - why? because you always need a joint perspective on the complexity. We believe in teams so much that we never send one where two will do. No one of us is smart enough to be on top of all that happens in a LENS. But together, we have a chance of covering all the points necessary. You need to do the same thing in your planning. Think of the team. The third factor is the "Myth" Factor. It is the "void in the centre" that is filled with the motivating stories of change. What story about the future are you going to live out of? Think of the story or myth and what needs to be communicated in your planning and implementation.

What happens when you do these things? I think we're talking about transformation. What you generally find is resentment or anger - in yourself and in others. You are angry at your situation, the unresponsiveness of the organisation, and at life in general. What happens is a transformation. Anger becomes care. What you have is care as a real companion and you see your anger transformed. We all experience frustration. You confront frustration and it gets transformed into creativity. You find yourself released to dream and act boldly in ways you never have before. What often happens is you experience ineffectiveness. Each of us feels our own individual efforts are unproductive. What you find is you have many colleagues who have made the same decision. You have been linked with a strange "league", a colleagueship with "Those Who Care" about the future. And you find them everywhere. Your ineffectivity gets transformed into corporateness.

Then there is fear. This is real fear. If you don't experience fear now, then you don't know what I'm talking about. Our warranty stops when you pick up the ball. There's no guarantee that this plan will work. This is the best plan we have. You will have to go back and put it together again and again. But your fear is finally transformed into courage.



Spiritual Awareness

Group work must include spiritual awareness if it is to touch the existential anxiety of our times. Without awe, the awful remains unspoken; a diffuse malaise remains.

Be willing to speak of traditional religion, no matter how offended some group members may be. Overcome the bias against the word of God. The great force of our spiritual roots lies in tradition, like it or not. The wise leader models spiritual behavior and lives in harmony with spiritual values. There is a way of knowing higher than reason; there is a self greater than egocentricity.

The leader demonstrates the power of selflessness and the unity of all creation.

CREATING AN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

In the process of implementation, task forces need tools to help them think through their action plans. In the LENS process the group develops a Tactical System which includes the actions required to activate Strategic Directions. From this list (usually 25-35) five to are selected by the group for the first phase of implementation. The selection criteria examines intuitively each tactic against the criteria of: Visible, Easy to Accomplish, Involves Most People, Catalytic and Individual Passion (personal interest in working on it).

Our experience with many organisations has shown that the **Implementation Brief** is useful in channeling the task force's data and plan of action. The Brief consists of the following:

a) Title and Number of Tactic.

Each task force has been assigned a specific tactic on which to work.

b) Task Force Name. The task force chooses a unique name which describes the task the group has chosen to do. Creating a suitable name gives focus and energy to the work they will undertake on behalf of the whole group and creates a unique identity. For example, in a LENS conducted in India, a group working on collection of overdue accounts called itself "Welcome Lakshmi" (the goddess of wealth). The group working on creating open dialogues between top management and the departments called itself "Open Heart".

c) Task Force Members. A listing of all task force members.

d) Intent of Tactic. A brief statement about what the tactic is to achieve, the purpose or intention of doing it.

e) Three Month Objective. The task force decides together on an achievable objective, or victory for a three month period of time. They may not

complete the entire tactic in three months but only initiate work on it and, therefore need to determine realistically what they can do to launch the tactic.

It is necessary to have the objective stated in terms that are quantifiable, visible and measurable. The objective needs to be a "stretch" for the group, but should be completed within the first 3 months. It is not necessary to have everything neatly completed at the end; some may accomplish it before the end of three months. In a plenary, the total group discusses all the stated Three Month Objectives to ensure that a consensus is reached about each task force's direction and target.

IMPLEMENTATION BRIEF													
NUMBER AND NAME OF TACTIC: _____							TASK FORCE NAME: _____						
INTENT OF TACTIC: _____							MEMBERS: _____						
THREE MONTH OBJECTIVE: _____							SYSTEMS CHECKLIST:						
							DEMONSTRATION						
							IMPACT						
							INTERCHANGE						
							TRAINING						
ACTION STEPS:													
WHAT		HOW			WHO			WHEN					
1.													
2.													
3.													
4.													
5.													
6.													
7.													
8.													
IMPLEMENTATION CALENDAR													
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	

f) **Action Steps.** Now the task force is ready to prepare a list of all the major action steps needed to reach their 3 month target. Each task force member contributes to the brainstorm, identifying how an action is to be done, who will do it and when it will be initiated. In this step, the group is encouraged to visualise the completed action. A couple of people "spin out" a scenario and others take notes. What you hope they will do is not try and describe all the details, but find innovative ways to involve people, such as workshops or forums. After creating a list of implementing actions (not necessarily in order) the group selects the 7-10 key ones and clearly identifies the "What" "How", "When" and "Who" for each step.

g) **Calendar Timeline.** Once the information is completed on when action steps will be initiated, the task force spreads the steps (1 to 10) across the 3 month calendar of 13 weeks to see the time flow. The numbered step is listed below the week in which the action step is initiated.

h) **Four Systems Checklist.** Finally, the group reviews its action steps according to the four informal systems at play in the implementation process: Demonstration, Impact, Interchange and Training.

The Plenary

Each Task Force puts up cards for each action under the week designated and the three month objective at the end of its assigned row. They then report on the timeline activities, starting with the 3 month objective. The facilitator allows only questions of clarity initially with a focus on the objective; is it realistic, do-able, bold enough? If there are lots of questions, it is sometimes easier to get them out and let the Task Force answer all at once. As for suggestions, have the group reporting make notes and avoid commenting. You are not interested in debate here. You want seriousness, but the mood needs to be an up-beat sharing of ideas.

At the conclusion of the plenary have the group name the three month period. This "creates time", that is, it gives this period identity and empowers the whole group. In one LENS the group named the three months as "Sanjivni" (Hindi for "Life-saving"). Finally, we would recommend the implementation day be concluded with a great celebration!



The Ripple Effect

Do you want to be a positive influence in the world? First, get your own life in order. Ground yourself in the single principle so that your behavior is wholesome and effective. If you do that, you will earn respect and be a powerful influence.

Your behavior influences others through a ripple effect. A ripple effect works because everyone influences everyone else. Powerful people are powerful influences.

If your life works, you influence your family.

If your family works, your family influences the community.

If your community works, your community influences the nation.

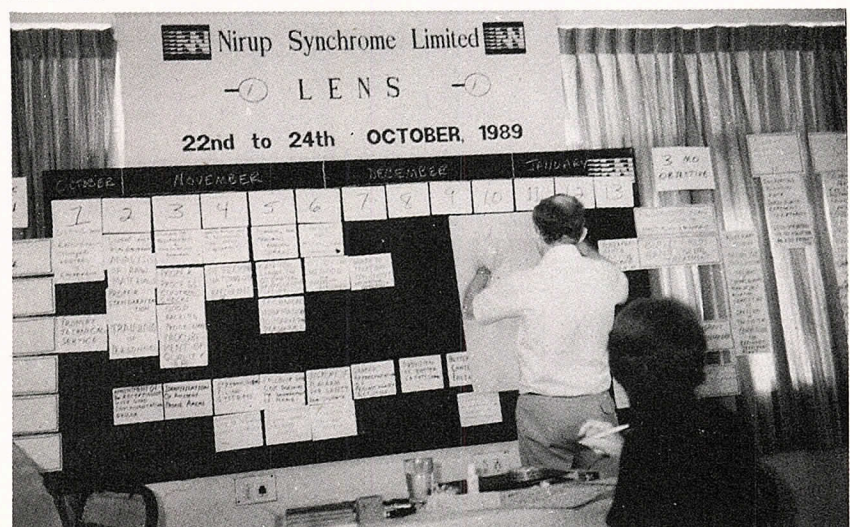
If your nation works, your nation influences the world.

