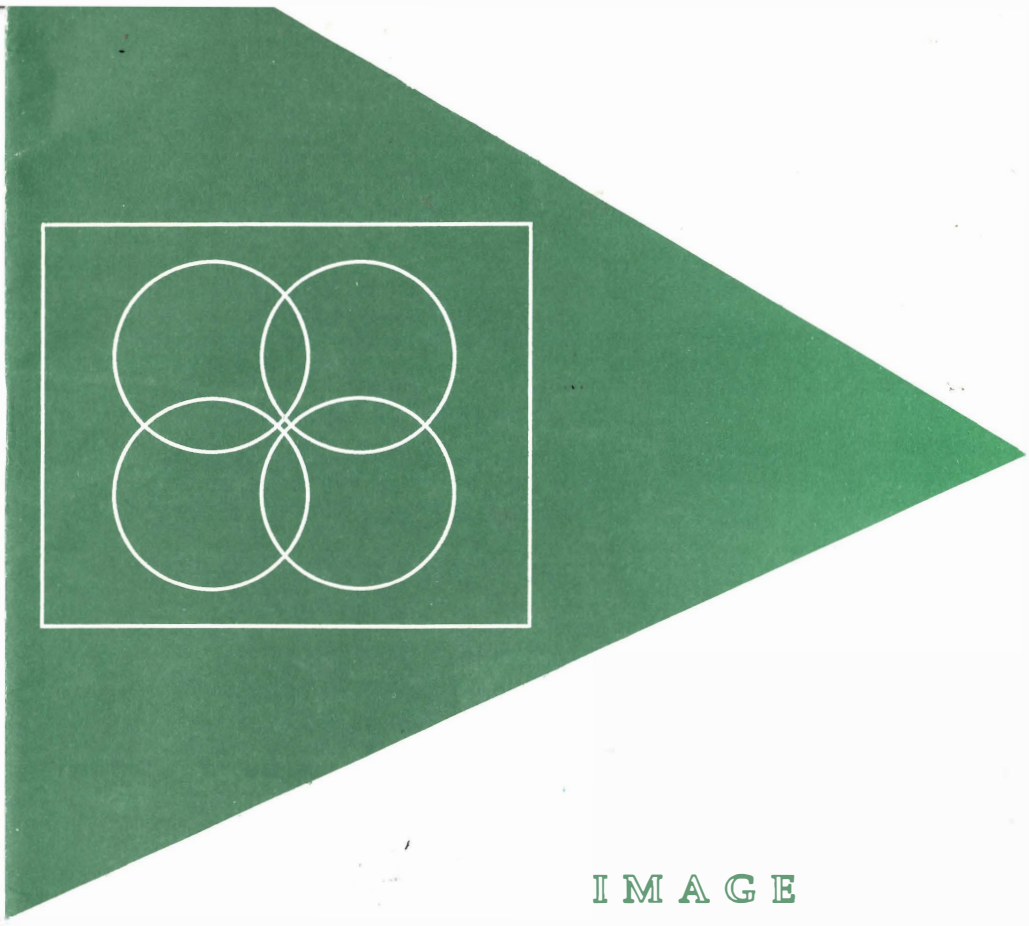

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AN ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL
ON
PERSONAL AND ORGANISATIONAL TRANSFORMATION

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 affiliated organisations. These include ICA: India (Bombay, Panvel and Pune), LENS Services Pvt. Ltd. (New Delhi), LENS International Malaysia Sdn..Bhd., ICA: Australia, ICA: Philippines, ICA: Taiwan, ICA: Hong Kong and LENS International Japan.

The Action Research Journal draws on a variety of sources including other ICA worldwide 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 TWENTY-FOUR JUNE 1995

"BUILDING COMMUNITY"

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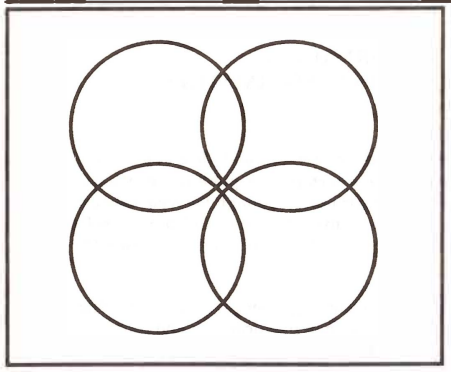
JOURNAL OVERVIEW



Recently I attended a three day workshop on community building conducted by the Foundation for Community Encouragement. It was a unique experience where thirty people learned how to really listen to one another and to learn to speak from the heart. One of the real struggles was the rule that when one spoke you were required to speak only for yourself and not to generalise or intellectualize your response.

Upon reflection, I realised how pervasive and controlling mental models are in building community. We all operate with assumptions and values based on our experience that unconsciously cause judgment without thinking. (Oops, I should have said 'I operate....!).

Today there is increasing concern and attention being given to the question of community. Our modern life-style and increasing mobility have removed the grounding experience that our ancestors had when stable and small communities were the norm - where the "mental models" we had were shared by those we met and values and accepted patterns of behavior were, for the most part, common.

Even in India, where most people still have a sense of "belonging" to a place (usually a small village where their parents or grandparents resided), there is a sense that real community is missing. This is also true of nearly all countries as people are moving to the urban centers where industry is locating and jobs are to be found.

Because of this migration and the fact that people are finding that they spend most of their time in the working environment, there is a new search for the establishment of community in and through the workplace. Articles and books are now being written about the need and possibility of creating community in the offices and factories in which people work.

But there is a current trend in business today that is mitigating against community in the workplace. Led by "reengineering" processes, businesses are reducing workforces to a bare minimum. Long term employment is a thing of the past in most places these days. People are moving often between companies and into different parts of the companies in which they are employed as multi-skilling and flexibility begin to dominate company configurations. Pay for performance, temporary workers and early retirement schemes are becoming common everywhere. Community will have to built with these realities taken into account.

But there are more factors working against community in the workplace today. Despite a recognition of the critical need to create an environment in which high performance results, the pressure to produce high profits as the first priority, (this is more prevalent in the west), means that a person's job is always in jeopardy. As can be seen in the recent major layoffs that large companies are engaged in, companies still tend to view employees as a cost to be minimised. It is hard to build community is such an uncertain environment. Community needs stability to become established.

At a deeper level, this raises the question of values. Just how important is a sense of community to good performance? When financial factors take precedent over human factors, community necessarily suffers. Companies tend to be advocates of values that put the emphasis on money and consumption. These materialistic and self-centeredness values cannot sustain community. Community requires spiritual values and most organisations are ill-equipped to understand and develop spiritual values.

Another requirement of community is trust. Trust is diminished by fear, anger and resentment. Roger Harrison, in his paper, **Towards a Learning Organisation**, says that these factors inhibit learning in an organisation. "There is a sense of unease and impending doom which hangs over us all, and which is not so much a fear of something specific, but the anxiety associated with massive uncertainty about what are the causes of our difficulties, what the future holds, and what, if anything, we can do to influence the future in a positive way."

"Anger and resentment are also on the rise, as our largest organisations dismantle the implicit contract that has for so long governed the relationship in bureaucracies between the organisation and its managerial and white collar employees. People are increasingly being required to change and to learn new ways of thinking, new attitudes and new behaviors, as a condition for retaining their employment. The choice is ever more frequently between learning and growing, and being demoted or unemployed."

Roger also points out that there is a rise in a sense of betrayal in organisations. This is more than just that which comes from the changes just mentioned from insecurity and role changes. Even improvements can generate a sense of betrayal. People are often asked to risk and take initiative. Old reward patterns can shift. But when initiatives lack substance, Roger says it amounts to "a seduction of the innocent". "Those that sign on and buy in are those who believe and trust. When leaders fail to hold the course and deliver the dreams they have created, the sense of betrayal is actually greater than when people lose their jobs through the 'normal' operation of markets, technology and the business cycle."

So, in the face of these increasing negative factors in the changing business operating climate, how do you build community? Perhaps we can't. Drucker points out that and organisation cannot be a community because it is a single-purpose entity. John Epps, in a private commentary on the subject, makes the case that all we can do is enrich a sense of mission and improve working relationships.

In my experience, the one organisation that had what I felt was genuine community was the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA). We structured the organisation around five principles that we felt constituted "primal community". 1. Significant space (the working environment designed to communicate the mission and meaning of work). 2. Historical time (living ever before a profound sense of historical participation in change). 3. Structured care (keeping people's personal needs in mind). 4. Participative decisions. 5. Destinal story (a rich mixture of songs, symbols and rituals that communicated the profound role of the organisation). These five are capable of being instituted in most organisations, but it is a difficult job. But perhaps this image of "primal community" is worthy of being held in our attempt to bring about transformation in our organisations.

This Issue

We begin this exploration with an article about community building with a chapter from Bishop James K. Mathews's book on Gandhi, Satyagraha, The Matchless Weapon. ***Satyagraha***, (the power of truth through self-purification), was the basis for the founding of Gandhi's *ashram* during the freedom movement in South Africa and India. This moral basis of community gives us a sense of what it means to have a value-based foundation for community. Although it is not a practical form for the business community, it nevertheless illustrates the need for intentionally structuring a community to reflect the human centered approach. Gandhi remains an inspiration in India, but his focus on community is not recognised in today's context of change processes.

M. Scott Peck, in his book, A World Waiting To Be Born, describes a modern day process of building community. **The Civil Organisation** describes his vision of how organisations can become community. Through his Foundation for Community Encouragement, (FCE), he has developed a process that takes a group on a journey of experience to community. Progressing through four stages; Pseudo-community, Chaos, Emptiness and Community, his team of facilitators enable groups to grasp the change in attitude required for true community. Peck's team has worked mostly with mixed groups of people, but has done a number of workshops in-house with significant results.

Respiritising Organisations, by John Epps shows how to enliven an organisation. Spirit is at the heart of community. By discovering the means to release spirit in organisations we create the conditions whereby community can take root.

Working in Community is part of a chapter of the book, The Living Organisation, Building Community in the Workplace, by John Nirenberg. The book describes a new paradigm for organisations that goes beyond empowerment to what Nirenberg calls "Solacracy". In this new state organisations become human-centered. In this particular chapter he describes the skills required to operate in this new understanding.

Learning organisation disciplines are required for community. Dialogue (Team Learning) and the other disciplines that enable community building are described in **Community Core Competence**, an article from The Systems Thinker newsletter, by Kazimierz Gozdz.

Finally we present a method developed by ICA Taiwan for **Conflict Resolution**. This method can be used to resolve differences between individuals or groups. Its power comes from the mutual discovery of the underlying assumptions held by each side. Often there is a misunderstanding of these mental models and their clarification can often lead to a new basis in which a novel solution to the conflict can appear.

The symbol for this issue is taken from the workshop on community building conducted by FCE. It represents the four stages of the journey towards community. I hope you find these articles helpful in your own attempts to build community.

Jack Gilles
Editor

SATYAGRAHA - James K. Mathews

Self-suffering looms very large in Gandhi's thinking. Once he wrote: "Nonviolence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering." Such suffering has an effect on both the Satyagrahi himself and his opponent. For the former it brings about greater purification; hence, generates more moral power. In the process he may become more sympathetic toward the opponent. The latter, in turn, is not only moved by the sight, but may examine his own position and may be relieved of some of his anger, pride and fear. It is maintained that by self-suffering instead of the infliction of suffering, there is achieved a degree of identification with the opponent, so paving the way for relieving the hostility. As the two move closer together, it is possible that a solution may be found by compromise or synthesis of their two points of view.

