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A Case Study of a Failed Organization Development Intervention Rooted in the Employee Survey Process

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ABSTRACT

This case study illustrates some of the problems of naive over-reliance on employee surveys as part of the organization development process, and makes recommendations to practitioners for effectively managing a theoretically sound approach to their performance improvement work. In addition, this case provides a close-up view of an inexperienced consultant and the distractions that resulted in a failed intervention.

Assumptions Underlying Organization Development

In the new, world economy, U.S. corporations are scrambling to meet the unrelenting demand for ever-increasing productivity, quality, and innovation. Competition and instant marketplace shifts are the most significant drivers of these trends, although the high costs of waste, rework, and unmet customer expectations are also important factors (McLagan, 1991). As U.S. corporations strive to improve their productivity, quality, and innovative capability, they are recognizing that knowledge has a critical role in this process.

Contemporary organization development theorists see their contribution as: a system-wide application of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organizational strategies, structure, and processes for improving an organization's effectiveness (Cummings & Worley, 1993, p. 2).

In addition, the general change model of organization development is seen as having four phases. They include: 1) Entering and Contracting, 2) Diagnosing, 3) Planning and Implementing, and 4) Evaluating and Institutionalizing (Cummings & Worley, 1993, p. 60). While each of the four phases is seen as important, they are not all given the same emphasis. For example, Cummings and Worley (1993) devote a single chapter each to phases one and four in their book, while devoting three chapters to the "Diagnosing" phase and ten chapters to the "Planning and Implementation" phase.

Nadler, Gerstein, and Shaw (1990) provide five conditions for moving beyond Phase 1, Entering and Contracting. They are:

1) The current state is intolerable.
2) Management is willing to make the investment over time.
3) The organization is prepared to stick with it permanently.

4) It is important to the success or survival of the business.

5) Senior management understands that the job cannot be delegated to middle management.

The case study focuses primarily on a description of the consulting context and the Phase 2, Diagnosis, process. As the case unravels, the failure points back to deficiencies in Phase 1, Entering and Contracting, and the general naiveté of the inexperienced consultant.

Organization Development Case Study

This case study is based on data obtained through a consultant's diary, interviews, observations, and documentation related to an organization development effort in a private-sector organization. The focal point of the organization development effort was the work of a *relatively inexperienced* external consultant. The external organization development consultant became an important part of an established company-wide quality improvement team. The consultant joined the effort at the second phase of the change process—the Diagnosis phase. The consultant was assured by a top executive that the executive team was committed to improvement, change, and openness. Thus, the inexperienced consultant skipped over the important Phase 1, Entering and Contracting, as it related to the core change effort. The contracting was narrowly focused on a company-wide survey of all employees to assess the organizational climate. This was done with the consultant's expectation of moving on to Phase 3, Planning and Implementing, and becoming a bigger player in the TQM effort. This expectation was seeded by the executive who originally contacted and selected the inexperienced external consultant.

Introduction to Promotion Inc.

Promotion Inc. is a privately-held, medium-sized organization of 1,100 employees located in the Midwest. The organization provides products and services in the direct mail industry. Promotion Inc. was founded in the late 1960s, and is made up of three divisions: Mailing, Printing, and Envelope, which work together to provide a "total package" of products and services to its customers. These services and products include envelope production, high-speed printing services, data processing, and personalization of preprinted forms. Promotion Inc. had revenues of over 90 million dollars in the last fiscal year.

The Mail Division provides data processing, personalization of printed forms, and letter shop services. Typically, the process involves receiving a mailing list from such customers as large credit card companies, and then downloading this information into a computer. The computer then drives high-speed printers that personalize preprinted letters, forms, and so forth, with the names and addresses from the customer's list. The letter shop function involves inserting the letters, forms and other materials into envelopes, applying postage, and presorting the mail in accordance with postal regulations. The product that is delivered to the post office is commonly referred to as "junk mail."

