

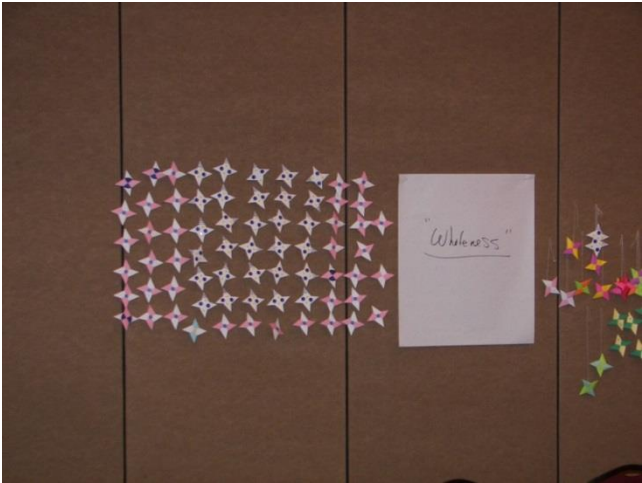
The Transformational Change Simulation and Leadership Workshop

“Different by Design”

Chapter Two: Toxic Soil

The participants were exhausted physically, emotionally and intellectually by the eight hour Simulation experience. They were advised that they would be asked to “extract meaning” from the experience the next two days and come prepared to talk about their various “roles” as it relates to their real world experience.

The Fliers were now on the conference center walls and everyone could see the “difference” when they were “Just Cutters” and afterwards when “wholeness” dominated all behavior.



Phase One and Two



Phase Three

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Phase Three creativity on display

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As they arrived, everyone began to recall the fun and excitement of Phase Three and were pointing out their own personal contributions to satisfying the four Customers.

“Good Morning everyone. Two minutes before we began. Two minutes.”

Many were so engrossed in talking about the artifacts on the wall that they totally ignored the time announcement. I told Bill, “They are operating in “real time.”

Finally, after another two minute announcement, they were all seated. “The purpose of our time together today is first, extract meaning from the simulated experience of yesterday, second decide whether it is possible to translate that behavior and creativity back to your companies and finally -- how it can be done.”

There were thirty five participants from twelve different companies in the room: a bank, an insurance company, two manufacturers, a logistics company, one major restaurant chain, a personal fitness company, an IT services company, one manufacturers Rep Firm, a graphic design company and two entrepreneurial start-ups. Many were leaders and managers along with representatives from their organizations with significant performance responsibilities.

“Before we begin, did anyone wake up in the middle of the night with an ‘a-ha’ about what happened yesterday?”

Amber, from one of the manufacturers quickly raised her hand and began to talk with some conviction: “This (pointing to the wall) is exactly what we have been trying to do at our company for several years now --- we have called it culture change --- it has been facilitated by six sigma backbelts and teambuilding retreats – and a host of sales training seminars ----- none have worked because we are always too busy to implement what we learned.”

When she paused, Ron interrupted and said: “You’re not alone!” with some forcefulness in his voice.

There were three hands in the air and I motioned for them to wait as Amber had not finished her thought. She continued, “I’m sorry, but I

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hope we will address how to create total company commitment like we did yesterday”

“Amber, before we move on, let me ask you a question. Why did your company do all of that work – what were the performance consequences that were driving the need for a culture change?”

She quickly said, “Bottom line results.”

I thought to myself, confusing “What” for “Why” is always the justification for a culture change.

I asked, “But—“why?”

“Our top line revenue was not growing. It was like Phase One yesterday -- we were not serving customers and we lost several key accounts.”

Don interrupted Amber’s next comment and ask me: “Have you ever had companies successfully implement this back at work?”

Respectful of Amber’s wanting to add another thought, I motioned for Don to wait and asked, “Amber, what was your final thought?”

“Only that our new senior leader has attended this workshop when she was with another company -- she told me that it is all going to change soon -- and she wants my opinion as to what to call it – and it will not be another culture change – so I need that new way to describe it for her -- that’s all.”

“Thank you Amber-- if there isn’t a well defined process for implementation after any training event--- if everyone is not involved--it will seldom be sustained. We will reveal that part of the implementation process as we continue our time together.”

