

Culture and Creativity: How to Manage for Good Thinking

with revised edition of The Practice of Creativity

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In his inner heart, each of us fears that he or she is incapable of great deeds. To watch any four year old build a dream world around some toys and then courageously defend it against some powerful threat is to remember a confidence now long gone for most of us. The capacity for great creative deeds stays with us in the adult world, and it is buried and kept buried by the force of norms that support a culture that desperately needs creative behavior, but relentlessly discourages it unawares.

Subtly and more overtly discouraged from maintaining the joy of creation, we make a virtue of adult consistency and rigidity. We diminish our ability to grow and change. We are not aware that while our eye is upon imitating adulthood, we have let slip our grasp of originality. We have become creatures of our culture; our norms enforce the repression of the very activities that led to our youthful creativity.

I had long thought that we needed to change so as to renew our ability to solve problems in original, satisfying ways rather than persisting in imitation and passive acceptance. I no longer believe that renewal is the issue.

No. Those creative impulses, that power to improvise, those skills for making connections are all safely buried within each of us ... and kept there, for the most part, by a culture that listens to a different drummer; marches to the beat of 'do not rock the boat'.

Now, this would not be so bad except for two facts: there is a bootleg beat in there. Voices are raised, begging for new ideas, fresh thinking, breakthroughs, discoveries worthy of a Nobel Prize. But do not screw up. Fact one: the bootleg beat.

Fact two: that improvising, impulsive, connection-making self-inside each of us, will not quit. We punish, ignore, laugh at, ostracize those impulses, and somehow, they find a way... we do have those far out, absurd seeming ideas in spite of the ridicule and high anxiety: and they turn out to be breakthroughs ... thinking that was just right after all. And when we force ourselves back to that sedate 'do not rock the boat' beat, we feel a deprivation; a nameless 'withoutness' that casts a pall over what should be a cabaret.

I believe the real challenge is not to develop creativity in more of us but to develop a culture that demands that creativity take its rightful place in our thinking hierarchy: right up there alongside logical thinking, realistic thinking, thinking through, careful thinking, and so on.

We are beginning to find out how to develop this new kind of culture. The skills required are considerable, but not beyond any of us. They have much to do with observation, deciding, mini-problem solving, dedication and flexibility.

The culture that operates today's business, church, and political systems is a gift from the past. I think of it as a gift because it brings us beautiful stabilities, traditions, and capacities of respect. Without these we could not achieve much of anything because we

would be wholly busy defending our lives and sacred properties from the other barbarians around us.

DO A SIGHT, SOUND, MOTION, AND EMOTION STUDY

There is no question that we operate in a materially effective way. This is a culture devoted to productivity. We have made a rational study of a time and motion study productivity ... a time and motion study of just about every system from toilet training to automobile production. While much bootleg creative thought has gone into making us the nation we are today, I believe that it is time we spent something like equal time doing a sight, sound, motion, and emotion study of the process we all use in dealing with each other. This is what I think of culture: how we do it, whatever 'it' is, and how that affects our thinking.

RESEARCH INTO CREATIVITY

Our research into process began in the mid-fifties with our study of creativity. We started to tape-record, for later examination, ourselves working to create new product concepts, which we later attempted to implement.

It was our plan to catch every nuance as we invented something new. We could then replay the tapes and discover exactly how such thinking is done. Then, knowing the secrets of creativity, we would be in a position to invent at will.

As you have guessed, it did not prove to be as straightforward as we planned. A great many things went on that did not seem to have much to do with creativity. Individuals had disagreements, there were war stories, interruptions, different thoughts as to how to run the meeting itself, jokes, new people coming in and wanting to know the score, questions (to put a polite name to it) of who would make what decisions as an idea seemed to be developing. These and many other matters kept us in a state of confusion about creativity.

This confusion did not deter us from writing and proclaiming some 'facts' about creativity. Some of these facts turned out to be mistaken as we learned more. For example, one fact we proclaimed (to my present sorrow and shame) was that an invention group worked better without women because if there was a woman present, the male members would compete for her attention and fail to tend to business.

Much subsequent observation has proven that any group (without any exceptions I know of) will be more productive, in a creative problem solving sense, if it includes women. Proportions do seem to make a difference ... the ideal is somewhere near a fifty-fifty mix.

EARLIER STUDENTS OF PROCESS

We were aware of some of the practices of football coaches but failed, then, to make the connection with our own process research. Since the early thirties professional football has made extensive use of game films to improve their own individual and team processes and to study those of their opponents. In modern times colleges and even high schools make extensive use of film and videotape to learn and improve their

process. The consequence of this wide scale and continuing study of PROCESS has resulted in quantum improvements in effectiveness. Any present day professional team in the NFL could easily defeat a 1930's champion.

Compared to professional football coaches our present-day managers and teachers of managers (in the business schools) know very little about the PROCESSES involved in managing. By process here I mean the carrying out of assignments, the interactions that are necessary to get something done.

EXPANDED SUBJECT POPULATION

As we expanded our subject population from our own invention group of eight to observe what eventually grew to be thousands, the woman myth about creativity, along with many other myths about creativity, dropped away. I would like to deal with these now even though it may seem a digression. It will underscore some of the false witnesses against creative thought--the kind of prejudice that makes so many believe that it is an outlander ... a freak in the world of thinking instead of one of the stalwart everyday workers like logical thinking.

MYTH Number One:

Creativity is something that is needed in only a few, unusual situations--for instance when you-need to write a story or think up a theme for a party or devise a new procedure on your job.

This belief that creativity is needed only on rare occasions is one of the greatest barriers to seeing creative thought as the everyday useful thinking tool it is.

The fact is, the process we loosely call creative, is basic to much of our day to day thinking. Every time I improvise, make a connection, use an approximate thought, or modify a proposal, I am using my creative muscles. For example, I was a passenger on a long drive. I got quite sleepy and yet I could not get my head in a comfortable position to nap. I improvised: I raised the headrest to its highest point, rolled up my sweater and wedged my head comfortably between the sweater and headrest--the sweater was supported by the doorpost. I slept soundly.

Before we relegate creative thinking to being available only part time, we need to understand the processes and operations encompassed by it:

Processes Used in Creative Thinking

- retrieving
- imaging
- comparing
- transforming
- improvising
- connecting
- evaluating
- objective setting

Many of these processes and thinking operations are a normal part of everyday 'non-creative' thinking. It seems prudent to avoid the repression of any of these if I am to do my best thinking in any situation.

MYTH Number Two:

Creativity is something to be feared because it is unpredictable and uncontrollable. For example, if people are encouraged to be creative all the time, they will get unacceptable ideas in their heads and begin to behave in ways that are destructive, against the rules, or downright embarrassing.

This is an unspoken myth. Nobody talks about it. But many managers and parents are convinced that creative people are offbeat. They tend to undermine the system.

This myth persists in spite of the fact that most of us have ideas that undermine the system, and we control them! The myth is probably nourished by the belief that few of us are creative. We assign strange attributes to those we believe have this rare gift. I heard a highly talented and creative company president refer to some of his staff as "our crazies". It evoked the image of a padded wing where these few valuable, but dangerous people were kept.

The act of creation is strange to none of us. It may seem strange because some of those thinking operations, while familiar to all of us, are not associated with creativity.

There is, of course, a wonderful and exciting unpredictability about some ideas one has, but they are not, by any stretch of the myth, dangerous or uncontrollable.

Unfortunately, while this myth persists, we send ourselves and others some mixed messages about the desirability of thinking creatively. We deny our own capacity, and we even deny our appetite for creative activities. At the same time, we admire creativity in others and are drawn to creative ideas and activities as to a magnet.

MYTH Number Three:

Creativity is for people who are specialists--artists, writers, architects, designers, actors--people who have some business that requires them to be creative. Or only for people with the GIFT of creativity.

This myth is difficult to dispel because people are so creative in denying that whatever it is they have done qualifies as creative! Before we are through, I hope to reframe the whole idea of creativity so that you will be more aware of your own GIFTS.

One of the reasons each of us has a reluctance to admit that his action is actually creative is that we all tend to point in awe to some of the outstanding examples of creativity--like the Polaroid camera and film, or television hits, or great actors and equate these with creativity--as though no action of a lesser magnitude could possibly qualify.

Ideally, as you become more aware of how creativity works, your standards will become realistic: valuing the great accomplishments, certainly, but also appreciating lesser ones that have, in the fact of their existence, great significance and importance.

WE SAW ONLY PIECES AT FIRST

As our study of meeting tapes became more informed, we saw scraps of strategies that often appeared to result in ideas. For example, we were working on the problem of cat population control. A member laughingly suggested, "I wish we could teach them rhythm (a method of birth control)."

This led to the idea of including a birth control ingredient in cat food. The occurrence of these kinds of stimulating idea starters led us to put together scraps into procedures to increase idea productivity. In the above case, we began to encourage participants to wish for anything, however unreasonable. I have written of these adventures elsewhere. Now I want to focus on what we learned about the periphery of creativity.

THE FACT OF NO PERIPHERY

When we began our research, we thought of the group as a convenient way to make the process of creativity visible for our study. Because of what we heard and saw happening in groups, we came slowly to realize that there was no periphery. Everything that passed between participants had an effect on creativity--that is, an effect on the creation and building of an idea: The way people worked together, the arguments, 'friendly' barbs, the 'Dower struggles, the decisions on where to focus, who would be listened to, and all the 3500 ways that people treat each other had a direct effect upon the success or failure of the group to generate ideas. The myth of the great idea being presented and prevailing through its own persuasiveness against indifference, or animosity, bit the dust early. The Darwinian theory of the survival of the fittest ideas, never demonstrated itself.

A CHANGE OF FOCUS

The discovery that everything has an effect on creativity has forced us to shift our focus from creativity alone. It seems reasonable to suppose that the interactions in a meeting have a far greater influence on the meeting outcome than we had thought.

The traditional view of a meeting is that it is a well-organized affair with a purpose that is understood by all and that it operates along rational lines toward a conclusion. There may be interruptions, war stories, jokes, etc. but generally the purpose of the meeting shifted our focus from creativity to cataloging and attempting to understand the newly discovered 'governing' factors.

ACTIONS AS CULTURAL TOOLS

We gave these actions the name of cultural tools because they appeared to be used to influence the behavior ... even the thinking, of other members of the group. In this context, we are using culture to mean the body of rules and practices generally agreed to and complied with in any group. We think of a norm as one of those rules or practices

that supports the culture. For example, it may be a norm in a group to be late for meetings. The general culture may be very hard-working.

"Thought control" has a nice Orwellian shiver to it. Yet, as we study videotapes of meetings with the idea that many of the actions do have an effect on thinking, we conclude that one of the functions of the cultural tools is to govern the kind of thinking that takes place. An extreme example is one that has gone into mythology: the messenger who brings bad news has his head cut off. In our society, this is done only figuratively, but it is a fact of life in many companies. And in nearly every company, bad news is dealt with in special ways: 'wait until the boss is in a good mood' or 'wait until you have something good to go along with it'.

THE CULTURAL TOOLS THAT-GOVERN THINKING

Each of us has a certain conviction about his or her own integrity... his consistency in giving and supporting his point of view no matter what the situation or opposition. We are not reckless about it. We use tact and gentle persuasion when that is appropriate (i.e. when disagreeing with a boss), yet, we stick to our guns.

The idea of someone else governing my thought via cultural tools does not sit well with me. If these tools were those oil torture, it would make more sense.

WHY-CULTURAL TOOLS WORK

The tools themselves are words, vocals, and non-verbals. These are the three channels of communication. Words are familiar and obvious. Vocals are too, yet we may not have thought of them as an effective channel. Think of the effect of tone, hesitation, and emphasis. These often define the meaning and intent of words better than a dictionary! Non-verbals are also familiar, yet often not thought of as communication. Consider the story of the Egyptian slaves who were hauling those great stones up the side of the pyramid. The boss slave complained that he was stalled and needed more men. The big boss had every other slave killed. The remaining slaves became unstilled. Some non-verbal! Some communication!

A more modern and less drastic non-verbal was given by a client of ours. The management found it necessary, during a serious business downturn, to lay off twenty-five of a research staff of forty. Ten years later with a research staff of two hundred that famous lay-off is still discussed--a powerful nonverbal!

There are obviously more moderate degrees of non-verbals, and if we are to understand the capability of these three channels to influence--even govern--thinking, we need to appreciate that each channel covers a wide spectrum or continuum and, it is this fact that gives them their subtle power.

Consider the words: you are a damned fool. These can be said lovingly, with a non-verbal embrace when I have brought home an extravagant diamond necklace on our anniversary. Or they can be said harshly, over the shoulder as I stagger drunkenly. The point I want to emphasize here is that there are infinite variations that move a communication from one end of the spectrum of punishment to the other end of the spectrum of great reward and appreciation--and we all understand this.

THE-ROLE OFF ANXIETY

Harry Stack Sullivan, one of the great leaders in modern psychiatry, uses an analogy and a fact to illustrate the role of anxiety in influencing behavior. Image an amoeba in a flat drop of water. This drop of water is hot at one end, and cold at the other. The amoeba is most comfortable in luke warm water. Therefore, it swims toward the temperature gradient that most suits it.

An infant of six months is so fine-tuned to its parents that it can detect anxiety in them as soon as it sees or hears them. Sullivan's fact one. Fact two: anxiety is an uncanny sensation. It does not have an apparent cause, like the pain of hunger. Anxiety is not manageable like hunger. The way most of us learn to deal with it is to reduce or avoid it--move away from it. Throughout our growing years, most of us spend a good deal of energy detecting sources of anxiety and taking evasive action. Sullivan considers this a very important learning tool. When I am behaving in an unacceptable way, my parents show their disapproval with words, vocals, and or non-verbals, and I modify my behavior to reduce the anxiety I feel at their disapproval.

THE BUILT-IN ANXIETY PRODUCER

Most children begin to build in a surrogate parent very early. I have watched a two-year-old girl get to a table lamp and touch it, look toward her parents (who were paying no attention) and then gently slap the hand that touched the lamp. Most of us keep a well-developed surrogate parent and this tends to produce the anxiety when others around us show disapproval. While we may not react with the speed and purposefulness of the amoeba, we do tend to modify our behavior and thinking according to Sullivan. This is my theory of how cultural tools can govern thinking:

THEORY

IN EVERY HUMAN INTERCHANGE THERE IS A CULTURAL 'ANXIETY GRADIENT' THAT IS CREATED BY THE WORDS, VOCALS, AND NON-VERBALS OF THOSE ENGAGED. THIS GRADIENT GOVERNS THE FREEDOM WITH WHICH THOSE PRESENT WILL THINK AND ACT. THIS ANXIETY GRADIENT IS INFLUENCED BY THOSE SENIOR IN RANK.

HYPOTHESIS FOR OBSERVING CULTURAL EFFECTS

Familiarity generates a cultural camouflage and when we are observing meetings we will need some kind of base-line test to evaluate what we are seeing and hearing. It is useful in situations like this to have a tentative hypothesis which we can test against our observations. If the hypothesis continues to explain the behavior we observe, we can increase our confidence that the hypothesis is sound. If it fails to explain, we can then modify the hypothesis.

My hypothesis, still tentative after twenty years of meeting watching, is in two parts:

- 1) The highest priority enterprise of each of us is to enhance his or her self-esteem, or protect it from threat.
- 2) When my self-esteem is threatened, it raises my anxiety level, and I will move in almost any direction to protect and enhance it.

Meetings--and I believe whenever two or more people get together, we have a meeting--bring out in a person a paradoxical combination of two major elements: sensitivity and assertiveness. It appears that when I have 'audience' it stimulates in me the impulse to say or do something that will add to my self-esteem. At the same time, it turns up the volume on my sensitivity to detect or keep track of how I am doing. I seem doubly aware of any action that might have a reflection on me. This sensitivity appears to increase with-the number of people in the group.

I have come to believe that, for most of us, the number of people who esteem us has an important bearing on how I esteem myself. This makes most meetings have an importance that is real but is out of the awareness of most of us: an arena where I may, if I play it right, add a great deal to my self-esteem account.

Meetings are, if my hypothesis holds up, opportunities to help participants blossom as a result of approval and appreciation, or to be impoverished and put on the defensive by disapproval, attack, or punishment.

It will be our task to study the actions--the words, vocals, and nonverbals of our subjects to learn whether the hypothesis holds. If it does, then it has powerful implications for the way meetings can be made most productive. Indeed, it has the same implications for all interactions whether at the office, at home, or in between.

USING THE NEW HYPOTHESIS

This understanding of the cultural dynamics of a meeting can lead to more effective management of meetings and other interactions. It can provide a model to guide the person who is in the position of leading or facilitating a meeting (remember, a meeting is when two or more people start to talk together).

A prudent leader or facilitator with this model in mind sets a high priority on protecting members from any threats to self-esteem. He or she knows that each member cherishes his or her own image above any problems to be solved, or any subject under discussion. If threatened, this member will not only reduce or stop all cooperation, but will actively plan to take some action to retrieve the threatened self-esteem.

These maneuvers will often be so subtle as to escape the naked eye. It is therefore easy to believe that such things are figments of the imagination. It is in these cases that closed-circuit television helps us, by repeated viewing and by slow-motion, see more clearly the cultural dynamics. After some experience is gained, a whole new level of awareness and vision is achieved. Cultural forces that were before hidden in the 'noise' are seen and can be acted upon.

SOME GUIDELINES BASED ON OBSERVATION

The informed facilitator repeatedly demonstrates that in this meeting, no images of self are going to be threatened. He or she does this by intervening whenever he sees such a threat in the making.

The facilitator's next priority is to capitalize on the assertiveness that lurks in the hearts of even the most timid-seeming person. He or she does "his by giving undivided attention to each person who speaks--and sees that everyone has ample opportunity.

With care and practice, the effective facilitator demonstrates repeatedly that in this meeting not only does no one get threatened, no one loses at all: everyone wins. This is more easily accomplished than one might think. Each person gets a chance to **demonstrate his or her** prowess without exposure to anxiety. No one is criticized. At the same time, the leader keeps the focus on the task to be accomplished.

A successful meeting depends upon intense cooperation and teamwork, but the action must proceed in a way that will enhance individuality, never submerge it.

A good tactic is for a group to rotate its leadership so that each member experiences the role of leader or facilitator as well as that of participant. When the group member is acting as leader he uses his individuality to serve the creative surge of the group. While members are roving freely in their imaginations, the leader is watching, protecting ideas and people, as well as recording and keeping to a plan.

THE CULTURAL SIGNALS ARE GO!

In this situation where members of the group are not only assured of protection, but are also invited to contribute (given an opportunity to enhance self-esteem without risk!) some interesting changes can be seen.

Each member, freed of the need for self-defense, can concentrate on developing his or her own, freed-up style. Through the use of thinking strategies to be discussed later, members discover depths and breadths of thought that are not only useful to the task at hand, but are also exhilarating to the originator.

Since no energy can be used in attacking each other, there is time and inclination to appreciate the thinking of others--a charmed circle attention, appreciation, and stimulation.

To achieve this desirable blend of individual stardom and cooperative group membership requires a facilitator who understands the cultural signals and can use them for the benefit of the group's task.

A REDEFINED ROLE FOR LEADER/FACILITATOR

The basic element of leadership is power to control, or be in charge. We have found a paradoxical fact: the more a leader attempts to use his power to serve him or herself--for example, to support or promote her own idea the less control he has over the group. This underscores a widely known cultural truth that is seldom taken into account: people will submit to leadership control only through their own permission, or through fear. Thus, a culturally informed leader gets permission to take charge of the group. He or she then quickly demonstrates that his power will be used to serve group members, to assure each idea a hearing, to give support and consideration to each thought, and to protect members from any threat to self-esteem, the members can then use their full energies in producing their best thinking.