Though the above description is doubtless highly idealized and theoretical, there is at least something to be said for these views, both from the standpoint of common experience and from an examination of Gandhi's programme. He himself was often disappointed, for he attempted to reduce the practice of Satyagraha almost to an exact and predictable science. It was impossible to take into account the innumerable variables.

To Gandhi, however, there was only one real reason for the failure of Satyagraha. That was lack of adequate self-purification or national purification. For example, he wrote: ". . . the whole scheme for the liberation of India is based upon the development of internal strength. It is a plan of self-purification." This concept takes us to one of the central ideas of Hinduism: that the act of truth (satyagraha) has almost unlimited power. It can be performed by those who have perfectly fulfilled their *dharma* (religious duty). This requires great self-purification. National purification would mean everyone doing his full duty.

Techniques of Satyagraha

Gandhi often used the words "method" or "technique" to describe his various ways of giving expression to Satyagraha, either for purposes of direct action or constructive activity. A number of them were of a distinctly religious connotation and the whole programme of resistance was deliberately cast in a religious framework. These methods were used by Gandhi both in India and in South Africa. His concepts and methods, with the years, show evidence of having matured but the spiritual intent persisted.

It is possible to divide Gandhi's techniques of Satyagraha into a number of general categories. There is bound to be a measure of artificiality about such systematization. Some methods could be placed in more than one category. It is not possible to elaborate on any except the most important ones. Nor will they be discussed in any supposed order of importance or chronologically, though the groups follow a fairly logical sequence.

A. Techniques of Preparation

Throughout his nonviolent campaigns, Gandhi was confronted with an enormous task of preparing the people to participate. He was only too painfully aware of how inadequate the preparation was, and how easily it was for nonviolent efforts to slide into violence.

1. ***Selection of Clear Issues***: Satyagraha could not be used over every problem. It was necessary to seek a clear issue; one which would grip people's imagination, in which they were involved, and make them willing to act. The Rowlatt Acts were such an issue. So also was the "Black Ordinance in South Africa. No less it had to be a moral issue where the Satyagrahi could be portrayed as patently in the right. For a moral victory was sought; not the reducing of the adversary to subjection. For example, in regard to the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Congress did not seek General Dyer's "head" but confession by Government of its responsibility for the occurrence. Moreover the cause had to be specific. As Gandhi put it, "Civil Disobedience can never be directed for a general cause such as for Independence. The issue must be definite and capable of being clearly understood and within the power of the opponent to yield. This method properly applied must lead to the final goal." Though his judgment was at times faulty, in general he appears to have shown an instinct for selecting right issues that amounted almost to genius.

2. ***Recruitment and Mobilization***: Once an issue was selected, participants had to be rallied. If the issue were of the right kind, they generally responded readily. As popular confidence in Gandhi grew almost to the point of adulation, many followed him blindly in spite of the matter at stake.

Soon after his return to India he had attracted to himself a number of his closest associates - his "staff officers" - who were to serve with him for years. These included Mahadev Desai, Vallabhbhai Patel, Vinoba Bhave, to mention only three. Several of his South African colleagues were with him too. To the top rank of colleagues additions had constantly to be made. A weakness throughout the campaigns was a lack of adequate numbers of really top-grade workers. The need was vast in lower echelons as well. As he had done in South Africa, he found a place for women who had special abilities in spinning and in picketing liquor and foreign cloth shops. Children had their role too, as did students. So likewise did some professional men and the masses.

Yet he was not primarily interested in mere numbers. Rather quality was his aim. He was a great believer in volunteer workers but expected much of them in their role as Satyagrahis as this list of qualifications makes clear:

(1) He must have a living faith in God.
(2) He must believe in truth and nonviolence as his creed and, therefore, have faith in the inherent goodness of human nature which he expects to evoke by his truth and love expressed through his suffering.
(3) He must lead a chaste life and be ready and willing for the sake of his cause to give up his life and his possessions.
(4) He must be a habitual khadi-wearer and spinner.
(5) He must be a teetotaller and be free from the use of other intoxicants.
(6) He must carry out with a willing heart all the rules of discipline as may be laid down from time to time.
(7) He should carry out the jail rules unless they are especially devised to hurt his self-respect.

3. *Organization*: Gandhi's zeal and ability as an organizer, demonstrated repeatedly in South Africa, did not diminish after his return to the homeland. For opposing the Rowlatt Acts he established in Bombay in 1919 a Satyagraha Sabha of those pledged to oppose the measures by nonviolent means. In December 1920 at the annual session of the Indian National Congress, he introduced constitutional changes which transformed it from a kind of debating society into a smooth-running organ of action. Nor was that the last of his overhauls of Congress. He had the wisdom, though, to realize that Congress could not perform every necessary task. Therefore he constantly launched new organizations for particular work. These special groups he related to the Congress for prestige's sake, but did not make them integral parts of the larger body, so as to preserve freedom of action. Among these additional bodies were the All-India Spinners' Association and the All-India Village Industries Association. Not all these groups were entirely successful and Gandhi did not hesitate to see that useless organizations went out of existence. From the earliest days in South Africa and throughout his public life he insisted on the most careful public accounting of funds of his organizations.

4. *Training*: What Phoenix Settlement and Tolstoy's Farm were to his South African work, Gandhi's ashrams were to India. His view was that "Training is necessary as well for civil disobedience as for armed revolt." There is a tendency in India for leaders to found ashrams or similar centers as places of spiritual retreat, but in modern times especially, dedicated to some practical end. Examples are Rabindranath Tagore's Shantiniketan, a national university dedicated to the indigenous arts and education; Gokhale's Servants of India Society, deliberately modelled after the Jesuits with each member dedicated to some special activity of social reform or uplift. So Gandhi followed in a great tradition.

After he returned to India he sought a center for his work. Gurudeva (Tagore) invited him to Shantiniketan; Swami Shraddhananda to Hardwar. It did not seem good to build on other men's foundations, so on May 1, 1915, he established his first Ashram in the village of Kochrab, near Ahmedabad. It seemed unsuitable and when plague broke out two years later, he moved to another location near Ahmedabad, Sabarmati, on a river and near a jail, both with the same name. He called it Satyagraha Ashram. When he launched the Salt March in 1930 he left there, vowing not to return until Swaraj was won. Later he moved to Wardha, in the heart of India; and in 1936 to Seqaon, a village five miles away, deliberately chosen as a most difficult area. The name of the place was soon changed to Sevagram - Village of Service. These ashrams served as "parent" institutions to others elsewhere in the country. Wherever Gandhi established his headquarters the Indian Nationalists regarded it as the "capital" of India. They flocked to Sevagram. And wherever he was he stimulated training.

When Satyagraha Ashram was founded, it was with the following purpose: "The object of this ashram is that its members should qualify themselves for, and make a constant endeavour toward, the service of the country, not inconsistent with the universal welfare." In order to fulfill the object, the members were to undertake vows regarding: truth, nonviolence or love, chastity, control of palate, non-stealing, non-possession, physical labour, swadeshi, fearlessness, removal of untouchability, and tolerance. These were the activities of the Ashram: worship, sanitary service, sacrificial spinning, agriculture, dairying, tanning, national education and *khadi* technical training.

It is not suggested that the only training was at these ashrams, yet they were the focal points. Without them the Satyagraha campaigns would have been impossible. They were laboratory schools for the national movement. Gandhi was a firm believer in discipline and felt that iron discipline was necessary if Swaraj was to be achieved. Furthermore, he was deeply convinced that such vows as are enumerated above were helpful in achieving personal and so national discipline. What in the ashram was a vow had its counterpart in Satyagraha pledges and Independence Day pledges which were given by masses of Indians during the various Civil Disobedience movements.

B. Techniques of Purification

To a Westerner a technique of purification in the political context may upon first thought seem like some strange Oriental device. Yet Western nations, too, have had their national days of prayer, of fasting, of mourning, of thanksgiving. Gandhi constantly related the attainment of *swaraj* to the nation being worthy of such attainment. *Swaraj* was literally self-rule or self-control. It was a movement of self-purification, and Satyagraha was a "great movement of national purification." In April 1920, a year after the Jallianwala Bagh massacre, Satyagraha Week was proclaimed for prayer and fasting and to contemplate Truth and Non-Violence rather than concentrating upon Civil Disobedience. But more by example than by mere precept did he commend tech-

niques of purification. As already indicated, purification enabled *dharma* or religious duty to be fulfilled, so making possible fuller realization of truth and generation of moral power (soul-force).

1. Fasting. Fasting was the technique *par excellence* for spiritual purification. Days or periods of fasting and prayer were frequently proclaimed in preparation for Satyagraha. In the main, because of the potency and danger of this method, he reserved major fasts to himself. Some discussion of fasting is in place here.

Fasting is a common practice encountered repeatedly in the history of religions. It is supposed that fasting was first of all enforced upon groups of men by natural circumstances, such as famine, and so its spiritual value learned. Fasting has a long history in the Hindu and Jain traditions. Under certain circumstances a Jain monk could commit religious suicide by self-starvation.

Gandhi recognized and practised several types of fasts. One type was of the usual nature of private fasting for spiritual purification and physical benefit. These might be only partial fasts and of longer or shorter duration. He did not hold that fasting had any purely mechanical value, but on the contrary, it was without value unless undertaken in the proper frame of devotion to God. He did, however, recognize its physical value and used it as a part of his "nature cures." He wrote to his friend, G.D. Birla, "In my view fasting is the best of medicines." Such fasts must in the main be personal and secret. It is evident that Gandhi undertook many private fasts. He records: "My religion teaches me that whenever there is distress which one cannot remove, one must fast and pray." Very often he expressed the close relationship of fasting and prayer. Fasting came to him naturally. He once wrote that he had imbibed the practice with his mother's milk, for she often fasted.

The second type of fast was the penitential. Such a fast has a place in Satyagraha. This he used a number of times both in South Africa and India. In writing of a case of immorality in his Ashram at Sabaramati, he speaks of three courses of action. One is to punish the guilty ones - this was the easy way. Another was the course of indifference, which would have disastrous moral consequences. The third was the way of love - of heaping penance and suffering on his own head. This he chose by fasting seven days. Those who practice fasting for purity and penance need not believe in ahimsa, he said. Yet purity and penance as motives for fasting could be related to Satyagraha. For example, his fast in 1922 because of the Chauri Chaura riots was penitential in nature. He called for fasting and prayer on the occasion of offering hartal - for penitential and purification purposes. He himself celebrated Independence Day, August 15, 1947, in that way.

Thirdly, there was fasting as a political weapon. The penitential and purification aspects were never entirely absent in this type of fasting. He said that fasting was the Satyagrahi's last resort in the place of the sword. There are records of no less than twenty-five public fasts by Gandhi. They ranged in duration from twenty-four hours to twenty-one days. Three were announced as "unto death," provided the end was not gained. It should be said, however, that he professed to be concerned with "the act (of fasting) itself, not the result of the action." At least seven of the public fasts were for direct political purposes. The others were for penance and purification principally, though whenever he fasted it was a political event. The occurrence of a fast invariably puzzled or angered some of his close colleagues.

