

Tips and techniques to improve the way your teams work

Who Moved the...Fish?

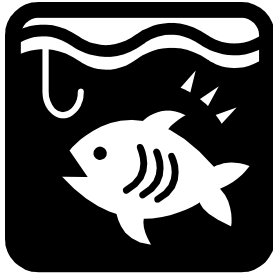
By Randy G. Pennington

Change for the purpose of improving productivity has been around as long as people have been...well, fishing. My father, an 84 year old retired diesel truck mechanic, shared the following two stories with me over a year ago. They highlight the importance of focusing on goals rather than tools and offer a perspective on how to engage people in the change process.

“Two friends went fishing in a nearby lake and they caught a lot of fish. One of the friends said, ‘The next time fishing, let’s come back to the same place. We’ll use the same fishing pole, the same kind of bait, and the same boat.’

‘Furthermore,’ he said, ‘I’ll mark the place in the boat where we were standing when we caught the fish.’ and he marked a big X in the bottom of the boat.

The next time they went fishing, the friends used the same boat, bait, and poles. They went to the same location. They had no luck; the fish had moved.”



The popularity of Spencer Johnson’s *Who Move My Cheese* has made the notion of setting one’s sights on a new reward as common as fishing in a new spot. But leaders continue to face challenges on exactly how to motivate others to readily embrace change.

As my father says, “Changing the way you do things is not easy. The older you get, the harder it is to change.”

One technique for motivating others to change leverages the natural competition that exists within us. Here’s the second story from my Dad’s days as a Service Manger for the International Harvester Company.

“I attended a school in Chicago about how to get more work out of mechanics. The instructor told a story about a company that manufactured engines. The plant had a day shift and a night shift.

The night shift had a meeting and decided to write a big six (6) on the floor so that everyone would see it as they walked in the plant. When the day shift came in, they asked, ‘What is this big number 6 on the floor?’ *(continued on page 2)*

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Ground Rules

Ever wonder where the term “ground rules” comes from? Frank Bell, a facilitative trainer, tells me the term comes from baseball. Different parks have different conditions not anticipated in the “book rules.” The “ground rules” are rules based on conditions at that particular playing field or “ground.”

For example, at Wrigley Field in Chicago, ivy grows on one of the outfield fences. The “ground rule” is that a hit ball that becomes stuck in the ivy and consequently becomes out of play is a double (two base hit). It’s a ground rule and not a book rule, because ivy exists only at Wrigley, not at Yankee Stadium, Camden Yard or Dodger Stadium. The rule that a batted ball that bounces over the fence on the first bounce is a double is “book rule,” because it’s in the rule book and applies in all playing venues.

Does Silence Imply Consensus? By Kristin Arnold

Your team has discussed the various options and it appears there is a general agreement in the room. The team leader suggests that if no one objects, the team agrees and you have consensus. Or do you?

Consensus means that everyone lives with the decision AND supports it upon implementation. By using the “silence implies agreement” rule, you might have consensus, but then again, you might not. Some common pitfalls:

Gessed Incorrectly. By listening to the discussion, reading the body language and making some inferences, the team leader is making a decision for all to abide by. Unfortunately, the team leader might be wrong and is asking people to have the courage and visibly object to the decision.

Power Play. Sometimes the team leader is intentionally pushing the decision through and doesn’t want to hear any objections. In reality, the team leader may achieve “pseudo-consensus” in the meeting, but will face

"We had a textbook case of pseudo-consensus. Your article [in the Daily Press and in this newsletter] really drove the points home. Now, after we took the time to air our concerns, we have a genuine consensus that all of us can live with."

Bob Heffley
Metro Productions

Fish and Natural Competition *(cont'd from p. 1)*

The night shift answered, 'That's how many units we turned out on our shift.'

The day shift said, 'OK, we'll show them,' and they wrote a big number seven (7) on the floor.

The night shift wrote eight (8). The day shift wrote nine (9), and on it went. Each shift increased its performance and challenged the other to beat it. They were motivated by their own expectations and the desire to out-perform the shift."

These stories provide two important ideas to make change work:

- ◆ Focus on the goal, rather than the tools and process.
- ◆ People will readily change to meet their own goals.

Leading change is ultimately about engaging people to voluntarily adopt new ways of doing things to meet new and expanding goals. We can learn it anywhere, even from my Dad. We simply must look.

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Pseudo-Consensus *(continued from page 1)*

resistance or sabotage during implementation.