In this sense, the leader is really more of a facilitator, or helper to the group. In turn, the group can concentrate on distinguishing themselves by their good thinking!

CHAIRPERSON VS. CULTURALLY INFORMED FACILITATOR

A study of videotapes of a traditional chairperson and also a culturally informed facilitator shows some critical differences: the strong chairperson points directions, makes instant judgments of relevance and usefulness, hews to the agenda, and parcels out assignments. He or she feels free to contribute ideas, select among those offered, join in the everyday barb shooting, and generally be both member and person in power. Many of these activities are useful and necessary if the group is to accomplish its task. However, mixed in with the good and necessary are many actions, that when traced have destructive and hindering consequences. Few traditional chairpersons are able consistently to sort out helpful responses from those that do damage. Further, it seems that most of the time the leader (manager) does not specifically know what his role should be. He or she has a general goal: to get things done. He assumes that the present cultural practices of chairperson, agenda, and guided (or perhaps freewheeling) discussion is effective. These assumptions go unexamined, because things do get done, goals are accomplished. But our study of tapes tells us that the culturally uninformed leader wastes his own and his group's talents by allowing destructive actions (unseen by untrained eyes) to subvert and blur each meeting's focus. Such waste is expensive. Boredom and impatience are familiar symptoms; less obvious to the unawakened eye are rivalry, non-cooperation, and hostility.

The traditional leader tends to be self-serving and manipulative. For example, his own ideas get special treatment because he gravitates toward responses that support his own preconceived notions. Immediate negativity to other ideas and the resultant need to defend one's point of view become accepted as useful and realistic.

MAKING THE CULTURAL TOOLS WORK FOR THE GROUP

The purpose of a meeting may range from a discussion of a situation, or information passing, to problem solving. Group size may range from two upward to hundreds. The very large meeting presents its own special problems and I want to focus on the size that is most common in company and family: two to six or ten. One of the reasons for coming to any meeting is never on the agenda. It is the hope, often out of awareness, that I will have a chance to enhance my self-esteem. When a manager or parent is aware that this hope is seemingly universal, he or she can tailor his meeting to give such opportunities--and take advantage of some himself.

Charles Chilton Pearce in the *Magical Child* says that intelligence is the ability to interact with the world and what is in it. To the degree I have to react, or act against, I am crippled. In a recent group of managers, I observed two men reacting. Dr. A, a marketing director said to Dr. B, a research director, "The way we operate, research follows our lead and dreams up what we ask for, and it works quite well."

"Bullshit!" replied the research director, "We develop what we believe is right, and marketing goes and sells it."

When asked to redesign their exchange and make it into an interaction, it went more like this: Dr. A, "In our operation, marketing takes the lead in developing new ideas for products. Research then develops the products to meet our specifications."

"Wow!" says Dr. B, "That is really different from the way we go about it--tell me more about how it works for you."

After Dr. A explains their system, Dr. B explains his, and they both go away with good feelings and information they did not have before. This is an example of using the cultural tools intelligently.

The culturally informed person does not let interactions simply happen. He invents (and often it is necessary to invent) ways to use words, vocals, and non-verbals to obtain enriching interactions. When he meets John at the coffee maker and they have their usual exchange, he listens to John's comment and says something that speaks directly to John's point. And in an informed culture, John does the same for him.

Parents have a different opportunity with their children. If they are to grow up culturally well-informed, it is important to help them learn to have interactions. These begin with listening and designing replies that acknowledge the thought of the child. Dr. Gordon's Parent Effectiveness Training or P.E.T. can be a useful handbook for this.

For the manager and facilitator of a group of several people, the opportunity takes on some new dimensions. His or her objective is to engage and make the utmost use of the people he has invited to a meeting (or to work for him or her). If he is able to generate the right sort of culture for his group, remarkable things can happen. Relieved of the burden of self-protection, a member can wholeheartedly devote himself to speculation, imaging, and to supporting and considering far-fetched notions--in short, producing the rich variations out of which fresh alternatives lead to exciting decisions.

This may suggest permissiveness and acceptance of irresponsible ideas in the hope of culling a good one. This is not the case. Managing a group, a meeting, or a family problem cannot be solved and opportunities capitalized simply by permissiveness, politeness, or irresponsibility: each of these qualities is appropriate and valuable only when properly used. By themselves, they are not the answer.

We are here particularly concerned with helping the person in power increase his capacity for bringing out the best from the members of his group. At the same time, these cultural tools, when properly used, help the individual improve his or her capacity to contribute.

ELEMENTS OF SYNECTICS®

Synectics® has developed two basic and interrelated approaches to help groups of all sizes to high performance: first, we have developed ways of observing actions within groups that allows the members to learn to use the cultural tools (words, vocals, and non-verbals) to help accomplish its goals. Second, through the study of thousands of videotapes of groups in action, we have developed strategies that help group members use more of their potential for imaginative, explorative thinking.

The combination of culturally informed participants with strategies for enhancing good thinking produces, as you would expect, outstanding results. A simple-minded example will suggest to you how the Synectics® procedures work:

Suppose you are attempting to develop a new food for pets. You are aware that a person identifies, to some extent with his or her pet. Your new pet food must therefore appeal first to the pet owner. You now enter a strange state: you think about the things you like, and wonder if the dog would like them too. You evaluate each idea against what is on the market and various other criteria. "I like steak--so does the dog, but it is too expensive. We could use less expensive cuts, scraps ... but Alpo has already done it."

This activity is familiar and has identifiable elements: given the problem you collect data from things you have observed and your own feelings; you form a hypothesis, see how it stands up, modify it if necessary, and evaluate it again. This is the well-known scientific method.

In our observation of invention groups, we found that the success rate increases if more and different information is collected. We have used scraps of evidence from our study of tapes, plus many experiments with groups, to develop strategies to help people think in unaccustomed ways. To encourage improvising and connection-making, we take members on strange trips away from the problem itself to generate new possible connection-making material to increase the chances that a totally novel connection will be made.

Underlying and supporting these freeing up ways of thinking is a climate created deliberately through informed use of the cultural tools.

Next, when the time comes for hypothesis formation, we invoke a disciplined way of interacting with the ideas so that each one gets the benefit of group power to use the fresh data in the course of evaluating, modifying, and re-evaluating the emerging idea.

The creation of a climate where individuals can freely speculate with the assurance that their thoughts will be listened to supportively and built upon is a critical factor that is generally ignored in a group that is operating traditionally in and out of meetings.

In a culture that is deliberately designed for high performance, the manager has his best chance for getting good, balanced thinking. The usual alternative--a traditional climate--embodies a relentless gravity-like force against speculative, exploratory thinking. This force is particularly dangerous because it is so easily justified as realistic thinking.

It is a well-kept secret that people in general (even you and I, and managers in particular) are determined enemies of speculation and exploratory thinking. Each of us pays convincing lip service to his or her willingness-even eagerness--to consider new thoughts and ideas. But a thousand videotapes, such as we have studied, make liars of us all. People use remarkable ingenuity to make clear by tone, non-verbal slights, and outright negativity and adversariness that they are not only against ideas and change,

but also against those who propose them. We humans habitually try to protect ourselves **even from our own new ideas.**

Beneath the traditional cultural camouflage, out of sight of most of us, the signals go forth “think safe”.

It is only because man is, from birth, a creative problem solver of marvelous ingenuity, patience, cunning, and brilliance that we prevail at all over our fear of making mistakes.

These are strong words, but give me a video recording of a normal meeting and I will identify the cultural tools being used to keep good thinking from happening.

Synectics®, with its knowledge of how to use the cultural tools to help an individual or group to broader, more exploratory thinking can help anyone interested in using more of the potential each of us is born with.

The culture of a company is transmitted primarily in meetings--meetings between two, or five, or more. It is at these times that orders are given and received, leadership modeled, and beginners see how the business is conducted. It is also key because managers spend a large amount of their time in meetings, and finally it is important because in meetings the cultural action is most visible. For more than twenty years we have focused our cameras on meetings of all kinds to discover what happens in them that has such a profound effect on achievement, and creative thinking.

In the course of studying videotapes for information about creative thinking we have observed much that affects thinking of every kind. It has also become clear that many of the actions we have catalogued have a marked effect on accomplishment. For example, it is not uncommon for an officer in an Executive Committee meeting to ask for help from his fellow officers ... and get no response at all. We have seen this happen in top management committees in respected corporations. We believe this happens because when a member of the committee identifies a problem of magnitude--the members do not have any systematic way to bring their powers to bear, and it becomes the custom to remain silent and assume that the request will somehow be taken care of at a lower level.

It is more usual in such meetings for no one to ask for help. Even though we know from private conversations that several of the members need assistance that could well be given by one or the other of these, the most powerful men in the corporation. We believe that two factors are at work here: the first is the effect of having no dependable way to focus their knowledge and experience on the problem of a fellow member, and the second is a sort of gentlemen's agreement that we will not **air each other's** dirty linen.

TOP MANAGERS ARE FRUSTRATED BY LACK OF FORCE

In private interviews with many men and women at officer levels in, large corporations here are some of the observations they reported:

"One problem is that we need to get the Executive Committee working more, effectively together."

Tom (the president) does not share his organizational thinking"

"My skills are not being tapped."

"While Joe (the president) has always protected everyone--he is not a great transmitter--not open, you might say."

"In Executive Committee Meetings, we talk about a great many things we do not do anything about."

"The failure of this committee (Executive Committee) to perform to its potential is one of the greatest risks to the company."

"We sit in the same room (the officers) but one of our norms is: you do not question my areas, and I do not question yours."

"I dread the time spent in those Executive Committee Meetings. We go over the same ground about ninety percent of the time."

"I hate to say this, but when Jim (president) is not there we seem to get some things done when he gets there we get destructive."

These are only a few comments from interviews with executives from well-known and successful companies. While most people have unflattering things to say about the meetings they attend, these people are referring to the councils of the mighty: the meetings of the people who presumably run the company.

CULTURAL INNOCENCE

The men and women I quote above are all successful, intelligent business people with the **power to make things happen** in their companies, yet they do not know what to do **about these meetings that are so important** to the success of their companies. Not all presidents know the answer either, as some are quoted above. Many consider their meetings a weak area but are unsure about what to do to make their management committees more effective.

The problem lies in their lack of knowledge of the dynamics of meetings; their innocence of the cultural tools that govern meetings and their failure to use them properly. ILL. is not that every officer is not familiar with words, vocals, and non-verbals--they are not only familiar with them, they use them every day in achieving their goals in their own departments. But there is a widespread misunderstanding about how the cultural tools work, and what consequences they carry when used carelessly, or without understanding.

AUTHORITY VS CONFUSION

One of the problems with observing the process of a meeting is that the chairperson feels that he or she has little choice: either let the meeting go wherever it seems to wish to, or come in with an iron hand to give it direction. I talked with a chairperson after a meeting in which I thought there was almost a continual difference, argument, and general confusion. I asked him if it did not bother him that they spent so much time in actions that really did not further his purposes. He answered, "It used to bother me at first, but I find that if I let these skirmishes go on for a few minutes then everyone is ready for a decision. You probably noticed that after a few minutes I come in and suggest a line of action or make a decision."

He was an effective manager of a multi-billion-dollar company. His vice-presidents considered him decisive, but fair. They believed that the periods of argument and confusion were being used to help the president make up his mind--and this may well have been the case. They felt heard and as though they had an influence on the decisions that were being made. The cost in competition, non-cooperation, and in fighting was not visible.

Contrast this with a culturally informed president: "The ultimate clientship in this reorganization decision is mine, but I would like to get as much information about your suggestions as I can." Each of the six officers involved had an opportunity to give his thoughts, respond to the ideas of others, and the president joined in with how he was feeling. Finally, the President said: "Here is where I am coming out ... does this cause difficulties for any of you?"

Some further work was done on difficulties, and the president made the decision. In the second instance the president got the benefit of the thinking of his top lieutenants without running the risk that they would damage each other with in-fighting. Further, he did it systematically, making clear his ultimate ownership and that it was his decision.

Another area of great difficulty in management is dealing with the issue of authenticity. Perhaps the most troublesome part of the issue is discovering how, to accomplish without having 'to resort to authoritarianism. In many well run companies this is not an issue. The company is run on authoritarian rules and that is understood. Many of these companies are considered excellent. If examined on the basis of cultural flexibility most would be rated 'quite destructive' to the people involved.

One of the more confusing aspects of an authoritarian operation is that it gets results. Managers who require that things get done, and use their authority to see that they do, achieve their goals. A further confusion is that some of these authoritarian managers have subordinates who swear by them.

AUTHORITY AND THE CULTURAL TOOLS

In the organization of most of our institutions there is a system of hierarchy. The non-verbal implication of this hierarchy is that some people are superior to others. The usual intent is that a boss is not necessarily a superior person to his **or her subordinate, but is better** informed and superior in knowledge and experience in the task area. In reality, rank has often taken on the additional meaning that a person of rank is probably superior in most ways to a person of lower rank. This is reinforced in hundreds of ways from favored parking to other prerequisites that clearly have some purpose other than doing work. Rank has its privileges outside areas of work. It has come to be, in most institutions, that a person of lesser rank often feels that his lower rank is a drain, or reduction, or reflection on his or her self-esteem.

This is certainly not true of everyone nor is it felt in every case. Yet it seems prudent to take it into account as a factor influencing some of the norms in a culture and therefore some of the thinking. For example, in one of the quotes above, a manager observed that the group seemed to get things done when the president was absent but became destructive when he was present.

The reason I want to emphasize the point that authority appears to overrule the usual consequences of misuse of cultural tools is that the overruling is so apparent, the immediate accomplishment so clear. This leads many of us to look at successful authoritarian companies and say to ourselves, "much as I do not like the authoritarian way and what it does to human development, I cannot argue with success." Before you and I give in to that line of thought, let us ruminate upon a quotation from William Blake: "Blight never does good to a tree ... but if it still bears fruit, let none say that the fruit was in consequence of the blight."

One of the conclusions I might draw from the observation of companies who are neither authoritarian nor culturally informed is that it does not pay to go half-way. It will be more effective to be nakedly authoritarian than attempt to be participative without being informed about the cultural tools.

CULTURAL TOOLS IN ACTION

Most managers learn how to operate in meetings by sitting in as subordinates. They observe how the chair handles things and how subordinates get their wishes on the record. They experiment with ways to get themselves heard and to enhance their standing with the important people in the group (remember the governing hypothesis: the need to enhance my own self-esteem).

By and large, these experiments are judged by that self-esteem criteria "Did I look good?" A secondary criterion is "Did I help the project at hand?" Sometimes the two are both served by the same action--but not always. It behooves the manager who is going to get the most from his or her team to be able to distinguish between purely self-serving actions, and those that forward the purpose of the group.

For example, you will see in a later episode, an executive group was discussing the feasibility of buying a regional company. This was not the first discussion, and all knew the reason for the purchase was to get an increased market share in that region. The cost was high, and funds were tight. One member suggested "Let's buy the company, increase our market share and then sell it." It was a radical thought, and the group chose to ignore it. It was not responded to in any way, and they went on considering the figure that were involved in buying the company.

This might seem an extreme example, but in our experience of studying meetings, it is not rare. A culturally knowledgeable chairperson will not permit a contribution to be ignored. The consequences, without regard to the value of --the suggestion are too serious. To name a few, the action of ignoring is a non-verbal that says: this suggestion is not worth considering, the person who offered it is not high enough in my regard to influence me, the opinion of other members not to pay attention to this idea is correct.

There are several options in handling an 'interrupting' idea of this kind and we will discuss all of them at a later time. The point I want to make is that there is very little direct teaching of meeting management from the cultural point of view. In fact, there is very little teaching of meeting management from any point of view. The usual meeting is run on the basis of an agenda and the chairs' concept of Robert's Rules of Order usually picked up along the way by watching other improvisers. This would not be critical except, that it has serious adverse consequences to the manager's visions of high performance and excellence. The manager will be unaware of this as the actions are invisible to the untrained eye at the moment they are happening.

This is a point we will be stressing. Because a manager cannot see the damage he or she does or permits subordinates to do with the careless use of the cultural tools, he is often oblivious to what is happening. The consequences are real enough, but the cause is a mystery. If the issue was production machinery and I was careless with the tools, the machine would quickly let me know by screaming in agony or slowing down or stopping. My feedback is an excellent teacher. With interpersonal actions and the use of cultural tools, while the actions are clearly there, if I am not alert I may miss them in the midst of the cultural noise, and simply be surprised at the consequences which may show up in destructive behavior at the meeting, or in low quality performance later.

MEETINGS FROM A CULTURAL POINT OF VIEW

In evaluating a meeting one is tempted to generalize, to think of the overall meeting and its results and say "That was a pretty good meeting," or "That was a poor meeting." We have found it more useful to identify a specific, take it out of context, and make a tentative decision about the value or lack of value. For example, in the episode described above, (Let's buy the plant, then sell it), we consider the fact that the idea offered was an interruption of a financial evaluation, the idea itself, the way the idea was treated, and any other components that we can directly connect with the episode. Each of these actions has consequences, and we want to understand them as completely as possible. When we have understood the possible consequences we would then ask each participant who has seen him or herself on tape to redesign their action to accomplish what they wanted (as far as possible) without destructive consequences.

In analyzing these episodes, we are going to draw conclusions that may seem too far reaching for the evidence at hand. These conclusions are drawn by us with some confidence because they are based on the examination of hundreds of similar situations in which we were able to check out the accuracy with participants as well as examine the episode repeatedly on videotape. When you question one of our assumptions, weigh it against the criteria we so often use: does this action increase the probability of the success of this group, or does it decrease it.

The meeting that follows was transcribed from various meetings and tapes so it is a composite, however, it is a faithful representation of the cultural and material content of the many meetings we have researched. Cast of characters:

President: Pete
Vice-President of Sales: Sam
Vice-President of Manufacturing: Mike
Vice-President of Research: Red
Vice-President of Marketing: Mark
Vice-President of Engineering: Ed
Treasurer: Tom
Asst. Treasurer: Ted

The meetings we have used for this simulation were all held during a serious recession, so there is more desperation than normal.

Meeting

Pete: Well, let's get going--bring your coffee with you.

(The group gathers around a large table in the rather elaborate Board Room.)

Pete: I don't like to start out on a subdued note, but I think we should hear the Treasurer's report, Tom?

Tom: I have asked Ted, who put this together for us to make the presentation. (presentation of slides with explanation follows)

Pete: Ted, you are showing a four million increase in our loss where does that come from?

Ted: It comes from a decrease in sales--our performance did not come up to forecast.

Pete: Do you know about this, Sam?

Sam: I know about \$800,000 of it, I will have to look into the rest.

Pete: Would you do that please, Sam and report back. This is getting to be a real problem.

Tom: If we project out to the end of the year we are looking at a \$30,000,000 shortfall and that is going to make a rotten looking report. I could use all the help you can give me to make it look better (Sam's secretary comes in and gives him a note)

Mark: If you could sell some of that inventory it would help.

Red: Let's begin to charge interest on our receivables.

Tom: That is not an industry practice.

Ted: This would change our relationship with our customers.

Mark: How about an extra sales effort between now and the end of the year?

Sam: It won't help things to look desperate.

Mike: If we could make a big sale for cash on the 28th of December, it would help a lot. (laughter)

Red: Tom, what is that item #7...

Pete (interrupting): I am afraid we will have to move on. Tom, would you and Ted go through this and tell us what we need to do? Could you have that for us by next week's meeting?

