THE EXTRAORDINARY
TEAM

Tips and techniques to improve the way your teams work.

Collaborative Problem Solving
By Jeff Anthony

Here's a three-part framework to support a collaborative approach to planning and problem solving:

PROBLEM PHASE

Set the goal: Create a specific, measurable, achievable, worthy target linked to the business. Sponsor's input on background, context, and direction is necessary prior to handoff to team.

Develop a Roadmap: A first pass agreement on how to move through the problem-solving process. Includes stakeholders, timeframes, checkbacks, and resources.

Define the Problem: Agree on a clear, concise statement of the problem the group will work. Includes a description of the current situation and its impact. If you don't agree on the problem, you will never agree on the solution!

SOLUTION PHASE

Gather and Analyze Data: Develop a fact-based understanding of the factors affecting the situation and an agreement on the root cause(s).

Generate Options: Create a broad range of ideas focused on the factors affecting the situation and/or the root cause(s). To assure the surfacing of creative options, defer introducing criteria until the evaluation stage.

Evaluate Options: Explore and assess the relative merits of each option. Involves prioritization via discussion, applications of criteria, and weighting.

Decide: Build an agreement on an option to pursue. May be a hybrid of several alternatives. Not looking for the single right answer, but one that each member of the group can live with and actively support at

Team Leadership

There are essentially three ways to select a team leader:

Management may appoint the team leader if the team is just forming and doesn't know each other well. In a few cases, management doesn't yet have a high degree of trust in the team's decision-making process and therefore, finds it necessary to appoint a leader at the onset. They typically appoint the process expert or senior member to lead and represent the team at management briefings

Management must choose an individual who has demonstrated facilitative leadership skills, or they should be prepared to train the prospective team leader. The team leader should be well-respected by the team and other stakeholders, be technically competent and have the best interests of

Conference Call Ground Rules

Telephone conference calls are a low cost alternative for teams to meet members located in different places. They are great for routine status reports and for short-term, problem solving meetings - but not if you follow your instincts to just grab the phone and start talking! Conference calls are not as easy as a one-on-one phone conversations, so follow these tips or ground rules for effective conference calls:

Use a moderator. One person (typically the person who initiated the call) should be the moderator. Start with a "roll call" of attendees and their location so that everyone knows who is on the line and announce when new members join in. Give a short, precise overview of the purpose and goal of the call, followed by a simple, clear agenda. Ask the participants to follow the agenda and conference call ground rules.

Keep up the pace. Most participants usually speak very slowly, careful of what they say and how they say it. But the average person is

"When you can't meet face to face, there are several electronic ways you can still meet: conference calls, video teleconferencing and computer conferencing. Conference calls are great when the people already know each other and the objective is to share ideas and make some lowe-level decisions."

Kristin Arnold

▶ Conference Calls *(cont'd)*

able to decode verbal information four to five times faster than the average speaking rate. This makes for a very long, tedious meeting! The moderator should set the tone of the conference call by speaking at a regular rate with good inflection and intensity. Other participants will then follow the leader in style and rate. The moderator should also ask the participants to limit their contributions to a reasonable length (for example one or one and a half minutes) and allow questions for clarification.

Manage the voice traffic. The more people you have on the line, the greater the potential for overload and domination of a few people. Limit the number of people involved in the conference call to team members and one or two scheduled speakers. Ask the participants to state their names and location each time they speak. Recognize that one individual at one location will have more "air time" than several people huddled around a speaker phone at another location. If possible, questions should be directed to specific individuals; for example, "John, will you share your perspective on this issue?" or "Mary, could you please clarify that issue?" The moderator may serve as a "gatekeeper" to ensure everyone has the opportunity to participate.

Take a poll. At critical moments in the meeting, poll the participants for their input. Call out each name and ask for their opinion, comment or vote. Recognize that this will take time, especially for larger groups, but is worthwhile for critical issues where the team must make a decision to move forward.

Use handouts. Where possible, mail or fax information to be used during the conference call. Quantifiable data such as sales forecasts, trend charts, and other descriptive data is helpful to have prior to the meeting so that everyone is looking at and commenting on the same information.