If your world works, the ripple effect spreads throughout the cosmos.

Remember that your influence begins with you and ripples outward. So be sure that your influence is both potent and wholesome.

How do I know that this works?

All growth spreads outward from a fertile and potent nucleus. You are a nucleus.



DO THAT FOLLOW UP!

Companies invest a great deal of time and money sending their people to seminars and training programmes. Yet, one of the major complaints is that although the initial enthusiasm upon returning is high, the rate of retention or utilisation of the skills and knowledge acquired at such programmes is low.

There are three factors that determine the future productivity of participants. First, is how well the programme was designed and conducted. Too many programmes utilise only standard lectures and slides to impart knowledge. More stimulating and multi-dimensional learning methods are required that utilise the various learning modes and styles of the participants. (See Image No. 7 for more detail on Learning).

The second factor lies in the contextual understanding within the participant(s). Often participants see the programme more as "time away from work" than an opportunity to expand one's skill and capacity. What is helpful to all concerned is giving a well-thought-through context for the programme before people attend. It should include what results in terms of specific skills or knowledge are expected and why trainees are being sent. Upon returning, a thorough debriefing and mutual goal setting session for future application on the job is necessary.

The third, and perhaps most important factor is the culture and work patterns of the organisation. If the programme, for instance, stresses the formation of a team or consensus decision-making process and the culture is not supporting these modes, then the effect will quickly dissipate. Especially if the programme has the participants develop some type of plan of action, either individually or as a group, follow up is crucial for success.

Follow up Sessions

Although the follow up will vary, depending on what the programme was, we would suggest the following basic components be utilised. We will use the LENS follow ups as an example of how these are designed.

In the LENS programme, the participants are formed into task forces which develop action plans to be accomplished over a three month period. First, at the time of the programme, schedule the follow up and stick to it as closely as possible. It is all too easy to have other priorities delay follow ups. Just the fact that the follow up is taken as seriously as the initial programme will help the participants do the implementation. Let people know what will be expected of them. Each programme should have both a product and some skill needed by the participants.

Second, when holding the review or follow up session, start the programme with a reflection of "what has been happening?". This is not a detailed report, but rather a chance for people to describe what has happened to them personally. If you are holding a skill reinforcing session, ask the group to recall the key components of the original programme. In the LENS follow up, we review how the workshop method was used and how it can be a vital tool for involving people and generating new ideas and commitment. If time allows, we often will hold a "mini" training session with practical application for the group.

Third, when possible, hold the reviews in the same space as the original programme, or if that is not practical, hold them repeatedly in the same space. The creation of "place" where the learning and reinforcement happens provides an environment that subconsciously calls forth the decisions required and the "spirit" in which they were made. In the LENS follow up we encourage the teams to report using a variety of visual displays that imaginably holds their results.

Fourth, follow ups are, to a great extent, accountability sessions. It is helpful to make the accountability a "learning" rather than a "trial". If a person or group has not succeeded or done what was planned, start with "where are the blocks" and "what have been your learnings about (X)?" This allows for a recommitment to occur, rather than nagging guilt.

Finally, during the follow up process it is important that management continue to express their commitment and expectation of participants in day to day affairs. Holding sessions occasionally with the individuals or teams shortly after the programme spurs motivation. Informally continuing to ask questions and encouraging open feedback reinforces task force objectives. Finding out what the organisation can do to develop a supportive culture and acting on it speeds up the process of change. Even little things, like making task force meeting time a "job priority" supports implementation focus. In the LENS, management is encouraged to meet with task force leaders on a regular basis between follow up sessions.

Activating these basic five steps greatly enhances the effectiveness of any training or planning programme.



THE REAL TASK OF TASK FORCES

Fuzzy Versus Specific Objects

By William J. Altier

Task forces often are cited as a problem-solving tool. But the vast majority of situations suitable to task force resolution relate to decisions to be made, not problems to be solved. They have to do with determining future happenings, not solving past events.

With a true problem, often the worst thing that can be done is to attempt to find its cause via a broad-based, cross-functional task force. We saw this clearly when a manufacturer of healthcare products suddenly found 100% of its major product rejected by quality control. It quickly set up a task force of engineers and scientists from all over the company. People who knew little or nothing about the manufacture of the product were asked to become overnight experts.

When several months had passed and the rejection rate was still running at 100%, management brought in an outside consultant. Ignoring the existing task force, he started working with the people who had hands-on involvement with the manufacture of the product. In just three days they found the cause.

A task force used to find the cause of a problem becomes a mechanism for voiding all priorities save the problem it is tackling; its primary purpose is to focus and concentrate the efforts of people who would be trying to solve the problem anyway.

Task forces are better used as a tool for resolving significant decision situations. Setting product development priorities, selecting target markets, determining organisational structure, choosing product designs, making pricing and positioning decisions, planning new-product introduction, choosing capital equipment and facilities, determining strategic direction, and making systems decisions are some typical examples.

Task forces are productive tools to use when resolving decisions that cross functional or organisational boundaries. They are tools to apply to situations that do not fit neatly into an existing box in the organisational structure; they're big round pegs where the organisational structure consists of small square holes. They overlap conventional boundaries, and their outcome has effects beyond the neat little square holes.

Often executives will have a gnawing concern: things just aren't right, something needs to be done or changed; things could be going better than they are. But they can't conceive of an approach. Is it appropriate to pull together a task force to attack such a concern? The answer is yes - if the executive with the concern is a member, and if the task force has proper leadership. In one case a vice-president of an international company was concerned about its tax positions around the world. Policies and practices weren't working well; too much money was tied up unproductively. But the target of his concern was fuzzy, and the way to attack it was not obvious.

When the vice-president and two of his tax experts spent a day with an outside consultant, they succeeded in unraveling the situation and developing a specific list of ways to improve future task impacting decisions. The most significant item on the list concerned the need to change transfer pricing. A separate task force was set up to develop an improved transfer-pricing mechanism - a specific, identified concern.

What to Expect of a Task Force

If there are several specifically targeted concerns, one or more task forces may be the answer. In such situations it is essential to identify any dependent relationships between the concerns. It's possible that the output delivered by one task force could alter or obviate the need for a subsequent task force. Identify the sequential, independent-depend-

ent relationships; set up the independent task force and await its outcome before even acknowledging the potential existence of the dependent task force(s).

When a high-technology manufacturer set up a task force

to determine optimum future manufacturing structure, it became obvious that the spectrum of expanded product directions and manufacturing options was too complex to resolve in a single effort. A sequence of decision analyses based on the relative technological sophistication and market potential of each product segment was developed. The top-priority segment became the independent or first decision to resolve. Each sequentially dependent decision was resolved in turn, its range of manufacturing options constrained by "what was left."

A task force is expected to deliver a concrete, well-thought-out course of action, not a "recommendation." Recommendations are subject to review and acceptance or rejection by the higher echelons. If the upper echelon had the answer all along, why set up a task force?

Task forces are used to deal with the unusual, the exception to the routine conduct of the business. There is no reason or excuse for a task force to be kept in existence *ad infinitum*.

A task force is expected to deliver a concrete, well-thought-out course of action, not a "recommendation." Recommendations are subject to review and acceptance or rejection by the higher echelons. If the upper echelon had the answer all along, why set up a task force?

A multibillion-dollar corporation became concerned that several of its smaller business units weren't achieving their full potential under the existing organisational structure. A task force, set up to analyse the situation, concluded that one business should be sold and another, left to fade away. Finally, it recommended that the other units, located in three separate groups, should be combined into one completely new group.

As instructed, the task force made a "recommendation." When it did, each of the three group vice-presidents who would lose the business units quickly erected barricades. The recommendation died a quick death. Because it wasn't in the best interest of the company? No, because it was only a "recommendation" that could be overpowered by the power structure.