Don was patiently waiting --- “Now, back to you Don, -- yes, many companies have experienced tremendous success – some are actually here today and they might be willing to tell their stories.”

“Three examples that are not here are the *“I’m-a-lovin-it”* phrase of McDonald’s that came from this workshop --- a restaurant chain had seventeen straight quarters of same store sales increase as the

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implementation progressed -- and Experience Columbus is doing amazing things since the contextual shift from the “reactive” visit orientation to the “proactive” experience orientation.”

I paused and said, “Yet -- to be fair it doesn’t always work --- Sears spent six years – and many millions trying to transform Sears with a “problem solving” vision and the senior leader totally ignored my advice about the impossibility of transformation using “problem solving” technology.”

I paused, shook my head as I recalled that experience and said, “It is a very individual and difficult choice to make.”

“But, many of you are significant leaders and managers--- let’s focus on why you are here and what was your ‘a-ha’ moment from last night – who’s next?”

Brent, the COO of a major restaurant chain, raised his hand and said, “Now that I can see what is involved and how it is totally different from what we have tried to do in the past” -- he looked at Amber and said, “We’ve done the same things that you describe --- I’m willing to consider it.” He paused, “but the key is to know how to get what you call “wholeness” to happen back at work. It seemed so simple when we did it yesterday, but that is not possible back at work in our company.”

Not wanting the conversation to dwell on the problems that any particular company may be having back at work, I asked,– “But Brent --- what did you enjoy most about the experience yesterday?”

Brent had no chance to answer that question as Pam, his HR director, jumped in, “Watching him get crushed when he painted it on the wrong side and he tried to sell it as quality -- and he got caught in the lie! Our restaurants do that every day to our customers when the cooks don’t make it the way it is ordered, and we try to convince the customer that it is okay.”

Everyone laughed and acknowledged that it happens everywhere in the restaurant business today.

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In a defensive mode Brent looked at Pam and said, “He asked me what I enjoyed most and you told him what went wrong – classic response!”

After a moment to reflect, he continued, “What I liked most was the TO’s – the time outs -- to talk about what went well and be able to tell the truth – without blame – that’s when I began to understand why the design of the factories was the real reason we could not serve customers --- as you said in the beginning, it was not about us.”

Still looking at Pam he said, “What you just did was talk about what was wrong, not what went well --- he paused ---and I am just as guilty of that as everyone in our company. We never get positive feedback for doing anything right – I mean “well” -- and our regional managers have a cynical view of our employees -- that they are all minimum wagers -- and that toxic mindset is why we can’t change.”

Pam, unable to swallow the confrontation said, “It is because of the turnover -- no one is ever with us long enough to focus on the positive. We are always correcting mistakes!”

With some urgency in the tone of her voice, she asked, “Are we going to talk about the role of positive feedback in achieving that?” (she pointed to the wall) “Brent is right, we are having hiring problems as we are known as a bad place to work.”

“Pam – quick question – if – as you ate breakfast – if you knew we were going to hold Phase Four this morning -- would you have looked forward to participating?”

“You bet!”

“Why?”

Before she could answer, I said, “Everyone think about that question -- and really get clear about “why?”

“Pam.--did you receive positive feedback sometime yesterday and did it impact your willingness to participate again today?”

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She started by saying, “I was exhausted at lunch.” The rest of her answer was all about how – during Phase Three she was able to get out of the functional job that was always being criticized for poor quality and not keeping pace with the speed of production in Phase Two.

She finished by asking, “Anyone else feel that way?” Almost every hand went up.

I paused and looked at everyone, “Creating a positive feedback system is a critical “ingredient” for designing the “fertile soil” for a business to be different.”

After a pause that seemed like an eternity, I asked, “Who else?”

Samantha volunteered, “I felt totally lost when I had to get out of the Folder chair. When I was just a folder, I was safe from being blamed for the disasters the Customers’ experienced in Phase One and Two – but -- I felt so underutilized -- it was just like being back at work.”

“No one can blame us in accounting” ---then with a little jovial nature she said, “but we are really good at blaming everyone else -- “then in Phase Three I was allowed to get up and go help make the jewelery for Debbie and realized that I had a creative talent that I have never been able to use at work – ever!”

