

Systems Thinking & Problem Solving:

(Understanding Our Most Important Messes)

More on Mental Models, Shared Vision, Team Learning,
Dialogue & Skillful Discussion, Ground Rules for Effective Groups,
Undiscussables, Facilitating Group Action

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More on Mental Models

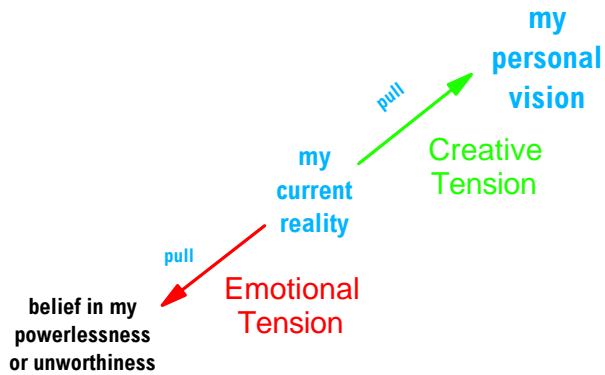
Mental Models

- We live in a world of self-generating beliefs;
we believe
- The data we select are the real data
- Our beliefs are based on real data
- The truth is obvious
- Our beliefs are the truth

Shared Vision

Personal Mastery

A person's ability to hold creative tension



Values, Purpose & Vision

- Vision includes*:
 - Core Ideology (... preserve the core)
 - Core values
 - Core purpose (mission)
 - Envisioned Future (... stimulate progress)
 - A major 10-30 year goal, a hoped-for outcome (a BHAG for "Big, Hairy, Audacious Goal")
 - "vivid description" of the desired outcome and/or vehicle (company) to convey a picture charged with emotion
- Provides inspiration and guidance for alignment

* Collins & Porras, "Building Your Company's Vision," *Harvard Business Review*, Sep/Oct 1996

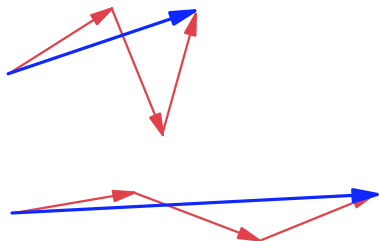
Team Learning

Team Building

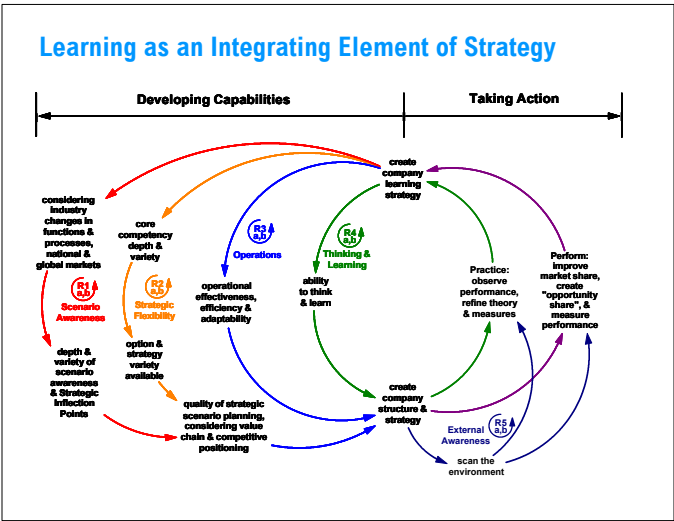
If an organization's structure does not support its vision, all the team building in the world won't help.

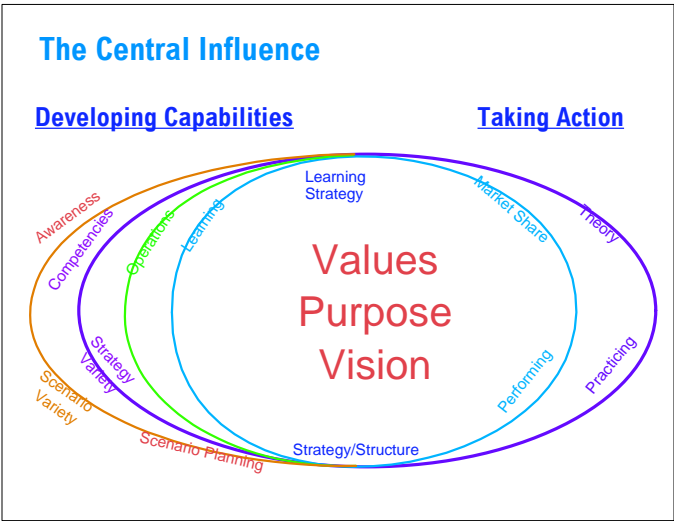
Shared Ideology & Vision

Are we aligned?