When you staff a task force with competent people, you expect them to deliver a competent result. And you in turn should be prepared to carry out the course of action they deliver.

Who Should be Involved?

If you want optimum results out of a task force, think about optimum people. Think about the people who are most knowledgeable about the situation, who are closest to it, who might bring unique insight to it. "Optimum" people is not necessarily synonymous with "top-level" people. Often-times tremendous resources in the lower ranks get overlooked.

The most important consideration is knowledge; after that comes clout. It's critical that all the involved or potentially affected constituencies are represented. A consensus that doesn't represent all the pertinent perspectives is worthless, if not dangerous.

Different types of knowledge are required, specifically knowledge about objectives, and knowledge about how to accomplish the objectives. Often, in major corporate decisions, the top executives are the ones in command of the objectives. However, they may lack expert knowledge as to how to best fulfill the objectives.

First, a group of executives should be brought together to determine the objectives and

their relative importance. Then they are replaced by a team of staff experts who are charged with examining those objectives, creating alternative ways of satisfying them, and determining the best course of action.

A *Fortune* 500 pharmaceutical firm found this approach to be the right one for them. They felt that some of their accounting practices might not be in tune with the times. These practices, such as allocation of corporate assets and liabilities and allocation of interdivision and indirect expenses, influenced major management decisions every day. Nobody was better equipped than operating management to define the objectives to be satisfied by these practices. Therefore, a task force of a cross-section of operating management met and, in one day, developed the objectives.

However, these managers knew little about accounting methodology. They knew how to define the objectives but had little idea of the intricacies and fine points of how to achieve them. Thus, after the objectives were set, a second group composed of accounting and financial experts was assembled. This second group developed alternative approaches to the objectives and, in each case, selected the best alternative as a course of action.

A couple of final points on the makeup of task forces. Every member has to want to be there. They should be excited about the opportunity and consider it a compliment to have been asked to participate. They also should consider it a necessary, but short-lived, imposition on their time. And everyone should be an active and concerned participant.

How Many People Should be on It?

The ideal number is about six or eight. Too small a group, particularly if they don't know each other well, will often lead to excessive caution. On the other hand, large numbers eat up large amounts of time.

The key question in determining the size of the group should be, "Is all of the necessary knowledge present?" If it takes 14 people to bring all of the relevant perspectives together, so be it. And be prepared to invest increased time in the analysis. In certain circumstances, it may be desirable to utilise a large group so that all affected parties can have "ownership" of the results.

If it becomes necessary, you can always add someone to a task force, or even ask a person with special knowledge to sit in for an hour or so at a specific point. But you can never remove people from a task force. Even if it becomes obvious that they won't be able to contribute, their egos are at stake.

How Should Members Prepare?

In the vast majority of task force situations, all of the information necessary to resolve the concern is already in people's heads. Sometimes an obvious file or two is helpful as a source of specific data. But the crammed briefcase is usually a time-wasting security blanket. Some of the information that will ultimately be required by the task force may not exist yet. Such information voids can be dealt with when they are specifically identified.

When Should it Meet?

There's a simple answer to this one: As soon as the need is recognised. A typical delay tactic is, "But we don't have all the information we're going to need. We'll pull together a project team to get the data and then we'll start." That's absolutely the worst way to approach it. The project team will spend ten times the time and money required to gather ten times the data needed. Then 90% of it will go unused or, worse, will be incorporated into a mediocre conclusion because "It must be important; look at all the effort that went into gathering it."

Get started immediately. If critical information voids must be filled to come to a conclusion, let the task force identify them specifically as they proceed. They can then pick up the phone and get the missing answers, or call time-out, make specific information-researching assignments, and later reconvene to continue their efforts.

Every task force should have a tentative meeting schedule and termination date stated before it starts. The most productive way for a task force to operate is to go nonstop until the job is completed. A well-structured and well-run task force can resolve a major decision in two or three days. If information voids are hit, it may be necessary to take a several-week or even several-month break while the missing pieces are gathered. But if the actual fact-to-face meeting time of the group becomes measured in weeks instead of days, something's wrong.

When a metal products manufacturer recognised that the time had come to concentrate its efforts in selected target markets, a task force was established to determine the optimum target markets. The group members knew before they started that their knowledge about many of their potential target market candidates was weak. As they proceeded, the missing data about each market were specifically identified. At the end of the second day, information-gathering assignments were made to each team member and the group recessed for two months. At the end of that time, data complete, they reconvened

and completed the analysis in one day.

There can be that unique situation, usually relating to major, long-term change, in which a day or two a month for a couple of months is the way to go about it. For example, a task force pulled together to create ideas for new, completely innovative products is usually more creative if the members don't attempt to reinvent the wheel in one sitting. A two-day meeting to define the boundaries and start to create new concepts will usually exhaust the participants' immediate creativity. Meeting one day a month after that normally will produce a significantly enhanced list; the task force members will have time to reflect and analyse.

An adversarial atmosphere often exists within task forces. One must recognise, and take steps to defuse and deal objectively with, potential adversarial perspectives among members.

Each functional specialist's bias must be placed in proper perspective and subordinated to the composite best interest of the company. And there is only one way that can be done: with a leader who is from a constituency external to the subject. The leader may be an insider or an outsider, so long as he or she is removed from the topic under discussion, and from the people discussing it.

Above all, the leader must be an expert in leading groups. It is also desirable that the leader be an expert in the fundamental management thinking processes of situation assessment, decision analysis, and the like.

The leader's ability to manage, direct, and control the thinking of the group determines whether results are delivered in a few days or a few months. Several years ago, I was asked to salvage the efforts of a task force that had been working for three months on a major corporate decision. Because the objectives had not been framed at the outset, no agreement was in sight. The members had gathered masses of excess, unneeded information and they were floundering. With no concerted thinking process to bind their efforts, each had gravitated to his or her private instincts. With proper direction, their objectives were defined, their thinking was channeled, and the long-sought-after decision reached in two days.

If a task force is unsuccessful, the failure belongs to the leader. Don't predestine failure by selecting an inappropriate leader.

Task Force Record-keeping

The ideal record-keeping tool is a flip chart on which the leader is continually recording the significant points, answers, questions, data, and conclusions. As each sheet is filled, it is numbered and attached to the meeting room wall. After the mission is accomplished, the flip charts can be typed and each member given a copy. Thus every person involved has the same reference base to utilise in any future discussions or historical analysis.

When IBM launched its PCjr, the keyboard was denigrated as a "toy" by many competent observers of the computer scene. IBM immediately came to the defense of its decision; the keyboard was exactly what was best suited for the PCjr market, they insisted. Several months later IBM replaced the toy with a more "professional" keyboard. As an indication of the magnitude of the error in the original decision, the company offered to exchange a new keyboard for the toy obtained by earlier purchasers. Could the decision-making shortcoming that led to the toy keyboard be repeated in some future decision? It's always possible. But it's less probable if the original faulty decision is reexamined to learn how it went astray. This is only possible if the thought process has been documented.

What Output Should it Deliver?

Again, the simple answer: a course of action to be implemented, backed up by unanimity. In a very small percentage of task forces, consensus might not be achieved. And, in most of these cases, the holdout is a minority of one. In such situations, it may be desirable to neutrally discuss the differences in an open forum with top management and let them draw their own conclusions. Invariably in such situations, presuming an intelligently structured task force, the minority position exists because of a lack of objectivity, often because of fear of change.

What about a report? One or two pages pinpointing the conclusions and the key reasons behind them may be appropriate in some circumstances.

Strictly in the interest of enlightenment, in some instances it may be nice for the team to make a brief presentation to senior executives, but strictly for their information. If it has to be done to acquiesce to their second-guessing, then the structure was wrong from the start.

What About a Sneak Preview?