Tom: Will do.

Pete: Mike, you wanted to give us some information about estimating...

Mike: Yes, I do not believe you (looking at Sam) really appreciate how critical it is to get accurate estimates for us. About half the time we are breaking our necks to meet a delivered price that never should have been given in the first place. Another problem that makes it even more difficult to deal with is that quite often the delivery date on these machines is hurting us too.

Sam: Easy, Mike if I understand this, your people are in on the estimates and on the delivery dates too. So, if you are having problems, you are helping to make them for yourself.

Mike: I am taking it easy, Sam. The problem is really one where your people make commitments and then use those orders to beat my guys over the head with something you have already promised. When we have some decent margin business in the shops, we can handle a few of these, but...

Pete:(interrupting) We know, Mike, that these things hurt more at a time like this, but can't engineering...

Ed:(interrupting) We are caught in the middle of this thing and my people are really strung out with redesigning to try to satisfy two immovable, unreasonable objects (laughter).

Pete: OK, OK, I know you always get caught in the middle of this, but couldn't the three of you assign someone from each department to work this out?

Mike: We have tried that and we come out on the short end. This time I wanted to take it right to the top.

Pete: Well (laughing), here we are why don't you three set up a meeting. I'll come if you think you will not be able to work it out but I feel certain you can come to an agreement. OK? (nodded agreement) I want to open up the subject of Orca Engineering. I have asked Ted to put together the figures on it, and it looks like a good buy--it would put us into that northeastern region in a hurry.

Red: Given our cash situation, let's borrow the money to buy Orca, get the distribution we are after, and then sell it. (silence)

Sam: Pete, I have not been over these figures in detail, are they really making a profit?

Pete: Just about. We will have to dig in deeper, but one of the reasons their price is so reasonable is their sales are way down nationally. (After a brief discussion, Pete asked for a vote. All were in favor except Tom.)

Tom: I will abstain rather than vote against it. Fiscally we really should not be spending the money on this.

Pete: OK, Tom, noted. The next order of business is to hear from you, Sam.

Sam: You all have my sales forecast, and while it looks grim, I believe it is realistic we will make it.

Tom: If we could just turn those receivables into cash!

Red: When you had Yugoslavia, Sam, didn't you go to the government for receivables that were overdue?

Sam: That was a special case, if I remember. Mike, are you going to extend your plant shutdowns or do those end next week?

Mark: Speaking of shutdowns, perhaps you should be thinking in terms of other plants as well as those you have down already.

Pete: I believe we should go ahead and take the risk of stock-outs, Mike.

Mike: I would like to look at that picture again.

Pete: OK. The next item is Engineering staff cuts. How is this looking to you, Ed?

Sam: Pete, before we go into that could we discuss inventory figures? I have a lot of trouble with these figures. I don't think they show a real picture of what we have on the shelf and in work. Do you, Mike?

Mike: No, I don't and I worry about it. I would think you could set up a computer model that would give you a good grip on what you have in inventory. We have used one to forecast work force needs, and it has been good.

Mike: I don't know about workforce but our model would be so complicated, it would be easier to trace each individual part.

Pete: Art, why don't you get one of your computer guys to take a look at the inventory problem?

Art: OK.

Pete: We really need to get some information from you, Ed, about reducing staff.

(Ed passes out several papers and explains his thinking on lay-offs)

Pete: I'd, I really feel that you can cut more than 7% out of your staff budget. Would you and Mike and Art get together and see what you can do?

Ed: OK. If we are through with that, I just want to tell you that this new nozzle is cleared by everyone, and it looks good.

Pete: Well, my friends I just want to ask if this one is going to be as shock proof as it has to be ... (there follows a discussion of the new nozzle) Now let me ask a question, friend, when you demonstrate this will you put it on a machine that works? (There follows some discussion of plans for demonstration).

We will break off the meeting at this point although in fact, it went on for the rest of the day.

EXAMING SOME OF THE CULTURAL IMPLICATION OF THE MEETING

If you or I ask members of the above group what kind of a meeting they had, they would probably say something like: "It was OK. We covered the territory. It might not have been happy, but then, who can be with things the way they are?"

However, when we look at the actions of the meeting with a cultural framing, and also with the question of effectiveness in mind, it looks different. Every top management

group would like to work toward a high performing company starting with their own team at the top. What I propose to do is look at the action here, and speculate what a culturally informed team would have done in the same circumstances.

The first order of business was the treasurer's report. There were two outstanding pieces of information: an unexpected loss of \$4,000,000, and a projected year-end shortfall of \$30,000,000. The fact that these were presented to the Executive Committee without backup plans and suggests that there are hidden agendas in the group, and that Tom, the treasurer, has little faith in his own problem solving ability.

If Tom and Sam were friends, Sam would have known about that \$4,000,000 in plenty of time to know **exactly where and** why it happened--and also to have some plans or options to do something about it.

On the other hand, if this were a company where a heavy authoritarian culture held sway, the chances are that Tom would not have dared present the figures he did without first taking advantage of every chance to get an explanation.

Given the situation, it seems to me that the president made an appropriate disposition of the matter when he asked Sam to look into it and report.

Now, let us look at what happens to \$30,000,000 shortfall. It was evident that this shortfall had been discussed previously. The only surprise was that it had become larger than expected. I assume that the president already knew of this figure, but that it came as a surprise to the rest of the committee.

Tom revealed his own position when he asked the group for its help. In effect, he was saying that he was at his wits end. In a culturally sensitive meeting, the facilitator, in this case, the president, would have acknowledged this request for help and dealt with it in one of two or three ways: we will problem solve at a later date which we will agree to now. Or ask Tom to choose his team, including some of us, and set a date himself, and set a time for a report back to the committee. An of these would acknowledge Tom's belief that he needed help.

What happened was that a couple of ideas were thrown out, silently or vocally evaluated, and discarded. The invisible consequences of these actions are: rejection to each of the people who offered an idea (Please keep in mind the hypothesis that each person is there to enhance his or her self-esteem) and a signal to all hands that this is not problem solving time.

The president's disposition of the problem-an enormous one-was to tell the treasurer it was his, do not count on us, thus ignoring Tom's plea for their help. The unstated signal: do not come to this committee with problems.

The next transactions may be linked to previous ones but not definitely. When Mike laughingly presented his idea of a big sale before the end of the year, in his heart he was serious--he was hoping that the group would jump in-and do some inventing that would make something like that possible.

The laughter was a rejection of any hope of pursuing that idea. Laughter is by no means always a sign of rejection, but when nothing is done about the laughed-at idea or proposal, it is rightly read as rejection. This may have influenced the way Mike presented his estimating problem to Sam.

The words, vocals, and non-verbals laid this one on Sam. If the facilitator were culturally informed he or she would have known, unless intercepted, that this was going to create problems in later interactions. He or she might have intervened something like:

"Mike, I hear us having a problem with estimating involving you, Mark, and probably Ed, too. Is this something we want to problem solve about here? Or might we set up a meeting with some of the people doing the estimating?"

The group would have heard Mike's need for top people and the decision would have been made by Pete. This brings up an interesting point. In most of the meetings we observe, it is the tradition for the senior person to be chairperson. This is usually the CEO. If cultural factors are to be taken fully into account it puts the chair in a difficult position of trying to do everything at once. **We will discuss the options later.**

I have mentioned interruptions only twice. This is an understatement. With eight high powered people in the room, interruptions are the order of the day unless the chairperson is so authoritarian that no one dares to speak out of turn. A trained facilitator deals with interruptions as they happen and acts as a traffic cop so everyone gets air time.

The next topic, the purchase of Orca Engineering, is an example of either hidden agendas or railroading. There certainly must have been some private discussions of the feasibility of buying an engineering company, yet one got the feeling that there had not been a full review of everything involved. (It was sometimes the case in this particular company that deals were largely set up and decided by the CEO with the committee as a reluctant rubber stamp before presenting to the board).

In this case Red made an attempt to do some problem solving before plunging ahead. His idea was evaluated silently, rejected, and the meeting continued ... again, not without consequences. Red, whose realm is Research is 'told' that his ideas do not count, and the group once again gets the signal that it is not convened to solve problems.

The fact that Tom abstains and the meeting goes right on, is significant. The President has just signaled his top group that their opinion even in their own territories, may have little weight.

The next order of business is sales. As the group is looking over the forecast, Tom brings up a wish--if they could just turn those receivables into cash. Red is reminded of another receivables problem where they took a different approach. Without invitation, they are starting a mini-problem solving session. Sam squashes both with "That was a special case". The consequences of this interchange are: Sam does not get the attention his sales report deserves. Both Tom and Red are told that new ideas and problem solving are unwelcome from them--in fact, if Red had some idea behind bringing up collecting from the government, we never hear it.

A culturally knowledgeable facilitator might have dealt with this as follows: "Tom, it sounds like you are starting to problem solve with receivables. I will make a note of it and if Sam wants to go in that direction we will. Sam is looking for other ideas and comments on his report. "Anyone got anything?"

This would probably have prevented the diversion into shutdowns. Not that the shutdown subject is unimportant. It deserves a separate and clear discussion and decision of its own.

As it is, there is a brief mention of shutdowns and Pete seems to give blanket permission for shutdowns with his "take the risk of stock outs."

The next item is reductions in the engineering staff, but before that gets discussed, Sam interrupts with his concern about inventory. He gets the support of Mike and they are off on inventory. Art, from his experience with modelling offers an idea.

It is rejected by Mike before he really understands what the idea is. Pete cuts the inventory talk by delegating it to Art. Here again, without any malicious intent, Pete has failed to acknowledge Sam and Mike's problem except indirectly and in a way that may well keep them out of the actions undertaken by Art.

Even though Sam is out of order in bringing up inventories, the culturally informed thing to do (the action with the most favorable consequences for the team and its task) would be something like "I hear Inventory is causing you and Mike some pain, Sam. Let us put that on the agenda and deal with it fully **later**. Right now I want to hear from Ed about those cuts."

As you saw, Pete was not satisfied that Ed had cut enough from his staff. He then forms a team for Ed. It would have been dynamically better for Ed if Pete had suggested to Ed that he get a couple of the other members of the committee and see what more he can do. Forming his team for him suggests he is no longer in charge. 'if that is actually what Pete has in mind, this is no way to inform Ed.

The final episode of the nozzle may have been brought on by Ed's need to recover some esteem. This nozzle problem had been bothering everyone, and it involved one of their most important machines.

Pete handled this in a way that was almost calculated to result in bad feelings for everyone involved. His questions were rhetorical, and the use of 'friend' seemed sarcastic. It would be straighter and far more effective to make the nozzle problem an agenda item and review it directly. Every item on the agenda has serious implications for the company. And every one of these experienced and dedicated men has something to offer on nearly every point. Because no one understands the nature of culture of the meeting, and there is no one there to enforce any sort of cultural discipline, in a way, the company is deprived of one of its most potent forces--a united, informed, and contributory top management team.

The episodes discussed above all actually occurred in much the same way as described. Even though we have disguised names, amounts, and various other

specifics, the people involved will remember the episode. We have many more of these in our files because these meetings are regular--usually once a week or perhaps once every two weeks--the intent is to illustrate the actual way many such meetings proceed and then analyze episodes with a view to culture and the possible consequences to group effectiveness through lack of what we call cultural discipline for managers. In this context, I am speaking of the general body of rules, agreements, and practices that have developed in any working group. For example, we agree explicitly or implicitly to listen to each other--then we don't. We agree to finish one subject before starting another--then we don't. We agree that we are a problem-solving forum for the company, and then we are not. There are more cultural influences at work, and we will discuss them in a later chapter.

A NEW CONCEPT OF WORK

The characteristics of the meetings from which these working samples were taken were: confusion, individual vs group, negativity toward ideas, and lack of attention to each other. The prevalence of these four behaviors is common to nearly all the meetings we have observed in most of our institutions for education and industry. The single most important reason such wasteful procedures exist is that the practices and their consequences are not really visible to the unaided eye. Because few have experienced a culturally flexible group at work, what they are doing now seems normal and effective.

Working with high performing groups (of people) is an exciting, exhilarating experience. Whenever we observe such a group, their hallmark is deliberately constructive behavior--the culture they have set up; the practices agreed upon, all reinforce achievement. They pay close attention to their process--how they do things--the consequences--as well as what they do.

Professional football has taught us all a lesson in what can be accomplished through minute attention to process and its consequences. As I mentioned earlier, through the intensive study of game films and more recently television films, coaches could help members of the team develop moves (processes) that made each more effective as an individual and as a team player. I want to emphasize this paradoxical truism: it is possible to be both an outstanding star and an excellent team player. This has significant implications for competition within the team.

What I am saying is that it is perfectly possible to take a management team from playing at sandlot levels of accomplishment (speaking now of use of potential, not how seemingly well they are doing) and through self-study of their processes, how they interact with each other, and help them to be high performing professionals whose achievements will far outshine their past standards.

Unfortunately, the culture in which most of us are trapped is careless of the ways of high performance. When we study the norms in schools, families, and other small work groups in business and education, the lesson we learn over and over is that the governing law of culture is uninformed inconsistency based roughly on the concept that **YOU WILL NEED TO COMPETE WITH EVERYONE TO SATISFY YOUR OWN NEED FOR SELF ESTEEM.**

It has been our objective to learn, through the observation of many management groups and invention groups via closed circuit television, ways of operating that result in High Performance. It seems apparent that some companies can achieve excellence through a policy, expressed or simply enculturated, of authoritarian operations. We were looking for something else that yields greater joy to the participants. For lack of better words, we call it High Performance. It is accomplished through a different sort of acculturation--one not based on fear, but on a flexible regard for one's self and for the talents of one's fellow workers.

The reason we have such great confidence in our findings is that they are firmly grounded in our own observation of thousands of individuals in situations where each must use his or her talents--and we can see what each does. The overwhelming evidence is that virtually everyone has depths of talent that are rarely called upon. In fact, the normal culture in which he or she works actively discourages him or her from engaging those talents.

Authoritarian cultures are the worst offenders in this discouragement. They appear to work well because a few selected talents are and then slavishly obeyed. Such companies will remain the standard of excellence as well as set new highs in employee satisfaction and individual achievement.

We can say this with confidence because again, we have observed thousands of groups trained to be culturally informed outperform individuals who were brilliant.

Much of the main body of information about being culturally informed is common sense. To act on it requires a change in some behaviors that are habitual, and that always takes time, resolve, and practice. But no unusual feats of transformation are necessary. We will deal with the concepts of High Performing Systems; being culturally informed ... and culturally flexible, at length.

CHAPTER 3 New Concept, New Structure, New Roles

As described in that classic model Robert's Rules of Order, meetings are designed to provide an orderly way to allow conflicting views to be aired, heard, and dealt with. Nearly all chairpersons we have observed in our research use a casual personal fusion of Robert's Rules, legal, military, and Dale Carnegie models. We are convinced that this approach prejudices the outcome toward mediocrity. As you saw in the meeting described earlier, almost random behavior, which culturally unaware leadership produces, tends to be careless of the ideas and feelings of others.

To redirect and call forth the energies in a meeting, we need a new model guide the actions of the facilitator. A good model is like an imaginary template--when something goes outside the plan, you are alerted and can bring the action back where it is more constructive. To avoid over control, your model will set definite boundaries beyond which you will not exert your power.

Without question, your most important responsibility is to develop and protect a temporary culture that encourages the greatest possible use of potential for High Performance or excellence. This demands that you see and understand the forces at work, and be ready and able to deal with those that threaten the culture you are responsible for establishing.

Your second task is to make maximum use of the most powerful and most delicate force at your disposal--the mind of each member of your group. In a meeting, these minds work so skillfully and so speedily that they are prone to distract and **hinder each other unless you set context, style, and purpose.**

The key to accomplishing both these assignments is an understanding of the three elements with which culture, context, style, and purpose are created: words, vocals, and non-verbals. As discussed earlier, these three kinds of action govern all human exchange and to be an effective facilitator you will need to master the interpretation of them. Without that, it is impossible to stay in charge of a meeting and bring forth the high-performance characteristics of its participants. In fact, our studies of meetings of two or more people strongly suggest that no manager will get the best from his people, who does not master the interpretation and application of the cultural tools.

We will be dealing with the facilitator's role in detail later. Right now, I want to discuss meetings themselves. There are thought to be several kinds of meetings: information getting, information passing or sharing, decision-making, problem-solving, and perhaps a mixture of all of these.

The culturally informed facilitator keeps in mind that all meetings have some things in common: people and their paradoxical need to be individuals and star, and at the same time be members and belong; and purpose. A perfectly designed meeting will provide an opportunity for everyone there to both star and be a member, and at the same time accomplish the purpose of the meeting.

TRADITIONAL VS. DESIGNED MEETING

Although it was not a central purpose of our research, we could not help but observe that a great many meetings are held with only a small amount of attention paid to helping the participants get the most benefit. At one end of the involvement spectrum is the speech--pure information passing. Unless the speaker is skillful and purposeful in getting involvement, his or her audience will spend most of the speech thinking of something else. At the other end of the involvement spectrum is the one-on-one discussion. This is just about as involved as one can get, barring loving--which may be the ultimate. All meetings, as we move toward large information sharing meetings, are hard because someone wants to get some other people to understand something--that is the least common denominator of meetings.

According to Random House, understand means: to perceive the meaning of; grasp the idea of; comprehend--to be thoroughly familiar with; apprehend clearly the character, nature, or subtleties of.

In my early work with groups we were focusing on problem solving. I observed an interesting phenomenon: each person in the group had a need to re-express the problem before he or she seemed ready to tackle it. I have the same inclination myself, and I interpret it to mean that my path to understanding requires that I somehow manipulate the incoming information to connect with my current knowledge. This is not a revelation. It's common knowledge that to understand something new, I need to connect it with something I am familiar with. The idea I find intriguing is that this pattern of thought is so well established that I go through it with something that may not be new to me. It is almost as though I need to translate what is presented, into my own personal, internal language to **really understand** it.

This would suggest that when I am designing a speech for a large audience that I make my points in terms that each can readily translate into his or her personal language. For example, if I am talking about company policy or goals, I will not really be understood unless my talk is in terms easily personalized by each of my listeners.

Another implication is that when people are talking in a group they are always speaking of the topic in their own personal language and from their own point of view unless they tell me otherwise. This seems crushingly obvious, but in our observations, it is a cause of many problems. For example, suppose a group is working on the problem of seat belts in cars.

Jim: How about a seat belt that fastens itself?

Joe: That does not really solve the problem. Isn't the basic problem one of safety?

The culturally aware facilitator sees that this is two different personal views of the problem. Jim and Joe, because their self-esteem is on the line, may turn this into a win-lose argument that will not only affect the culture of the meeting, it will get in the way of focusing on the problem.

It seems clear that the complexity of our own reactions makes it important that meetings be consciously designed to take into account both the needs of the people involved and the accomplishment of the task at hand.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL FLEXIBILITY

The most striking difference between a Synectic®'s meeting and a traditional meeting is that cultural flexibility is encouraged and expected. The second clear difference is that the roles of all present are clearly articulated. Finally, the facilitator uses a more or less standard procedure or set of steps.

Cultural flexibility is a new term and what I mean by it is a willingness on the part of those present to depart from traditionally accepted customs and practices and use actions that are designed to further achievement. The term recognizes that **there are other customary practices that are not acceptable**. The **criteria for acceptability are based on whether or not the action encourages or discourages teamwork**. Wherever this is needed or desired--at work, at home, or in between, then cultural flexibility is important.