Model I & Model II Theories of Action

from Chris Argyris
Knowledge for Action, A Guide for
Overcoming Barriers to
Organizational Change, 1993

Theories of action

- Learning occurs when the mismatch between our intentions and actual consequences
 - - are detected and
 - - we take action to correct the mismatch
- Argyris has studied **action around difficult problems**
 - problems which are likely to be **embarrassing or threatening**
 - The skills we learned early in life to deal with these problems are protected and rewarded by our culture, yet they fail to produce effective actions.
- Definition: Effective Action results in reducing problems

Chris Argyris, Knowledge for Action, A Guide for Overcoming Barriers to Organizational Change, 1993, p. 2

Two types of theories of action

- **Espoused theory**
 - The theory that we as individuals espouse and that comprises our beliefs, attitudes & values.
- **Theory-in-use**
 - The theory that we as individuals actually employ.
- Argyris' research has found:
 - - We customarily design and implement a theory-in-use significantly different from our espoused theory
 - - We are unaware of the inconsistency between the theories we espouse and actually use

Chris Argyris, Knowledge for Action, A Guide for Overcoming Barriers to Organizational Change, 1993, p. 51

Ground Rules (continued)

- **Be specific -- use examples.**
 - Specific examples allow other members to independently evaluate whether the examples are valid illustrations of the general point.
- **Agree on what important words mean.**
 - Have a common understanding, arrive at consensus
 - Lack of a common understanding is often not discovered, and is at the root of disagreement.
- **Explain reasons behind statements, questions, and actions.**
 - Helps people more realistically interpret what's being said and done.

Roger Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator, Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*, 1994, p. 75

Ground Rules (continued)

- **Focus on interests, not positions.**
 - Allows finding more common ground
- **Disagree openly with any member of the group.**
 - Required to allow a group to really get at the issues.
- **Make statements, then invite questions and comments.**
 - Helps surface disagreements so they can be resolved.
- **Jointly design ways to test disagreements and solutions.**
 - What data would we need to see to resolve the disagreement?

Roger Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator, Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*, 1994, p. 75

Ground Rules (continued)

- **Discuss undiscussable issues.**
 - First step can be raising an issue and expressing concern that it may be considered an undiscussable issue. The group can initially explore the concerns without actually discussing the specifics.
- **Keep the discussion focused.**
 - Test whether others agree that we're off the track.
- **Do not take cheap shots or otherwise distract the group.**
 - This can leave someone wondering why a comment was made or trying to come up with a witty comeback.
 - Avoid side conversations.

Roger Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator, Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*, 1994, p. 75

Ground Rules (continued)

- **All members are expected to participate in all phases of the process.**
 - So the group can benefit from the different points of view.
 - Anyone may, of course, indicate they agree with what's already been said or do not have relevant input on an issue.
- **Exchange relevant information with nongroup members.**
 - The group must decide what information is relevant to share with nongroup members and how to share it.
- **Make decisions by consensus.**
 - In situations of substantive conflict, cooperative environments produce better decisions than competitive environments.

Roger Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator, Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*, 1994, p. 75

Ground Rules (continued)

- **Do self-critiques.**
 - Takes time, and sometimes uncomfortable, but it is the only way group performance can improve.
 - What ground rules did we use well? Which need improvement? What will we do differently next time.
 - To reduce negative feedback, each person can contribute how he or she could have improved.
- **Others?**
 - Test with the group whether other ground rules are needed.

Roger Schwarz, *The Skilled Facilitator, Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups*, 1994, p. 75

Undiscussables

Senge et al., *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook*, 1994 p. 404

Undiscussables: Issues

- Important to discuss
- Might offend someone or violate an unspoken taboo.

- We cannot openly
 - ... discuss some issues.
 - ... or even discuss that we cannot discuss them.

Undiscussables: Ground Rules

- Respect the fear that accompanies this exercise.
- Reflect and take notice of your initial response to each undiscussable as it is read aloud.
- Listen for what is said and not said.
- Challenge ideas and assumptions, not people.
- Beware of untested attributions, especially of people's motives.