In some instances, task forces will be dealing with issues that have wide-spread familiarity and consequences. Often nonmembers will go to great lengths to try to get what they think is the halftone

score. Nothing is certain until the final conclusions are reached. Any task force which issues an in-process communique (or leak) is doing a great disservice to itself and its cause.

If it's a really crucial question that might be expected to take some extra time, then tell them you're on schedule, ahead of schedule, or behind schedule. But don't prostitute your effort by attempting to predict, or even narrow, the outcome.

When it is done right, when it is organised and run by these criteria, a task force benefits everyone. The participants will find it an exciting and fulfilling experience, and management will find the answers it needs. The proper management of task forces is an essential part of proper management.

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Doing Less and Being More

Run an honest open group.

Your job is to facilitate and illuminate what is happening. Interfere as little as possible. Interference, however brilliant, creates a dependency on the leader. The fewer rules the better. Rules reduce freedom and responsibility. Enforcement of rules is coercive and absorbs group energy.

The more coercive you are, the more resistant the group will become. Your manipulations will only breed evasions. Every law creates an outlaw. This is no way to run a group.

The wise leader establishes a clear and wholesome climate in the group room. In the light of awareness, the group naturally acts in a wholesome manner. When the leader practices silence, the group remains focused. When the leader does not impose rules, the group discovers its own goodness. When the leader acts unselfishly, the group simply does what is to be done.

Good leadership consists of doing less and being more.

HANDLING GROUP CONFLICTS

By John L. Epps

Nobody ever said teamwork was easy. Or that group discussion could solve everything to the contentment of all involved. But sometimes the bounds of tolerance are reached. Sometimes a group comes up against it to the point at which disagreements are NOT merely differences of perception or of understanding the situation. Sometimes we really DO passionately disagree WITHIN a team. How do you keep on, keeping on? Sometimes you get to the point of saying "The hell with it! This isn't worth it." The emotional strain, the innate tension, the constant frustration, backbiting, sniping, tantrums and placebos take their toll. Your psychic energy runs down. Whatever creativity and commitment you once had are diverted into either propagation or circumvention of conflict. Life gets to be one long stress syndrome with reduced effectivity in the task and physical symptoms contributing to the degenerating atmosphere.

There are three approaches to this situation. They are approaches, not resolutions. If the situation were resolvable, then it wouldn't be this type of situation. You find yourself as a leader using some or all of these approaches, depending on your makeup, the severity of the circumstances and what has to happen.

Approaches to Group Conflict

I. The first is: PRETEND IT ISN'T THERE: THE POLLYANNA APPROACH. The main advantage of this approach is "accentuate the positive". It uses the points of agreement as building blocks to try to get on with the task at hand, and in so doing builds up a residue of assent from which people can continue to function. It buys time and dramatises mutuality in the hope that a "self-fulfilling prophecy" will occur. "Maybe we'll become what we try to be."

It doesn't work, because it doesn't follow the song and "eliminate the negative". Instead it provokes a sense of unreality in which tasks seem idealised, and principles, instead of informing action, become admired abstractions.

The negatives don't go away. They fester like a gangrenous sore, pretty soon producing eruptions that scatter pus to the winds. Amputations occur. And no one takes the corporateness seriously — it's just a ruse to look nice on the outside. It's sort of like putting a band aid on cancer.

II. The second is GET IT ALL OUT — THE THERAPEUTIC APPROACH. In this approach, the attempt is to get group members to say what they think, to "lay the cards on the table," to express their feelings

of hostility, frustration or despair. The main advantage of this approach is its disclosure of pent-up emotions. It is likely to precipitate a crisis and be heavily emotional — shouting, weeping, accusations abounding until people run out of steam. Blood pressure soars, adrenalin flows, tempers flair, voices crack, hearts palpitate, eyes water, and temperature escalates. Anyone who has been in a situation of this type outside of a guided group therapy session knows the massive danger involved.

Unless a skillful therapist is in attendance, the emotions do not get absolved/exonerated/vindicated. They just hang there and rot. Pretty soon the stench is nauseating: the atmosphere reeks like an outhouse in a dysentery camp. Mutual contempt has taken over.

But the real disadvantage of this approach is its residue. Emotional release has an "afterglow effect" for the one who is released, but for those who take the brunt of the release, the "afterglow" is more like a smoldering fury.

Because words DO have an impact, one who has been attacked does not get over it easily. It doesn't go away, no matter how "well" they took it at the time. Things fester. Hostility remains. And what was said in the heat (hate) of the moment can't be un-said. It has a residue, often far beyond what was intended or warranted. A residue of guarded hostility is not quite what we mean by corporateness.

This approach has the further disadvantage of displaying and dramatising things at their worst. It highlights the negativities of the group and effectively eclipses what positives, however slight, there may be. In so far as this happens, it is a distortion of reality and does not entice resolution.

III. STRATEGIC REALISM: THE CONSENSUS APPROACH. This one is complicated. So I'm going to state an underlying principle, some operating assumptions, and some practical techniques. This is not yet a final conclusion, and refinements are welcome: What have YOU found effective?

A. The principle was well put by Garrison Keillor, the radio comedian: "Sometimes you have to look reality in the eye...and deny it!"

Things are NOT as they seem, and usually in these situations our version of "realism" is a shallow "objectivity" (or subjectivity) lacking in warmth, profundity and futuristic outlook. Those elements are part of any "reality," and until they are identified, no positive resolution will occur. What appears to be a corporate holocaust may well be simply the appearance of the Dark Night of the Soul in our midst. And one responds differently to the Dark Night than one does to "That SOB who is so dumb (s)he can't walk and chew gum at the same time!"

A group gathering is a drama of its *raison d'être*, and, as the actors say, "The play's the thing", so it won't do to succumb to "realism" in its simplistic forms.

B. Some operating assumptions are helpful in moving beyond the impasses that crop up in these situations. They are also helpful in sorting out what IS the reality we have on our hands. They are ten.

1. The given reality is good.
2. Everyone is an SOB in his/her own way.
3. The context of the gathering/discussion shapes its content.
4. Things said have effects, implications and consequences.
5. Imponderables can be acknowledged — and bracketed.
6. On some things, there is no consensus.
7. You have to earn "chits" to be able to do direct criticisms that are heard and accepted.
8. You can't affirm the other too often; everyone wants recognition.
9. It is necessary in a group/team to know what's going on and to account to each other; keeping communication open is a high value.
10. Discipline regarding emotional control is helpful; not every feeling deserves expression.

C. I have found 7 practical techniques useful in working out the implications of these assumptions:

1. Symbolise the beginning and end of the discussion/meeting. Let it be clear when the thing begins and what is the context. And especially let it be clear when it is over. Ending on an unresolved argument may be necessary, but dribbling out in confusion compounds the difficulty.
2. Start with the specific and short-range to inform the long-term and the imponderable. There is likely to be much more clarity about what to do NEXT than about what the future requires of us.
3. Keep a list of unresolved issues that surface, but don't raise them for discussion directly until a resolution is at least POSSIBLE. Otherwise, raising them paralyses the group and thwarts any further discussion.
4. Try to say "Yes, and..." instead of "No, but...". Build on the foundation that was laid, even if 99% of it was false. You can effectively replace a deluded statement if you first begin to sound like you are trying to affirm it.
5. Use "bank shots" to get around defensiveness over poor performance. Criticise in generality or at some person obviously not the offender but able

to take it. Otherwise you occasion a reinforcement of defenses that prevent hearing and responding.

6. Try to get objective data on the subject at hand, then make your own judgments. To dispute over interpretation is probably inevitable, but it is at least conceivable to be interpreting the same THING.

7. Summarise the decisions and accomplishments of the session. End on a note that recognises that no time is insignificant. Make the summary recognisable to those who took part; you can't be Pollyanna here. And then symbolise the conclusion of the gathering.

These seven steps will almost certainly NOT produce smooth sailing or conflict resolution. But they are ways to avoid the more obvious traps in working out the future. Please add your own.