Internally, the Mail Division is divided into traditional departments including warehousing, accounting, account services, human resources, data processing, bindery, and letter shop. Apart from the company's primary facility is a satellite production operation. The company's greatest strength is being able to process large jobs in a short period of time. It also has a reputation for being able to do difficult jobs, (e.g., inserting a pen into an envelope), which often require modifying and reprogramming equipment.

These strengths have helped the company build a customer base that includes large financial, credit card, and insurance companies. However, a threat Promotion Inc. is currently facing, and one common throughout the mail industry, is its inability to maintain quality control in the face of customers demanding that they process increasingly complex jobs. This is primarily due to technology becoming increasingly sophisticated in its ability to discriminate between different populations and target a potential customer's needs with more accuracy. For example, five years ago, a two-million-piece mailing might have had five "splits," or five different combinations of inserts targeted for different segments of a population. Today, that same mailing might have 100 splits. This increase in complexity has had the effect of multiplying the probability of operators making mistakes by a factor of twenty, and has severely taxed the Mail Division's processes.

The contracting was narrowly focused on a company-wide survey of all employees to assess the organizational climate, with the consultant's expectation of becoming a bigger player in the TQM effort.

As a consequence of this increased complexity, Promotion Inc. had not been able to maintain an acceptable standard of quality, and had lost many of its most valued customers. An additional cost to lost customers is the rework that mistakes generate, which in the previous fiscal year involved more than three hundred thousand dollars in postage, labor, and material costs. This had resulted in layoffs and low morale as the company's health and future came into question. In order to combat this threat, Promotion Inc.'s management team began a total quality management (TQM) program three years ago and has made the improvement of quality an important goal.

An additional threat to the company is its high turnover rate. The yearly turnover rate in the Mail Division production areas has been over 90%, while turnover in administrative areas has been 20%. In the satellite production facility, the turnover rate has been 60%. This turnover rate has been estimated to cost over a $600,000 per year in training and orientation costs, and costs associated with the mistakes new employees typically make. Management also believes the high turnover rate directly contributes to Promotion Inc.'s inability to consistently provide a quality standard acceptable to its customers.

Characteristics of the Corporate Culture

Promotion Inc.'s culture is highly integrated with little differentiation in values, beliefs, and practices contrary to the dominant culture permitted. The direct mail industry, in general, has what might be characterized as a "sweat shop" orientation. The industry's practices and values are based on the assumption that workers are a commodity and can be purchased in whatever quantity desired for the market price. They are not valued as an investment. Employees are inadequately trained, paid minimum or close to minimum wage, forced to work forty-five to sixty-day stretches without a day off during busy periods, and laid-off the moment production demands decrease. Other industries that have practices and policies similar to these include the agricultural industry, which employs migrant workers, and the textile industry, which historically employs illegal immigrants.

Using Deal and Kennedy's (1982) four characteristics to define a culture, Promotion's culture would be characterized as valuing: 1) "activity" over results-oriented actions, 2) individualism over teamwork, 3) decisions that minimize risk or maintain the status quo, and 4) feedback that is based on compliance.

This culture appears to have served Promotion Inc. well before their internal and external environments began to dramatically increase in complexity. When Mail Division employees operated slow but reliable electromechanical inserters and printers, when jobs were not complex, and when their customer's expectations were not as demanding, Promotion functioned well and grew to become one of the top 100 privately owned companies in its state. However, many of Promotion's past strengths have turned into weaknesses. With the introduction of high technology, frequent changes in postal regulations, and complex jobs, Promotion's antiquated practices are increasingly causing employees to make mistakes precipitating rework, poor quality, missed deadlines, and wasted materials.

Employee Survey History

A survey was commissioned by the company's "Total Quality Management" (TQM) Steering Committee, whose membership included the director of human resources, the director of data processing, the director of production, the manager of management information systems, and the assistant director of finance and accounting. Its goal was to determine the causes for high turnover rates in the Mail Division and to develop and implement strategies to solve the turnover problem.