We focus on meetings because it is there that it is easiest to identify and evaluate actions and their consequences. The cultural flexibility learned in meetings can be carried over to the other situations with great profit. For example, all High-Performance Systems require cultural flexibility. The ultimate result of Synectic's cultural flexibility is that the members of a group knowingly take responsibility for helping each other instead of competing and being adversarial.

The concept of cultural flexibility has familiar antecedents. Politeness and good manners can be thought of as *cultural disciplines*. Synectic's research first revealed that **many actions which were well within the bounds of good manners actually had adverse effects upon the cooperation and productivity of the group**. (George please elaborate on this more. Huge idea that Synectic's training means we can no longer disagree.)

There was a specific event in our research when we first observed that some seemingly harmless actions went beyond the discipline of politeness and good manners. I had harbored the general belief that while standards for politeness vary with groups and situations; for example, a group of what we would consider gentlemen, when on a hunting trip together, have different standards of politeness than when they are in an office meeting--I believed that normal standards were OK for meetings and for general use in office and plant and therefore manners and politeness were a non-issue.

One morning in the mid 1960's a new group was starting training. Almost the first experiment was for the group to organize itself and work on an invention problem that we furnished. I had given them the specification sheets and turned on the television which I operated from a separate room. Something distracted me from the first few minutes of the meeting. About ten minutes into the fifteen-minute meeting, one of the men, we will call him Al, took the thermos bottle (which was the model for the problem) and said, "What if we took this sheet of rubber--"

"That would be too expensive" said Alice, interrupting his line of thought.

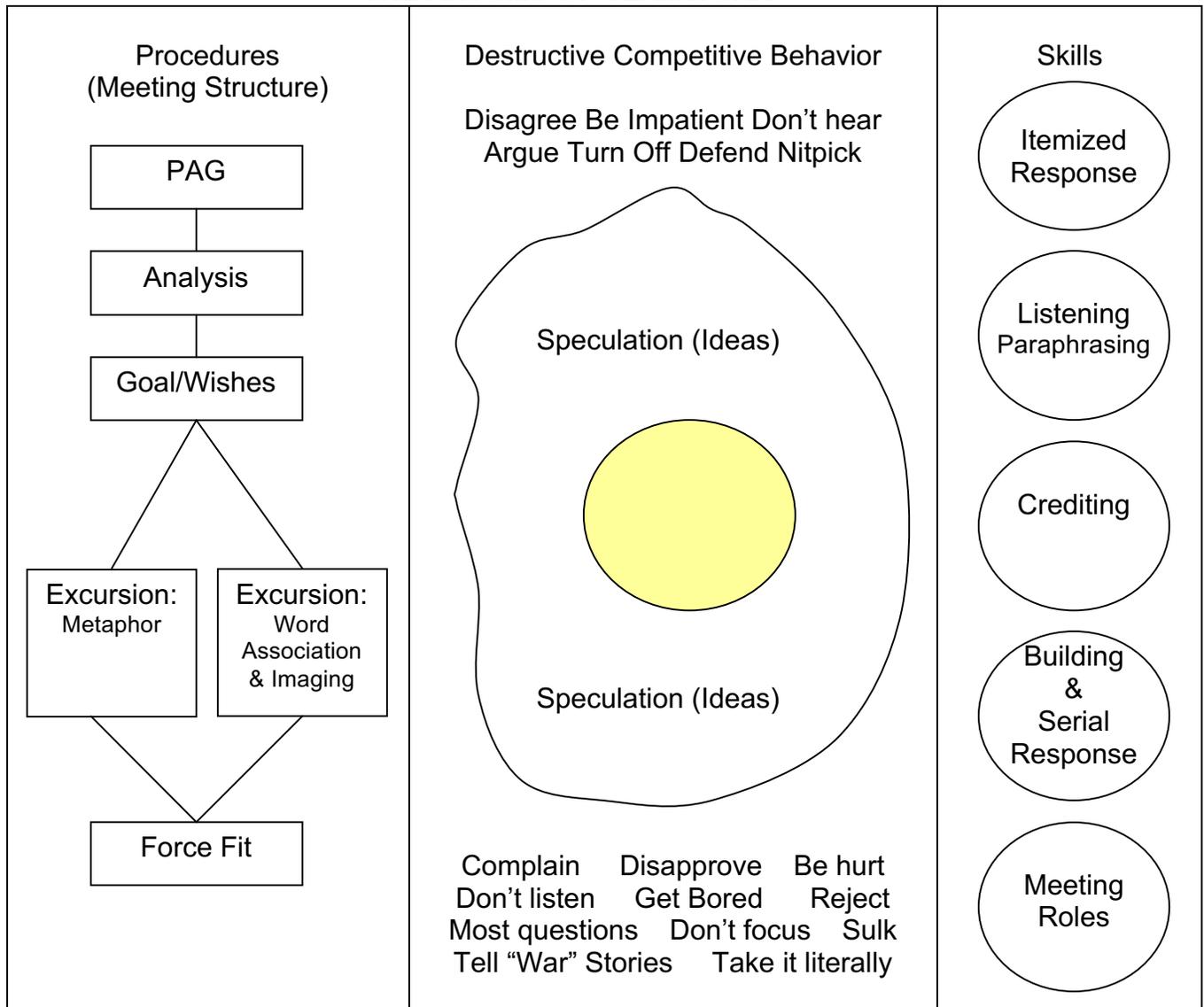
I did a faint double take because watching and listening to Al, I could not see how Alice or anyone else could know enough about what he had in mind to know whether it would be too expensive or not.

When the group came out to watch their tape, and we started it at the beginning, the mystery was solved and a great light went on in my head. Just as the group was going to work on the problem, Al said to Alice "You are the only woman in the group, you be the secretary."

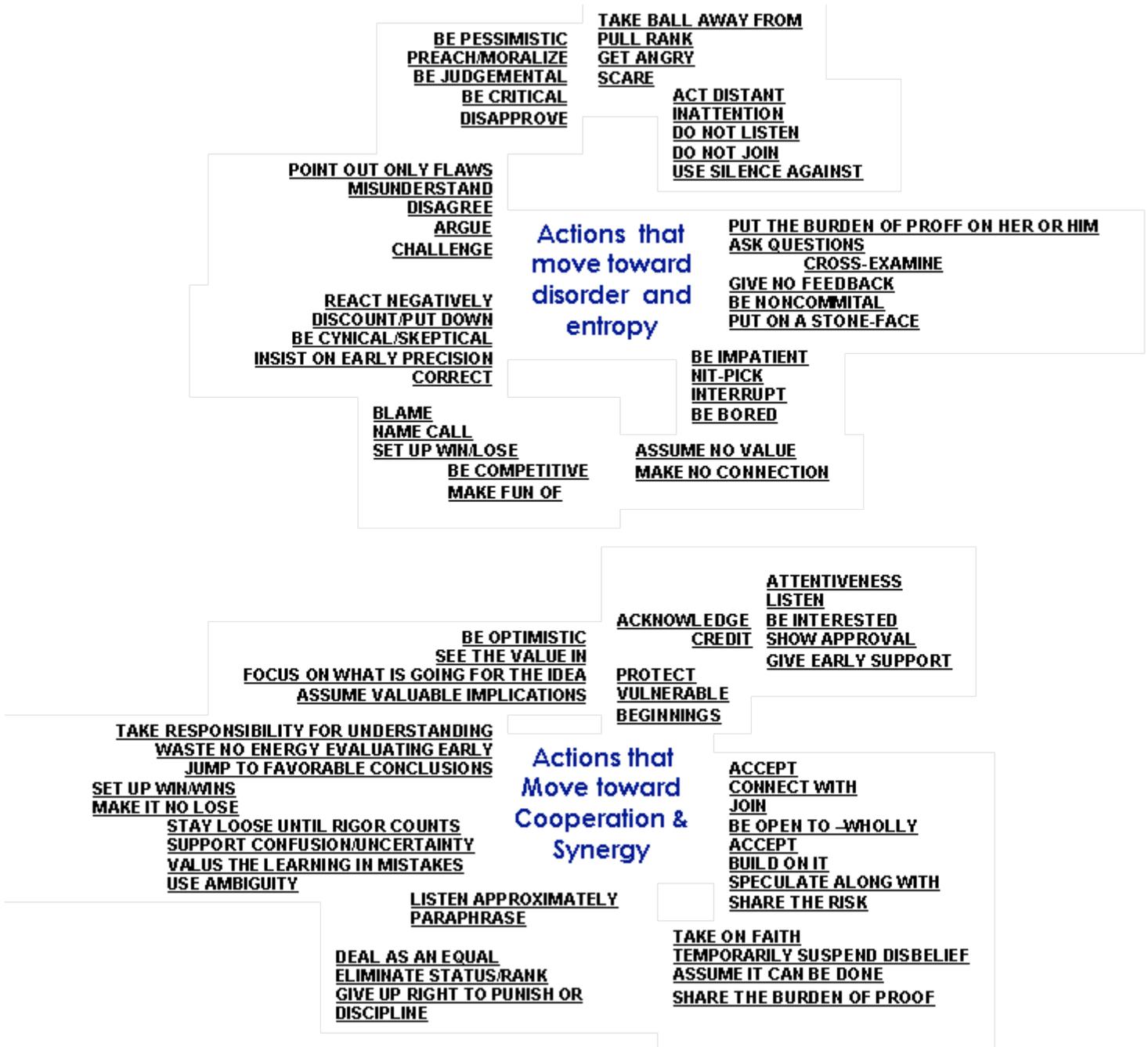
It became crystal clear watching Alice after, that, she was interested only in cutting Al down to size. She watched him and waited until she thought he was sufficiently exposed, and then she let him have it.

From that time on I was aware that how people acted toward each other had definite consequences, some good, some bad. As we accumulated observations we began to be able to predict what the consequence would be. We began to draw conclusions and began to establish a cultural flexibility that would get us the good consequences and avoid the destructive. Below is an early attempt to sort out and illustrate the dynamics of a meeting. This illustration was known as the 'fried egg chart'.

THE ANATOMY OF TEAMWORK



CLUES FOR READING CULTURE



In the early 1970's we worked closely with a group of practitioners of Transactional Analysis--a system of therapy that examines the interactions with the purpose of improving mental health. Our purpose was to get as specific as possible about the kinds of transmissions that brought out the best in people and those that tended to bring out defensive maneuvers that might be destructive to a group effort.

It was this time, through our work with the T.A. people and through my study of the work of Dr. Harry Stack Sullivan that I became aware of the overwhelming importance to each of us of his or her own self-esteem. The charts above were published in 1983. We first used the term 'cultural flexibility' to describe the purpose of many of the actions of the Facilitator in Synectics® meetings.

The Westinghouse Experiment

From November of 1980 to the fall of 1983 we conducted an experiment with the Steam Turbine Generator Division of Westinghouse Corporation. Under the command of Stan Quick, STGD as it is called, undertook to change the culture of their operation. The particular focus was on the thousand or so people who would man their new headquarters building in Orlando, Florida.

Dr. James Vaughan and his wife, Dr. Elizabeth Vaughan, consultants retained to assist in this unprecedented experiment, chose Synectics®, and another consulting firm, Human Resources Inc., to help them with the work. HRI, as they were known, had had some experience in cultural change, while we had experience in creative problem solving. It was thought that the combination of HRI's knowledge of culture and Synectics knowledge of interactions that lead to cooperation and problem solving would help the skilled Human Resources Department already in place at STGD (George Dann commanding). The results of that three-year experiment, judged largely successful, are reported elsewhere. Out of our experiences over the period came our concept of culture flexibility.

As we watched the groups struggle with the new norms they had agreed to, we came to realize that to the extent a group was able to maintain their cultural flexibility, they were successful in getting the teamwork and performance they were seeking. When the cultural discipline broke down, they reverted to their old competitive adversarial ways.

We also observed that to some degree there was continuity--if a person was cooperative in a meeting, the beneficiary of that would be cooperative out of the meeting. Not surprisingly, the converse was true: if a person was discounted in a meeting, he or she carried the 'grudge' outside the meeting.

We had only a limited opportunity to observe this phenomenon as we were mainly focused on meetings. The examples we did see were so consistent and the notion seems so obvious that we believe it deserves close attention. We might put it as follows: it is important for a group to maintain cultural flexibility in their workplace as well as in meetings.

From recent experiments with schoolchildren ages eight to eleven, with a limited family sample, and our continuing research into the processes of management and invention

teams, we have been reinforced in our belief that the cornerstone of cooperation, teamwork, and high performance is informed cultural flexibility; and this is true in meetings, in the workplace, at home, and everywhere in between.

LESSONS FROM WESTINGHOUSE

Our going-in plan to help change the culture of the STGD division of Westinghouse was worked out between George Dann of Westinghouse, Robert Allen of HRI, the Vaughans, and myself of Syntectics. We believed that given that we had three years for course corrections we could afford to start with a loose plan which combined in theory a three-day Syntecticse course with an HRI three-day workshop in determining and modifying the cultural norms that existed at' the time. This was supported by extensive interviews and questionnaires. In this first workshop participants made some decisions and agreements about the norms that would govern their actions with each other and with others in the company. At the same time, the top management team defined and agreed upon their vision for STGO. Briefly, this vision was to become the number one company in their field in quality and to establish a culture that was supportive of achievement.

In support of the HRI cultural change program they did numerous studies within the company to identify trouble spots and issues that appeared to be key to successful change.

In the meantime, Syntectics began to give three-day workshops in a program we called the Innovative Teamwork Program. This course was built around problems identified by the participants. The three days were spent working round-robin on the problems, with a great deal of attention paid to the processes used. By reviewing each problem-solving on closed circuit television, we attempted to help each group develop cooperative ways of dealing with each other.

It seems clear that these two programs supported each other in theory. In practice, there was considerable slippage. For example, a group might not bring any of the issues identified by HRI research because no one in the group happened to be effected by it. Quite often groups that worked together were not able to go through the workshops together ... and often, some members of groups missed one or both workshops. In spite of this, there were major changes in company culture. Over the three-year period several giant projects were undertaken and handled in **ways that were new and far more effective than** the traditional procedures. For example, when bidding on a power plant in Australia, a member of the shipping department personally travelled all the optional routes by which the huge machinery might be shipped. An unprecedented practice that saved several million dollars.

In addition, the culture generated supportive, helpful behavior and cross-divisional cooperation that were unknown in the previous culture. In the temporary headquarters building occupied while the new building was built, quarters were tight and makeshift, but from the time one was greeted by the receptionist--warmly, competently, and helpfully--through meetings with various departments, it was clear that here was a different and more competent culture than existed in STGD before.

LESSONS LEARNED BY SYNECTICS

The most important lesson we learned has to do with the small and large actions that are the actual support of culture: the words, vocal, and nonverbals--were not sufficiently emphasized and learned. In brief, no cultural flexibility was agreed upon and established and reinforced. We learned that neither of (the three-day workshops were enough singly or together because they were insufficiently oriented to the nitty gritty upon which culture rests. As a result, the managers were not in a position to reflect, act out, and manipulate the cultural tools. As a consequence, while the overall results are favorable, the underlying concept of cultural flexibility is lacking. This is not to say that the STGD people will not work out ways to maintain the levels of support and visions of achievement that they have established. It does say that as a result of our experience, the present work we do on culture change places heavy emphasis on the explicit establishment, mastery, and maintenance of the particular optimum cultural flexibility the company develops.

Another lesson of experience is that no group that works together believes that there is much wrong with their present culture that a new, more sympathetic boss could not cure. It is extremely difficult for members of such a group to accept the fact that there are many of their own transmissions both helpful and harmful that they are not seeing. This makes it important that each group experiences self-observation on television or sound tape so that they can observe for themselves that there is a dimension about transmissions that offers an opportunity for learning and development--and that the critical nature of transmissions is appreciated.

THE NEED FOR CLARIFYING

Culture seems on one hand, simple--determined by words, vocals, and non-verbals. In fact, it is so various, and in many cases so subtle that it can seem like a shifting mirage. Old traditional ways of doing a thing present themselves as comfortable and seductive. They are "tried and true". People uninitiated to the new cultural flexibility are puzzled by its practices and resist it. It's very newness at first makes it easy to slide back into the comfortable traditional ways of acting. "Let the sales slip take the *usual* five days to get to the warehouse." "Give the customary nonchalant treatment to a mild customer complaint."

There are so many of the old culture's processes that crowd in on the new resolutions that almost constant clarification is needed. To keep the eyes on the new culture it is necessary to take unprecedented measures: Weekly awards for pointing out the best example of the new norms. Historians who document the larger projects so that the accomplishment can be reviewed and savored as an example of the new culture at work.

Develop a new eye for issues, problems, and opportunities so they can put to work the new problem-solving processes that are part of the new culture.

In each new situation, it is necessary to be aware of the impact of the cultural flexibility and what it implies that is different from past practices. And this difference needs to be pointed out **often**, once or twice is not enough.

One of the more surprising things we learned about was the high level of fear that exists between managerial levels. Traditionally the **boss**, no matter at what level and in spite of apparently easy camaraderie, is feared and he or she in turn fears his boss. What is passed to him in the way of information and gossip is carefully strained and ordered. Communications are generally far from straight.

In the process of self-observation during the development of a cultural flexibility bosses have an opportunity to refine and change the signals they send out to reduce fear and encourage straighter communication.

Not every manager is comfortable with deliberately reducing fear in his subordinates. This reservation is fed by the fact that many effective companies depend upon fear to ensure that orders are carried out. The authoritarian policy is one that produces what are considered excellent results as long as the chain of commanders who carry out the orders are faithful and the few people at the top who make up the orders are in touch with what is wanted.

The authoritarian policy denies the worth of contributions along the line, and tends to demean those lower down in the chain. In addition, I believe it pays a heavy price in resentment and emotional resistance and even "innocent" sabotage. I remember many occasions when I was working with machinists in a development lab. A skilled machinist would make a part according to a drawing, from having looked at the drawing known that the part would not work. In that shop it was part of the culture for the engineers to have all the authority in design. Machinists were never consulted.

The authoritarian vs. the participative style of management has been thoroughly worked over in song and story, and I do not wish to add to the lore. When a group that works together to accomplish something begins to look at its Cultural processes (its everyday words, vocals, and non-verbals) and gets a feeling of how good they can be when they problem solve together, authoritarian leadership takes its rightful place.

In Synectics' new design, less attention is paid to introductory workshops. We find that if a group can tackle an opportunity or problem within the company and work it through as they observe their processes, the outcome is far more meaningful than theory--though theory has its place. Workshops are valuable as concentrated learning after the efficacy of the procedures has been established.

Finally, in our experience we were continually impressed with the ability of people at every level to respond to carefully designed processes. There are enormous potentials that remain untapped by traditional hierarchical cultures.

NEW ROLES

Just as we found it necessary to continually clarify cultural discipline, it has been important to clarify the roles of every person involved in a meeting. While we use the

meeting as an opportunity to identify responsibilities and learn to manipulate the cultural tools, the use of these earnings is valuable in any situation. Not all of the actions of the Facilitator will be appropriate in everyday intercourse, but a great many of the awareness's will be valuable.

MEETING ROLE

There are definite roles for each participant in a meeting. if these are understood the chances of a successful meeting are substantially increased.

In the usual meeting, there is the chairperson, one or more participants, and a purpose. Rationally, the purpose of the meeting takes precedence over everything. That is what the meeting is about. The first clarifying task is to identify the "owner" of the purpose. This is the person who is most intimately concerned with going forth from the meeting with an answer, a solution, a decision, or any other objective such an owner might have.

If this owner can be clearly identified, we call him or her the CLIENT.