Then, with a slight display of emotion she added, “I woke up in the middle of the night and asked myself -- is it possible that I could enjoy my work as much as I enjoyed making those earrings and necklaces yesterday?” She paused and said, “not in how our company operates today.”

Everyone was silent and she continued, “I’d love to go see two of our clients who make creative stuff and see how it is made, not just approve payments and process the payroll. Also, --- I hate being called “Sam in Accounting”

I asked, “Samantha – why don’t you go see those customers?”

“I’m not in sales – only our sales people do that.”

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Jeff, the owner of the graphic design firm said, “Our accounting counselors all have significant customer interaction about the buying experience with our company --- and they uncover many design opportunities for our sales and design people to explore.”

Samantha quickly asked, “Why do you call them counselors?”

Jeff said, “Let’s talk about that at lunch.”

It was obvious that the experience within both Phase One and Two in the morning of the Simulation was emotionally very frustrating for many people.

Others volunteered their examples of being “Just a Function” and I returned to Samantha, “Samantha – jokingly I said, -- I won’t call you Sam ---what gave you permission to get out of your chair as a Folder – and if we were going to conduct Stage Four this morning, would you put on a Folder badge ever again?”

“NO WAY! If that is what we are going to do today, I’m out-of-here!”

Everyone laughed and she got up and went to the coffee table in the back. “This is what I do at work when I get frustrated – I go down to the cafeteria and get lost in coffee.”

While she was still at the coffee station, I asked, “Samantha – is your frustration relieved when you return to your office?”

“No – it’s just back to the old grind of payroll.”

I looked at the total group as Samantha returned to her seat and said, “This may be one of the most important extractions we will make this morning – please consider what your own answer to the following question might be.”

“Samantha -- you said -- you were allowed to go help Debbie – what allowed you to do that?”

She went silent – two others raised their hands with an answer – I motioned for them to wait – and she finally said, “That Master of

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Real Time badge and what we talked about during the Time Out’s – and I could see that Debbie needed help – that’s it – I guess?”

Because she answered the question in the form of a question, I suggested, “What Samantha just said is very important – the contextual shift from a “place” to a “space” – and the shift from functionality to the Master of Real Time ---gives everyone a new source of authority -- and she now had permission to serve customers.”

I could see the confusion in the room – so I added, “The shift from Phase Two to Phase Three was not linear. We will talk again about this issue after the next break. As Samantha’s example illustrates -- one of the key principles of our work together – is to realize in the new context of serving customers *we do not need permission to be who we are.*”

That thought brought a strange look from some people. “You will find that we must see the “functions” --- “Just a Cutter” --- as people --and one of the first steps in creating a different design for any company is to be clear that *all people have creative potential— and if it resides in fertile soil –it has authority to serve customers – and something very different will happen – that is what we experienced in Phase Three yesterday.*”

Jeff quietly added, “Amber, it was the counselor technology within the design of our company that allowed the creative potential of our accountants to be released – it was amazing!”

This was not the time to facilitate new learning so without delay I asked, “Are there any other ‘a-ha’ moments from last night.”

Patrick, the plant manager in one of the manufacturing companies, stood up and said, “This is serious, isn’t it?”—He paused and said, “That was a very serious thought you just made – *that behind all functional job descriptions is a person with creative potential that has never been released – right?*” --- and without hesitation he said, “and that is what I heard Jeff say he did with his accountants --- can we talk about that right now?”

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“Patrick, you were quick to pick up on that thought – did you somehow experience being treated like “Just a Function” yesterday?”

He paused for a moment, wanting to know more about Jeff, then continued: “I was the sales guy who sold the special. I heard the Plant Manager call me that “Damn Sales Guy” when I promised Customer D that we could get him really high quality Fliers. Why did he see me as a “damn function!” I was just doing what all sales people are supposed to do! That actually pissed me off – excuse my ‘French!”

“Then --- last night I realized that I do that exact thing in our company when some of our sales team sells “specials” that we can’t make.” After a long pause he continued, “Sometimes I see our Reps as a “commission” – “Just a Cost” – how’s that for a terrible thought -- and they treat us as those “damn guys” in the factory.” He paused for ten seconds, “We have the “damn factory guys” versus the “damn sales reps” ---and our customers get right in the middle of that Lose-Lose game.”