Just how was the technique of fasting supposed to work? First of all it was to be used very sparingly and after all other methods had been exhausted by the devotee of nonviolence. It was not to be for any selfish end. For example, Gandhi opposed a hunger strike in jail among the Satyagrahi prisoners in South Africa because its aim was to make them more comfortable. Moreover it was to be undertaken as "a peremptory call from God" and not actively premeditated. It was to be practised only by the highly disciplined and not the impulsive. Finally, it was to be against the "nearest and dearest" - those among whom by devotion and service one had won the right of respect and influence. It was not to be used against an enemy. Thus Gandhi's final fast in January 1948 was for justice to the Muslims; it was directed against his own Hindu community.

Such a fast was in the order of a protest against a wrong done by society. There was also at times an element of punishment about it. He wrote in 1922 about the fast over the outbreak of violence at Chauri Chaura, "my fasting is both a penance and a punishment. . .It is a penance for me and a punishment for those I try to serve, for whom I love to live and would equally love to die." Fasting was also a form of self-suffering. As such it was supposed to move those against whom it was directed to amendment of conduct. Because of the purification involved, the ascetic act of fasting was understood to generate irresistible power for the accomplishment of its end.

That a fast can be coercive can hardly be doubted. Gandhi's fast in prison during February-March 1943 was termed by the Viceroy as a form of "political blackmail (himsa)." Though Gandhi admitted that occasionally his fasts had coercive effects, that was not his intention.

Gandhi himself admitted the faultiness of one of his fasts, the one at Rajkot in early 1939. It's purpose was to persuade the ruler of Rajkot State to live up to an agreement he had made with his people but had not fulfilled. When other methods failed, Gandhi fasted. But he appealed simultaneously to the viceroy for a legal decision on the problem which was rendered by the Chief Justice in Gandhi's favour. Later he renounced this advantage, for to appeal for such outside aid showed lack of confidence in Satyagraha; and if the matter could have been settled by the appeal, the more rigorous measure of Satyagraha was not justified. He concluded that the Rajkot fast was after all not true nonviolence but a "weak copy" - passive resistance.

2. The Practice of Silence. Though silence was mostly a personal technique of Gandhi's, it had value in his public activities. He commended it often to others. It was his practice for years to observe silence on Mondays, a plan which had for him great physical and spiritual worth. He would break it only for exceptional reasons, but would converse by notes when necessary. For this reason he often called his silence a "fraud." He tells of having been favorably impressed by a visit to a Trappist monastery in South Africa. It was his desire to increase his periods of silence. He rejoiced in having kept fifteen days' silence at Yeravda Jail. During 1926 he observed a Year of Silence. This did not mean absolute silence but political silence and devotion to the affairs of the Ashram as fully as possible. Again in early 1945 he observed silence during daylight hours. The next year also he entered a period of indefinite silence.

The observance of silence afforded, Gandhi felt, an opportunity for him to cultivate the "Inner Voice." Obedience to its dictates assumed high significance in his pursuit of Satyagraha.

3. *Hartal*. *Hartal* means cessation of business out of respect, or for mourning, as a protest. It may be regarded as a technique of direct action, but for Gandhi the direct action was rather a reflex from its inner spiritual nature. A *hartal* was to be carried on in a "religious spirit." The one set for March 30 and then later for April 6, 1919, was to be a twenty-four hour period of fasting and prayer with contemplation of Truth and Ahimsa. When the anniversary remembrance week of the massacre of Jallianwala Bagh was observed from April 6 - 13, 1920, both April 6 and April 13 were days of prayer and fasting. There was fairly wide mass observance of cessation of work, but it cannot be claimed that the religious aspects were always faithfully pursued.

4. Prayer Meetings. Through the years Gandhi quite often held public prayer meetings. They were the rule in his ashrams. Particularly, they were a characteristic of the latter part of his life. Then they were sometimes attended by thousands; on February 3, 1946 in Calcutta, half a million people were estimated to be present.

It was in early 1946 that Gandhi instituted the practice of delivering daily addresses on topics of the day, following the offering of prayers. The prayers themselves consisted of more or less personal repetition or singing of prayers or hymns of the various religions of India. There was also mass singing of "Ram Dhun" to the accompaniment of "tal," that is, rhythmical beating of time with the hands to inculcate mass discipline. This was a revolutionary innovation in the technique of nonviolence. The whole of *Delhi Diary* consists of reports of Mahatma Gandhi's post-prayer expositions. It was while on the way to one of these meetings that Gandhi was assassinated.

Gandhi felt that these prayer services and talks filled a genuine role toward reestablishment of harmony among the various religious communities of India, particularly since there was acute tension evident from 1946 through 1948. He regarded rioting as a social distemper or malaise which was fanned by the "yellow press." He felt that the thing to do was to move into the points of greatest tension and tell rowdies to behave. Even a child could do this. But the root cause of disorder was fear - senseless fear by one religious community of other religious groups. Prayer could help overcome that fear.

5. Vows and Pledges: Throughout Gandhi's life a pledge or vow (vrata) was a serious religious matter. It was from his mother that he learned to stress them. He was himself repeatedly taking vows. They became for him "categorical imperatives." He regarded a vow to be a strong reinforcement in the carrying out of an intention. So it is no surprise that he made use of this religious device in his Satyagraha campaign. It is well known that vows are highly regarded in Jainism. All five of the Jain vows found their way into the Ashram observances outlined above. Moreover, he repeatedly would have masses of Satyagrahis take a pledge to resist nonviolently at all costs. This was done at the opening of the South African campaign. There he could say: "Our entire struggle has been built on a foundation of pledges." They were oaths before God. Likewise, he asked that Satyagraha pledges be taken in India. These were often renewed on anniversaries and at various public functions.

The vow was important in Hinduism as it has been in other religious traditions, including the Hebrew-Christian. It is especially used by Hindu women. For the ill a vow can be relaxed. It was so in the instance of Gandhi, who, when sick, finally agreed to take goat's milk, though he had vowed not to drink milk, at least that of the cow. The vow is closely related to asceticism and self-purification.

Gandhi regarded the taking of a vow not as a sign of weakness but of strength. It strengthened determination and was a bulwark against temptation. For him a vow was to do at any cost what one ought to do. He called God the "very image of a vow," for He is unchanging and completely dependable. Gandhi tried to impress his followers with "the necessity of vows for the purpose of self-purification and self-realization.

"Gandhi himself went to jail in India six times, serving a total of more than five and a half years. Throughout his whole career, including South Africa, he was jailed ten times, spending almost seven years as a prisoner."

THE CIVIL ORGANISATION - M. Scott Peck

How does a group become a civil organization? What does a civil organization look like?

From the minimal formal training I received in the practice of group psychotherapy, I can remember only a single instruction. We psychiatry residents were told that the competent group therapist must be able to focus his of her consciousness on two separate levels: the level of the individual patient and the level of the group as a whole. It was a valid instruction, but not one easy to follow. Perhaps it is impossible to fully attend to any two issues or questions simultaneously. I cannot listen wholeheartedly to my patient, wondering how best to respond to him, and at the very same time ask myself how the entire group is functioning, examining what its groups dynamics are at that particular moment. The best we therapists can do is to vibrate relatively rapidly, switching our level of awareness from the individual to the group, and then from the group back to the individual, and then from the individual back to the group again until the meeting is over. Good group therapists earn their money.

During the first few years that I exercised my vibratory capacity in this regard, I found it considerably easier - more natural - to focus my attention on my individual patients than on the group as a whole. Over and again I would become so engrossed in what a particular patient was saying and what I might do to help her that I utterly lost sight of the group dynamics that were occurring. I would repeatedly fall into this trap even though, as a person, I already had a relative gift for group consciousness. Gradually, however, with some effort I became increasingly able to attend to group dynamics without ignoring the individual patients. My vibratory capacity became more balanced; my group consciousness *improved with practice*.

In 1980, I began to work with larger groups of thirty to four hundred at a time, groups of people who assembled not for the purpose of psychotherapy, but for an experience of spiritual education. As their leader, I now switched my vibratory frequency to focusing my attention almost totally on the group as a whole and only very occasionally on the members as individuals. Over the next two years I became fairly adept at leading such groups into "community" - a way of being together with both individual authenticity and interpersonal harmony so that people become able to function with a collective energy even greater than the sum of their individual energies. I started to name these events "community building workshops" (CBWs).

I would begin these CBWs by emphatically informing the participants that our sole task in being together was to build ourselves into a community. But even though the purpose was not psychotherapy, an astonishing amount of psychospiritual healing would occur in the course of these workshops, particularly after the participants had learned how to stop playing therapist with each other.

One of my techniques of leadership was to repeatedly point out how the group was behaving as a whole and then gradually ask the participants to contemplate themselves the health of the group. It worked! The majority became increasingly adept at thinking in terms of the group as a whole. Moreover, a substantial number of participants returned again and again to other CBWs, and as they did, I had the joy of witnessing them often become truly and consistently expert at spotting group dynamics without my help. The community building workshop is the most effective means I know for raising group consciousness.

By mid-1984 the demand for me to lead CBWs exceeded my capacity to supply it. Joining with others, I began to develop a corps of well-selected and trained community building leaders to replace me. When they are functioning in their role as leaders, these men and women are all adept at keeping their consciousness focused primarily on the groups for which they are responsible - on these groups as organisms, or whole systems.

Once a year these leaders gather for what is called a Leaders' Roundtable to rebuild themselves as a community and receive updated training. They are sacrificial people on the cutting edge of society. They lead workshops in their spare time for minimal fees. The rest of the time most of them work in demanding jobs in positions of high responsibility. They are on the front lines. Consequently, when they come back together for these roundtables, it is like coming home. Children, no matter how grown, have tendency to regress when they come home. So it is even with these experienced leaders. We routinely joke about how immaturely we can behave at roundtables, as if we were squabbling sisters and brothers, dependent and demanding, rather than the true adults we usually are.

The primary dynamic of this immaturity is that we "forget" how to use our capacity to keep our minds on the group as a whole. At one roundtable a relatively junior leader said something to me that was literally guaranteed to throw the group back into chaos. Later he apologized to me outside the group for the turmoil his remarks had caused. I suspected they did not constitute "consciously motivated organizational behavior." "What you said was quite appropriate in relation to me, Hank," I told him. "But when you said it, were you thinking of just you and me, or were you also thinking of what effect your remarks would have upon the group?"

"I was only thinking of you and me," Hank confessed.

"Suppose you'd been one of our designated leaders, instead of Peter or Joyce," I asked. "Would you have said the same thing?"

"I might have said it to you in the parlor, just between you and me, but, no, I certainly wouldn't have said it in the group."

"Well?" I waited.

"Do you mean I ought to always behave as a leader in group, even when I'm not the designated leader?"

"Sounds tiring, doesn't it?" I responded.

That was some years ago. Today Hank is one of our senior - and most powerful and experienced - leaders. I'm not sure it is possible anymore for him to be in any group - even a roundtable - and say anything without first considering the effect of his words upon the group as a whole. So it is for our other senior leaders. Their group consciousness is operating from the very second they step into every meeting of any kind. For them group consciousness and civility have become a way of life.