Don't Stir Things Up

Run the group delicately, as if you were cooking small fish.

As much as possible, allow the group to emerge naturally. Resist any temptation to instigate issues or elicit emotions which have not appeared on their own. If you stir things up, you will release forces before their time and under unwarranted pressure. They may be emotions that belong to other people or places. They may be unspecific or chaotic energies which, in response to your pressure, strike out and hit any available target.

These forces are real and exist within the group. But do not push. Allow them to come out when they are ready.

When hidden issues and emotions emerge naturally, they resolve themselves naturally. They are not harmful. In fact, they are no different from any other thoughts or feelings.

All energies naturally arise, take form, grow strong, come to a new resolution, and finally pass away.

PHASING THE LENS JOURNEY PROCESS

What any facilitator knows is that when a group spends an extended time together it is not difficult to generate a high degree of enthusiasm and sense of team work. But to sustain that back in the day to day work place is not an easy task. We are creatures of habits, especially work habits, so it is not hard to understand the low productivity of most "off site" programmes.

Beyond the obvious follow up process, it is helpful to grasp the basic principles of the process underlying a real shift in performance. Perhaps an analogy will be helpful. When two chemicals combine to form a new compound they must reach a certain energy state to react. It is like climbing a hill, and then proceeding down the other side to a level that is stable and higher than the initial one. Similarly, a company undergoing change has to overcome certain energy barriers, habit patterns and contradictions, to reach a higher and sustainable level of performance. Like a three stage rocket, the initial programme can give you a "boost" but it is rarely, if ever, enough to make the permanent improvement desired.

The following is a description of how the LENS programme can help move a company to a higher level of performance. It is a journey that takes about a year and is in three phases of three months, four months and five months. We call it the 3-4-5 LENS Journey.

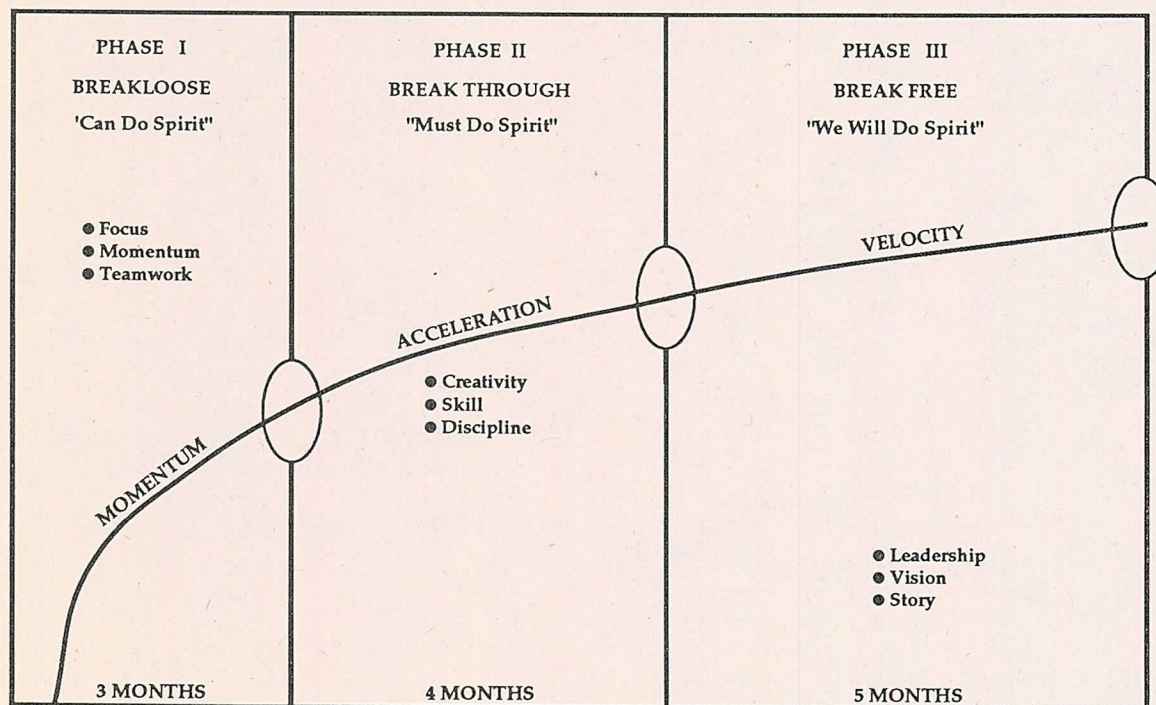
Phase I - "Break Loose"

The LENS programme ends with the participants choosing actions to implement, deciding on

three month objectives and forming a team responsible for seeing it through to completion. The selection criteria for the actions chosen bias the actions toward those accomplishments that will be the most visible, involves the most people, are do-able and catalytic. Since you want to maintain initial enthusiasm and teamwork generated in the LENS programme, actions are focused on those that will launch **Focus, Momentum and Teamwork**. You generate a spirit "Break Loose" in which the participants develop a "Can-do" spirit.

Because this "getting off the ground" is so crucial to the success of the LENS we insist that there be three follow ups, one every month of Phase I. What you are doing is creating an environment in which this new spirit and cooperative team mode of operating can live. Without this protection, the old "spirit" will overpower the new spirit and maintain the old ways of doing things. The major contradictions identified as barriers to the future in the LENS will not be overcome during these first 90 days. But they will have been impacted and "loosened up".

Since the majority of those operating out of the new spirit will only be those who were in the programme, it is important they see how regular gathering and peer accountability works in building effective change strategies. Even a mild case of team competition for best performance is a good idea. Get the successes that each team accomplishes out to the whole group. Make a big deal of it. This can-do spirit needs lots of encouragement. Later there will be time for more "hard-nosed" pushes. As a facilitator you need to constantly remind people of the skills it takes to lead a team. Having something to read or



study at each follow up begins to foster a Learning Community.

As you move toward the establishment of the "change systems", you want to implement in this Phase I, many **Impact** events (ones that get people's attention) to let them know "Change is Happening Here". In addition, get the **Interchange** system functioning through the rhythm of the follow ups, by encouraging task force meetings and coordinators meetings. Give instructions on leading effective meetings during the follow ups. If all goes well you will have accomplished or exceeded the three month objectives and be ready for Phase II.

Phase II - "Break Through"

A fine victory celebration and team awards should herald the success of Phase I. Even those teams that ran into difficulty will be carried along with the corporate can-do spirit. But now is the critical phase in the process. Like a rocket that has gotten up some momentum, the next phase takes on a different challenge and draws on a different spirit.

We have momentum, but not enough to reach the sustainable level of change. It is now that a careful assessment of the underlying contradictions must be done. The must-do activities chosen now are those that really will alter the way things are. Now the emphasis for the teams shifts to that of **Creativity, Skill and Discipline**. Creativity because you don't know just what it will take to get the results you need. Risk and experimentation are required. The skill will be principally that of a facilitation style of leadership and the discipline (will) is focused on the self and the team.

This "Must do" spirit is both a serious one as well as enlivening. Since the task is harder, the time frame is 4 months. Follow up is shifting to the self initiated mode with perhaps one follow up involving the facilitators at the midway point. The role now of the facilitators is training, initiating a long term leadership development plan. The context of the LENS action plans are used as the basis for grounding and practicing facilitation skills.

A cautionary note. There will be a great tendency to continue the present task forces that were formed for Phase I. This is natural since many of them will have additional work to do or discover new aspects that need to be continued. We encourage dissolving these task forces, then reconstituting if necessary. The focus needs to be on establishing a new agenda for the group. Now is the time to bring additional people on board. Expand the number and size of the teams. "Task forcing" as a way of life is established during this phase.