CLIENT

The role of Client is based on a philosophy of how work really gets done. Any given task has a kind of life of its own. In a machinery company making, among other things, valves--faucets--the task of making a good faucet depends upon a succession of people who, temporarily 'own' that faucet. We have found that it clarifies the fact that the real boss of any task is the task itself. We need to make clear who 'owns' a given task at any one time. For example, the head designer of the company above, gets an order for a swan faucet made of gold. He is the Client over that job while he figures out, in a general way, what is wanted. He may call the salesman who sold this golden swan faucet to a dealer. The head designer calls in one of his people and assigns the task of design to him. They talk it over, and the designer now becomes client over the task. The salesman, the dealer, and the head designer still have a piece of the action--a piece of clientship, but the head Client is now the artist who is designing it.

The task passes from the artist to an engineer and then to a pattern maker and then to the core and mold makers, to the metal pourers, to sandblast, to the machine shop, the polishing shop, to shipping, and it finally arrives at the dealers who ordered it in the first place. The important thing from our point of view is that each Client actually be given ownership of his part of accomplishing the task.

This is more important than it may seem. If, for example, the chief designer, who has some rank in the company, becomes fascinated with the idea of a golden swan faucet, he may feel free to meddle in the artist's design, poke into the way it is engineered and even get into the molds and the pouring as well as the machining. The effect of this is that it takes ownership away from those who properly should have it. This tends to rob each successive 'owner' of the satisfaction that comes from doing his or her part of the job well. The consequences of messing up ownership can be far reaching. If it becomes the cultural practice, then it follows that there will be little pride in the work because it does not belong, clearly, to anyone. The practice further deprives each rightful owner of

the opportunity to add to the task, his or her own piece of improvised excellence with its important addition to his or her own self-esteem.

The reality of Clientship becomes even more complicated when a part of the task is legitimately owned by two or more people simultaneously. For example, a marketing plan for a product has multiple simultaneous ownership.

We will discuss later how we handle this. For now, we want to define the responsibilities of the Client in a meeting where there is a problem to be solved.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT GO WITH THE ROLE OF CLIENT

The Client's overall responsibility is to get from the team as much of what he or she needs as possible. All of his or her actions are aimed at that. His or her interactions with the team need to be designed to reinforce the cultural discipline that the Facilitator will be creating. I will be more specific about this as we go along. Now, the responsibilities are the following:

1. Give the Team Enough Information About the Problem or Opportunity So They Can Begin to Work. We have found that a brief period (about five to seven minutes) to cover all answers to the following questions will generally serve:

- (a) What is the background of the problem?
- (b) Why is it a problem?
- (c) What are some of the things you have thought of or tried? and
- (d) What do you wish to get from the group in the time available? In addition, it is important to make clear to the group what your personal stake in the problem solution is.

2. Contribute to the Meeting as Though a Participant. It can be particularly use full if the client offers a far-out wishful goal/wish to demonstrate openness to such goal/wishing on the part of others.

3. Be Alert for Opportunities to Show Appreciation for Good Thinking. When a participant makes a pleasing contribution, use words, vocals, and nonverbals to let him or her know about your pleasure. Do not attempt to fake this.

4. Resist the Temptation to Comment on the Contributions When They Do Not Please. You have complete control over the direction in which the team will go. When making choices, simply ignore those that do not aim where you want to go.

5. Listen Approximately. Many of the suggestions made will not be precise fits to your problem. Exercise your skill in three-step listening. Listen for flaws, listen to overcome flaws, and listen to hear an idea without flaws.

6. Model the Ways You Wish Participants to Act. For example, practice crediting: When someone says something that stimulates a thought in your mind, let her or him know. "Sally, when you said that, it gave me the idea that" Basically, if you check the outline of actions that encourage speculative thinking and do whatever you can to conform to that in your operations, you will fulfill this responsibility.

7. Prove That You Are There to Find Ideas That Will Work for You. For example, in the goal/wish phase the facilitator will be getting from the team a mixture of ideas, wishes, beginning ideas, and directions. During this period, if a new idea that appears feasible is offered, it will be written up by the facilitator. Even you have not been commenting on the offerings as they happen, you can say something like, "Hey! there is a new one I could experiment with next week." You may not choose to do so, but you have let your team know that you are alert for ideas that will be useful to you.

8. Indicate the Sort of Direction That Interests You. Here, again, you will not be reacting to every goal/wish, but when a goal/wish suggests a direction you particularly like, let the team know.

9. Be Decisive. When the facilitator asks you for directions, give him what he needs. If you need time to consult, take all you want, but when through, be definite.

10. When You Are Not Getting What You Want, Let the Facilitator Know.

If the team is way off base, ask for a break and discuss your feelings with the facilitator privately. Often you can express what you want in a goal/wish, for example, "I wish I could get more ideas on how to get distribution."

11. When Evaluating an Idea Use Itemized Response. * This is a procedure that gives the members of the team a balanced evaluation that educates them about the kind of thing you are looking for and are concerned with. If you choose to proceed with developing ideas, they know just what needs to be worked on. In the itemized response you articulate three or four advantages or positive aspects of the idea and then you shift your attention to the concerns or gaps in the idea. These are aspects that need further inventing. If possible, you phrase your concerns as 'how to's'. For example, in a car safety problem, suppose you are the client and the idea to be evaluated is a padded mechanical bar that lowers to embrace the occupants of both seats, much like the bar on a ski lift. *We will discuss Itemized Response in detail later.

Jane: I like the relative simplicity of that, and another plus is that it would be easier for the user to pull it down and put it in place than the seat belt. It would be easier to automate than a seat belt. Another thing I like—and this may be sneaky—we could make it so that in the up position it would get it the way of driving. The user would almost have to put it on.

My concerns are how can we make it comfortable, like a belt and how can we prevent sideways slipping. guess my only way is how can we make it simple --not a big mechanical deal. In summary, the client is the reason for the meeting. Satisfying him or her is the clear objective of each member. How the client interacts with the individuals and ideas will have a profound effect on the productivity of the group.

In summary, the client is the reason for the meeting. Satisfying him or her is the clear objective of each member. How the client interacts with the individuals and ideas will have a profound effect on the productivity of the group.

THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE FACILITATOR ROLE

We designed the role of Facilitator over a four-year period in the early sixties. Initially we had no quarrel with the usual role of chairperson. As our understanding of the critical nature of implementation developed (without it, nothing happens) we observed that quite often the chairperson made decisions for the implementer. While these may have been, decisions based upon more experience, they did not belong to the implementer who was looking at the problem or situation through his or her own personal glasses. A decision by the chairperson was unlikely to fit that personal scheme of things as well as a decision arrived at by him or herself.

During this period, we were studying implementation and attempting to increase the probability of its happening. In experiments using decisions made by the manager, compared to those where decisions were made by the implementer, there was far more improvising and 'inventing ways around difficulties' and in addition, far more commitment and pleasure when the decisions had been made by the implementer. We began then to develop toward our present policy of implementer or Client autonomy. We experimented with the chairperson--usually the manager--being an -h the decision up to the Client. Here, the problem was that 'advices' from most managers had the force of orders. We began to realize that a manager who was also the chairperson simply had too much power—too dominant a position. Members of the group, preoccupied as they were with enhancing or protecting their self-esteem, had too little left-over energy for information giving, seeking or problem-solving for the benefit of the Client.

Further, the chairperson was usually the highest-ranking person in the groups. Traditionally he or she owns at least part of the problem if we ceded some to the Client--who usually reported to the chairperson.

It became clear to us that the interests of the task were being poorly served by this system. We set out to design a role that would be dedicated to two goals: first to use the collected individuals to the utmost of their powers; second, to direct that power toward helping the Client with his or her task.

The only way the Facilitator could do this would be to make it clear that he was not in competition with any members of the team. That meant the Facilitator would be out of the idea, opinion, and suggestion business directly. His or her job would be to get these contributions from the team on behalf of the Client.

Most managers find this role difficult if not impossible. Their image of themselves as successful managers is making a lot of correct decisions, having cogent and persuasive opinions and giving suggestions that result in success. Their self-esteem is often based on this image so it is useless to ask them to give it up without some recompense.

If a manager can focus on the success of his team and use that plus his contributions as a member of the team, he will be comfortable with this design--though he may find it difficult or impossible to be a good facilitator because he is so wrapped up in content, ideas, opinions, and suggestions.

In an ideal design of a meeting of more than four people, the manager will turn over the role of Facilitator to someone else. Although, when a manager becomes skilled in the

use of the cultural tools and able to maintain cultural flexibility, he is quite able to operate as facilitator and use I.-he role to add to his luster as a manager who gets the very best out of his team.

Philosophically, the Facilitator is much like the conductor of an orchestra. He guides the 'Individual players, and the group, but he makes no music himself. He is dedicated to producing the most effective rendition of the piece of music they are playing together.

He or she is also something like a stage manager with a great spotlight. He focuses the light on one member of the team after another, yet no one is ever in the shadow.

In this way, he fulfills the paradoxical needs of each of us, including himself--aimer of the spotlight: to be a star ... and to be a member of the group.

THE ROLE OF FACILITATOR

The overall responsibility of the Facilitator is to establish and maintain a cultural flexibility that gives the greatest possible encouragement to Client and Participants to use their potential for good thinking. Good thinking is that kind that is most appropriate to the need at hand. At times the task will require widely exploratory, speculative thinking; at others, what will be needed will be rigorously logical routine thinking. The Facilitator will make it clear to the group what is expected of them. In situations of unwanted confusion, he or she will clarify. He or she will know when the confusion is a constructive way of finding some new connection and will support it.

The Facilitator will have at hand various strategies to help the team when it needs aid in speculative thinking in its search for new connections. He or she will be mindful of structure--that is, the Synectics flow chart, but not bound by it. He or she will use his judgment about what is needed, guided, of course, by the Client's needs.

Here are some specifics for the Facilitator to consider:

1. Make yourself thoroughly familiar with the actions outlined on page 51 those that discourage exploration and those that encourage it. I will be suggesting some ways of avoiding the discouraging actions, but the best way to facilitate is to improvise in your own style in response to what is happening. Your objective is always to establish and protect the culture/climate.
2. Listen to team members. This is the foundation upon which nearly every encouraging action is built. Permit the speaker to paint any picture he wishes; your aim is to understand from his point of view. If in doubt, or you think that any team member may be in doubt, paraphrase to be sure you understand to the speaker's satisfaction. This sounds easy, but it is not. You will catch yourself making judgments, tuning out, listening to your own thoughts, and otherwise failing to really comprehend what the speaker is saying.

The importance of listening cannot be overemphasized. Skill in good listening has a pervasive effect on the team's productivity because it directly affects the culture.

You will also, on occasion, have a member who tries to dominate the meeting. He will have immediate responses and go into endless detail if you allow, it. These people are

usually bright and valuable, but they can ruin a meeting. You will need to control such a person without alienating him (he may be your boss). Here are three ways of dealing with this. There are others, and you can invent your own:

- a. When you believe you understand the point, interrupt to say "Thank you, I've got it," and quickly move to someone else.
- b. Avoid the compulsive talker's eyes when asking for a response.
- c. More drastically, when you ask for a response, look at someone else and hold your hand to the talker in a casual stop sign.

3. Keep the energy level high. This may seem an impossible assignment, but it is not if you use the tools available to you. There are a number of things that control the energy of the group including some beyond your control, such as a member's hangover. But there is a lot you can do. Here are some suggestions:

- Your own interest, alertness, and intensity are contagious, so when you take over as Facilitator, give it your best. Use your natural body language; move around, move close to your speaker, use your hands--anything that is comfortable for you.
- Make lavish use of the idea-getting strategies that we will introduce later in the book. These excursions, as we call them, are just that--they are like brief vacations from the problem and they encourage the kind of thinking that coheres a group, makes them more tolerant, and allows them to return with their energy and material banks **refreshed**.
- Keep the pace fast but unhurried. Do not linger on any one step too long. When group members give signs of boredom, move to another step if possible.
- Humor can be invaluable. If amusing associations occur to you, bring them out. When a member jokes, show that you enjoy it too--if you really do. You are probably not a stand-up and so do not push yourself to become one. Just be yourself, encourage humor, but do not let the meeting degenerate into a joke-telling-session.
- Surprise the group. After running a few excursions that are alike, run an excursion they do not expect. I will give you some sample excursions later, but you can make up excursions of your own so you can guarantee lots of variety.
- Have a plan to shake things up for the sessions right after lunch and for later in the afternoon. These are low energy times. 4. Keep your eye on the Client. When members are giving ideas, watch your client with great care. If he or she shows interest, check to see if he or she would like to pursue that line of thought. When in doubt about what kind of content your Client wants, ask him or her: "Client, we have 21 Springboards (goals/wishes). Would you like to select one to pursue or would you like some more Springboards?" Keep in mind that it is your job to get the Client what he or she wants and needs. 5. Rotate the Facilitator Role. Like the Pony Express changed horses, it is wise to change Facilitators to keep up the pace. It has other benefits: reinforcing the cultural discipline of a group

(particularly when the participants are unaware of cultural consequences) is hard work and excellent training for use elsewhere. The more people experiment with it, the more learning and the more appreciation for the role.

6. Do not Pussyfoot. Because the cultural climate plays such a critical role, Facilitators often believe that being gentle and polite establishes a culture that encourages speculation. There is nothing the matter with gentleness and hesitation if you are stuck for the right word, or the next step, but you can be crisp and definite in intervention to protect the culture. It is your responsibility, and you have the authority to carry it out. You demonstrate that you are in charge of process.

7. Do not get into Content. The subject and the entire content of the session are in the charge of the Client. You will find yourself having ideas, opinions, and thoughts about content ... do not voice them. As soon as you get into content, you are in competition with your team it is human nature to favor one's own ideas, and you will find yourself in conflict. The team instantly senses that they have lost a leader and gained a competitor. The members switch to competitive tactics and the culture becomes adversarial. The cultural flexibility will be broken. If you have an idea so great that it crowds out your ability to hear, turn the Facilitator's job temporarily over to someone else.

8. Last, but you should do it First: - Get Permission. Before facilitating any group, ask their permission to do your job. if anyone has problems with your taking this kind of leadership, find out ahead of time and do some problem solving. A facilitator can do his or her best only with the consent of the participants.

PARTICIPANTS ARE HONORED GUESTS

they form the heart of our resources and to the degree that they operate well, we will have a good meeting. Both the Facilitator and the Client will do well to keep in mind that an important element of the job is to listen to and encourage the participants.

I have come to believe that the participants need to be encouraged to be themselves. they need pay little or no attention to the 'rules'. The Facilitator will intervene to keep things on track. The critical thing is for participants to feel free to air any stray or errant thought for the stimulation of the group. Unless a participant is being deliberately destructive, he or she will quickly pick up the cultural flexibility. That need not be a concern. What we want is their whole-hearted thinking and feeling presence. Here are some specifics:

1. Pay intense attention to yourself and your impulses. You think at the rate of about 900 words a minute. People talk at the rate of 125 words per minute. Use only a small part of your energy in attending to what is being said. Use most of your energy in following the thoughts stimulated by the speaker. Even when your images and thoughts seem irrelevant to the problem, not them down and hang with them to see how, in some way they might be connected by 'force', or supply a suggestion in a different direction.

2. Use your note pad. When you are 'out listening' that is, out of the meeting and listening to yourself, keep notes on your pad. See where the line of thought takes you. Then when you are ready, you need not interrupt, you will have your ideas ready. Whenever you get an idea or a beginning thought, write it down. Do not depend on memory.

3. Do not censor something that feels important even if it does not make sense. Let the group hear it. They will listen to it as a stimulus and may be able to make a connection where you could not.
4. Make three step listening your modus operandi.
 - a. Listen for general understanding,
 - b. listen for feeling, and most important of all,
 - c. listen for the images it stirs up in your mind.Pursue those for possible connection making.

5. Practice open-mindedness. This means that when you are listening to an idea, you listen to how it might work as well as to the flaws. If you find yourself unable to find any positive implications in an idea, it is a signal to you that you are not making yourself available.
6. As the cultural flexibility comes clear to you, join up. Do not worry about it, you will quickly pick it up. In the meantime, the Facilitator will take care of you.
7. Cooperate with your Facilitator. Even when you may not understand exactly what he or she is asking for, cooperate as best you can. Guess, and do it. You can ask questions after the session.

In summary, as a participant, your responsibility is to bring to the meeting your whole self and use as much of it as possible.

Chapter 4 A Theory of Good Thinking

Developing a cultural discipline that encourages people to do their best thinking is a giant step in the right direction. Without this, there is small chance that there will be any change from the everyday safety first kind of thinking that plagues nearly every company.

Simply changing the culture will do some wonderful things in the way of encouraging, improvising, cooperating, and achievement. But to help people dip into their unused potential, more is needed: an understanding of the thinking problems themselves, and some easily used strategies to stimulate improvising and connection making.

We believe that what every manager wants is GOOD THINKING. This means whatever kind of thinking is appropriate to the task at hand. Good thinking will range the spectrum below:

ROUTINE -----EXPLORATORY

There are many situations where routine thinking is the desired mode—for example, when filing, when using a formula, when making a logical check, and so on. There are also times when it is desirable to do exploratory thinking: when you need a new idea to increase distribution, to motivate salesmen, a new product, a new approach to the boss, and so on.

There is a third type of situation where a routine matter is being considered and a member of the group **sees an unexpected** opportunity. For example, the management committee is routinely checking operating expenses.

One member, looking at video maintenance and replacement expense connects the skills of their video maintenance person with a new possibility: offering a course in videotaping techniques. This would use the idle capacity and cover video expense. This kind of opportunity recognition can happen only when a member feels free to move throughout his range of capability from Routine to Exploratory. It is also the chief reason why, even when routine matters are being considered, a prudent manager wants his people in the habit of 'whole range' thinking as opposed to simply routine.

We find that nearly all of us are quite good at routine thinking, but when exploratory thinking is wanted we seem to have difficulty. We know from thousands of experiments that nearly everyone (There are some handicapped people who genuinely appear to be incapable of exploratory thought, but even they are few.) has CAPACITY for exploratory thinking, but not everyone is willing to use it. How seriousness is this unwillingness, or whatever is blocking this use of self? Optimists say we use about 20% of our potential for thinking; pessimists say it is more like 5%.

In any case, there appears to be general agreement that most of us use only a small percentage of what we have.

This has been a matter of concern to us because it has been our business to help people dip down into that unused portion of potential and use it to invent new products and process and to solve problems in new and more effective ways. We have repeated observed teams and the individuals in them “play over their heads”—solve problems that they could not solve before. Yet these same people, after a few months back on the job have stopped ‘that kind’ of thinking and slipped back into their old routine.

This was the original reason we became interested in culture and its effect on thinking. It was out of this interest and the study that went with it that the concept of cultural flexibility was developed. It speaks to the problem of external influences that tend to keep us from using our talents for exploratory thinking. It only partly helps with the internal problems that hold us back. We theorize that these internal problems are:

- THE DIVIDED SELF
- INTERNALIZED CRITERIA
- SAFEKEEPING HABITS OF THOUGHT
- PUNISHING INTERNAL CLIMATE

THE DIVIDED SELF

I often find myself acting as though there were two different sorts of people inhabiting my skin. One is open to any, suggestion and eager to pry into new experiences; the other is the voice of caution. It continually warns against the unpleasant consequences of doing whatever it is the first self is proposing. This inner dialogue became so interesting I began to personalize each voice and assign ways of thinking that seemed characteristic. Below is a model of my two selves. One I call Experimental, the other Safekeeping.