Few ever think objectively about the groups in which they are involved. But from the experiences just recounted, I can make hopeful claims. Virtually all people do have a potential capacity for such thinking. They will use that capacity when they are trained to do so. The community building process is an ideal form of such training. However, it is natural for them to forget this training unless it is repeated. If it is repeated often enough we know it is possible for many people's group consciousness to become so practiced as to be instinctive, natural, and no longer forgettable. The hole in the mind can be filled!

Over the past fifty years, psychotherapists, management consultants, and other students of group behavior have come to discern that when groups evolve, they tend to do so in certain somewhat predictable stages. This is not to say that all groups evolve in wisdom, maturity, effectiveness, or civility. Most, in fact, do not. But when they do, there is an order and lawfulness to the process. These stages have been given various names. My preferred ones are pseudocommunity, chaos, emptiness, and community.

For many groups or organizations the most common initial stage, pseudocommunity, is the only one. It is a stage of pretense. The group pretends it already is a community, that the participants have only superficial individual differences and no cause for conflict. The primary means it uses to maintain this pretense is through a set of unspoken common norms we call manners: you should try your best not to say anything that might antagonize or upset anyone else; if someone else says something that offends you or evokes a painful feeling or memory, you should pretend it hasn't bothered you in the least; and if disagreement or other unpleasantness emerges, you should immediately change the subject. These are rules that any good hostess knows. They may create a smoothly functioning dinner party but nothing more significant. The communication in a pseudocommunity is filled with generalizations. It is polite, inauthentic, boring, sterile, and unproductive.

Over time profound individual differences may gradually emerge so that the group enters the stage of chaos and not infrequently self-destructs. The theme of pseudocommunity is the covering up of individual differences; the predominant theme of the stage of chaos is the attempt to obliterate such differences. This is done as the group members try to convert, heal, or fix each other or else argue for simplistic organizational norms. It is an irritable and irritating, thoughtless, rapid-fire, and often noisy win/lose type of process that gets nowhere.

If the group can hang in together through this unpleasantness without self-destructing or retreating into pseudocommunity, then it begins to enter "emptiness." This is a stage of hard, hard work, a time when the members work to empty themselves of everything that stands between them. And that is a lot. Many of the things that must be relinquished or sacrificed with integrity are virtual human universals: prejudices, snap judgments, fixed expectations, the desire to convert, control. Other things may be exquisitely personal: hidden griefs, hatreds, or terrors that must be confessed, made public, before the individual can be fully "present" to the group. It is a time of risk and courage, and while it often feels relieving, it also often feels like dying.

The transition from chaos to emptiness is seldom dramatic and often agonizingly prolonged. One or two group members may risk baring their souls, only to have another, who cannot bear the pain, suddenly switch the subject to something inane. The group as a whole has still not become empty enough to truly listen. It bounces back into temporary chaos. Eventually, however, it becomes sufficiently empty for a kind of miracle to occur.

At this point a member will speak of something particularly poignant and authentic. Instead of retreating from it, the group now sits in silence, absorbing it. Then a second member will quietly say something equally authentic. She may not even respond to the first member, but one does not get the feeling he has been ignored; rather, it feels as if the second member has gone up and laid herself on the altar alongside the first. The silence returns, and out of it, a third member will speak with eloquent appropriateness. Community has been born.

The shift into community is often quite sudden and dramatic. The change is palpable. A spirit of peace pervades the room. There is more silence, yet more of worth gets said. It is like music. The people work together with an exquisite sense of timing, as if they were a finely tuned orchestra under the direction of an invisible celestial conductor. Many actually sense the presence of God in the room. If the group is a public workshop of previous strangers who soon must part, then there is little for it to do beyond enjoying the gift. If it is an organization, however, now that it is a community it is ready to go to work - making decisions, planning, negotiating, and so on - often with phenomenal efficiency and effectiveness.

In our customary language the word *community* is

applied to virtually any group: a neighborhood, town, or city; a church, college, university, or social club. This is so even when its members may be total strangers to one another or, if they are acquainted, their knowledge of each other is utterly superficial.

By now, it is clear my usage is far more precise. Specifically, for me, community requires communication - and not the mere exchange of words, but high-quality communication. The quality of group communication is so poor in our typical business and social organizations that I designate them as pseudocommunities or pretend communities. For the most part, keeping their interaction both light and polite, their members are only pretending to communicate. A genuine community, on the other hand, is a group whose members have made a commitment to communicate with one another on an ever more deep and authentic level. There are very few true communities.

When a group does make such a commitment, however, it will evolve through the stages just described and wonderful things will begin to happen. The members transcend their narcissism, coming not only to respect but to appreciate their differences. Long-buried resentments are surfaced and resolved. Enemies are reconciled. Hard eyes become soft, and swords become feathers.

After I had spent three years of leading groups into community, frequently assisted by Lily and a few others, it dawned on us that we had stumbled upon a pearl of great price. Knowing nothing at the time about how to design, much less manage, a decent organization, we did at least know that this pearl needed to be shared as widely and quickly as possible. With little more in common than a passion for peacemaking, eleven of us gathered in December 1984 to establish a nonprofit, tax-exempt, public educational foundation: The Foundation for Community Encouragement, Inc. (FCE). It is to FCE that this book is so properly dedicated. Most of what follows is a condensation of what we have learned working with it and through it over the past eight years.

As an educational foundation, it is the purpose of FCE to teach the principles of community - that is, the rules for healthy and civil communication in groups. We did not arrive at these principles in a vacuum. Just as over the past sixty years we have developed a military technology to annihilate ourselves from the face of the earth, so - unbeknownst to most - we have quietly and unobtrusively developed a technology of peacemaking that we call community building. Various pieces of this technology have come from such diverse sources as Christian monasticism, the Quakers, Alcoholics Anonymous and the Twelve Step programs, the sensitivity group movement, the Tavistock Institute of Great Britain, and the work of management consultants.

One reason we often refer to the principles of community as a technology is because they are analogous to software. Software is a system of rules that are fed into the hardware of a computer to teach it how to operate effectively. The principles of community are similarly a set of rules that can be given a group of human beings to teach them how to work effectively as a group. Any group of people willing to submit themselves to this system of rules will quickly learn to function together with remarkable efficiency and civility.

A system of rules to which one submits may also be called a discipline. Depending upon the circumstances, I shall be referring to the principles of community as either a technology or a discipline. In any case, it is something that must be practiced. You cannot learn much about computers from a lecture or reading a book about them; you become truly knowledgeable about them only by using them. Consequently, FCE fulfills its educational mission primarily by teaching the principles of community through highly *experiential* group workshops, or CBWs. Its current philosophy and mission statements read:

Philosophy Statement

There is a yearning in the heart for peace. Because of the wounds - the rejections - we have received in past relationships, we are frightened by the risks. In our fear, we discount the dream of authentic community as merely visionary. But there are rules by which people can come back together, by which the old wounds are healed. It is the mission of The Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) to teach these rules - to make hope real again - to make the vision actually manifest in a world which has almost forgotten the glory of what it means to be human.

Mission Statement

The Foundation for Community Encouragement (FCE) encourages people, in a fragmented world, to discover new ways of being together. Living, learning, and teaching principles of community, we serve as a catalyst for individuals, groups, and organizations to:

- communicate with authenticity
- deal with difficult issues
- bridge differences with integrity
- relate with love and respect

FCE's approach encourages tolerance of ambiguity, the experience of discovery and the tension between holding on and letting go.
As we empower others, so are we empowered by a Spirit within and beyond ourselves.

RESPIRITISING ORGANISATIONS - John Epps

You don't have to be a mystic to recognise the spirit of an organisation. It's the degree of enthusiasm, creativity, commitment and passion shown by the people on the job. When it's present, doing business with the organisation is a delight. When it's missing, working with the company is a drag, whether as a customer, a vendor or a staff member. Spirit may be intangible, but its effects permeate the entire system and determine the quality of output. It is too important to be left to happenstance.

Some organisations have found ways to release the spirit that is latent within their people. They have not attempted to look back to a long gone past: the times are changing too rapidly for that. But neither have they attempted to "rev up" the group with empty hoopla. The groups described below have touched a deeper level within their members and have managed to release a drive that was already present, but concealed amidst layers of bureaucracy, routine, procedures, and rules. They have released a liveliness that makes the work, if not altogether predictable, certainly of a higher quality.

This article is about methods of how to release spirit. Simply reading stories of successes can be inspiring, but it's rarely useful. The cases below are windows into methods that might work in any organisation.

THE APPROACH

Spirit is released when people experience REALISTIC AFFIRMATION, RAPID IMPROVEMENTS, OR EXPANDED CONNECTIONS. The common element in each is the element of surprise: People who have been mired in routine require something extraordinary to reawaken their fizz and mischief. It does not happen through memos or through dictums from the top. Somehow when something occurs in an organisation that is out of the ordinary and provides one of the above three experiences, people wake up to a new spirit. We will explore each experience in turn.

I. REALISTIC AFFIRMATION

Spirit is released when people experience realistic affirmation of their situation, of their experience or of their future.

Affirmation that awakens spirit, however, has nothing to do with "keeping a positive attitude" or "overlooking the negatives." In point of fact, much of what goes on in organisations is not pleasant; work life has its ups and downs. Spirit is released when the whole reality is affirmed. It might look like this:

A. "Tea At Two" (Affirmation of the Situation)

"We have 4,000 people working here, many of whom work the docks. Shortly after I became the company CEO, I came in one morning at 2 am and brought curry puffs and tea to the stevedores and sat down and ate with them. We talked about what was happening. I come in at night quite a bit, always at irregular intervals so they never know when I am coming. My father was a stevedore, so I understand their jobs. Can you imagine how they feel knowing the CEO's father used to be a stevedore? Their productivity has increased 46%"

- CEO-major Asian port management company

Part of the mystique of the graveyard shift is that no authority figures are around. Most bosses wouldn't be seen dead working at those hours. So when one shows up, especially THE one, it's a surprise. It is also an affirmation that people are important enough for the CEO to visit. The group experienced a resurgence of morale that showed up in productivity. It would not have happened had the CEO, for example, invited stevedores to his office for a chat during "normal" hours; nor would it have occurred were he to have talked at them about the grand work they were doing despite the hardships. Instead, he demonstrated an affirmation of the workers' hardships by being there in person.

Communicating affirmation of the real situation may mean taking active part in it, visibly letting people know that as a manager you are not "above" the nitty-gritty. Does this diminish the workers' respect for the boss? Don't people really want a symbolic figure towering above them providing a model of what one can aspire to? No.

As inspiring as heroic figures are, they are also unwitting condemnations of the very mundane level at which most people operate. They don't affirm, they condescend with a certain visible gratitude for having risen above the situation of most people. They tend to embody what Tom Peters has appropriately called "thinly disguised contempt." Affirmation of the situation means taking part in it with vigor, enthusiasm, and passion. People get the idea.

B. "The Art of Work" (Affirmation of Experience)

It doesn't take an awards dinner or even a big party to affirm the experience people have with the company. Those are important, but overrated methods for enhancing morale. Sometimes it happens spontaneously. A group of young managers from a company that manufactures electrical connectors were gathered for management training. Theirs was a very high-tech operation turning out hundreds of thousands of products daily in a well organised, procedure driven, quality-conscious environment. The work was tedious, meticulous, and after you achieved a certain proficiency, boring.