Too Rushed. In the interest of time, the team pushes on without checking for agreement. Unfortunately, there will always be time to reemphasize and rework the issue when it becomes apparent the team is not committed to the decision.

No Voice. Quieter members certainly aren't going to voice their opinions and extraverted members may venture a comment or two without trying to rock the boat. Unless the team leader is attuned to these subtle nuances, these unvoiced objections indicate a lack of consensus.

Ask Me Later. When the "silence implies agreement" rule is invoked, people simply reserve the right to object later. They don't commit to the decision right then and there. Instead, they agree that they don't object RIGHT NOW.

If your team is a victim of "pseudo-consensus," take a moment to go around the room and ask each team member's opinion. Sarah Sheard, a systems engineering expert, found two things happen when you poll your team members:

Build a Better Solution. Those who have reservations state the reservations, which they might not do if silence was the only option. Often, their reservations change the whole direction of the group. Either they think of something no one else has, and thereby add to the quality of the product, or they have a real problem with it which the group has to address to ensure buy-in.

Internal Buy-in. If a team member is required to respond to a request for buy-in, they have to make a commitment to the decision internally. If you publicly declare "yes", "no" or "I can live with it" (note, you can use a quick thumbs up, thumbs down or thumbs sideways for quick polling), then you actually decide at that point that your decision is what you say it is. Otherwise, you might reserve judgment.

A quick poll of the participants can improve the quality of the decision, ensure all team members are heard and help them make an internal commitment to the decision.

You can find more articles on Teamwork by Kristin Arnold at www.qpcteam.com

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"Team Energizers will take your team to another level. Its ideas and strategies aren't theoretical (though they are based on sound theory!), but are crafted from the most important kind of testing: actual use with real people in the workplace."

Bob Pike, CSP, CPAE Speakers Hall of Fame
Founder/Editor, Creative Training Techniques Newsletter

What's New at QPC Inc.

I have always heard that summertime in DC is hot, sticky and horrendous. Fortunately, this year, it is quite pleasant (at least so far). I hope your summer is "quite pleasant" as well.

I wanted to thank many of you for your warm wishes and condolences on the untimely death of my brother, Mark. Just knowing that you care (and read this newsletter!) was deeply appreciated.

This has also been a busy season for me. I have been working with Baltimore Gas & Electric, Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Michigan, Farm Credit Insurance Corporation, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and USAF Program Management Squadron. In addition, my third book, Team Energizers (see next page) just hit the streets and I hired a publicist, Maryglenn McCombs to help me get the word out. To coincide with the book release, we just updated our website to include a massive search engine to hunt for the perfect activity for your team. Both of these projects have been in the wings for over a year until I got a bit settled in our new location in Fairfax, Virginia. I guess I don't have any more excuses...

Finally, as of 1 July 2003, I officially retired from the US Coast Guard Reserve with over 20 years of active duty and reserve service. Unfortunately, I won't receive a retirement paycheck until I turn 62 years old, but at least I don't have to "drill" anymore or be recalled to active duty!

Have a great summer and stay cool! Kristin

Markers, Anyone?

While attending the International Association of Facilitator (IAF) Conference in Ottawa, Canada, I was introduced to an absolutely fabulous easel chart marker. I know what you're thinking... it's pretty pathetic that I would be gushing over something as mundane as a marker. The sad truth is that I am so excited about these markers, I wanted to share my good fortune with you!

A good easel chart marker is a facilitator's best friend. Years ago, we used El Scribo®. Great tip, solid ink colors, lasted forever. For some bizarre reason, Eberhard Faber® discontinued producing El Scribos in the late 1980s. The Grove Consultants (www.grove.com) resurrected El Scribo a few years ago as Charters™, but it's not the same.

Many of us switched our allegiance to Mr. Sketch®, a scented watercolor marker that has great colors. But the tip or "nib" doesn't hold up and the ink doesn't last.

Neuland, a German Company (www.neuland.biz), just entered the North American market with all kinds of charting gizmos: boards, specialized papers, push pins and simply awesome markers. They are scentless, the nib lasts a lot longer, the colors are rich and don't fade over time. The pens have "ergonomic grooves on the side of the marker enabling the correct grip angle so the wedge shaped tip is always in the right position for neat and precise writing."

Neuland offered IAF members a 10% discount off their first order and they have extended this offer to you, my readers, and they said YES! Just go to www.neuland.biz, print out the fax order form and note a "5% discount for The Extraordinary Team Readers". Effective until August 31, 2003.