The notion of having more than one self is not new, Freud postulated three: Ego, Id, and Superego. Transactional Analysis also works with three: Parent, Adult, and Child. I find that my two are more satisfactory for my purpose, which is to better understand why most of us fail to use large amounts of potential. My guess is that we will not, find any One large reason for this failure. Rather, we will find a great many small factors each one reinforced and supported by a common element in many disguises: fear ... fear ranging from not wanting to appear foolish to a more solid fear of being thought weird or, perhaps worse, feeling weird ... crazy.

As a part of this book you have been given a model of the Experimental and Safekeeping Selves. The purpose of the model is to suggest a way that these two selves interact that tends to limit use of my potential. As I move through everyday life, my Safekeeping Self is firmly in the ascendancy as in Figure 1. This is the way I get across streets and find my way home without taking speculative adventures on the way. In serious business meetings, I may even go a little more Safekeeping. I do not want to be thought of as a reckless person, unworthy of promotion. Usually the degree of Safekeeping control is dictated by the most Safekeeping person in the meeting. All of this is, I believe, out of the awareness of the participants. We are thinking of ourselves as our normal prudent selves.

Now, let us suppose that the chairperson asks for some new ideas on how to collect overdue receivables. We are all handicapped by the Safekeeping mode we are unconsciously in. Exploratory, risky, rule-breaking ideas are buried beneath our

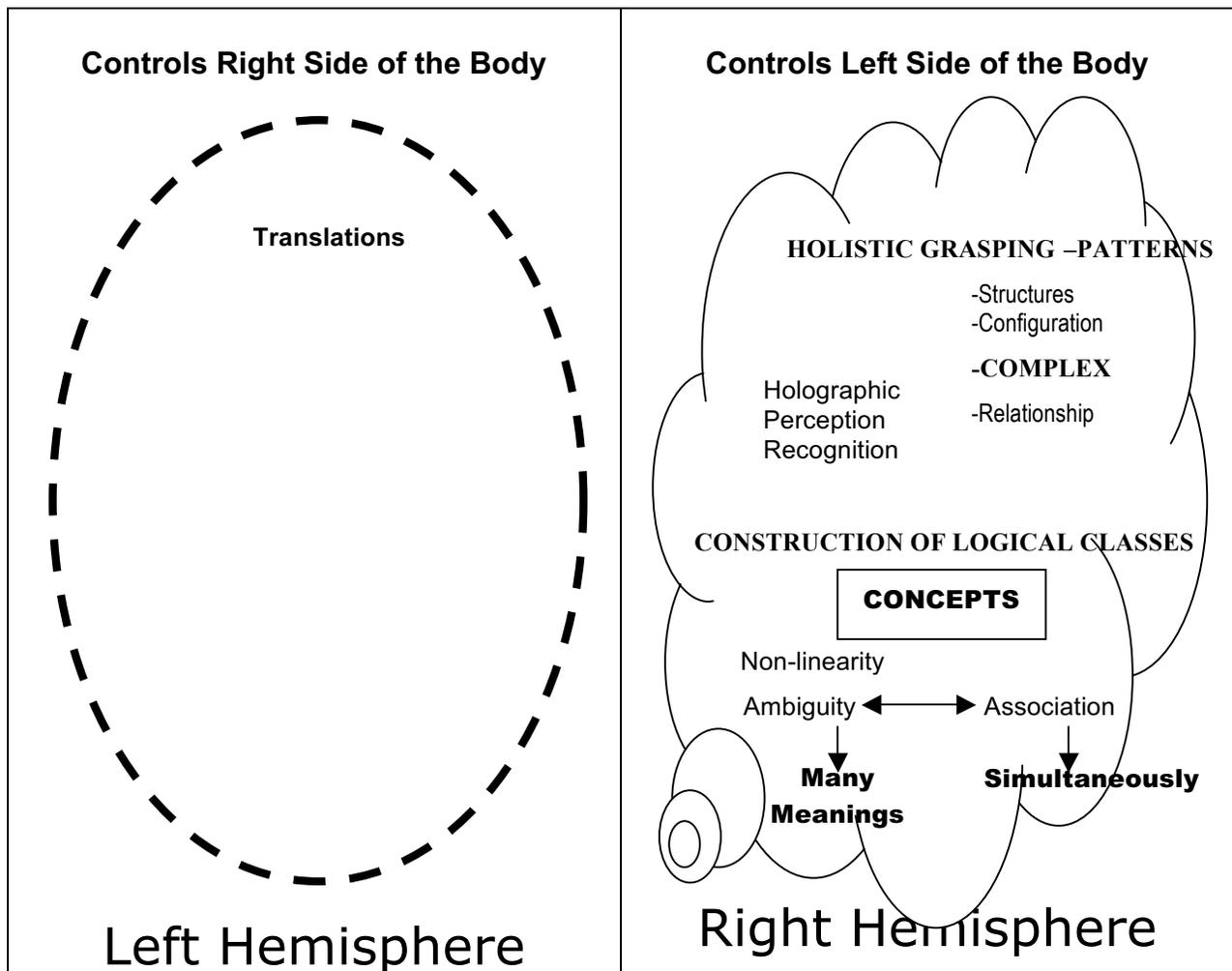
Safekeeping blanket. If an errant risky thought slips through like "Let's offer, to their bookkeeper, a secret reward for payment.", there is my punishing self to smother this dangerous thought before it gets out of my mouth. So, we all sit around the table allowing safe, old ideas to come to mind.

In contrast, in a culture where we have developed a cultural flexibility friendly to good **thinking, everyone has permission to take the wraps entirely off Experimental Self.** Any risky, impossible, crazy idea is welcome as a beginning. Safekeeping is turned off for the moment. As soon as we have a beginning idea, Safekeeping comes in to help shape the idea not to point out the flaws and dangers. In other words, all of the helpful elements of Safekeeping, without the punishing parts.

When you oscillate the model back and forth--but not uncovering punishment--it gives you a picture of how you can use more of your potential just by understanding your own two selves better. And if you are surrounded by a culture which you understand, and to which you subscribe, you can more effectively apply the freeing norms to yourself.

The Divided Self (Physiological Division)

To further complicate the use of our whole selves, our brains are divided as is shown schematically below:



Perhaps the most serious problem this poses for those of us determined to use more of our potential is the philosophical persuasion of the two hemispheres. The left is dedicated to the proposition of differentness, individuation. A doorknob is not at all like a tube of toothpaste. The right is persuaded that everything is somewhat connected and related and alike. A tube of toothpaste fits in the hand comfortably like a doorknob.

Left hemisphere, being boss, can get quite strict about making weird connections and also about improvising--using things meant for one purpose for a different purpose. Yet these two activities--connection-making and improvising--are at the heart of discovery, innovation, and invention.

The great thinkers, like most three year olds, and the world class thinkers, like Pasteur and Bacon, have learned to use these two seemingly antagonistic selves to do great thinking. We lesser mortals are handicapped in our use of our potential by our low tolerance for thinking or observations that are unexpected or that do not precisely fit. Confusion bothers us, and to clarify, we tend to get either or, and black and white. And I have gotten black and white in the discussion below. Actually, there is a great deal of communication between right and left hemispheres. I am using left brain and right brain as metaphors to indicate certain types of thought.

Below is an experiment:

LEFT BRAIN KINDS OF CONNECTIONS

How is an automobile like a child's wagon?

The kinds of things that spring to mind are: they both have four wheels, you can steer them, they carry things. These are the kind of connections that the left brain is comfortable with. You could take one of them into a court of law and demonstrate that it is true.

RIGHT BRAIN KINDS OF CONNECTIONS

How is an automobile like a totem pole?

Not so many connections seem to spring to mind in this case. Left brain would insist that they **are not alike** at all. But right brain comes through with connections like: both are symbols, both are conscious **works of art**, **both are** functional for their purpose, both are worshipped. All of these might be argued. They tend to be ambiguous and mean different things to different people.

When both these questions are put to a group, the group is much more productive when comparing the automobile to the wagon. When the totem pole comparison is made, there is often some embarrassed laughter.

I believe that the experience of most people in listening to the inputs from right brain have not been happy. From the time, I am young my connections that are not precise (even though they are interesting and elegant and the first step toward precision) are not accepted and tend to be treated as cute or funny:

"Hey, daddy, there is a big cat!" for a horse.

"Mom, look at that hairy tree!" for a long leaf pine.

"Hey look! the puddles are all hard!" the first freeze.

The adult response to these connections makes it evident to me that these connections are weird, and somehow wrong. I begin to censor them and repress them.

There is a phenomenon called selective inattention which refers to a practice most of us have of not attending those things which make us anxious. I believe that this applies to inputs from the right brain. By the time I am in my teens, I am avoiding listening to those weird connections that my weird brain is trying to fob off on me.

This cutting me off from myself is in response to the words, vocals, and non-verbals of the people around me ... it is a direct result of the cultural inflexibility that prevails around me. The left brain dominated people around me are attempting to make me an acceptable member of their culture. There are no bad intentions here. It is a lack of understanding and appreciation for the communications from the right brain.

This is another area where each of us tends to reduce the use of our potential. One of the great skills of right brain is making the connections that produce newness.

When we understand the uncensored, raw, exploratory speculative information (guesses might be a better word than information) fed in by right brain two things become clearer: First, we desperately need the kind of logical, experience-remembering, analytic power of the left brain to make these possibilities into realities. Second, we need to overcome our culturally reinforced fear of accepting them--no matter how outlandish and non-sequitur--for serious (and playful) consideration of their relevance to whatever it is that we are working on. I have put these in reverse order purposely to reassure the left brain dominated reader that I know we cannot get along without him.

There are other rationalizations for keeping right brain thinking in a safely censored state. Very often it proves to go nowhere ... no connections seem to flow from it--it just seems to be an absurd and useless thought. And that is what many offerings will be. One of right brain strengths is that it will try on almost anything that looks remotely possible. It is purposeful, not random, but does not always hit with something the left brain can use even when left brain is willing. Think of right brain as a fairly reliable home run hitter in baseball. When he strikes out, or he has a dry spell, you do not send him forever to the showers. You keep him in there because you know the next one may go out of the park.

Another problem that keeps us from making full use of these enriching transmissions from right brain is that left brain misunderstands its mission. It is acculturated to immediately examine each transmission for relevance, how it will sound to others, how logically does it fit the situation, and so on. If we are going to change to use more of that potential, left brain (and I) need to understand viscerally that left and right brain are like two hands making snowballs. Right scoops up some likely looking snow and then left comes in and shapes it. It can go back and forth a few times and only then is it time for left to make a judgment about whether to throw it, or reject it and start- another.

The above are matters of reframing our internal cultural flexibility if I can shift from viewing right brain transmissions as interrupting thoughts and recognize them as an enormously enriching part of me that sees many confections and wholenesses that I would otherwise miss, I can take back a part of my potential I have dismissed.

One of my overall and continuing tasks in modifying my internal cultural flexibility is to bring my divided selves closer together. Some of the suggestions above will help, and underlying everything is having conscious regard for both 'selves'. Another way to help is to become aware of some of the pejorative things I may be saying to myself. These under-the-breath name callings have a real effect on one's feelings and performance. If you can stop them, you will be doing yourselves a real favor! On the other side of the coin, if you can remark and appreciate accomplishments, connections, apt thinking, you not only build internal friendship, you increase the probability of good thinking happening.

INTERNAL STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

One of the marvels of child development is the capacity for the child to learn patterns and principles. The whole area of learning to walk—the principals involved and the complex skills to not only get around, but to run, jump, and **turn cartwheels is next** to miraculous. This same capacity for handling the complex also applies to thinking. **While there are some concepts** that take the maturity of seven or eight years, children are capacious and eager learners of thinking processes. As in most of their learning, they use everything. They reason for themselves, they listen and watch others, and do endless experiments. In the early stages, from learning to talk to about four years, children are great thinkers in the sense of being improvisers and connection makers. These are imaginative traits and among the most important is being a thinker 'across the board' that is, from routine to exploratory. But because many of these early connections are quite approximate--cat for horse, hair for leaves--we grown-ups, without meaning to, tend to dishonor connection making. We are in a hurry for the child to learn to discriminate between a cat and a horse, for example. Therefore, instead of savoring the approximate and bold thinking that connected this large and unfamiliar horse with the known cat, we often treat such connections as funny mistakes.

During these early years, the child is learning the 'rules' and principles of thinking, just as he or she did for walking and running. These early principles tend to become standards or criteria. When the child does some thinking with others, he or she says I of himself "How am I doing?" These standards--arrived at early in life and never consciously re-examined—may give him or her an answer that keeps her believing that routine is the good way to think. Most of our cultural disciplines press the child toward routine.

I have asked several hundred people to give me the characteristics they associate with routine thinking. Below is a list of the most frequently cited:

Criteria (characteristics) of Routine Thinking

- Logical
- Empirical
- Few mistakes are tolerable
- Focus is on completing the task
- There are specific guidelines
- Boundaries
- Predictable

- Comfortable
- Familiar
- Low risk
- Socially acceptable
- Supported
- You know where you are going and there are road marks along the way

If I look at these characteristics or standards through my cultural glasses I find that most are acceptable, approved, and supported in most of the cultural disciplines I experience.

Below is a similar list for exploratory or speculative thinking:

- Criteria (characteristics) of Speculative Thinking
- You do not know where you are going
- You do not know whether you are going to get there
- Focus is on the process as well as getting there
- Many mistakes are necessary
- Much confusion
- Much uncertainty
- High risk
- Not provable in advance (and sometimes not after the fact)
- Makes you anxious
- Unpredictable
- Appears inefficient and wasteful
- Easy to reject as impractical or impossible

When I consider this list through my cultural glasses I find that most, if not all these characteristics are disapproved of and discouraged by the cultural disciplines in which I move.

I believe it is important that we realize that most cultures in which most of us move are organized against exploratory thinking. Even more important, our own internal cultural discipline is also skewed to keep us from using our capacities for exploratory thought. Here is one more way we are discouraged from using our full potential.

SAFEKEEPING HABITS OF THOUGHT

Each of us has several safekeeping habits (habits can be ought of as internalized norms) such as self-censoring, listening for flaws, eliminating all but the most obvious connections, avoiding risks, obeying rules, and so on. I believe that every one of these is a form of self-censoring, and I believe that if we examine each instance where one of these habits thought have taken over, we will find that the master being served is ... fear ... fear of looking foolish or worse.

I would like to focus our attention on self-censoring because it offers the key to getting at so much unused potential. It is a rich vein to mine. Before we look directly at the problem, I would like you to take a side excursion. Pretend that you are an inventor. You have been asked to invent a new closure or stopper for a wide mouth thermos bottle it must preserve the heat and cold characteristics of the thermos, and your Client

wants the stopper to be loss-proof. He has experimented with strings, chains, and hinges and these **are not attractive to his market. He wants a closure that is** somehow 'built in'.

Spend a moment or two developing beginning ideas for this problem. Below is a diagrammatic representation of the thinking process we believe most of us go through when faced with a problem where we do not know the answer:

The start of the sequence is usually a wish for something I do not have or for something different. In this case, I wish for a new stopper because that is the given problem.

It is important to consider the function of WISH. It is the 'order' that begins a search for some kind of beginning connection to the problem. The phrasing of that order has a lot to do with the mind set as the search goes forward. With some types of thinkers this initial order is far from a wish. It might go something like this: I want you to search for a thermally efficient device that can be built into the neck of the present thermos. This is a left-brain attempt to move on a straight and efficient line from the problem to a complete answer. The rigorous specifications will tighten both censor and search and make it difficult for the searcher to make connections. We find it much more effective to make the search process more whole brained, loose, and as open-ended as possible. In effect, I am sending my right brain on a connection hunt. I want to give it as much latitude as possible so that it will bring back for consideration of left brain as many possibilities as can be found.

The RETRIEVAL operation is the search itself. As you can see from the diagram the search must deal with two levels of censorship: the striped section which is in our awareness, and the solid section--much more extensive--that is below awareness.

In effect, my censor allows my search to 'find' only those connections that it deems fitting for this particular search. It is quite common for the search to turn up connections that the aware censor then vetoes, for example, a balloon closure--one you blow up--aware censor does not let that one out because a sharp fork might blow it up. A coin purse does not get by because it would be difficult to make it water and air tight. And so on.

The point I want to emphasize is that between the strictness of the aware censor, and the unconscious censor keeping away the search entirely, I am kept to a fraction of my potential for good, suggestive beginning ideas. In my theory of good thinking, these inhibitions to connection making apply whether we are looking for a creative idea or simply a good, workable idea.

These are two areas of opportunity: first, how to give good directions for a search, and second, how to conduct a good search in spite of censorship. We will deal with these later.

IMAGING is the next thinking operation, and as the name suggests it means seeing the problem or solutions with the mind's eye. This is an important aid in any kind of thinking and we have found that a great many people have repressed their imaging capacity. It

is not something to worry about. In working with older people who had repressed their imaging, they found that by pretending they pictured the subject, it was just as useful!

Imaging and COMPARING go together. They are a way of checking out a beginning idea., For example, I image the balloon closure in the neck of the bottle and a fork bursts it. I immediately substitute a tougher rubber and the closure is ok.

When I substituted the heavier rubber, I TRANSFORMED the connection to make it a better fit to my needs. This is another operation of great importance in developing ideas of any kind--whether creative, or simply ideas that will work better. In this thinking operation, we are often handicapped from using our potential because there is a belief that an idea as presented must be evaluated as it stands. Transforming or improvising, as we sometimes call it, is an important operation that we will also focus on later.

Finally, there is STORING. When we have developed an idea that works, we store it as an addition to our idea bank.

One of the parts of my theory of good thinking I consider most important is the idea that these thinking operations apply whether I am working on a problem that requires creative thinking, or simply a problem --hat needs routine thinking. Further, I believe these thinking operations apply when I am understanding and learning something. Obviously, I consider valuable anything that will help make these operations more effective.

PUNISHING INTERNAL CLIMATE

In experiments with more than six hundred subjects we learned that nearly everyone as an active self-punishment operating on a continuous basis. This built-in critic is less friendly and forgiving than most real life adversaries is on a constant watch for any deviation from perfect! If I slop some coffee as I carry my cup to the table, my critic calls me clumsy and stupid. If I hit the wrong key on my typewriter, I am in for a short jab. In brief, everything I do is under surveillance of the most critical kind.

Much, if not all, of this unfriendly disciplining is useless and in fact sets up a sensitivity to being punished that often keeps me from paying attention to good beginning thoughts for fear they will be punished as silly or stupid by my own internal critic.

There is a general belief that these internal transactions are without much consequence. The argument goes that I am friendly enough with myself not to take these internal criticisms seriously. This is simply untrue.

Each of us has what might be called a 'self-esteem bank account'. Appreciation and accomplishment and praise adds to that account. Unfavorable words, vocals, and non-verbals subtract from it. When these unfavorable transmissions come from within they are real withdrawals from self-esteem. Few, if any of us, can afford this kind of self-denigrating extravagance.

As an experiment, identify the names you call yourself when you make mistakes. Write them down. Imagine calling a friend one of those names.

Do a part-time monitoring of the times you put yourself down with words, internal vocals, and gestures. If you are like most of us, you will justify self-punishment on some sort of grounds that it leads to self-improvement. In the experiments, we ran, nearly every self-improvement purpose could be better accomplished by some means that did not include punishment.

The subjects in our experiments were not always able to eliminate all self-punishment, but many reduced it substantially, and some skillful few (about 20%) eliminated it entirely. The resultant increase in good feelings was a joy to behold ... and to experience.

If you can reduce internal punishment to a minimum, then you will become more aware of the punishment coming at you from the culture around you. This is the first step in counteracting it.