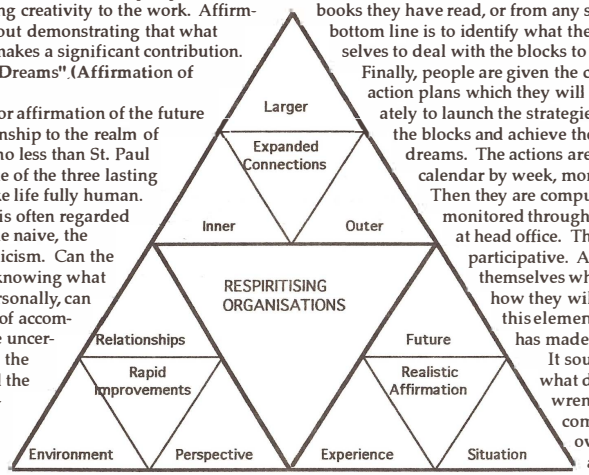
The group went out to dinner one evening to one of Singapore's several restaurant-cum-boutique areas. Walking around after dinner, they came across an art shop that displayed a hologram consisting of a group of their connectors. They bought one and brought it to the seminar where it became a featured piece of decor. The next night, the group went back and bought the artist's entire stock of the holograms with the intention of displaying them in their offices.

It was probably the first time any of them had experienced beauty in their products. That an artist found it a worthwhile object was a powerful affirmation of their experience. The discovery gave them a spirit of appreciation that had been lacking.

Finding your products in an artshop is not a replicable method. But finding ways to regard one's work as art certainly is. Too often people regard work as a necessary nuisance (or evil) that allows them to do what they really intend on weekends or vacation or other times. But for the craftsman or artisan, it's quite the opposite: it's the work that is enlivening. Other experiences provide the distance and perspective necessary for bringing creativity to the work. Affirming experience is about demonstrating that what people actually do makes a significant contribution.

C. "Inventing Your Dreams" (Affirmation of Future)

Another name for affirmation of the future is "hope." Its relationship to the realm of spirit is attested by no less than St. Paul who regards it as one of the three lasting intangibles that make life fully human. But in the 90's hope is often regarded as the province of the naive, the starting point of cynicism. Can the future be affirmed, knowing what we know? More personally, can I anticipate a career of accomplishment, given the uncertainty of the market, the speed of change and the fragility of organisations?



When these questions can be answered positively, then a certain relaxation of anxiety occurs and with it, a corresponding release of anticipation, energy, enthusiasm, and yes, spirit. Here's how it can work.

Few jobs are more difficult than selling insurance. Maintaining hope in the face of daily rejections, solitary efforts, and rising company expectations is no piece of cake. The profession has a high turnover of people who run out of steam. Bookstores are filled with attempts to boost the morale with secret hints, heroic exploits and surefire methods for closing the deal.

One leading company took another tack. They encouraged agents to design for themselves a positive future. Their process begins with a head office manager meeting for two days with a group of agents. They are first asked to specify in detail what success would look like for themselves. Factors of wealth, prestige, and job satisfaction are all included, and people dare to dream about themselves in the most desirable future. By the time this session ends, people have gone beyond the surface to articulating their most profound desires.

In stage two, the agents are asked to identify the blocks that are preventing them from achieving their desired future. Here the leaders are careful to disallow "victimism," i.e., placing blame for one's own situation on external factors. The obstacle can't be company policy or head office insensitivity; the obstacle for agents is what prevents them from dealing effectively with those factors. It's their personal blocks that are identified. This is a difficult and soul searching session, but necessary for the process.

In stage three, participants are asked to develop creative strategies for dealing with the obstacles. Here they are free to draw on ideas from other people, from books they have read, or from any source. But the bottom line is to identify what they can do themselves to deal with the blocks to their own success.

Finally, people are given the chance to establish action plans which they will initiate immediately to launch the strategies that deal with the blocks and achieve their hopes and dreams. The actions are placed on a calendar by week, month and quarter. Then they are computerised and monitored through an on-line system at head office. The process is 100% participative. Agents decide for themselves what they want and how they will achieve it, and this element of participation has made all the difference. It sounds like a somewhat dreary process wrenching effort and commitment from an overwhelmed agency force. In fact, it is quite the opposite. Agents in both Malaysia and Singapore have flocked to these sessions, finding in them a way of working through their doubts and fears and releasing a sense of practical determination. Their production has exceeded the industry average by some 20% and kept the company as number one in the industry.

Interestingly enough, the successes of the agents has had an infectious influence on those conducting the sessions. Managers who have been leading groups of agents through the process for four years have also been inflicted with hope. As one put it, "I saw these people with little background going extra miles to better themselves, and I thought, 'What about me?' So I began taking night courses and am now getting my advanced industry certification."

It's not so much having a cheery picture of the future that releases spirit. Anyone can develop a utopian fantasy. It is seeing how to get there that makes the difference. When a person has specified the heart's desires and worked out a practical plan for achieving it,

then that person lives on a different plane from someone slogging along in drudgery fearfully wondering what fortune next holds in store.

II. RAPID IMPROVEMENTS

There is nothing unusual about advocating improvements in an organisation. But ask most people about improvements and you get words like *slow, tedious, difficult* and *resistance*. People know that the times and organisations are changing dramatically, but despite the rhetoric, experience often tells a different story.

The problem with gradual change is that it does not release energy but saps it. Often the results are outdated before completion. People like to make a contribution, and when they can see results from the efforts, they are moved to continue. But nobody is "spiritised" by prolonged efforts to make a minor alteration. People are deadened by long term projects: they need to see results, even if they are part of a longer effort. In Breakthrough Strategy, Robert Schaeffer notes that small wins produce more energy and momentum than a big one that comes once in a blue moon (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Co, 1988). Or, as Sun Tzu, the master general of ancient China says, "Nobody ever profited from a prolonged campaign. Although we may have heard of stupid haste, never has cleverness been associated with long delays." The improvements that release spirit are quick, visible, substantial and participatory. Spiritising improvements have to do with the perspective, the environment and personal relations.

A. "War and Peace" (Improving the Perspective)

The department head had his hands full. The staff - telephone operators at a classified ads department of a large urban newspaper - were noted for their limitless capacity for bickering. The manager was frustrated, and his mood fed the backbiting, undercutting style of his people. Each was in competition with colleagues to bring in the largest number of ads; the performance incentives were tied to the number of deals you closed as an individual. It was everyone for herself.

During a seminar, they all undertook a "working styles identification survey" with emphasis on differences and not judgement: no styles are preferable to others. It was a revelation.

The manager found his viewpoint totally changed from being a frustrated judge of antisocial behavior to being a guru of an immensely varied team. The alteration was visible, as if suddenly a light had dawned in his mind, and now he could understand why the tensions existed and possible ways to mitigate them.

He stood up in the group and proceeded to tell them his insight: "You're always pushing her because you are a driver, don't you see? That's great! And you want to be sure everyone is happy because you're amiable, see? We need you to keep doing it!" He carried on in a very personal way with examples they all recognised, and their mouths dropped open in surprise. There were a few tears as people saw that it was all right to be what they were, and that the tension was not a problem but simply the way different styles affect each other. They could live with that.

The manager's newfound appreciation for the group provided a spark for their morale. Productivity has continued to climb.

B. "Little Things Mean A Lot" (Improvements: Environment). Question: what does it take to make working in a 30+ year old petroleum refinery invigorating for all 300 staff? Answer: One turned on supervisor, one mighty support system, two years . . . and a participative planning process.

It used to be just another place to work. You went there, spent 8 or more hours, often in the blazing tropical sun, obeyed all the rules, followed the safety precautions, sweated a lot, swore a little, and went home. Just like any other job. And you turned out exceptional, high-quality petroleum products. After a while, you could do it in your sleep. Occasionally a new manager would come in and there would be some new twists, a few transfers, some new initiatives, a safety campaign, a union issue, but it was pretty much business as usual.

A few people thought it didn't have to be that way - they thought a lot of human energy was going to waste. So, encouraged by the refinery manager, they designed a programme, PACT (Participative Approach to Communication and Teamwork), in which problems relating to the working environment could be handled by the people affected by them. It seemed a simple solution, but in a culture dominated by procedures and layers of control (as a refinery needs to be), implementing improvements can be a daunting task. When the programme was conceived, it went through multiple stages of approval (all the way up to the country head), and involved developing procedural manuals, PR material, posters, flyers, information briefings, structural designs - it very nearly died, strangled by its own red tape.

The one thing missing in all the infrastructure was the one thing the programme was out to catalyse: people improving their own workplace. It felt like too much trouble. You had to conceive a project, recruit some people to work with you, make a presentation to management, design a work plan, carry it out, coordinate meeting times, get a team leader and a separate facilitator, and hope for the best.

When the refinery decided to hold participative planning sessions with groups of 30 staff at a time, things began to change. Each session came up with several action plans and teams committed to carrying them out through the PACT structure. Since that began in 1990, it's been hellzapoppin' at the plant. And a lot more fun.

A few of the 65 projects completed totally at staff initiative include:

- new canteen with music and equipment
- open house for neighbors; open house and tour for employee families with 1500 attending
- courtesy campaign for in house staff
- a new roof for the loading shed -allows loading of products for shipping during frequent rainstorms
- a checker competition with winning proceeds going to charity (the company frequently contributes to charity, but this time it was the staff who made the contribution)
- a week-long programme of activities for wives of refinery staff, most of whom had never visited the plant - it included a plant tour with briefings, a series of programmes on safety in the home, fire prevention in the kitchen, first aid, etc. The female staff who organised the programme did it "in appreciation for the support you give our husbands in working here."

The projects are heavily oriented to improving the working environment and the morale of staff. A staff attitude survey was conducted after PACT had been in operation for some time and 93% of staff regarded this refinery as an excellent place to work. This represented a substantial improvement from past surveys and is one of the results sought after by Management. Of course, the release of spirit has occasioned a corresponding increase in productivity.

C. "Tea At Three" (Improvements: Relations)

They were a hard bunch. The local branch of a leading international bank was accustomed to doing business with the toughest of clients, and doing it with flair. Theirs has been described as a "take no prisoners" corporate culture. They were aggressive, knowledgeable, efficient, systematic, profitable - and lousy at maintaining civil relationships in the office. During a corporate planning session, the managers realised that this approach was demoralising staff and that a demoralised staff will not provide the support required to sustain their pace. So they pondered.

Their solution was to institute a "compulsory tea break" each Wednesday afternoon at 3:30. Everyone in the building was to stop work for half an hour, go to the canteen, and chat. This seems like a trivial solution to a minor irritation. But coming in that culture in the middle of the week interrupting a working day was a major shift in relationships. At the first session, the Managers formed a "receiving line" and greeted officers and clerks as they arrived. You would have thought the sky was falling. First looks of surprise, then fear, then tentative greeting and only then an increasingly boisterous conversation. The key factor in releasing spirit was the surprise alteration of relationships. People were forced into treating each other as human beings, and it was a delight.

The process continued for 18 months, then died out. This does not mean that it failed, only that routine is the enemy of spirit. Whenever the most creative events become accepted and expected, then it is time for a change.

III. EXPANDED CONNECTIONS

Experiences that release spirit are those that disclose a connection to a wider operating context. Spirit occurs when we are pulled out of the comfort zone into the real world of opportunity, chaos, ambiguity, risk and uncertainty. That's the world we really live in anyway, so occasions that force us to acknowledge it are invigorating. The connections that liberate the spirit from its constraints are experiences of connection to the Outer World, the Inner Self and the Larger Purpose.