They began this project by identifying, through a cause and effect diagram, a number of probable reasons for the high employee turnover rate. They decided, however, that the best way to prioritize these causes and to discover other possible contributing factors was by developing a survey instrument to systematically measure employee perceptions regarding the general characteristics of the organization. At this time the Steering

Committee determined the survey could also provide benchmark information regarding their TQM program, and could be later re-administered to determine progress. An outside consultant was selected for the purpose of designing and developing the survey instrument, administering it to employees, analyzing the data, and providing feedback sessions.

The Steering Committee choose an outside consultant, first because the organization did not employ anyone who was experienced and skilled in implementing culture surveys, and second, because there was a low level of trust between management and employees. External consultants were perceived by management and employees to be more knowledgeable about the survey process, to have a lesser stake in the outcome, and to be more trustworthy. The external consultant joined the Steering Committee and worked with the team to determine the final design framework and survey items. The early meetings with the team reinforced the consultant's perception of the integrity of the performance improvement effort.

Employee Survey Design

The survey instrument was designed around 16 possible causes of turnover which the TQM Committee had identified along with additional organizational factors derived from approximately 20 interviews with individual employees. These resulted in the development of a 102-item survey, made up of both forced-choice and open-ended items, which was organized into the following general categories or dimensions: a) management leadership, b) supervisory effectiveness, c) interpersonal and departmental relationships, d) productivity and accountability, e) communications, f) employee career development, g) training and development, h) job satisfaction, i) working conditions, j) employee compensation, and k) employee turnover. The survey instrument included a demographic page asking employees to provide information regarding their job in the organization, their department, their sex, their shift, and the length of time they had worked for the Mail Division. In order to ensure anonymity for those who worked in small departments, and to avoid the problems associated with employees feeling they were excluded from the process, the Steering Committee decided to administer the survey to all 480 Mail Division employees. The focus of the TQM Steering Committee and the sense of objectivity created by the decision to survey all division employees distracted the consultant from the absence of top executive involvement.

The survey instrument was pilot-tested with a small group of employees and revised by the consultant. The consultant did not share the pilot-test data with any steering team members.

Administering the Employee Survey

The director of human resources and the external consultant administered the survey to small groups of employees over a two-day period. Great care was taken to assure employees that they were taking the survey anonymously and that the completed surveys would be processed by people outside the Mail Division and Promotion Inc. Employees were also informed of the purpose of the survey, and the decision by the Steering Committee that the results of the survey would be completely disclosed to all employees.

Survey Results and Analysis

The survey analysis was divided into three separate reports, each having a specific purpose. Their respective titles were *Employee Survey Data, Employee Survey Report,* and *Executive Summary.*

The *Employee Survey Data* document presented the results of the survey according to department, job, shift, and seniority variables. Being 500 pages in length, it is by far the greatest amalgam of information contained in the three reports. Its contents include the survey instrument as it was administered to employees, the eleven survey categories and their respective item numbers, and the outputs of five statistical programs written to process the data. The statistical outputs are made up of means tables, which include standard deviations and number of responses given for each item. This document does not include employee anecdotal responses to open-ended items, assessments of the data, or recommendations. This level is the least "user friendly," and was intended to be used as a data resource for future organization change strategies, TQM projects, and research. The consultant shared the full data-based report with a professional friend asking for advice. Overwhelmed by the size of the report, the colleague recommended an executive summary and summary report as the primary means of communication.

The focus of the TQM Steering Committee and sense of objectivity created by the decision to survey all division employees distracted the consultant from the absence of top executive involvement.

The *Employee Survey Report* analyzed the data primarily by job classification. It was organized according to the 11 survey categories and presented a survey summary. Not every question or item was included in this analysis. The decision criteria for leaving items out were based on their relevancy, which, in most instances, was determined by an item's similarity to other items within that category. The data in this report was graphically represented by bar charts and was accompanied by relevant anecdotal statements made by employees. Each part in this report also included an analysis section in which problems were analyzed to identify underlying causes. This report was developed to be easily understood by the general workforce and was designed to be used in employee and committee feedback sessions.