My theory of good thinking is simple to state: Everyone is capable of good thinking and wants to do it. The cultural disciplines around us (and those within us) discourage us from using our full potential. By modifying those cultural disciplines and becoming culturally flexible, we can all make much better use of our potential for wholehearted and whole-brained thinking. (pg. 89 original)

CHAPTER 5 Using Culture to Aid Good Thinking

Meetings provide an opportunity to make clear the cultural flexibility you stand for because meetings bring out the Safekeeping in most people. One of the interesting things about the Safekeeping orientation is that it instills an overwhelming need to make others behave in Safekeeping ways. A rule of thumb is: be explicit about everything you possibly can--for example, "This is a problem-solving meeting. Joe and I need your help on salespeople getting interviews. Janet is facilitator, and we plan to spend no more than two hours--so we will still end the meeting no later than 10 o'clock. OK Jan, it is all yours."

"OK, team, I just want to remind you of a couple of ground rules-remember, we are not doing any evaluating out loud unless it's favorable. We will get a chance to carefully evaluate ideas Joe and Tom get serious about. Please keep a pad in your lap and make notes when you get an idea. I will get to you, but we will have to take turns. I am hoping you are feeling adventurous because we need lots of exploratory thinking on this one.

"Let's go. Joe, I am going to focus on you as primary Client. Give me A TASK HEADLINE..." she writes it on-an easel pad. FLOW CHART

It increases efficiency if the Facilitator has in mind a sequence, or flow chart. I recommend the one given and defined below, but any sequence that works will do the job. There will be times when an experienced facilitator will see that she will gain by altering the flow chart, and will feel free to do so. It is merely a guide.

TASK HEADLINE

A one sentence headline of what the Client wants to work on. We keep it short to focus attention on what the Client wants to accomplish. Ordinarily it is preceded by How to or Invent, to signal that we will be looking for idea thinking rather than discussion. In the example, above, Joe says, "How to obtain an interview on every call."

ANALYSIS

The Client briefly covers the following questions:

- 1) Why is this a problem or opportunity?
- 2) Give a brief history.
- 3) Why is this your Clientship (how or in what way do you own this problem)?
- 4) What have you already thought of or tried?
- 5) What do you wish to get from the group?

We have found that these questions give the team enough information to get them started and it proves to be important that the team is not given a long explanation. It will tend to bore them; they do not need to become as knowledgeable as the Client, and their ideas will be free, to some extent, from the constraints so well known to the Client. An ideal time frame is five to seven minutes to cover all the questions.

SPRINGBOARDS

Open up the problem by giving the Client optional ways to consider. These convert facts, feelings, concerns, opinions, and wishes into a form easy for the Client to deal with. Each is preceded by 'How to' or 'I wish' even if the speaker knows how to do it.

'How to' and 'I wish' are signals that these ideas are not up for criticism but are exploratory thoughts, the more wishful and adventurous, the more useful.

SELECTION

After the group, including the Client, has developed enough Springboards (the number will vary depending upon the amount of time and Client needs), the Facilitator asks the Client to select a Springboard to pursue further. The Client may want to combine more than one. This tends to be all right unless the rewording becomes too general and loses the flavor of the original springboard. a CAN DO ... or a NEED IDEAS

The selected Springboard will either be an action that the Client can conceivably do (even though it may have some drawbacks), in which case we call it a 'CAN DO'!

Or the selected Springboard needs further ideas before it can become a DO, in which case we call it a "NEEDS IDEAS TO BECOME A CAN DO."

If the Client selects a CAN DO, the Facilitator takes the Client and group through an evaluation which we call an ITEMIZED RESPONSE. This is simply a balanced way of evaluating an idea. The Client identifies some positive implications of the idea before identifying the parts of the idea that concern him or her. The concerns are worded as 'How to's'.

The group then works to overcome the Client's concerns in the order of difficulty decided by the Client.

NEEDS IDEAS TO BECOME A CAN DO

Should the selection be of this kind, the Facilitator asks the group to give ideas to make that Springboard into a CAN DO. When this is done, the Facilitator leads the team through the ITEMIZED RESPONSE. When the team has overcome the concerns about the idea, the Client restates the idea (if necessary--it may have been changed or modified in overcoming the concerns) and the **Facilitator tests to be certain** this idea meets the needs of the Client. The test consists of three questions: (pg.92 original)

- 1) Does it have some newness?
- 2) Does it appear to be feasible?
- 3) Are there concrete next steps?

NEXT STEPS

The facilitator writes up on an easel pad the next step dictated by the Client with any help from the team that may be appropriate.

Step 1	Task Headline
Step 2	<p>Analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Brief background b) What an opportunity or problem? c) What is your ownership? d) What have you thought or tried? e) What do you want to come out of this meeting?
Step 3	<p>Springboards</p> <p>I wish...</p> <p>How to...</p>
Step 4	Selection
Step 5	<p>Option a.) Can do. State as an idea</p> <p>Option b.) Need ideas to do. Generate ideas. State concept as an idea.</p>
Step 6	<p>Itemized Response</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify plusses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. etc. b) Major concerns (state as 'How to...') <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>Select most serious concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> c) how to... <p>Ideas to overcome concern</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. <p>Repeat until all major concerns are overcome</p>
Step 7	<p>Restate (as Possible Solution)</p> <p>When no more concerns, restate the concept as it now stands</p>
Step 8	<p>Test</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Does it have some newness? b) Does it appear to be feasible? c) Are there concrete next steps?
Step 9	<p>Next Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. 2. 3. etc.
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The Use of Culture

If we think of the Flow Chart as organization, and the Roles as assignments, we can think of the way people carry out their assignments as PROCESS. It is in the process that the greatest opportunities lie for aiding good thinking. In Chapter 3 1 covered the roles and responsibilities of the various people who might be in a meeting. In carrying out these assignments much will be done to establish a cultural flexibility that will encourage achievement.

In addition, there is much we can do to help with the problems that tend to diminish good thinking. The most direct way to do this is to operate to enhance the thinking operations.

WISHING

This is a natural way that children think, but as we grow up, we find that when we make a wish and it does not come true, we get bad feelings. We shift away from wishing to be more realistic. As a businessman said to me, "I have spent a lot of time attempting to set realistic goals and see my problems realistically and now you are asking me to throw that out."

I am not asking you to throw anything out, but rather to add a dimension to your understanding of yourself in relation to a problem. The more different ways you can see a problem, the greater the possibility you will see a way to solve it. When you are able to develop your wishfulness you accomplish several things: first, you sidestep the traps that realism sometimes sets--the traps are obstacles that **really are not there, but seem** to be because you are thinking 'down to earth'. An example may clarify this point.

We were working with a group of architectural students. Their final assignment before graduation was to design a new building for the school of architecture at their own university. We were working on some Springboards for this opportunity:

Student: One thing I would like is a locker or locked space in the studio area where I could keep my things.

Facilitator: Would you like a private studio of your own?

Student: Oh, no! We could not afford that.

Facilitator: Suppose you could afford it?

Student: Well, anyway, that would not be fair to the, you know, others.

Facilitator: OK, everyone has a private studio. Would you like that?

Student: (doubtfully) I guess so.

Facilitator: You know, this is a wish--a dream solution, but if you could have it, would you want it?

Class: We would each like a private studio.

This was written up as one of the many Springboards. Later in the day, one of the Clients selected that one for the group to pursue further. The group developed an idea that fit their specifications: They would give each student a private studio by enlarging sleeping quarters and eliminating general studio space.

It is possible that they decided not to use this idea in the final solution, but it was an option. The chances are very small they would have developed this option if they had been unwilling to wish for it.

The important point about wishing is that it will often reveal that presumed barriers either do not exist or can be overcome.

The second reason wishes can add a dimension to thinking is that they permit the expression of different points of view within yourself. My Safekeeping self may wish along one line of thought while my Experimental self is wishing quite differently. Wishing gets me in touch with both directions. In addition, the activity of wishing is a powerful permission giver to weaken the self-censor. Since it 'is only a wish' the censor has no business keeping it from surfacing. Calling it a wish signals to my censor--and to everyone else--that this thought does not need defense- further permission to have indefensible ideas.

Also, getting into the posture of a wisher opens my tolerance to help me consider beginning ideas, stimuli, and half-thoughts of my own and others thus enriching the chances of turning up something new and better.

Finally, when I make the idea of wishing part of my thinking and responding repertoire, it is a great tool for helping me listen to things outside of meetings. When someone offers a thought that I might ordinarily have rejected I can say "That is a good wish", give some positives about it, and either go on to the concerns or leave the matter there if it is no threat.

RETRIEVING

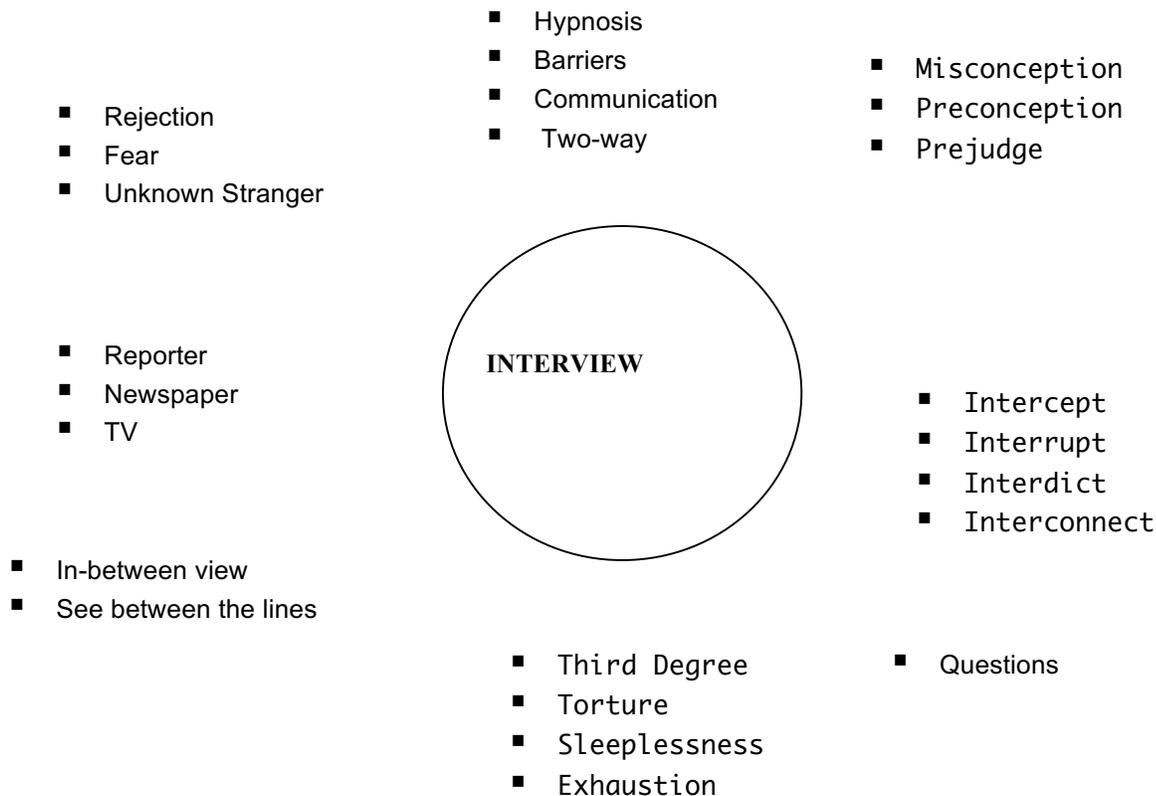
It is in this area that some of the great opportunities for improved thinking lie. Carl Sagan in his OMNI television series states that the brain's capacity is the equivalent of 100,000,000 volumes of 500-page books. This provides for such an overwhelming amount of storage that even if I am a poor observer from birth (an unlikely event if you have watched the rate at which children take things in) I will have a huge amount of data stored in my enormous warehouse. It seems to me that it is quite safe to assume that in any gathering of two **or more people there are beginning thoughts**, ideas, impressions, or associations to any problem or opportunity. The twin problems to deal with are: **getting a person in touch with the right file folder** in the vast storehouse and having someone in the group who is knowledgeable enough about the problem to make a connection. Even when I am working on a problem alone, these twin problems remain. How to locate the relevant material in my vast storehouse, and then to make a connection back to my problem.

SEARCH AND CONNECT: The organic outline

The diagram below is a useful search method. The way it works is that you draw a circle and inside it you put some key idea or word that is connected to the problem at hand. In the case below I have used the problem of Joe...'How to obtain an interview on every call.' It has to do with house to house selling.

After drawing the circle and putting in a key word, I then put down anything that occurs to me about that word and Joe's situation. I do not worry about relevance at all. I know my right brain is focused on the problem, just as my left is, and it will help me with its associations. (pg. 98 original)

A Method for Search and Connect
(Example from 'How to Obtain an interview on every call')



(After Tony Buzan's Organic Outline)

After my organic diagram is made, I scan it for likely WISH material. I wish I could be a known friend to every prospect (from stranger). How to instantly establish two-way communication (from communication and two way). How to use words, vocals, and non-verbals to establish myself as friend not foe. This wish grew out of the one before it.

The loose, free-flowing plan of an organic outline makes it a good strategy of SEARCH AND CONNECT. It can be particularly valuable when you are working alone.'

Remember, when you are working with a group, the offerings of any member of the team are most profitably used by the others as stimuli for SEARCH AND CONNECT in their own storehouses. Excursion

Another strategy for SEARCH AND CONNECT is called an excursion. The purpose behind an excursion is to temporarily remove the censoring restrictions of an ever-alert left brain. An effective excursion has three steps:

1. Put the problem out of your mind.
2. Generate seemingly irrelevant thinking and material.
3. Make connections between the seemingly irrelevant thinking and material and the problem.

An Excursion can be short to give the group a quick burst of different thinking, or it can be long--several minutes--when the group is having trouble thinking about a problem in any novel way.

A SHORT EXCURSION

Facilitator: OK, team, let's get our minds off the problem (1) for a minute. Think of an Example (2) of interview from the world of machines.

Jane: Two gears.

Facilitator: How do you see that?

Jane: Those teeth interview each other as they mesh.

Facilitator: Good! Any other Examples of interview from the world of machines?

Tom: The cutting tool on a lathe.

Facilitator: Yes. How so?

Tom: The tool gets into very close touch with the metal it is cutting.

Joe: The lights interview what is in the machine shop. The beams of light search out everything and interview.

Facilitator: Good! Now, take any one of these Examples and make it give you an idea back on the problem (3).

Jane: I think I've got one. The image of the tool cutting and the light searching gives me the idea of doing some searching or probing before we attempt an interview. Learn something about the prospect.

Joe: That's good! We could get some demographic information, and the salesperson could talk knowledgeably about kids or something else.

This is an Example Excursion in its simplest form. The Facilitator asks the group to forget the problem(1), and she selects a world far removed from the actual problem area (Machines) and asks for Examples (2). After collecting a few--and getting explanations for each--these discussions or explanations add to the distance from the problem and keeps the left brain's attention away from censorship--the Facilitator asks for connections (3).

A LONG EXCURSION

Facilitator: We have been working on this problem for a long time, and we have some good beginnings. I want you to get your minds completely away from it for a while so come with me on an excursion. Think of an example of a barrier from the world of engines or the world of weather (here, the Facilitator gives the team a choice of two worlds. **Her thinking was that perhaps the other women in the group might not feel at home with the world of engines so she gave them an option).** (pg. 100 original)

Jane: In weather, a thunderhead forms a barrier.

Facilitator: Say some more about thunderhead.

Jane: Well, if I remember (NOTE: it is not important for Jane to be accurate. If she is not sure about the facts, she can make them up). There is heated air rushing up the center of a thunderhead, and it is going so fast, it carries along anything that gets into it--like an airplane.

Facilitator: Wow! Any others?

Jill: A barrier in an engine is each piston ring. I know because I helped Mack put a piston in the lawnmower. They spring out from the piston and fill up the hole the piston fits in.

Tom: The cylinder.

Jill: Chauvinist! (laughter)

Joe: Another barrier in the engine--or at least in taking care of the engine is a ratchet wrench. When you are loosening, or tightening a nut, it lets you free one way, but it is a barrier the other way. (The group continues Examples until Jan, the Facilitator, believes everyone's mind is off the problem).

Facilitator: OK, Group, let's move on to Examination (In this step the group gives facts or impressions, or thoughts about one of the Examples selected by the Facilitator. Let's Examine Ratchet.

Joe: A ratchet is a one-way gear; the gear teeth are slanted so that a pawl will slip up one side, but if the gear starts to slip back, the pawl grabs the steep side of the tooth and halts the action.

Tom: It is consistent, and it is dependable; very permissive too, about letting things move in the approved direction. But if you try to go wrong, it stops you short.

Jane: The pawl that is slipping over the gear teeth might have the feeling of insecurity because it is permitted to click on by, but it learns that the teeth can be relied on as soon as it tries to go the other way. Also, you use a ratchet wrench when there is not enough room to swing the wrench all the way around. You rotate the wrench as far as you can go, then back up and let the ratchet click, then go to move the bolt some more.

Facilitator: OK, now let's see if we can get an Essential Paradox for ratchet. (These two words combination of adjective and noun is best understood by seeing examples).

Tom: How about dependable intermittency?

Jane: Directed permissiveness.

Joe: Permissive one-wayness. The Facilitator uses her judgment about how much explanation she will ask for. If the team is having rough going, she will ask for explanations to trigger more ideas in the team.

Facilitator: Let's go to the next step. Give me some examples of dependable intermittency from the world of nature.

The Examples suggested were: Old Faithful, changing seasons, tides, conception, and rain. The Facilitator then went on to Step 3 and asked the team to develop ideas from connections they could make with these suggestions.

While the Facilitator asks specifically for ideas and connections from these, she really does not care where the ideas come from ... there has been a great deal of stimulation and many good opportunities for SEARCH AND CONNECT.

Joe: I am thinking of conception (hoots) and how it is fun to try even if you do not make it every time. What it says to me is that we need to focus on making a sales call fun even if there is no order. I am not thinking so much of the prospect as I am of the salesperson. We all know how tough it is to take the constant rejection, let's figure a way to make the call more enjoyable for the salesperson.

The session continued with that as the new task to work on. Even though this line of thought may seem obvious now, it was a new thought for Joe, who as sales manager had spent a great deal of time thinking about the problems of getting interviews. The point I want to make is that longer excursions tend to be needed when the principal Client is too immersed in the problem.

FORCE FIT OR LOOSE FIT

The utility of Excursions is in the payoff ... ideas that help the Client. There are, of course, other benefits from Excursions, and I will list them at the end of this chapter. They all have as their objective to prepare individuals in the group to make connections from the Excursion material back to the problem and force or coax out of that connection something new.

There is a knack to Force Fitting (some feel that Loose Fitting is a better description. I will use Force Fitting to mean both or either). The people who are good at it have trouble explaining just what they do to make it happen. This is because, for most of us, it happens fast and 'underground'. The initial connection is made in right brain and is out of awareness. Further, sometimes the connection-making process seems so crazy that the connector rationalizes, and takes out the craziness--makes the process seem logical.

The process **does have** a logic, but part of it goes on in right brain, and it is hard to explain the way it works using left brain logic. But that is what I will attempt to do. I will continue to use the sales interview problem as it is a situation familiar to all of us in imagination if not in actuality.