A. "Getting To Know You" (Connection: Outside World)

People often work together in the same organisation for years without ever making contact. They may pass in the hallways or exchange greetings in the canteen or even sit through the same meetings time and time again without ever recognising each other as a colleague.

A typical instance of this situation was the faculty of a large, prominent college in a university system. Twenty four department heads, each with a number of professors to manage, came together to determine strategic directions for the college, and hopefully, to generate some teamwork among themselves. Academics are constitutionally loners, and professors are by nature overwhelmed with the research requirements of the field and the teaching requirements of their classes. Add to that the administrative burden of department head, and you can imagine teamwork being a low priority.

The meeting to develop a strategic plan occurred during two days of a holiday. Everybody expected most people to put in an appearance and leave as soon as possible. The Dean even recognised the inevitability of decreasing attendance and by mentioning it, gave implicit permission.

The group worked in three teams to develop elements of their vision for the future. By the time the work was completed, there was a buzzing sense of collegiality among the group. Their ideas were in sync! There was a complementarity between people from Nuclear Physics and from Oral History and from English Literature and from Physical Education that was totally unanticipated. The sessions continued with lively dialogue, open interchange, and growing friendships. By the closing of the session, no one had left, and three more had joined.

Nine months later, the Dean reported that task forces were still at work, and major steps were underway directly along the lines of the strategy. Perhaps more important, people were still basking in the warmth of unanticipated collegiality. They touched the outer.

B. "Lineman's Lament" (Connection: Inner Self)

For more than a decade, making connection with oneself has been the object of New Age exercises, many of which have become well deserving objects of ridicule. But despite the sometimes bizarre claims and postures of some practices, something deep happens to people when they renew contact with a part of themselves that had been obscured. It can occur in the most mundane situations.

A colleague describes the experience of working with a group of telephone linemen whose morale had reached rock bottom. One of them lamented to him, in a moment of conversation, "I know every road and lane in this county." Now anyone who has had training in listening skills or studied Rogerian psychology recognises that this statement warrants a sensitive reply. It is an occasion to reflect back what you hear and affirm the speaker's feelings, right? So you should say something like, "You must find it tedious to travel them so often," or "You have a good mental map of the area," or "It's boring to do the same thing day after day, isn't it?" Every good listener know that.

When confronted with the lament and its accompanying despair, my colleague responded, "Which one is your favorite?" Then he followed it up with "Why?" The lineman suddenly found himself remembering the time he had won a race along this road, and the floodgates of his memory opened up. Somehow he made connection with long-forgotten experiences that constituted the self that he had become. Instead of affirming a present mood, my colleague recognised the historical personage that was having that mood, and helped him to experience a moment of his own significance. I suppose the key was realising that the person HAD a significant past.

Now we can't go around a company talking about what people did at night along country roads. But we can go deep with our listening skills and help people to reconnect with their innermost selves. It creates a level of self-consciousness that produces spirited performance.

C. "Where Angels Frear To Tread" (Connection: Larger Purpose)

Harvard Business Review (Nov-Dec, '94) published an article stating that it is time to move "Beyond Strategy to Purpose." Having a large purpose adds a dimension of meaning to work and allows people to move beyond endurance and toleration to commitment and investment.

A group of managers from an insurance company was making a significant change of direction after the retirement of their Managing Director. The new M.D. wanted people to be involved in the changes, so brought them to a 2-day session on strategic planning. The process moved from visioning to analysis to strategy and finally to developing specific, short-term action projects to initiate new directions. It was participative all the way. One team of junior managers took on the task of creating a mission statement for the company. This task usually reverts to either the Board of Directors or to some PR agency, certainly NOT to a group of young, junior managers. The group let it go by in fond hopes that the other teams would have achievements to offset the certain failure of this one.

Three months later at their follow-up session, they gave a report that knocked our socks off. It was a good statement, as such things go; not perfect, but substantial. What bowled us over was the effort the team put into the task - on their own time with no incentive or reward other than the knowledge that it was a job that needed doing. They had first researched business literature to find out what usually goes into a mission statement; they had looked through annual reports from every company they could find. They had interviewed staff at every level to find out what they thought about the company's mission. And they had drafted, read, critiqued, redrafted, had outsiders critique, and redrafted, finally working until 2 am the night before the follow-up session to have the resulting statement typeset and printed for distribution to the group. When they presented the statement to the group, it was THEIRS! Not that it was perfect, but their response to questions indicated that they took this as serious business and would brook no trivial carping over phraseology.

They made a connection with the larger destiny of the organisation. And because they had an investment of time and expertise in the company, they had a stake in the outcome. They are connected to that destiny by virtue of their jobs, but only realised it when they were given the opportunity to name it.

CONCLUSION

So how do you re-spiritise organisations? In a real sense, you don't. Organisations are already spiritised - the real question is how to release the positive spirit that is capable of energising the people and place. We have found the answer to be in providing experiences of Realistic Affirmation, Rapid Improvements and Expanded Connections. When those occur, there is a good chance that positive "spirit" will emerge.

WORKING IN COMMUNITY - John Nirenberg

When Toto pulled the curtain on the wizard of Oz to reveal just a rather frail grandfatherly figure, the awesome bluff and bluster that scared the intrepid foursome immediately evaporated. Dorothy, the Lion , the Scarecrow and the Tin Man, discovered that they had the powers they sought all along. Pulling the curtain was the end of dependence and fear. It was the realization that one must take responsibility for oneself in life and that most of our fears and dependencies are unnecessary.

The revelation of latent powers within, and the misplaced dependence on others showed the Lion that he already had courage and the Tin Man that he had a heart, or the Scarecrow that he had a brain. We can achieve our goals and take responsibility for ourselves. Our cultural traditions have validated this for over three hundred years. It has been our history. It is more than mildly ironic that as we take pride in our individualism we are so ready to surrender it to others in the workplace. Of course it may be easy to do and convenient to do but over the long run it diminishes our sense of self. Once we realize our capabilities it is a small step to imagine how great our organizations could become. As organizations evolve into communities and follow the path of equitable involvement and mutual commitment, this energy will be released. Finding the power within and between each of us and the courage to understand what is in our shared best interests and to live accordingly is the challenge of cooperative action. The following issues are important for each community to grapple with. They establish the learning agenda for the skills that we need to develop.

First, however, let's look at the power of a work team building community; it is representative of the transformation now underway. The example reported is taking place at Lesher Communications, a printing company in Walnut Creek, California that produces four daily newspapers including the Northern California edition of the New York Times and other publications. They began a sociotechnical systems change that eventually resulted in the creation of self-managing work teams in their new printing plant. It started out simply enough. The company was keeping up with new technology and modernizing some printing processes. But they also took the opportunity to increase productivity through employee involvement.

They created a situation of which they are quite proud. Twenty-seven people are now doing what it takes almost 260 people to accomplish in their other traditionally managed plant. These numbers aren't nearly telling the whole story. What has happened is that people who performed narrow, closely supervised jobs before are now, after extensive training, taking the entire responsibility for the plant's performance. Middle managers' jobs were basically eliminated as their functions were assumed by the workers at the new plant. The employees learned all the jobs necessary and decided all issues surrounding payroll, scheduling, hiring, vacations, troubleshooting production problems, mediating team process issues and deciding how they would do their work. To do this they created a continuous learning organization where each employee by taking responsibility for the plant's output willingly commits him or herself to learning all they need to know to effectively execute their responsibilities.

Some dramatic innovations are practiced by the members of this self-managing team. Besides handling all the traditional middle management functions leaving middle managers to train, facilitate, and plan, the workers themselves elect members of their hiring committee which interviews, screens, tests, and selects their colleagues. Conduct, absenteeism and discipline issues are also settled by the workers by representatives they select. And, they elect members to their own safety committee. The point here is that former hourly workers are now making all decisions related to the work of the new plant and are heavily involved in its governance processes. This is a dramatic turn about. Many of the points that follow reflect the essence of what occurred at Lesher. Each company, however, must decide for itself how to approach each step as it begins the journey toward self-managing teams and beyond them to community. Ultimately this breathes new life into organizations and facilitates the evolution of the community model of organizing. The evidence is very clear that it works; that people can and do rise to the occasion and that once they taste this kind of effectiveness there is no going back to the old mindset.

Fundamental Interpersonal Skills

There isn't always an obvious connection in people's minds between spending a lot of time on process issues and organizational success. There is still an attitude about getting on with one's job and not being bothered by what often seems like endless talking in endless meetings with nothing getting done. We really have little choice since, as separate individuals, we can't possibly know all that we need to know and don't have the ability to see our work and place in the organization as others see it. We are constantly faced with the need to create alignment, to refine our understanding of ourselves and how we meet the needs of the organization and its external customers. The need to understand our connectedness at work is becoming crucial for organizational success. It determines the quality of our relationships which determine how well we understand and can meet the needs of the market.

Working in an idea age, a world filled with intangibles, requires the free expression of thoughts, feelings, and ideas from each person in an organization. How else can you innovate? Meet unique customer needs? Solve problems? Understand each other's needs? The cluster of skills required to elicit and use the input from each person is the central requirement underlying the competencies needed for future personal and organizational success and building a workable community.

Reduce Barriers Between Individuals

Try to eliminate barriers to communication between people. Individuals must first understand what is required of them to communicate clearly and honestly with their colleagues. They must understand the elements of their job and how to articulate their needs. Personal skills in formulating and expressing ideas are essential to begin the communications process. Being creative, analytical, and informed about one's job and how it fits into the group's and organization's purpose is essential. Each person shares this responsibility.

The structure and processes in place must be audited to determine the extent they facilitate or interfere with interpersonal communication. Do people fear telling the truth? Disagreeing with bosses or the group mind? Will one face action by the organization for speaking freely or suggest ideas that seem "unusual" or counter to the conventional wisdom? Are there various opportunities for self-expression outside of formal task-oriented meetings where free reign thinking is possible? Are there rewards and recognition for creativity? Are people encouraged to develop novel ways to approach nagging problems and issues? Are there particular people that ridicule the efforts of others when bringing up new topics, issues, and approaches?

DO: Survey individuals to gather their perceptions of the kinds and extent of the barriers they face to being open and communicative. Begin a dialog around these issues and develop a list of priorities for improving communication climate.

Build Interpersonal Compatibility

One way to minimize the influence of the closed, resistant or obstructive individual is to have frequent opportunities for meetings, committees and rotating task forces that require everyone's involvement. Providing a variety of meaningful opportunities to participate in idea generation, discussion and evaluation reduces the negative effects of any one individual and reduces the systematic inhibition of individuals' efforts to communicate freely. When feedback skills and the use of meeting facilitation techniques are learned and each person is trained in their use, individuals are less able to obstruct the work of the group. They cannot hide behind their position as in a conventional hierarchy and this behavior will be confronted. The facilitator playing a coaching role will show people the effects of their behavior. Eventually all will be able to do this as they become trained in these skills. This is a dramatic change from the usual silence that befalls groups in today's organizations because of the protocols that discourage confrontation, negative feedback and the expression of beliefs and feelings - especially "upward" in the hierarchy with all the personal and career hazards one faces as a result of speaking one's mind.