Although **Impact** and **Interchange** continue in this phase, **Demonstration** and **Training** systems

are emphasised during Phase II. Training is built around leadership work, empowering people, but in addition, you can encourage some type of regular study or Teaching Learning Community (TLC).

Demonstration systems are those that make a dramatic **Break Through** in those difficult contradictory areas. Each team is encouraged to have a demonstration activity in their plan of action.

To carry through with the analogy of a rocket trip, this phase is all about building up **Acceleration**. The objective is to reach a level of energy that will not return to the pre-LENS state. Again we stress the need to celebrate accomplishments, but now the follow ups need to have a stronger element of accountability. Teams need to be willing to report their struggles and blocks as well as their victories. Other participants need to ask hard questions without attacking and the receiving teams need to develop a stance of non-defensiveness. Because risk taking is to be encouraged, be sure that any risks taken, successful or not, are honored. Get the team to reflect on what was learned while attempting something new.

At the conclusion of Phase II the best state of affairs would be a substantial elimination of the earlier stated major contradictions, a broad participation in the change process and a cadre of trained, skilled team members who have learned what it takes to work together and win at implementation. Now we are ready for Phase III.

Phase III - "Break Free"

We now have a substantial number of people in the organisation operating at a higher performance level and energy level. They recognise that this participative and innovative culture is more fulfilling and produces the results they want. But there is yet more to be done. The vast majority of the organisation has been recipients, not participants in the change process. Now we must turn our attention to bringing everyone possible on board. We must enable the whole organisation to **Break Free**. We must guard against the weariness that can hit people when they realise that this process of transformation is a never ending one, that excellence is a state of mind, not a final destination.

The spirit we identify for this "long burn" of the transformation journey is that of a "We'll Do" Spirit. The major resistance point for getting the whole organisation working at this higher level is not located at the "top" or the "bottom" but in the "middle". That large number of mid-managers and supervisors who never see themselves as decision makers or change agents are threatened when a participative culture emerges.

The three needs for the LENS team are

Leadership, Vision and Inculcation. Leadership is the capacity to mentor juniors and to develop the habit of managing by wandering around (MBWA). Vision is developing the story about the future that will capture everyone's imagination about where this transforming organisation is going and how it depends on everyone for it to succeed. Inculcation is the ability to communicate these ideas and respond to the input from those who offer new ideas. It is literally "infecting" everyone with the new spirit.

"Buy-In Management"

Task forces can continue and perhaps new ones formed during this 5 month phase. But a new strategy is formulated to "win over" those who haven't yet caught the spirit. Often this is as simple as doing a series of LENS seminars at these middle levels. LENS can become a way of life for the organisation. And with facilitation skills developed in the first two phases, much of the programme can be handled internally in partnership with external facilitators.

The change system that is activated during this phase is **The Story Factor**. The new story is communicated, rehearsed and celebrated in as many innovative and creative ways as possible. Maybe it's a series of talks to groups by the chairman or M.D. It could be a new statement of the company's values and purpose. It could even be as radical as a new logo or slogan for the products. But to have an effect, this new story needs to be linked with the implementation strategy through concrete shifts in operations. Perhaps a concerted effort on quality or customer service would freight the seriousness of the new standards of excellence for the company. Or it might be a diversification or dramatic expansion in the business.

What Phase III is about is developing **velocity**. Speed is now the critical factor. Although we have a five month window to work with, the new organisation spirit requires a re-understanding of what time is for the organisation. It is in the "middle", the more bureaucratic part of the organisation where the old pattern of doing things is entrenched. Changing the sense of time and urgency is critical for the transformation journey.

Speed can be obtained by altering any or all of the following time consumers. There is the time it takes to know what I need to know. This is a function of communication and openness. There is the time it takes to make a decision. This is a function of authority and risk taking. Finally there is the time it takes to implement. This is a function of cooperation and imagination. Develop a self conscious analysis of where time can be shortened and speed increased. Most likely it will be in

decision making, when more and more people grasp a sense of ownership of the results and are willing to assume responsibility for a larger role while those in authority are willing to relinquish some control and stop second guessing juniors' decisions.

Overcoming Adversarial Relations

A special note needs to be said here on the involvement of workers and the persistent and the debilitating contradiction of management-union adversarial relationship. This is a vast and uncertain area. It will require much patience, understanding and love to bring about reconciliation and oneness. But unless steps are taken in the LENS journey to solve this contradiction it will eventually be the Achilles heel that prevents sustained transformation. We recommend a carefully designed programme which can be implemented sometime early in the second year of the journey. Results will not be immediate, but if we start with the premises that 1). we cannot succeed without a basic change in this area, and 2). that most people prefer to give their best when it is acknowledged and they are challenged creatively, then we can, over time, heal this deep spirit contradiction.



Unfolding Process

Group process evolves naturally. It is self-regulating. Do not interfere. It will work itself out. Efforts to control process usually fail. Either they block process or make it chaotic. Learn to trust what is happening. If there is silence, let it grow; something will emerge. If there is a storm, let it rage: it will resolve into calm. Is the group discontented? You can't make it happy. Even if you could, your efforts might well deprive the group of a very creative struggle.

The wise leader knows how to facilitate the unfolding group process, because the leader is also a process. The group's process and the leaders process unfold in the same way, according to the same principle. The leader knows how to have a profound influence without making things happen.

For example, facilitating what is happening is more potent than pushing for what you wish were happening. Demonstrating or modeling behaviors is more potent than imposing morality. Unbiased positions are stronger than prejudice. Radiance encourages people, but outshining everyone else inhibits them.

IMPLEMENTATION CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY: DEVELOPING AN INTEGRATIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

A major fan manufacturer, which in the past had achieved a fair degree of success as a top division in the company, had taken a dramatic nose-dive. Sales and production fell. Competition in the industry, pressure for new products and export business, and declining productivity found management perplexed at how to reverse the downward trend. In addition, the management team expressed their concerns about the functioning of the team.

There was a fear of openness, or frankness on the part of team members. There was a tendency for people to take criticism personally, blame others, or take a defensive stance which inhibited the team's effectiveness in planning and accountability. In years past the team had pulled itself out of a downslide, managed to turn around performance dramatically, and sustained that performance for several years. But this time it was different. The rut they were in was very deep and the old formulas weren't helping them to get out. Everyone knew it was going to require a totally new way of thinking and acting.

The division did a LENS on: "how can we re-establish financial soundness by building teamwork, integrating the planning process and strengthening a product development process?" During the LENS, sustained conversation was held on ways to deal with the interpersonal style and conflicts which blocked the effectiveness of the team to work together toward common goals. A task force was named to begin to initiate "openness" forums and start the communication process at all levels.

In all, seven task forces were launched. In the follow up programmes at 30 and 60 days two more task forces were added. At each follow up session the question of "openness" was discussed and analysed to determine if the action plan was having the desired effect and if not, why not. This issue became the keystone around which the management team would either win or lose. Unless a way could be found to become an integrated team, only marginal success would result. The seriousness with which the designated task force, called "Open Heart," responsible for this tactic as well as top management looked for changes in the perception toward a more open management style was commendable.

At the beginning of Phase 2 seven new task forces were organised. Ongoing task forces, such as Open Heart, continued to create TLC's on various topics of interest to employees, hold inter-departmental and workmen open houses.

The whole group took very seriously the

naming and forming of task forces. First, they would ponder the task at hand, suggest names of task force members, and consider what symbolic name would best communicate the objective the task force would have to achieve. Various people would try names out loud, one by one, as everyone commented, laughed and mulled the ideas around. Then, finally, someone would come up with just the right name that the rest would agree to eagerly. This became an important "rite of passage" for the task force and launched them into building the specific plan to accomplish its commissioning.

At the conclusion of Phase 2 all task forces had expanded team participation threefold. Moreover the concept of a "small group" approach was everywhere. The launching of quality circles took on new impetus through poetry, elocution, posters and competition at company-wide, multiple state and international conventions. Several prizes were won with workmen participating at new levels of involvement.