Practical Team Activities: Walking Our Talk *By Carol Weisman*

Walking Our Talk

To help the team to form a way of working with each other that is consistent with the way customers are treated.

Time: 10-15 minutes

Nr. of Participants: any

Materials: chart paper & marker

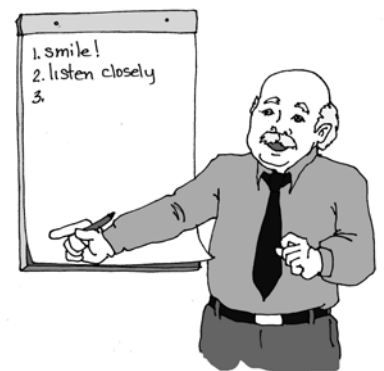
Ask the group to describe how someone seeking services or care should expect to be treated when coming to its organization. Record group comments on easel chart.

Then ask the team how someone who joins the team should expect to be treated. Write the answers on an easel chart.

Note: If the size of the group is twenty or less, it can be done together. If the group is larger than 20, form groups of eight to ten and ask someone to record. If there are break-out groups, come together and report.

When finished brainstorming, discuss differences between the ways a customer/client/patient is treated and how the team is treating one another. Discuss how the team can better "walk its talk" by agreeing to work out ways to treat each other as a client/customer/patient would be treated.

You can find out more about Carol Weisman at www.boardbuilders.com



"I used one of your 'Team Energizers' at my section meeting today (#16. Follow the Process). It worked great! Thanks!"

John Horner, Director
Baltimore Gas and Electric



From the Bookshelf

If you like the Practical Team Activities section in this newsletter, then you'll like *Team Energizers: Fifty Practical Team Activities* (ISBN 096763132-7). I compiled all the activities from the last eight years worth of newsletters and put them in one book. So, if you have the back issues (which many of you keep, surprise, surprise!), then you don't need this book. But, if you are missing issues, or came late to the party, then you consider adding this book to your collection of team icebreakers and activities.

Speaking of your team energizer book collection, my website has a new, super-cool search engine that helps you find the perfect team activity without having to flip through your entire bookshelf. Simply go to www.qpcteam.com and go to "energizers." Type in the type of activity you are looking for (e.g. communications), the number of people and the time you want to spend on the activity. Hit the button, and out comes a list of team activities with the corresponding book and page number. If you have the book, great! Go look it up! If not, you can click through and get more information about the book from the publisher or amazon.com. Pretty simple to use, so give a try the next time you are looking for a team energizer!

Just a Piece of Paper *By Karen Snyder*

On the way to our sixth-grade son's middle school awards ceremony, we celebrated by going out to dinner.

About half-way through the meal, he said, "I don't know what the big deal is. All they give you is a piece of paper." We suspected he didn't really mean it, but talked about how important recognition is, praised him and continued our meal.

When we walked in, the huge auditorium was already brimming with excitement. The students were a little more dressed up than usual and the parents were beaming. You wouldn't see as many cameras poised to flash, click and whirr at a Presidential photo-op.

When our son got his first piece of paper, I clapped and his father clicked. When he got the second, I cheered and his father clicked again.

Then it was time for the best piece of paper of all, the one my son wanted most. My heart pounded as the administrator said, "This award goes to a distinguished student who excels in mathematics, someone who enjoys the logic of math and who shares his knowledge with others. This award goes to an eighth grader..."

My pulse slowed. My son sat quietly for a moment. Then he leaned over and whispered, "I'm gonna get that award when I'm in eighth grade."

My son went home with two wonderful pieces of paper and a new goal.

What do you do with the paper in your office?

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The Maestro at His Best

When the famous violinist Paganini played a concert in one of the great halls of Europe, it was equivalent to the draw of a modern rock concert. The story is told of one such night in Paris. As Paganini appeared on the stage, the excited buzz of the audience turned to expectant applause. But as the maestro began to play, a string broke on his exquisite violin. Any concern passed quickly as the artist picked up the tune on his remaining three strings.

Unbelievably, another string snapped—followed moments later by a third string. Now the buzz in the audience was more anxious, even disgruntled; it wasn't expectant anymore. But the old maestro just raised his hand, calling for silence. As the audience became quiet again, he made a simple announcement: "Ladies and gentlemen. Paganini, and one string." What followed was easily the most amazing musical performance that crowd had ever seen, or ever would see, as the master played a rich and flawless melody—on one string.

When strings break your violin, what do you do?

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