One of the most inhibiting factors in communication, perhaps more so than any formal obstruction or interfering boss, is simply the personal discomfort commonly felt in the presence of unfamiliar people. It takes a while to get used to one another and to feel comfortable in freely expressing oneself, particularly if there are status or other differences that inhibit one's willingness to communicate. Providing many opportunities to get to know one another is a form of social lubrication that allows individuals to become psychologically comfortable and willing to more freely express themselves. It is vital then, to reinforce the emotional safety factor as people get to know and work with one another. It should not be assumed that we are all able to make this effort without encouragement or organizational facilitation.

Illustrate/Be Clear About Your Purpose

If you are a manager or facilitator, make clear how you are helping the group achieve its goals. Introduce or reintroduce the role you are playing at appropriate moments and remind the group of your strategic purpose - how you will be acting on its behalf. Make objectives concrete targets. Animate them. Create images of what the team wants to become and how you intend to facilitate this achievement. Frequently illustrate these goals and display them to all staff members. Show competitors' products and services and how you are doing in comparison.

Interpersonal Skills: Developing Teams Into Community

1. *Meeting Facilitation Skills*. Meeting facilitation skills are essential since much of one's work in community will occur in meetings. Learn the various roles and how each contributes to the group's success: facilitator, process observer (to comment on how the meeting went, what made it effective or ineffective), wall chart note-taker, recorder, time keeper, devil's advocate, refreshment coordinator, and facilities planner.
2. *Dispute Resolution Through Mediation Skills*. Using peer supervision, process observation, role clarification and self-assessment skills, personalize the causes of high performance. These techniques show how a person's efforts fit into others in the organization and lead to results for the group. Each is a method to gain clarity about, and focus on, one's part in the group.
3. *Dealing With Conflicts Between Colleagues*. Managerial mediation is a useful technique to apply when confronting differences and disputes. It's simple and easy to apply. The mediator supervises the process to insure that the four steps are followed:

Step 1: Disputants agree to find time to talk and to allow another person to mediate the discussion.
Step 2: Everyone agrees to a comfortable meeting place and time with no distractions.
Step 3: Each side talks, expresses appreciation of the process and with the other's willingness to work out the issue. In addition, be optimistic about finding a solu-

tion and agree not to withdraw or use force (physical or psychological) of any kind. Then state the issue and begin the dialog. Remember, don't get off track, tell jokes, scapegoat, give up, or remain silent.

Step 4: Watch for conciliatory gestures and support them and look for the breakthrough - a voluntary shift from a 'win/lose' approach to an 'us against the problem' attitude. When the breakthrough occurs make a deal. Be behaviorally specific, write it out and include a time line for follow up.

4. *Suspending Judgement (Using DeBono's Concept of "PO").* It is important for work group members and participants in any democracy to have certain general skills that also apply to solacratic organizational communities and solacracies described here: "As in a democracy, individual participation in teamwork requires personal commitment and maturity, self-discipline, flexibility, capacity for give and take, the willingness and ability to learn, basic respect for the other fellow with all of his differences, and the ability to examine oneself in relationships with other people with a degree of objectivity." PO is a position beyond yes or no. It requires you to suspend your impulse to judge long enough to fully grasp a situation before you act.

5. *Team Building Skills*. Team building developed out of the human potential movement of the 1950s and became very popular in the 1960s and 1970s. Today the concepts of teamwork and team building have undergone a renaissance and are fast approaching buzzword-panacea status. The intention is, of course, to help work groups operate more smoothly and effectively and to improve quality. The basic elements of teamwork haven't changed much since their introduction but what is vital to their continued practice and success is the creation of an environment that reinforces the behavior that makes teams effective. The context within which they operate is the key to their success. In creating community, organizations establish the kind of environment consistent with the operating principles necessary for effective teams. Without it teams will be short-lived, becoming just another passing fad. Remember, just because people are placed in groups doesn't make them a team.

Using survey feedback and action research is an effective way to discern the sense of the group when it is too large for meeting all at once or if there are logistical or time concerns that make it impossible to do so. Survey feedback is the ability to construct questionnaires that elicit members' perceptions of important dynamics of the group. This helps determine areas most in need of improvement and areas in which the group is doing well.

Action research is a follow up process that engages the group in the refining of their perceptions and the establishment of a specific plan to remedy ills, establish new goals, or reinforce existing practices that are working well.

Developing creative problem identification and problem solving techniques is also important. This includes using statistical data as well as creative imagery to gain and apply insights from the work processes itself.

Personal Skills: Developing Teams Into Communities

1. *Giving and Receiving Feedback*: Positive Feedback is conveying the satisfaction one has with the effect of another's work or behavior. When someone does a particularly good job or has executed a responsibility or been particularly insightful, telling them how they have affected you gives positive feedback. It not only lets someone know they have done well and are appreciated but helps her or him understand exactly what it was that was so effective. It encourages more of the same performance in the future. It is more than a polite "pat on the back" as well. It is a focused behavior on a specific incident; a reflection on an action someone has taken. During breaks or informal time, make a point of acknowledging how a colleague did well, helped you, or otherwise made a favorable impression.

Just being polite or conveying a generality that you liked someone's work is not particularly helpful though everyone does appreciate being acknowledged. It simply is too vague. When you take the time to be specific you assure that the individual understands and is focused on specific things he or she did that were effective. Niceties have a place, of course, but in addition to being vague generalities they have a shorter life than either accurate and focused feedback (or negative feedback) and may need to be reemphasized in order to get through the listeners social filter. The social filter accepts positive generalities in much the same way that one hears, "have a nice day" or "I'm fine" when exchanging pleasantries. In addition, positive feedback is rarely noted in one's "file" and rarely has a direct link with the organization the way negative feedback does, so we often diminish its importance; it has much less impact than it deserves, especially so when it isn't specific.

2. *Negative Feedback*. Much of our lives is enveloped in the expectation that things will work properly and people will perform well. Therefore, we typically become critical when this isn't the case. We are more prone to complain than to praise others. Both actions are uncomfortable and usually are avoided except in the most noteworthy instances such as unexpectedly good service or being severely inconvenienced by bad service or expensive mistakes. Negative feedback seems more personally relevant and important because it stems from a painful experience one is immediately motivated to overcome.

3. *Acceptance of Feedback From Others*. Giving feedback is only part the skill in developing an open communications climate. It is also necessary to accept feedback from others. Where there is a pattern and many people give you the same feedback it would be a good idea to

think about it more seriously. Test if the feedback is accurate for you and think twice if you receive the same message from different sources. In either case become receptive to others speaking frankly to you; invite helpful criticism and get in the habit of asking, as the former Mayor of New York Edward Koch used to say, "How 'm I doin?"

3. *Self-disclosure*. The feedback loop can only work if each member of the group is willing and able to give and receive feedback. Thus, it is necessary to be open and authentic; to present yourself to others genuinely and to express yourself naturally. The level of intimacy in the group will be determined over time as each member assesses the authenticity of the others and they reach an understanding of how far the group is willing to go in being open with one another.

4. *Ability to Listen/Empathize*. In order to fulfill the need to give and receive feedback as well as to heighten the general communication effectiveness of the group, one naturally needs to develop listening skills and the ability to empathize with the speaker. Listening requires clearing the time you spend with the individual from other distractions so that you can focus on what is being said and the context in which it is said. Show the speaker that you are listening and check in with the person to determine if you have been understanding the message by reframing it as a statement or asking a question to clarify points of interest. In short listening is paying attention.

5. *Capacity for Self-reflection*. The capacity for self-reflection is strangely absent among many people who seem oblivious of their effect on others and their social situation. This deficiency takes many forms from one simply being awkward to being obnoxious and instigating frequent and intense interpersonal conflicts. Even frequent silences or being a loner may indicate the hesitation on the part of others to engage in conversation or in the work process at hand. Self-reflection is an attempt to put one's behavior in interpersonal perspective by examining the influences one has on others and the impact of other's behavior on oneself. It helps people determine their preferences, dislikes, biases, patterns of relating and habits that may inhibit or facilitate interpersonal relationships.

6. *Honoring Inquiry and Dialogue*. In the world described in this book, there is little room for dogmatism, orthodoxy or immutable conventions. Remember, everything is considered tentative. Everything must be justified by performance and human need. In a fast paced changing world where ideas, creativity and innovation form the basis of most work, exploration of concepts, original thinking and openness to new ideas must be practiced by everyone. When armed with a capacity for using team building and meeting facilitation techniques, each individual is fully equipped for assuming a pivotal role in the work group when the circumstances require it.

7. *Keeping Everyone Informed*. Enhanced communications will be one of the most important issues throughout the 1990s and beyond. We are living in an information glut unlike anytime in history. It seems the number of claims on our time and the number of unwanted, uninvited distractions increases each year. The major issue at work is not simply to inform but to inform in a way that helps the individual focus on what is important and act appropriately. The idea of focusing and then acting appropriately will require incredible attention to detail, timing and appropriate channels of communicating while checking the receivers comprehension.

8. *Consensus Building and Mediation Skills*. Open communication, access to information and willingness to share power in order to be responsive, flexible and innovative requires skills in building consensus and in resolving conflicts. When each person is trained in these skills they can follow the processes intelligently from the perspective of a shared interest in an outcome best suited to the work to be done by the group.

9. *Process Observation Skills*. As each person prepares pivotal, leadership and meeting facilitation roles it is necessary to learn to observe and interpret dynamics while they are occurring. It is best to focus on interpersonal dynamics of others such as in a meeting where there is a formal observer present to offer the group feedback at the end of the meeting about behaviors that helped or hindered the process. It is also helpful to develop this skill to help you glimpse your own behavior and assess your impact on others and then on you in real time.

10. *Reducing Anxiety*. A major factor interfering with the achievement of long term teamwork is a widespread irrepressible anxiety. As long as all work is subject to unilateral approval by a superior and that all promises can be rescinded, teamwork becomes just shared delegation. Anxiety about the fundamental relationship between employer and employee still defines the context of the employee's experience. The bottom line for employees is that they still serve at the will of the boss and all major parameters of the employment contract and the team's functions are thus defined and controlled by others. Anxiety due to powerlessness remains. Nothing short of a rewrite of the social contract can work to reduce the major factors contributing to anxiety: inadequate support from superior; ineffective performance by superior; inadequate performance from subordinates; not knowing precisely what is expected on the job; not receiving credit/recognition when due; inadequate information about career advancement requirements; not being able to depend on the word or actions of managers.

COMMUNITY CORE COMPETENCE - K. GOZDZ

I recently worked with a group in a high-tech computer company that once had a very alive sense of community. The people felt more connected, more efficient, and there was a high sense of trust within the group. Productivity and learning were phenomenal.

Results were so good, in fact, that management infused the group with millions of dollars to upgrade its working environment and add more staff. But a year later, this group no longer felt like a community, and everyone was afraid to say so. Management pretended that everything was as it had been, and anyone who offered evidence to the contrary was considered a traitor.

In examining the history of this group's process, it was easy to see that no one had expended effort to keep alive the one resource that had made the group so successful: its spirit of community. Everyone just assumed that if management financed an expansion of the project, the sense of community would automatically continue.

A collective spirit of community, such as the one experienced by the original group, is highly prized. Yet more often than not, actions intended to preserve this spirit drive it out instead. In the case of the computer firm, the development of community was largely ignored to death.