One team reported, "each member practiced to become a good listener, encouraged others to talk about themselves and their ideas. Each task force member showed respect for the other man's opinions and was really interested in him. Frankness, freedom of opinion and openness was encouraged all along." Another task force which worked on debt reduction to improve working capital and successfully achieved its targets, attributed its success to spirit "which removed the word 'impossible' from the team's dictionary. This spirit acted like a cascading avalanche and generated more spirit. We now feel that, what was seemingly impossible, has been achieved and what has been achieved, can be improved and what was static, has moved and will keep moving in the future."

The Division leadership feels they have built the foundation for the return to financial soundness. They are not there yet, but they are committed to making it a reality in the next year. The key concepts that have contributed to the management team's success are: care and concern for each other as individuals who have a valued contribution as team members, objective reporting and accounting to each other on a regular basis and honest feedback on results, introspection as a team on strengths and weaknesses in leadership style and behavior, spirit-filled reporting events that captured imagination, particularly through posters, reporting formats and imaginal designs.

CASE STUDY: A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH TO IMPLEMENTATION

A medium size high tech manufacturing company has achieved positive results in building a

TQM (participative) approach through participation programmes including 20% of the 1200 employees, utilising the LENS process for strategic and operations planning. Key to their success is carefully observed follow up sessions and continued leadership training for their top management in participatory methods and culture building. A full time quality task force coordinator has been assigned, and there is an increasing capability of in-house facilitators for continued task force follow up.

The Managing Director discussed with ICA India in 1987 how participatory methods might be useful to the company. A series of programmes launched a still ongoing three-year relationship. In the Design Conference, the top management group described a desired future with as much detail as they could, then named obvious obstacles the group believed might prevent that future. That work became the context and focus for a Top Management Alignment Retreat in which they clarified the future Purpose, Mission and Values of the company. It resulted in a carefully thought-through and consensually agreed-upon statement which was disseminated throughout the company through 5000 notebooks with statements imprinted on the front pages. Values are still being inculcated by rehearsal through reading them in unison in all operations meetings.

The group also created a focus question for a LENS. The Focus Question was: "How can we focus individual efforts more effectively toward corporate objectives, improve customer focus and recreate its systems for more effective working?"

The senior executive LENS, including the top 17 managers, launched task forces to initiate new directions through implementation of the carefully selected most catalytic tactics. In the three LENS reviews held in early 1988, the group reported to each other results from their five LENS task forces. After three months, the accomplishments included: 1. 51 most important customers identified and average delivery time shortened, 2) 30% more sales and customer inquiry reply time improved, 3) Over 30 quality task forces operating at the operational level, each focused on specific needed improvements, 4) Data base generated, especially directed to customer inquiries, 5) Greatly increased interaction between departments and high team spirit within them, 6) Production up and rejection rate down, 7) Fewer customer complaints, 8) Greatly expanded information flow, especially production data available to everyone on the shop floor.

During the follow up sessions, considerable attention was given to Blocking Factors, Learnings and Positioning for the next actions. This not only deepened the analysis, but also became a training

experience. Considerable implementation spirit was developed among participants, recognition for efforts and clarity on needed next steps.

The company continues to re-examine and name their contradictions in order to focus implementation. This has helped lay the basis for a focused all-out approach to Total Quality Management. Subsequently they have had top managers in leadership training, focusing on participative skills and management style, and have scheduled operational LENS for 300 middle managers, supervisors and staff in groups of approximately twenty-five. This has resulted in a more effective team approach to management and encouragement of responsibility being taken down the line. Monthly top management meetings have evolved an increasingly interactive management style.

They are pleased with their success. The Manufacturing Director in regard to their experience, said after a visit to Japan, "We find what the ICA has been doing with us is just what the Japanese are doing in Total Quality Management." The Managing Director indicated his feeling when he said, "If we had looked at Total Quality Management two years ago before the results of ICA programmes, we would have said it was impossible. Now we can see how TQM is possible."

CASE REPORT: EMPOWERING A COMPANY BY MOTIVATING FRONT-LINE PEOPLE

After facilitating strategic planning, leadership training and managerial decision-making sessions throughout a bulk drug and formulation company over several years time, the need evolved to work intensively with front line personnel to enhance effective sales and service. It was the vision of two senior managers that inspired others to see the importance of developing individual human potential as the way to release energy and creativity in the organisation. A pilot project, which included extensive follow up over a year's time, was carried out in the Region where the need was greatest. New field managers had been assigned there to provide a spark, but the going was slow.

A preliminary focusing and analysis session was held with Regional and Head Office management to set the parameters for the pilot programme. This was followed by two-day operational planning sessions with all Medical Service Representatives revealing a lot of pent-up resentment over complex issues. People listened to each other, noted what was really behind complaints and demotivation, then struggled to objectify issues which showed up as "management-staff" conflict. One of the most gnawing issues was coping with the rising consumer movement. The group persisted to work out resolu-

tions as all were tired of being at the bottom of the company sales ranking.

Participants described their common vision which included the needs and hopes of both MSR's and management, focusing on the future rather than the past. Then they articulated the major underlying contradictions blocking that vision, creating innovative strategic actions to deal with them. They organised themselves into business units of 2 to 5 people on a geographic basis to support each other in a team effort.

A follow up session was held every two months over a one year period which included: 1) Reflection on experience of the previous 2 months, including stories illustrating extraordinary effort and success, 2) Reporting on actual results in quantifiable terms, 3) Re-maneuvering of tactical actions for the next 3-6 months, 4) Celebration of achievements, 5) Support needed which individuals could not provide for themselves, 6) Technical, company information and social interchange, 7) Leadership skill development inputs.

Most impressive was the way in which business units took up the responsibility of implementation because "they came up with their own solutions". Back up support provided by Regional and Head Office management was a constant input. Within the year substantial improvement was reported in business activity as well as being "self-managing teams".

Because of this improvement of performance through increased confidence, creativity and mutual support at all levels, the programme was taken to another geographical area. Here the need was to enable sustained high performance with very experienced staff, but in a market with untapped potential.

A similar series of programmes was carried out, with regular follow up of business unit activity. The programme was named by the participants in the initiating programme, "MARCHING AHEAD!" and they did. Each review included a reporting session of progress on self-determined objectives and actions, sharing learnings from both successes and failures concentrating on "what works", evaluating blocking factors, and deciding on campaigns and objectives for the next period of time. Key success factors as described by the team included: * Articulating their own problems and working out their own solutions. * Naming of teams to communicate their uniqueness and spirit. * Establishing and naming their own campaign focus. * Frequent interchange with other field and HO staff. * Constant information exchange. * Regular follow up accountability and repositioning. * Building on each others experiences and learnings. * Recognition of

efforts. * Visible signs of victory. * Special celebrations both within teams and as a region.

Each of the two locations was unique in the make up of its external environment, business potential, culture and people. The approach in each case was carefully and continuously designed in close collaboration with management in response to the current situation and including personal growth inputs through audio and visual video tapes, books, creativity exercises and documenting of individual and team learnings. Key to the change process was the regional manager who facilitated communication and interchange, highlighted and honoured individual and team contributions, arranged great celebrations, and compiled a documentary report printed and distributed throughout the system. This approach will be taken to other Regions, building on the learnings and experiences and utilising increasing facilitation expertise within the company.



This Versus That

Do not lose sight of the single principle: how everything works.

When this principle is lost and the method of meditating on process fails, the group becomes mired in intellectual discussion of what could have happened, what should have happened, what this technique or that might do. Soon the group will be quarrelsome and depressed.

Once you leave the path of simple consciousness, you enter the labyrinth of cleverness, competition, and imitation.