The *Executive Summary* was intended to give a quick overview of the survey results. Its contents, taken from the *Employee Survey Report,* further summarized the results of the 11 survey categories and specified general recommendations for developing a plan to reduce turnover and improve productivity.

Turmoil in the Middle of the Dissemination of Survey Results and Analysis

One week before disseminating the results and analysis of the survey, Promotion Inc. fired the Executive Vice President of the Mail Division. The President stated the reasons as poor management and the poor performance of the Division. The VP had been in the position for one year and had been hired from outside the direct mail industry. At this time an additional 12 Mail Division employees were fired, including managers, supervisors, and lead operators. The stated reason for this decision was a cost-saving measure critical to the Division's survival. Records reveal that personnel "house cleaning" activity of this type had been occurring at least once a year within Promotion. The consultant and the Mail Division workforce had viewed the fired V.P. as a positive force in the firm. The consultant was very disturbed by the action and discovered for the first time that the turnover problem at the lower employee level also existed at the upper level.

Closely following these firings, five survey feedback sessions to management were held. The first feedback session was presented to the President and consisted of going through both the *Executive Summary* and *Employee Survey Reports*. In general, the data was a fairly strong indictment against management. Problems that employees identified and reported feeling most strongly about varied between departments and roles, but in general, wages, mandatory overtime, standards pressure, and benefits were the most salient issues. It was difficult for the consultant to judge the president's reaction to the data, analysis, and preliminary recommendations. He asked a few questions about the data, but seemed more invested in discussing his undocumented and largely-unknown vision for the organization unrelated to the problems the survey had identified. He also expended a great deal of energy justifying his recent decision to fire the Executive Vice President. This person was functionally and symbolically the most open executive in the firm.

The TQM Steering Committee was then given the results and analysis of the survey, followed by feedback sessions to Mail Division managers. These sessions took approximately two hours. Reactions to the data and analysis were mixed. It appeared as though everyone was caught off guard by the employees' anecdotal responses. These responses indicated that many employees were extremely angry with the policies and practices of Promotion and the Mail Division. The director of human resources and the director of data processing were the most willing to discuss the identified problems contributing to turnover, and eager to begin the next step of developing strategies. Other managers responded less favorably. At one point, the production manager stood up and stated in reference to the survey data, "What the hell, it's only the opinions of employees, not necessarily fact." He later stormed out of the meeting stating that he did not want to listen to any more "bullshit." The manager of the management information system, and the assistant director of finance, responded by bringing into question the validity of the study and the efficacy of employee surveys in identifying problems.

At this time the Steering Committee, despite their earlier decision to provide all employees with the results of the survey and having already guaranteed employees this, determined that production employees should be given only a sampling of the results. Their stated fear was that employees might not react positively, or appropriately, if provided access to the full *Employee Survey Report*. They decided instead to provide employees with an abbreviated, edited verbal report from their managers. It took two months for these feedback sessions to take place, and the consultant was told not to attend any of the sessions.

Development of Action Plans

After the Steering Committee was provided with the survey results, they met twice with the consultant to discuss developing priorities and strategies to reduce turnover. However, the agendas of these meetings were generally controlled by three members who continued to challenge the validity of using employee feedback as a basis for guiding change. As a result, very little effort was spent on prioritizing the identified issues impacting turnover and developing solutions. At the end of the second meeting, the Director of Human Resources, in frustration, stated, "Are we really interested in doing anything about the turnover rate?" After a pause of several seconds, he said it was not meant to be a rhetorical remark and conceded that the committee apparently was not that serious about doing anything.