Phone conference calls can save time, travel costs, energy and hassle - especially if the team follows these basic ground rules to enhance the effectiveness of your next conference call.

Reprinted from the Daily Press, April 10, 1997.

▶ Collaborative Problem Solving *(cont'd)*

implementation. The *perfect solution* without the active involvement and support of key players...isn't.

ACTION PHASE

Develop Action Plan: Agreement on a "next steps" strategy for implementing the decision. Includes the basics: who, what, when, where, how. An evaluation should be an integral part of action planning. Small scale pilots are a wise step prior to full scale implementation.

Implement, Evaluate, Upgrade: Try out the selected option. Assess the degree to which it meets expectations and performance requirements. Develop an understanding and agreement on what worked and what didn't including suggested improvements. Documentation and sharing of what has been learned.

Celebration and Recognition: Acknowledgment of individuals' and organizations' contributions and effort.

"I just wanted to let you know I've wrapped up my first PPI team. They did their report out yesterday and it went great. Management applauded them and the team felt really good about it. Then the team thanked me for getting them thru it. (It was just that I had been trained so well!!). I had a great team to work with and we all had alot of fun. So now I'm on to the next team..... "

Marvelous Michelle
Monarch Marking Systems

What's New at QPC Inc.

By the time you read this, we should be moved into our new offices in Downtown Hampton, Virginia! The renovations are coming along nicely - thanks to Bud Leary and his wonderful team of folks at Coastal Construction in Portsmouth, VA.

The building should be ready by May 15th, but I'm going to say June 1st, just to be on the safe side. Everyone has been asking me about the grand opening....so I guess we'll have one near the fourth of July! We'll be sending invitations out shortly....

We will be having our very first public seminar in the Arnold Building on June 25-6, entitled " The Extraordinary Facilitator." I have enclosed a brochure and I sure hope you can make it.

In addition, I have been asked to provide teletraining on project team facilitation to the NTU Uplink - which is available to a thousand locations across North America and the Asian-Pacific region!

Needless to say, it has been pretty exciting around here! Hope you and your teams are well and I look forward to hearing from you....

Kristin

Public Seminars

May 29	Quality Awareness at Naval Base, Norfolk, VA
June 25-6	The Extraordinary Facilitator in Hampton, VA
July 23-4	Exercising Influence in Hampton, VA
Aug 19, 21-2	Guiding an Extraordinary Project Team - Teletraining provided via National Technological University and Old Dominion University in Norfolk, VA
Sept	Advanced Facilitation Skills in Hampton, VA
Oct 14-5	Exercising Influence in Richmond,

Please call for more details

New Address as of June 1, 1997
48 West Queens Way   Hampton, Virginia 23669
Phone: 757.728.2717 Fax: 757.728.2738

Practical Team Activities: A Tower Building Exercise

Tower Building
An exercise to demonstrate the value of planning and teamwork
Time - 30 minutes
Nr. of Participants: 4-10 per team
Materials Required:

- 1 pair of scissors
- 3 paper cups
- 3 paper plates
- 1 marker
- 1 roll of masking tape
- 4 index cards (5"x7")
- 4 index cards (3"x5")
- 4 plastic coffee stirrers
- 1 large zipper plastic bag with all of the above materials inside
- 1 sheet of flip chart paper
- Prepared flipchart of criteria for success

Introduce the purpose of the exercise: to demonstrate the value of planning, teamwork and results.

Explain the desired results of the exercise: to build a free-standing tower using only the materials provided.

The ground rules are as follows: You will have 15 minutes to plan and 7 minutes to build the tower. You cannot touch the materials during the 15 minutes of planning.

The criteria for success are: 1) that the tower is free-standing (not attached to the floor, walls, etc.); 2) the tower must be at least 5 feet tall; and 3) the tower must be able to survive a moderate wind.

For an added bit of fun, ask for the "measurers" - someone who

knows what "free standing" is; someone who is at least 5 feet tall, and someone who can blow a moderate wind! You will then use these folks to verify the success of each tower.