Undiscussables: The Process

- Gather data
 - Each person writes on three 3"x5" index cards
 - Everyone has same color pencil
 - If someone's behavior is an issue, refer to person by position, not by name.
- Distribute the cards
 - Collect and shuffle the cards
 - Deal the cards
 - Put cards face up on the table
- Discovering common themes
 - Read and post
 - Cluster into themes
 - Decide which to discuss, pick easy ones first

Undiscussables: Guiding Questions

- What is the threat behind the undiscussable?
- What mental model has allowed this hidden structure to persist?
- What has kept this issue from being discussed seriously?
- What are the unintended consequences of the undiscussable in the past, present, and future?
- How does this undiscussable support or block our ability to learn as a team?
- How does this undiscussable fit with our espoused vision and values?
- What do we want to do about this undiscussable?

Facilitating Group Action

Facilitating Group Action

- We need group process to overcome group MPD
- ... that's Multiple Personality Disorder

Nominal Group Technique (NGT) Steps

- Individuals silently write down their ideas
- Facilitator solicits ideas in round-robin fashion
- Group uses inquiry and advocacy
- Each individual rates the ideas and, given a specific number of votes, uses proportional voting to indicate ranking
- Vote
- Rank orders ideas based on the overall results of the group voting.

Idea Generation

- Non-interacting NGT is superior to the interacting brainstorming technique.
- ➔ Social inhibition
- ➔ Social loafing
- ➔ Production blocking
- ➔ Entraining of ideas

Ground Rules for Effective Groups

- Test assumptions and inferences.
- Share all relevant information.
- Focus on interests, not positions.
- Be specific -- use examples.
- Agree on what important words mean.
- Explain reasons behind statements, questions & actions.
- Disagree openly with any member of the group.
- Make statements, then invite questions and comments.

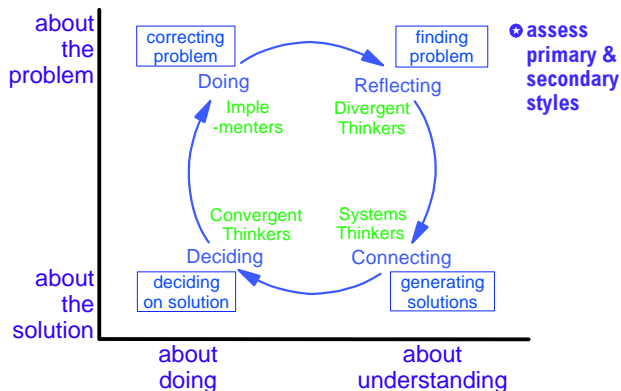
Ground Rules for Effective Groups (cont'd)

- Jointly design ways to test disagreements & solutions.
- Discuss undiscussable issues.
- Keep the discussion focused.
- Do not take cheap shots or otherwise distract the group.
- All members are expected to participate in all phases of the process.
- Exchange relevant information with nongroup members.
- Make decisions by consensus.
- Do self-critiques.
- Others?

Use for Success Factors

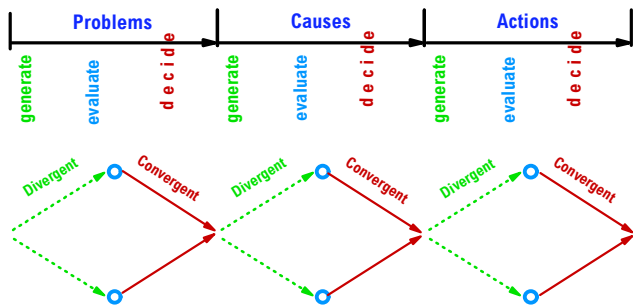
- **What are the five most important factors to make this company more successful???**
 - values ... principles ... "things to do" ...
- Write on yellow stickies
- Solicit ideas, round robin
- Inquire
- Advocate
- Discuss (balancing advocacy & inquiry)
- Vote
- Rank

The Wheel of Learning



The Facilitating Group Action Process

Process Phases



Action Priority Matrix

- For each action estimate:
 - ➔ Difficulty: Easy or Hard
 - ➔ Impact: Low or High
- Use "Action Priority Matrix" worksheet
- Action by action
 - ➔ Estimate quadrant
 - ➔ Vote on quadrant
 - ➔ Inquiry/Advocacy
 - ➔ Record Consensus
- Vote on action priorities
- Rank action priorities

		Difficulty	
		Easy	Hard
Impact	High		
	Low		