> ***It was difficult for the consultant to judge the president's reaction to the data, analysis, and preliminary recommendations. He seemed more invested in discussing his undocumented and largely-unknown vision for the organization—unrelated to the problems the survey had identified.***

The Steering Committee never met again to discuss possible action plans for reducing turnover, nor was the survey data ever used to establish benchmarks for the organization's TQM effort. The employee survey, which had cost approximately twenty thousand dollars to develop, implement, and analyze, was shelved. There are several reasons this project failed to have a positive outcome.

A Failed Organization Development Effort

Before beginning the analysis of this case study and the failure of the Mail Division to use the survey data to reduce its turnover rate and guide its TQM initiative, we would first like to define the criteria against which employee surveys should be judged. Change efforts in U.S. companies today are generally comprehensive, involve new practices that are not congruent with existing norms and values, have pervasive impact on the way people work, are difficult to explain, take years to implement, and have effects that are not easily separable from other influences in the environment (Walton, 1975). Consequently, the reader should not associate the success of employee surveys with the success of the strategies they help develop.

Because of this, the criterion used to determine the usefulness of employee surveys is solely whether the survey produced an action plan to address identified problems. This limited definition of success will permit a more useful analysis of the reasons this survey failed to produce an action plan. Given this criterion, there were several reasons inherent in Promotion's culture and the organization development process itself that contributed to the intervention's failure to produce action. They include: 1) incapacity to act, 2) need to minimize risk, 3) hostility of leadership to change, 4) problems associated with negative findings, 5) problem-tool interaction, and 6) atheoretical practice.

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Incapacity to Act

As stated earlier, one of the central characteristics of Promotion Inc.'s culture is its preference for activity over real action. The latter involves work that is designed to have some positive effects on the organization; the former refers to non-directional activity, or giving the illusion of making contributions to the organization goals. The external consultant to Promotion Inc. had participated on five other projects aimed at identifying problems, developing solutions, and implementing actions. In every instance these projects stalled either after problems were identified, or before solutions were developed. In none of these projects were solutions actually implemented. The inexperienced organization development consultant naively anticipated that a company-wide survey would break the "smaller intervention log-jam" resulting from the incapacity to act.

Factors at Promotion Inc. that led to the development of this incapacity to take action include a highly centralized power structure where few employees are empowered to take action involving organizational resources, and the inability of managers to balance conflicting priorities due to unclear organizational strategies (Shaw, 1990).

Need to Minimize Risks

Another characteristic of Promotion's culture that significantly impacted the survey's demise was the Mailing Division's preference for decisions that minimize risks. Risk-aversive behavior developed out of the perception that failure could result in severe consequences, including loss of one's job. This is a result of executive management routinely firing and demoting managers without clearly stating reasons related to their performance. This has resulted in managers maintaining low profiles to avoid the possibility of being the object of executive management's scrutiny, which they believe can only have negative outcomes.

The reason this preference for low-risk activity made it difficult for Mail Division's Steering Committee to act on the survey data was because the data indicated that significant organizational changes and resources would have to be expended to impact high turnover. The fact that these actions could pay handsome returns did not matter. Again, the inexperienced consultant was rationally weighing the true odds of success rather than the severe organizational consequences to those associated with failure—albeit *perceived* failure.

Hostility of Leadership Toward Change

Corporations attempting to make organization-wide changes involving their cultural values and beliefs need champions to take leading, high-visibility roles in the initiative (Garcia, 1989). Firing the relatively new and well liked Executive Vice President was a significant event in the failure of the survey and the larger TQM initiative. His vocational socialization had taken place in a non-manufacturing industry that carried a different set of values, beliefs, and assumptions than existed at Promotion Inc. He was very invested in improving the working conditions of employees and viewed them as an integral part of the corporation. His departure meant there was no longer anyone above the manager/director level who supported the findings of the survey, which indicated that turnover could be reduced by providing better benefits, pay, and working conditions. In addition, because he was not replaced, the Steering Committee did not have anyone within the Mail Division to resolve the impasse they struggled with, nor anyone to hold them accountable for developing an action plan to reduce turnover.