What Is A Community?

A mature community is characterized by an inclusiveness of diverse people and information, semipermeable boundaries, and a systems-oriented paradigm. In such a workplace, there is an openness to creativity and innovation. The organization becomes, in effect, a group of leaders who embody a profound sense of mutual respect and have the ability to fight gracefully while transcending differences. The benefits of corporate community include a profound sense of trust and cooperation, which leads to a coherent organizational vision.

How can an organization consciously and strategically develop competence in community building? It must first make the commitment to learn and grow as a community throughout its life cycle. Developing such a competence depends on a balanced growth of three interrelated elements: the experience of interconnectedness; sustainable collective intelligence; and learning architecture. Sustaining community over the long term also requires an organization to go through several stages of growth, each with its own set of developmental challenges. By anticipating these challenges, we can prepare to respond in ways that optimize growth and change while minimizing chaos.

Interconnectedness

Almost anyone who has survived a significant crisis in a group knows the spirit of community. Starting a new organization, enduring a tragedy such as the death of a colleague or friend, or experiencing a natural disaster can all lead to a spirit of interconnectedness in a group. In these cases, community arises as the result of a group's need for survival.

In business, this survival goal can be the starting point for developing a culture that deliberately fosters community throughout the course of the workday. Rather than depending on haphazard events such as crises, a team can actively nurture its capability to create experiences of interconnectedness through authentic communication. Paradoxically, it does this by acknowledging differences.

The typical organization is essentially what M. Scott Peck, author of The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace, calls a "pseudo-community," an organization unwilling or unable to acknowledge its differences. However, a group can be taught the discipline of learning to acknowledge and transcend these differences. If members are willing to learn how to face reality together, they can develop authentic and vulnerable communication. Through such a process, the organization can become aware of its barriers to true community.

When teams and organizations manage to experience interconnectedness - with its benefits of authentic community, safety, and intimacy - they are often so enthusiastic about these benefits that they try to stay in this state continually. But after a while they notice that their attempts actually create less sense of community. The lesson here is that the spirit of interconnectedness in a community is not a permanent state. It ebbs and flows with the community's life cycle - and when it is not present, it may be a signal that one or both of the other two aspects of core competence require attention.

Sustainable Collective Intelligence

A second aspect of developing a community has to do with enhancing the collective intelligence of a group. If a group cannot convert collective intelligence into organizational action, it can easily become a support group rather than a high-performing learning community. Creating such collective intelligence means actively nurturing the sense of community while simultaneously acting and making decisions that can improve the group's thinking skills.

One method for developing collective intelligence is the dialogue process introduced by physicist David Bohm. Dialogue focuses on creating shared meaning by surfacing and examining assumptions within a group. It emphasizes the importance of rational and cognitive group learning. As David Bohm described it, "(the word 'dialogue') suggests a stream of meaning flowing among and through us and between us. This will make possible a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which will come some new understanding."

Dialogue is very effective for exploring fundamental assumptions underlying group thought, but because of its focus on cognition, it limits the range of emotion within a group. An alternative is to incorporate Bohm's cognitive emphasis with Peck's focus on authentic feeling states and stages of community building (see Community Building: A Four-Stage Model). Combining dialogue and community building can allow a group to shift rapidly between "head" and "heart," allowing for a collective intelligence that can be sustained more easily over time.

Learning Architecture

Collective thought and action are required in order for groups to change the complex architecture that either supports or inhibits community. The learning architecture of community consists primarily of the systems and structures that sustain memory and learning in the organization over time. The compensation system, career development process, style of leadership, methods for distribution of power and governance, and physical structure of the site all affect a group's ability to experience itself as an authentic community.

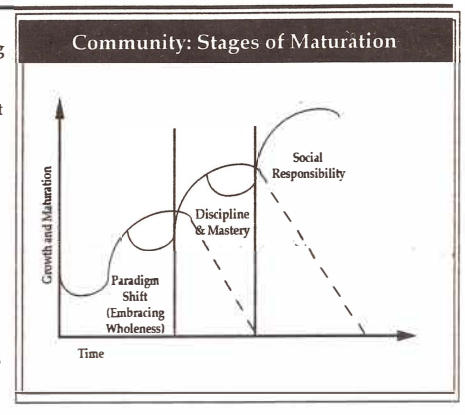
Understanding how the organization's learning architecture enhances or blocks community is critical to realizing the trust, joy, and flexibility of community. No amount of attention to team spirit or learning will be productive if the structures of the organization cannot or will not be changed to support community. More often than not, an organization that is having difficulty sustaining a sense of community is operating with systems that create fragmentation or disempowerment.

Systems thinking's emphasis on structural diagramming and identifying high-leverage interventions can help in creating structures that support community. This work is critical, because even when the organization's leadership politically backs the enhancement of community, if the organizational structures are prohibitive, they can inadvertently destroy hope.

Sustaining Community

With the actualization of the three aspects of core competence - interconnectedness, sustainable collective intelligence, and learning architecture - an organization takes its first steps to becoming a community. Developing a core competence in these three aspects, however, is just the starting point for long-term growth. Like a child that grows to maturity, all three elements must grow in harmony and balance for long-term health and vitality. And just as humans go through infancy, adolescence, and adulthood, communities go through necessary growth stages and transitions as they mature.

By definition, growth necessitates a certain amount of pain. If the organizational community avoids the pain of growth, it stops the learning process. But if it consciously embraces the three developmental learning challenges described below, an organization will find opportunities to grow spiritually, psychologically, and competitively.



Paradigm Shift - Embracing Wholeness

The first developmental stage in sustaining community wrestle with the assumptions of our prevailing mechanistic paradigm. Businesses cannot sustain themselves as communities or learning organizations unless they become capable of embracing a paradigm of wholeness.

Although a community-based perspective can be temporarily grafted onto an organizational world view that seeks answers in linear causality, such a transplant will not "take." Community responds best to cyclical, nonlinear processes. Organizations destroy community when they treat it like a mechanical process made up of linear cause-and-effect relationships.

In his groundbreaking work on paradigms, Thomas Kuhn explained that a group holding onto old ideas and values will often choose to die conserving them rather than risk the learning required for change. The only remedy to this situation that Kuhn offered was to wait for people to die off over time, thus paving the way for a new paradigm to emerge. Unlike the ill-fated groups that Kuhn described, businesses can use the technology of community building to make the transition between paradigms consciously.

A typical organization that has been successful and profitable for extended periods of time can fall out of touch with the "real world," and the company's culture can become unquestioned, much like a paradigm. When this happens, the leadership of the organization needs to pierce this unreality by challenging mental models and fostering an environment of trust where a new world view can actually take hold.

However, since our traditional organizations create and legitimize paradigms, acts of individual leadership are usually ineffective in changing them. The community-building process must therefore challenge and

transform the collective world view. At this stage in the community's life, the principle leverage point for growth resides in creating effective ways for the collective intelligence of the group to create new individual and organizational models of reality.

Discipline and Mastery

No organization can have a positive learning environment or feel like a "family" at all times. The evolution of a living community includes turbulent times that occur as we encounter one another's and the organization's underdeveloped areas. A learning organization that embraces community as a core competence thus requires day-in and day-out practice of what I call "discipline and mastery," so that the community and the individuals within it move toward optimum competency and aligned organizational purpose.

M. Scott Peck and Peter Senge both see learning as a lifelong program of study - what they call a "discipline." In The Fifth Discipline, Peter Senge explained, "By 'discipline' I do not mean 'enforced order' or 'means of punishment' but a body of theory and technique that must be put into practice. A discipline is a developmental path for acquiring skills or competencies. As with any discipline. . . anyone can develop proficiency through practice."

I believe that developing a core competence in community building requires four main leadership skills (originally described by Peck as a system of discipline):

- Delay gratification. Foster the ability to hold tension between the vision and the current reality, and be able to see the actual reality of a situation without jumping to problem solving. Embrace larger and more systemic views, avoiding the simplicity of linear causes and obvious solutions.
- Dedication to the truth. Boldly acknowledge what learning the organization needs to pursue. Seek to embrace unpleasant truths. Acknowledge the gap between intended and actual outcomes in order to remove the barriers to learning.
- Assume responsibility. Practice willingness to act as a fearless learner, to move beyond blame or judgment of oneself or others for the purpose of learning. Take responsibility for change.
- Balance learning. Discipline must be subject to a system of checks and balances or it can easily lead to burnout, excessive work, or a "task master" mentality. To truly benefit from learning, we need to provide periods of "slack time" for integration, relaxation, and play. Without balance, learning is less effective - and no amount of discipline can substitute for compassion and care.

Social Responsibility

Once a learning organization has embraced a paradigm of wholeness and established itself as a sustainable learning community, it will find itself called to address its responsibility to the larger society. This final developmental stage is really just a starting place for another level of growth.

An organization at this level of development will discover that its impediments to community are intrinsically tied to the limitations and systems that govern the larger society. For example, in the West, interlocking systems of oppression (such as racism, sexism, and classism) will inevitably emerge as obstacles to sustaining the community. These larger social issues will have to be addressed within the organizational goals of the company. Many organizations are surprised by the level of tension and struggle that is intrinsic to a mature community. They expect that mature communities are tranquil. But community is paradoxical: the more spiritually mature it becomes, the deeper the concerns it struggles with.

The fully mature community will encounter turbulent times, because once individuals and organizations reach this level of social awareness, the organization will need to reclarify its fundamental vision, values, and purpose. It will require this new clarity to balance its vision against its need to act on social issues. Because of past experiences of interconnectedness, a community will undoubtedly recognize that its survival is linked to that of the larger society. It can then develop a social vision that complements the organization's profit-centered vision.

The Journey Toward Authenticity

In an effort to build sustainable communities, managers sometimes try to apply traditional management methods, much to the community's detriment. There is a difference, however, between the responsible measurement of results and measurement that kills incentive. Those managers who are preoccupied with measurement over results tend to ask: How is community defined? How can we measure it? What results has it produced so far? This kind of leadership leaves organizations starving for authentic connection, since individuals who are preoccupied with evaluation often do not have energy for the work of building community.

A business seeking to become a learning organization by developing a core competence in community is embarking upon a complex and rewarding journey. This journey includes making a shift from hiding complex problems to not only confronting them, but actually using them to gain competitive advantage.

Embracing this journey provides a way for a business locked into an old paradigm, or stuck in the stage of pseudo-community, to transform itself into a more authentic community. Once learning and authentic connection become integrated, the organization can then release the talents and gifts of the community members in a way that produces results far beyond the capability of any one individual.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION WORKSHEET

1. SITUATION

2. IF RESOLVED TO MY SATISFACTION.....

3. IF RESOLVED TO OTHER'S SATISFACTION....

4. MY ASSUMPTIONS PREVENTING RESOLUTION

5. OTHER'S ASSUMPTIONS PREVENTING RESOL.

6. MY OWN DEEP BELIEFS SUPPORTING....

7. OTHER'S DEEP BELIEFS SUPPORTING....

8. POSSIBLE BREAKTHROUGH SOLUTIONS

9. WHAT I WILL DO TO CHANGE THE SITUATION

10. WHAT IS THE QUESTION THAT WHEN ANSWERED WILL RESOLVE/DISSOLVE/CHANGE THE SITUATION?