He then looked at the Sales Rep in the room, “Last week I had a vendor sales guy ask me that stupid question -- *what keeps me up at night* --I’ve been asked that question a hundred times – that’s why I call them the “damn sales guys” -- and now I know what keeps me up at night -- it is the design of the sales game they play – it is really annoying.”

Craig, the Sales Rep raised his hand to comment, but I motioned for him to wait as I could see that Patrick was not finished.

He continued, “But the worst thing was that my promise to get Customer D his high quality Fliers for his government contract -- and our inability to make them -- put him out of business!! --He lost the government account because of me!”

And with anger in his voice he said, “And no one cared! Remember how Deric was just a cutter and said don’t blame me – I cut it right – remember Deric?”

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Deric laughed and said, “It was not my fault – the paper cutter made cutting easy.”

Patrick continued, “In real life we kill our customers when we make false promises and can’t deliver – and we blame the sales guys for not selling what we want to make. We can’t exist based on what -- we want to make!” There was real anger in his voice “Somehow we overcame that yesterday and that – pointing to the wall – is proof that it can be done.”

He was on a roll and continued, “But, another worst thing was when I was asked for a forecast of the revenue for what we were going to sell after lunch. All I could envision was a linear increase of what we had already done and THAT --- pointing to the Phase One and Two wall -- had been a total failure.”

He paused and looked around the room, “Have you ever had to forecast the continuation of failure ---- and pretend at the Board meeting that it was going to work this year! It was just like back at work --- I had no idea how it could possibly be different. Seriously, at lunch we were --what I now know as “vision-less.” He paused, “Our market penetration mind-set must make the sales job of our Reps a bitch!”

Still standing he continued: “We have a company vision ---to dominate the market -- it gives no definition to a forecast. Like it was said earlier, our senior leader keeps saying we have to change this culture -- the only thing we change is the sales forecast ---to improve the efficiency of production – to please the Board. Our strategic approach to our customers needs to see them as partners like we did yesterday --not markets – but it remains unchanged and I’ve been told our mindshare with our Reps is in a free fall because - -- and it’s my fault -- because we can’t deliver on time.”

He sat down and said, “I hope we address this issue.”

I invited Craig the Sales Rep to comment and he said, “He just said it all.”

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Brian from IT Solutions joked: “Patrick --I have the perfect solution for you!”

Ross, from the manufacturer other than Amber jumped on Brian: “You guys in IT have all the SOLUTIONS!!” There was massive anger in the tone of his voice. “That was a part of our culture change – almost identical to what Amber mentioned -- we bought an IT SOLUTION to fix our factory that cost a fortune, took six months to install and it still doesn’t work!”

He wasn’t finished, “Remember yesterday! -- the only technology we had was Deric’s paper cutter – new IT technology is not the answer – we should have spent that fortune releasing the creative potential of our people --- that’s all we did to make that stuff on the walls.”

He paused and said, “We need to remember what Tom told us yesterday that *fixing is the wrong work* --- that nothing has ever been “solved” into existence! Why is your company name “Solutions?”

Patrick also jumped on Brian and quickly added, “Our IT provider calls everything a “solution.” I asked him to come with me to this session. He blew it off as “arts and crafts.” He will never admit that he doesn’t know something when working with our company.”

Ross and Brian wanted to continue the argument and I regained control by suggesting, “We will cover the leadership role in designing a different way to do business. You will find that leadership for Phase Three and Four is not a person or personality issue, rather an “energy field” that needs to be activated. Fortunately, -- it resides within the creative potential of every company and no one person – a singular leader--- acting alone can activate it – and it is not about motivation or functional efficiency.”

Ross quickly asked, “Then what is it about?”

“Ross, it is a structural design approach that allows people to be people -- and as Jeff suggested -- releasing the creativity that is within every company that is here today.”

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The confrontation between Ross and Brian and Patrick had temporarily suppressed the extraction process, so I suggested, “Let’s take a quick break – allow the frustration to subside and be back in five minutes.”

At the break Debbie came to me and said, “That was tense – we had that toxic soil in our bank for over two years. Maybe it would help if I tell them how we resolved it when they come back.”

I said, “It would be a great extraction for everyone – thank you.”