The inexperienced consultant did not fully discern the wide gap in commitment between the vice president and the other top management team members until the vice president was gone.

Problems Associated with Negative Findings

In writing about the problems inherent in social science research, Carter (1971) states that survey data that does not agree with management's anticipated results can result in their decision not to accept the findings. He lists five possible reasons clients may use to reject data generated by surveys. They include a) the psychological characteristics of clients, b) the quality of the research, c) the feasibility of implementing the recommendations, d) past negative experiences with social science research, and e) inappropriateness of the data and/or researcher to generate policy recommendations. Of these five, the psychological characteristics of clients is the most relevant to Promotion's case.

The problems identified by the survey were not in themselves unexpected. What did catch management off-guard was the intensity of feelings communicated through the survey, and the clear messages sent to management about what employees thought was wrong with the company. For example, an anecdotal remark from one employee was: "Employees are treated as cattle with no concern for their families or feelings...They are simply something to use to meet an end." Remarks such as these probably caused many of the managers at Promotion Inc. to perceive that there would be a significant psychological cost to their self-concepts if the data were accepted. This may be the reason the decision was made to take out most of the anecdotal remarks from the report before making it available to employees. This may also be the reason for the emotional response from one manager when he stated, "What the hell, it's only the opinions of employees, not necessarily fact."

The consultant assigned the task of developing the employee survey should have discussed with the President as many alternative potential findings as possible before beginning the study.

The negative nature of the findings also would have made it very difficult for any of the managers or directors to approach the President for resources to support efforts guided by the data. They understood it would be very difficult for the President to accept findings that challenged his value system. Consequently, they perceived supporting the survey's findings as an extremely hazardous endeavor.

The inexperienced organization development consultant naively assumed that the negative information was good in the sense that it provided the route to a good outcome. He did not fully anticipate the immediate effect of the negative information.

In conclusion, the reasons for the employee survey's failure to produce action had its roots in both the inherent characteristics of Promotion's culture, and the inherent difficulty of presenting negative findings to management. Listed below are some things the consultant should have done differently to minimize these factors.

Problem-Tool Interaction

There is a well known saying: "Give a child a hammer and all the world is a nail." For professional adults it is well known that practitioners having specific problem-solving tools such as mediation skills, computer graphic presentation skills, and survey skills tend to overuse their professional tools. And, they overuse them to the point that they bend the definition of the overarching problem. Thus, problems get defined and are limited by the capacity of the tool the consultant depends upon (e.g., all the world is a nail). "In almost all instances, using more than one data collection method is necessary to ensure valid conclusions about trends, factors, and causes of organizational, process, and individual performances..." (Swanson, 1994, p. 93).

Atheoretical Practice

There is nothing more practical than good theory. Sound theory provides a practical framework for walking into unknown situations, knowing where you are, and how to adjust your thinking and actions. And, it can be used over and over in a wide variety of settings (Swanson, 1988). Without sound theory, professionals operate in an atheoretical mode in which complex situations become roadblocks and/or derailments.

Having sound theory *and* extensive experience is even more powerful. In this case study, the neophyte organization development consultant had neither. And, this person did not take the opportunity to become intensely immersed in the relevant theory before taking on the organization development work. We speculate that the inexperienced consultant, being of very high intelligence, had a record of activity in less complex situations that resulted in underestimating the situation and overestimating his own ability.

Conclusions

As cited earlier, the general change model of organization development is seen as having four phases: 1) Entering and Contracting, 2) Diagnosing, 3) Planning and Implementing, and 4) Evaluating and Institutionalizing (Cummings & Worley, 1993, p. 60).