When a person forgets that all creation is a unity, allegiance goes to lesser wholes such as the family, the home team, or the company.

Nationalism, racism, classism, sexism: all arise as consciousness of unity is lost. People take sides and favor this versus that.

BOOK REVIEWS - Keys to Implementation

WINNING THROUGH PARTICIPATION:

Meeting the Challenge of Corporate Change with the Technology of Participation

by Laura Spencer

Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, Dubuque, Iowa, 1989. 185 pages.

(Available at Strand Book Stall, Dhannur Bldg., Sir P. Mehta Rd., Bombay 400 001.)

Winning Through Participation is a practical and spirited presentation of the group facilitation methods of the Institute of Culture Affairs (ICA). It deals with the practical realities of participative management. It is a "how to" book. The ICA has developed a system - the Technology of Participation (TOP) - a variety of participative methods, packaged into many programs, involving employees of organisations in planning and problem-solving on an ongoing basis. The main premise of *Winning Through Participation*, as stated in the Epilogue, is that it is possible "to create a climate that nourishes the qualities necessary for transformation - alignment, leadership, communication, co-operation, commitment, creativity, innovation and implementation" - through the use of TOP methods.

Winning Through Participation is organised into four parts. Part One, A New Generation of Participation, walks the reader through the changes that are taking place in the marketplace, among people, in the work environment, and in management style. It also tells the story of how one company dealt with a crisis and how TOP methods helped to turn the situation around. Part Two on Methods revolves around a case study that provides an overview of the TOP Strategic Planning Process and its results in a unit of a major oil company. Part Three on Applications describes the five steps of the planning process in precise and understandable language: first comes a mapping out of the practical vision; then an analysis of the underlying contradictions; third, a setting of the strategic directions. The fourth and fifth steps are highly practical: designing the systematic actions and drawing up the implementation timeline. It points out the uniqueness of the approach, the sequencing of the process steps, and the way the group is involved in the planning process. Part Four describes what results when people have a sense of ownership and responsibility for the organisation.

This was an exciting book to read. I was able to get the feel of the processes as they unfolded in the stories of case studies. *Winning Through Participation* makes a definite contribution to the world of organisational development. The methods outlined can help to facilitate groups and organisations as they

work toward creating an environment of participation and cooperation. It is possible for our image of how the world works to change, and, in that changing, give everyone the possibility of having a say in the decisions that affect their lives.

- - Beret Griffith



LEADERSHIP IS by Harrison Owen

Abbott Publ., Potomac, Maryland, 1990, 158 pages

Harrison Owen begins with the question of the current crisis of leadership and surmises that the truth may have more to do with our perceptions of past images of leaders. In the opening chapter, "Where Have All The Leaders Gone," he states that, "as the structures of our world, and the conditions of certainty, yield to an avalanche of change, the extent of our longing for stable, definitive leadership is exceeded only by the impossibility of finding it. The fault lies not with our leaders, but rather with ourselves, and our expectations. In the old days, leaders were supposed to make sense of chaos, certainty of doubt, and were to create positive action plans for the resolution of imponderable paradoxes. Good leaders straightened things out. Should chaos rear its ugly head, the leader was expected to restore normality immediately. But there's the rub. Chaos is now 'normal,' paradoxes cannot be resolved, and certainty is possible only to the level of high probability. Leadership that attempts to deliver in terms of fixing any of this can only fail. And that is exactly what is happening."

Harrison Owen believes that leadership is in a state of transformation, as we ourselves are, in our understanding of what a leader is and does. The future direction it seems to him, is from leadership as the private property of one or a few, to a broader picture of collective leadership - "we are all leaders, and there are plenty of us." And the role of leadership? - to enhance human potential.

This book is a great "practical" guide to Spirit and Leadership. Put simply, the book does a beautiful job of taking a realm of business, namely the Spirit of an organisation, and linking it with what a leader can and cannot do to empower and direct it. Harrison's advice and style of writing is extremely enjoyable and tends to make one a "believer" in this "Spirit stuff". The following is an excerpt which will illustrate his pragmatic and helpful understanding of Spirit.

The Four Immutable Principles of Spirit

Spirit plays by its own principles, which from the viewpoint of standard management practice, are not only strange, but aggravating in the extreme. I am not sure, of course, that they are immutable, but they always seem to apply. They are: (1) Whoever comes is the right people, (2) Whatever happens is the only thing that could have, (3) Whenever it starts is the right time, and (4) When it is over, it is over.

The Four Immutable Principles occurred to me originally as a rather facetious way to the operative conditions in meetings and conferences. I then discovered that they were no joke, and further, that violating them inevitably produced disastrous results. I admit that it *seems* that the principles suggest a total 'just let it happen' approach, prescription of failure. To be sure, one must make best effort to get ready. Details of time and space must be attended to. But when all that is done, or done as well as it can be, then the only thing to do is to follow the principles. Like it or not, whoever comes are not only the right people, they are the only ones there, and whatever happens is going to happen with them, or not at all. Recognising these principles saves untold amounts of anxiety and 'might have beens' which become so overpowering that the real, present opportunities are overlooked. Principles work, I believe, in meetings and conferences because they are descriptive of the way Spirit works.

First Principle — Whoever Comes is the Right People reminds us that Spirit cannot be forced. In those situations when word comes down from on high that a certain position or initiative is an organisational 'must,' which requires 'spirited participation,' there is absolutely no way in the world to insure that all the members of the organisation will buy in. Seeking such a result not only guarantees failure, it is also the total perversion of what Spirit is all about. Spirit forced is Spirit killed.

The fact that some do not feel inclined to join is no indication of failure unless it is defined as such. However, if the would-be leader will observe the First Principle, there is a high likelihood that not only will the Spirit rise, it will be infinitely deeper and richer than could ever be imagined. All who choose to participate will do so from, and for, their passion. Their passion provides the essential, powerful source of innovation and performance.

Second Principle — Whatever Happens Is the Only Thing That Could Have reminds us that leadership is not control. That is management. Leadership is rather the creation of a nutrient open space in which genuine human fulfillment may be achieved. The problem is that would-be leaders, for their own reasons of insecurity, often feel they must manage. After all, things could get out of control. The truth of the matter is, not only *can* things get out of control, that is virtually guaranteed to happen, if Spirit is really up and powerful.

This is a difficult point for one who leads. There is an understandable feeling that, having accepted the responsibility of leadership, he or she must also specify exactly how everything will turn out. The understandability of this feeling does not change its negative impact. All parents understand, some proprietary interests, is not licence to specify outcome. To forget this is to invite rebellion or withdrawal. The same is true of Spirit.

Third Principle — Whenever It Starts Is the Right Time. In a curious and important way, Spirit exists out of time. Indeed Spirit creates time. For Westerners driven by the clock, this is difficult to deal with, but the rest of the world understands that truly important events always make their own time. Actually, we in the West understand this too. We say without thinking about it, that the current year is 1990 A.D. We tend to overlook that this dating has meaning only in the context of a particular manifestation of Spirit. It is, after all, 1,990 years after the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. No matter what we, as individuals, may think about the particular person, there is no question that even the Western time system is Spirit based. Of course, if Spirit is manifest in a different person or place, you have a different time. Thus for the Jews, it is well into the fifth millennium; for the Hindus, the birth of Vishnu, some 4,000 years ago, is central.

When Spirit appears, it doesn't happen according to the clock. Whenever it happens is not only the right time, but its own time. Needless-to-say, senior executives hoping to raise the Spirit of a place find this principle annoying, but that doesn't change its power. The emergence of Spirit will inevitably frustrate the keepers of the corporate calendar.

Fourth Principle — When It's Over, It's Over. The manifestation of Spirit as all things appearing in time and space has a lifespan, and when it is over, it is over. Certainly Spirit may be renewed, or sustained, but there comes a time when its particular form simply runs out of steam.

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