Ask if there are any questions and if they all understand the process - then let 'em go!

After 15 minutes, tell the teams they have 7 minutes to build.

After 7 minutes, gather all around the center of the room, bringing the towers!

Have each measurer check each tower. Typically, half the towers will succeed.

Debrief what worked and what the teams could have done better, and tie it into the team learning points.

"The role of management is to demonstrate that we care about satisfying customers of the products we personally create, including policies, strategies, and plans. One of our biggest management challenges is to confront continually the vital lies that stifle change and innovative thinking."

Robin L. Lawton
Creating a Customer-Centered Culture

From the Bookshelf *By Sally Mason*

At the Defense Investigative Service (DIS), we are following a customer service model inspired by Robin Lawton in his book, **Creating a Customer-Centered Culture**. By focusing on three factors that determine quality and customer satisfaction (performance, perception and outcomes), we will be changing our culture, making customer satisfaction as a highest priority.

There are six steps in creating a customer-centered culture:

1. Define services as tangible products.

2. Identify and differentiate customers in terms of their roles, power, special characteristics and needs.

3. Determine customers' prioritized expectations related to service product attributes (performance and perception) and outcome.

4. Continuously measure the degree to which expectations are met (quality). Manage the customers' experiences by actively soliciting feedback and acting on it.

5. Maintain a current description of the service creation and delivery process with charts, text and measures.

The Story of An Eagle

There is a legend among Native Americans in the west about a brave who found an eagle's egg and put it into the nest of a prairie chicken. The eaglet hatched with the brood of chicks and grew up with them. All his life the eagle thought he was a prairie chicken, so he did what the prairie chickens did. He scratched in the dirt for seeds and insects to eat. He clucked and cackled. And he flew in a brief thrashing of wings and flurry of feathers no more than a few feet off the ground. After all, that's how prairie chickens were supposed to fly.

Years passed, and the eagle grew very old. One day, he saw a magnificent bird far above him in the cloudless sky. Hanging with graceful majesty on the powerful wind currents, it soared with scarcely a beat of its strong golden wings. "What a beautiful bird!" the eagle exclaimed to a prairie chicken who was his neighbor. "What is it?" "That's an eagle--the chief of the birds," the neighbor clucked. "But don't give it a second thought. You could never be like him." So the eagle never gave it another thought. And he died thinking he was a prairie chicken.

How Does This Apply to Our Lives? The eagle, made to soar in the skies, was conditioned by his surroundings to stay earthbound. There, he pecked at seeds and chased insects. Rather than trying to achieve his full potential as an eagle, he adopted his neighbor's standard for life: "Hey, don't worry about flying. . .let's scratch around in the dirt and find us some bugs." So he never attained the "good life" of an eagle, even though he had the capability of doing so.

Where do the standards for your life originate? Are you being conditioned by others, or by society as a whole? Oscar Wilde, a great nineteenth century author, accurately observed that "Most people are other people. Their thoughts are someone else's opinions, their lives a mimicry, their passions a quotation."
Internet: http:www.gospelcom.net/gf/dw-03-26-97.html

Leadership   (*cont'd*)

the team and the overall organization in mind. Some organizations use an assessment instrument or a simulation to forecast how well the potential team leader will interact.

The team may decide whom the team leader is going to be. Typically, teams select the obvious "leader," (most senior, most knowledgeable, most outgoing etc.), but for management to be truly comfortable with the team decision, the team should decide its leadership based on specific criteria as mentioned above. In this way, management will feel more comfortable and confident with the team's decision.

It is not unusual for an informal leader to emerge mid-way through the team development process. The informal leader usually complements the formal leader's spokesperson role by ensuring open and clear communication, cooperative relationships and effective decision-making.

Rotating team leaders volunteer or are assigned the leadership role for a specific task and within a specific length of time. This ensures balanced participation and allows team members to learn new leadership skills and sharpen their team skills.

Set some ground rules on how the role will rotate. All teams need a team leader to focus the efforts, set guidelines, and deliver results. How you go about selecting your team leader depends largely on the mission, management, organizational culture and development of your