This case study focuses primarily on the diagnosis phase, and as it unravels, the issue points back to Phase 1. Nadler, Gerstein, and Shaw (1990) provide five statements as a test for moving beyond Phase 1, Entering and Contracting. Again, they are:

> 1) The current state is intolerable.
> 2) Management is willing to make the investment over time.
> 3) The organization is prepared to stick with it permanently.
> 4) It is important to the success or survival of the business.
> 5) Senior management understands that the job cannot be delegated to middle management.

Using these statements, it is doubtful that a TQM initiative should have been started at Promotion Inc. However, the statements would have provided a useful tool for beginning discussions about possible changes in Promotion's culture, and would not have been as threatening a first step as the employee survey itself turned out to be. We would recommend the successful completion of this critical first phase before beginning any diagnosis or intervention that would attempt to change the basic cultural attributes of the organization.

In addition, the consultant assigned the task of developing the employee survey should have discussed with the President (the one who actually controlled organizational resources) as many alternative potential findings as possible before beginning the study. This would have provided an assessment of the President's willingness to support various organizational reactions and adaptations for each possible survey result.

If this had been done in partnership with the Executive Vice President, a determination might have been made apriori that the resources/requirements for addressing some of the possible outcomes of the survey were not tolerable. At that point the consultant could have approached the President and discussed possible outcomes and solutions. They then would have been able to determine the true level of commitment and could have made an informed decision regarding whether to proceed with the development and implementation of the survey.

Of course the critical incident in this case, which precluded any chance the employee survey had of being useful, was the firing of the Executive Vice President. The consultant was not privy to or astute enough to garner information that might have led him to realize either that the Executive Vice President was being set up or that the President was simply waiting for an opportunity to develop a case for firing him. The consultant, in preparing the *Employee Survey Report,* had assumed the Executive Vice President would champion the effort to develop strategies in response to the survey data. The external consultant had assessed the Vice President's willingness to address problems in the Mail Division, and knew he wanted to improve the working conditions for employees. Consequently, the consultant did not attempt to balance the survey report in terms of positive and negative findings which, without the Executive Vice President's support and leadership, simply caused upper management to become even more defensive. (The data was, as indicated earlier, overwhelmingly negative.) This lack of balanced reporting was another mistake on the part of the inexperienced consultant.

In conclusion, general recommendations to practitioners are as follows:

1. Function at a theoretically sound level. Organization development work for the purpose of improving performance is complex work. Theoretical models, a defined process of work, a variety of information/inquiry tools, and study of their interplay are required. Within this discussion we have referred to the general change model (Cummings & Worley, 1993), and process/tool expansion of the model (Nadler, Gerstein, and Shaw, 1990; Swanson, 1994).

2. Articulate the goal and hold on to it. In establishing the integrity of a survey, its role in relation to a larger organizational goal should be established. A clearly stated organizational goal should direct the need and nature of the survey. Connections between the goal, the survey, the data reporting and dissemination, and the follow-up actions are critical.

3. Establish employee survey ownership. Employee surveys generally address organization-wide problems and function as a preliminary, information-gathering step in developing strategies to transform the underlying "deep structure" of organizations. Because there are very few "short cuts" in developing, implementing, and managing these interventions responsibly, these efforts almost always require an investment of organizational resources over time, and a commitment from the *real* gatekeepers of the organization's power and resources. It is critical to establish ownership and commitment at this level before beginning the project.

4. Build contingency plans into the contract. In establishing ownership of the organization's change effort, it is important to discuss the different possible outcomes of the climate survey, and appropriate contingency plans. This will enable the controllers of the organization's resources to make informed decisions regarding their degree of commitment to the project. It is important to document this level of commitment and write it into the consulting contract.

5. Balance positive and negative findings. In order to minimize the resistance generally found in middle management when presented with negative data, every effort should be made to balance the survey's findings in terms of strengths and weaknesses of the organization. By building this balance into the survey report, there is a greater probability that management's psychological defense mechanisms will not prevent them from objectively examining the data. This will lead to greater commitment and cooperation in developing and implementing the change strategies, as well as improving the probability of success.

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