I will attempt to work with several of the Excursion Examples. Jane suggested that two gears were an example of an interview. I image the two gears turning, one gently probing the other. One lightning connections goes to probing and perhaps that is an opportunity, but I do not pursue it because probing 'is a familiar technique even though I might find something unique. I continue with my image of the gears ... the gentleness aspect catches my attention, and I recall a poem about the tenderness of a violin player as he tunes his in-stru-ment (the word was somehow broken that way in the poem). How can I use this ... does he or she sing to the prospect? Get on the same wavelength? Do some kind of a duet ... to get prospect involved? Give prospect a chance to do something she never has before ... a new experience? Play a violin? Or something easier to carry? A mouth organ. I image the sales person with a tiny accordion. How can I make something out of this? Prospect helps salesperson play a piece on accordion? Give an accordion gift? Loan the accordion? I am intrigued with the idea of loaning something of value. Something that connects with TV.

Two or three times or more, I am tempted to go to an old idea like open the interview with a gift, but I resist this as it would be a waste of my new material. However, I am not able to Force Fit this material into something new. This happens and while I would prefer to end with an idea, I know the material will stay in my 'bank' and be useful later. So, I move to a new stimulus.

The very heart of inventing something is in the improvising and connecting I do at this stage of problem solving. It seems that if I use that gear material on an old idea, it relieves some kind of tension and the need to use that material in a novel way is dissipated. If you re-examine my process, I am doing a continual oscillation between improvising a connection and testing it for usefulness. At no time, do I tie myself to one specific. (pg. 104 original) I shifted from violin to mouthorgan to accordion partly because I was moving toward something more 'practical' but just as much because that was the image that came to mind from right hemisphere. Left hemisphere says 'something smaller'; Right hemisphere supplies mouthorgan, Left says "tough to use together" and then Right prefers accordion so it sends the image of an accordion.

There are three ways to use this material from my mental oscillation as I improvise on the theme of gears and connect with the problem. (1) Ideally, I will come out of it with a new idea. Failing that (2) I store it in my memory bank under pressure. (3) The third way it can be useful is to tell it to the group who will use it as stimulus material.

THE EFFECTIVE INVENTOR/DISCOVERER

I imagine that the essential difference between the full-time inventor/discoverer and you or me is that he or she always has a problem or puzzle he or she is playing with and there is that storehouse of associations and 'missed' improvisations and connections under pressure. He or she is constantly searching for a clue to ease the pressure.

This pressure takes the form of anxiety, I believe, and most of us have little appetite for continued anxiety--even at a low level. The inventor/discoverer has been so rewarded by operating this way that he or she has learned to put up with the relatively mild discomfort of that anxiety and has, perhaps, been able to translate some of it into a feeling of excitement or alertness.

One of the important lessons a group learns is that they, together, can tolerate anxiety more easily than alone. A group also learns that unless they are willing to put themselves at risk this way, they will tend to develop mediocre ideas.

FORCE FIT CONTINUED

I return to the Excursion material and take the next Example-cutting tool. I image this in action and my attention is caught by the curl of smoking metal that comes from the sharp tip of the tool. The curls have tiny cracks in them because the metal was too inflexible to bend. How can I make the salesperson so flexible that he or she fits right into the life of the prospect? I image the salesperson turning into one of the prospect's children. In the image, I hear the child being endlessly insistent until she or he gets her way.

I focus on how to be like the prospect's own child. I flash to the magazine salesperson working his way through college--we do not want anything like that. I want a child that pleases...one who does something creative (and right here, one of the banked, under pressure ideas comes back into the picture). Salesperson and prospect do something creative together.

I momentarily wish the product were yarn so salesperson could start a mitten or something with the prospect and come back later to sell yarn for other mittens. The product is actually a line of cosmetics. I image the salesperson giving prospect an outline picture and suggesting she make it up the way she thinks would be most becoming ... Left brain says too tough a problem for the prospect. So, make it a picture of the prospect, and you make it up together. In fact, you take the close-up picture with a special Polaroid camera. That is the way the salesperson starts the interview, and then they together use special paints to simulate the line of cosmetics. I would then present this idea to the group for builds and later evaluation if chosen by the Client.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

This beguiling mixture of left and right brain thinking is at the heart of good thinking. In the traditional meeting--whether in my head or with a group, the right brain part of this marvelous partnership tends to be denigrated and denied. There are two things we can do to redress this waste. First develop a cultural flexibility that appreciates, encourages, and enjoys this kind of adventurous, whole-brained thinking, then use deliberate strategies that make it an integral part of each person's thinking life.

SOME USES OF EXCURSION

1. To develop Force Fit (connection making) raw material.
2. To give the group practice in improvising/inventing (the Excursion itself is a series of improvisations, inventions, and connections.)
3. To demonstrate tolerant approximate, thinking.
4. To stir up some right brain thinking.
5. To enjoy (it is fun!)
6. To demonstrate that taking risks is safe here.
7. To refresh and energize a tired group.
8. To give all members an opportunity to appreciate the thinking of other members.
9. To emphasize that we are after whole-brained thinking.
10. To demonstrate that anything goes (except punishing).

Chapter 6 Managing for Good Thinking

It seems evident to me that a manager who creates a culture where everyone uses his or her whole brain is going to benefit with Higher Performance than a manager who does not. We will look more deeply into High Performance Systems in a later section. Right now, I want to give some examples of managing in such a way as to encourage the kind of thinking that ranges from good solid routine and logical to good solid exploratory. These sample managers are demonstrating and encouraging cultural flexibility which in turn encourages subordinates to boldly use their whole selves in carrying out their assignments.

We are listening to a meeting called by the manager of new product development of a company that supplies parts to the automotive industry.

Sam (Mgr.): The topic today is seat belts. Tom (Project Manager) believes that if we can invent something to get people to fasten belts we'd really have something, and I certainly agree. I figured a one-hour meeting Harry, will you facilitate this session? Tom, of course, is Client.

Harry (hereafter referred to as Facilitator): Ok, team, listen and have your pads ready while Tom gives me a Task Headline.

Tom: How to have everyone fasten his or her seat belt automatically.

Facilitator: Give us a little background, Tom. Everybody be listening for Springboard material. I'd like to see a little organic diagramming because we are going to have to think way out to get anything new here.

Tom: As you all know; seat belts are the greatest device around for decreasing injuries and death in accidents. I am sure you have heard that famous quote from a state trooper, "I've never removed a dead person from a seat belt." The big opportunity is for someone who comes out with a way to get people to buckle up.

Facilitator: We know your ownership, Tom, what have you thought of or tried?

Tom: This is a new area for us, Harry. Sam and I were talking about the big unmet needs in the industry and this came up as one of them. The kind of things that have been tried are buzzers, which do not work and make people angry; lights on the dashboards; signs all over the place; cars that will not start until seat belt is fastened (this one created a real uproar); all the straightforward sensible things--none of them work.

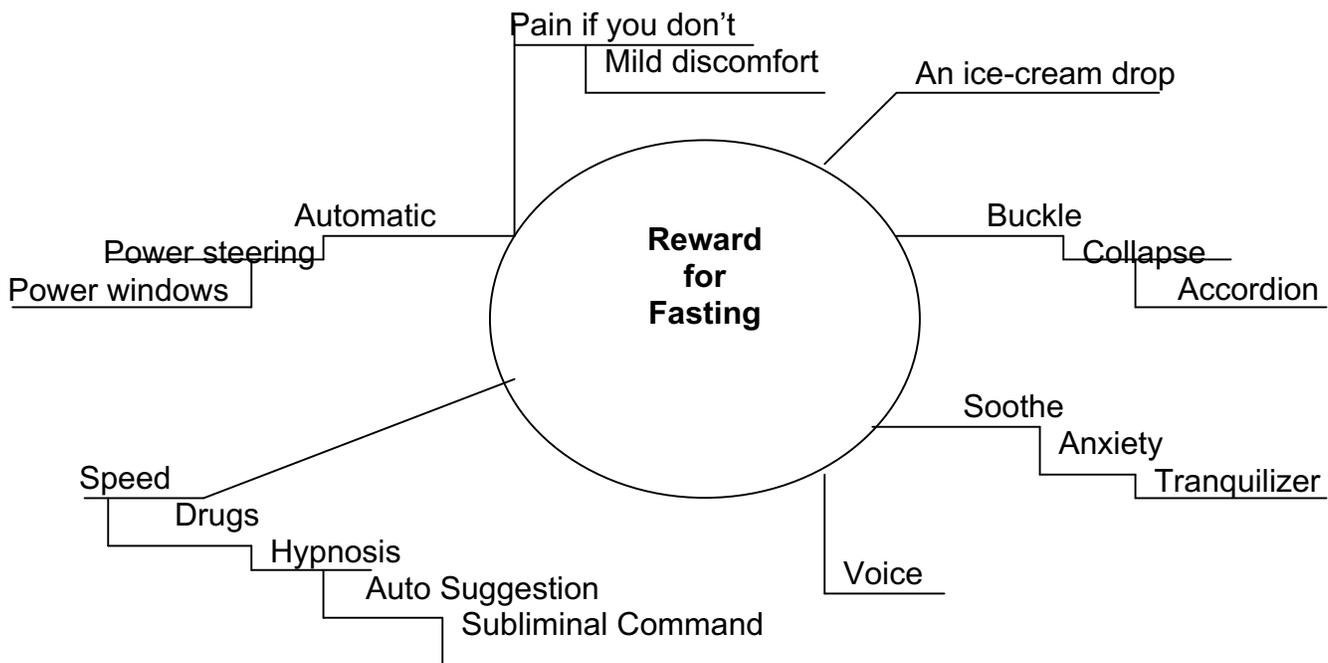
Facilitator: What, in your wildest dreams, do you wish you would get from us in these two hours?

Tom: I would like just two red hot new approaches to this.

Facilitator: Ok, team, I am open for Springboards-remember, the more wishful, the more useful.

Pulling back from the session itself, I want you to see a reproduction of Sally's (she is an engineer) organic chart. It is obvious from the extent of her connections that she was listening only peripherally to what was going on in the meeting. This is a good use of herself since she had enough knowledge of the problem to work on it even without Tom's explanation.

Sally's Organic Chart



Sally: I wish we had an anxiety producing seat belt.

Facilitator: Say some more about that. (Even when the Facilitator understands perfectly the Springboard, he or she asks for more. The purpose is to get the background thinking, but more important, to seed more connections for the group.)

Sally: My image is something that causes our subject to be slightly uncomfortable until he fastens his seat belt. Nothing extreme, just uncomfortable.

Facilitator: Good! Any others?

Grace (secretary): How to have the belts fasten themselves.

Facilitator: What are you thinking?

Grace: The image I have is that the belts are like snakes, and when the person gets in, the snake bites its tail.

Joe: How to have the belt smoke until fastened.

Facilitator: How are you seeing that, Joe?

Joe: Well, smoke comes out of the end of the belt and unless the guy plugs it in, there will be fog in the car. It is a quietly insistent method of reminder.

Tom: That gives me one. I don't know why, but I wanted to plug the belt into a so, on the dashboard.

Facilitator: You want to expand on that, Tom?

Tom: When Joe was talking about plugging that smoking end into the belt, I wanted it to be plugged into the dashboard. As I think about it maybe I am wishing the whole thing was part of the dash.

Facilitator: Let's get that wish up. (He writes it on the easel pad as he has been doing with the others).

Grace: I wish it was like a life boat drill with life jackets.

Facilitator: What are you thinking, Grace?

Grace: I went on a cruise ship last summer and when they have this boat drill, you automatically put on your jacket because they check everyone.

Sam: How to give it the image of a life jacket.

Facilitator: Say more, Sam.

Sam: When Grace said that, it struck me that these seat belts are life jackets. Maybe if we made them look oh, well, the cost

Facilitator: Come on, Sam--stop talking evaluation.

Sam: Right! Right! I withdraw that.

Joe: Whatever we end with I'd like to see us call it a life-belt.

Facile: I will get that in the notes (he writes on easel pad).

Sally: I wish the belts worked like power windows.

Facilitator: Keep talking, Sal.

Sally: I want them to be power driven so I just press a button and I am belted in. Start out as an option!

Note: I have edited this meeting considerably. The team spent about 20 minutes on Springboards and developed 27 of them. They spent about 4 minutes on the Excursion. They spent the remaining 35 minutes doing three Itemized Responses and getting further ideas on a powered seat belt. Facile: Good! Now, team, I know you have more Springboards and save them, but let's go on an Excursion. Ok, put the problem out of your minds. I want Examples of trapping (Harry believes by **shifting the search area he will get some strangeness) from the world of electricity.**

Sam: A fuse.

Facilitator: Yes? (pg. 112 original)

Sam: A fuse monitors the current and when it gets too strong, it burns out and traps the electricity. It won't let it go any further.

Facilitator: Good! Any others?

Grace: You know those fenced-in cages **where the power** lines go in? Well, that looks like it was a trap. If you look down from a plane, it looks like a giant spider web. (Grace has her facts wrong here, but the image is valuable and evocative, nonetheless).

Joe: How about light switches they trap the current until you want it.

Tom: A light bulb. The electricity would just wander around doing nothing, but the bulb traps it and makes it give out light.

Facilitator: Good! We have some great material here and now I want you to pick your favorite and force it to give you an idea or a wish for a Springboard.

Sally: I wish we could use an invisible web instead of belts.

Facilitator: Would you enlarge on that, please?

Sally: Yes. Picking up Grace's spider web, I imaged a very fine webbing that separates the occupants of the car from the windshield and the other things they hit that can hurt them.

Tom: Wow! How to use the web instead of the exploding balloon.

Facilitator: Tell us more, Tom.

Tom: You know those air bags that have gotten so much publicity? Well, these big air bags are packed under the dashboard. On impact with another car, an explosive is triggered, and it fills the air bags which expand and cushion the occupants from hitting the windshield, etc. The trouble is they are expensive and no one quite believes they will do **the job and get** out of the way—even though they have been demonstrated a

thousand times. With a web that might be on the ceiling and spring-loaded it just sounds like a winner to me.

Facilitator: Tom, would you choose the ones you want to pursue and we will go on to the next step.

Tom: Ok, Harry. As you can tell, the web idea is one of them. Another is that slight discomfort one. I believe that can be done with high frequency sound. And a third I would like to explore is the powered belt. Harry asks Tom to word each of the ideas and he writes them up. He checks each one to see *if* it is a CAN DO or NEEDS IDEAS IN ORDER TO DO. I will detail only the web idea which Tom classifies as an almost CAN DO. Harry decides to treat it as a CAN DO and goes into an Itemized Response.

Tom: This is a light but strong webbing. The dimensions we will work out, but it has some width--strands are two inches wide. It is folded, parachute like into a container on the ceiling over the front seat. There is another over the rear seat. On impact, the spring-loaded web descends and forms a flexible wall between the occupants and the parts of the car in front of them.

Facilitator: Has everyone got an image of this? All clear? OK. Tom, I want us to do an itemized Response--an evaluation. What are the elements of this idea that you like?

Tom: It is a really different approach to this old chestnut of a problem (Facilitator writes each of the plusses). Second, it promises to be much less expensive than the air bag, yet just as effective. Third, I will have to look at the literature and the patents, but I do Not think anyone has done it. Fourth, do you want me to go on?

Facilitator: Yes, and after you I want to hear from the others.

Tom: Fourth, it will be easy (relatively) to implement and test this idea. We can mock it up.

Sally: It is independent of the user--nothing to fasten, so it speaks to the problem you came in with.

Sam: We could not only sell it as original equipment; we could package it for the after-market. In fact, that might be a way to get it started. I really like this!

Grace: It sounds much safer than that air bag thing safer, even, than regular seat belts.

Joe: This is the kind of idea that is easy to explain. It lends itself to advertising. if we could get any sort of protection on it, it would open a lot of new marketing opportunities.

Facilitator: OK team. This idea has a lot going for it. Now let's look at the other side of the coin, and I want you, Tom, to lead off. What are your concerns--what worries you about this idea?

Tom: Putting aside the patent search and that kind of thing, there are a couple of problems I see: How do we get it to go where we want it to? How do we anchor it firmly when it gets there? (Facilitator writes each up and numbers them). If we can lick those, I am going to be happy.

Facilitator: Anyone have any other concerns?

Sally: How to keep the webbing from cutting.

There were no other concerns expressed and Harry went on to treat each of the other two beginning ideas in the same way. Even though the powered belt was a NEED IDEAS IN ORDER TO DO there was not time to go through the idea-getting stage. The Itemized Response gave them good starting places for the next session.

THE PREVELANCE OF WHOLE BRAIN THINKING

Sam, the manager of the group we have just watched, demonstrated his cultural flexibility and encouraged the kind of thinking he wants in his department. He did it by

delegating the Facilitating to Harry and the Clientship to Tom. He became subject to the behavioral agreements of a problem-solving session and acknowledged the Facilitator's correction. Sam could use his whole brain and join in the thinking, and if he had concerns about the ideas selected by the Client, he had ample opportunity to voice them at Itemized Response time.

Sometimes a manager, because of his broader experience, will see a Springboard that he believes is more promising than those selected by the Client. If so, he may point this out to the Client along with this thinking. When he does, he needs to be aware of the risks of taking the ball away from a subordinate.

The cultural flexibility that not only allows the kind of bold exploratory thinking, but joins in, is a factor in establishing a High-Performance group. It is important that in his other interchanges with subordinates Sam maintain this flexibility. I have made a study of interactions and have found that even in situations where there is substantial disagreement and disapproval it is possible for a manager to maintain a supportive stance. Below is a chart we have developed with the help of a great many managers and subordinates. It may be useful as a guide in maintaining your own cultural flexibility.

USUALLY PERCEIVED AS SUPPORTIVE	
ACTIONS (can be observed)	POSTURE (deduced by subordinates and peers from words, vocals, non-verbals)
+ Notes what is going for the idea	Optimistic
+ Does not clarify ambiguity confusion/	Values/supports early confusion/uncertainty
+speculates along with	Is open to ...wholly available
+ Gives early acceptance	Optimistic
+ Deals as an equal	Does not rely on rank and status
+ Builds on ideas	A developmental thinker
+ Does not waste energy on early evaluating	Stays loose until rigor counts
+ Buys in until appropriate decision time	Open-minded
+ Shares burden of proving idea worth exploring	Non-competitive
+ Listens--and responds with sequiturs	Available
USUALLY PERCEIVED AS ADVERSARIAL	
-Comments are critical	Pessimist
-Points out flaws early	Competitive
-Interrupts	Competitive
-Insists on precision always	Competitive
-Talks down to	Superior
-Cross examines, questions	Judgmental
-Acts impatient	Not available
-Imperious/threatening	Uses rank and status against
-Transmits negativity	Pessimist
-Is distracted, inattentive	Poor listener/not available
-challenges/disagrees	Competitive

THE DIFFICULTY OF THE EVERYDAY

Most managers find that while they are in meetings with a Facilitator to help they do not have too much trouble demonstrating their cultural flexibility and building the kind of climate for good thinking that they want.

The trouble comes in informal, one-on-one meetings where it is all too easy to revert to the cultural rigidities that are associated with traditional bosses.

Many of these are pointed out above and are perceived as adversarial. If, as a manager, you are dedicated to the propagation of good thinking throughout your organization, you will need to discipline yourself to be culturally flexible--both in meetings and out.

One of the helpful clarifying principles in small meetings is to determine ownership early. With the Client identified it is easier to find your own role either as Facilitator or participant. In a one-to-one situation you will find yourself playing both those roles. One of the elements that makes it difficult for you is that you share ownership with all the people who work for you. If you are to be successful in delegating and promoting good thinking, it will be important for you to learn to be comfortable as secondary Client.

Below is an example of a manager demonstrating informed use of the cultural tools. Jake is the general sales manager of a food processing company and has seven regional sales managers who report to him. One of his younger sales managers has come to him with a problem.

Jerry (regional sales manager): Jake, I have a problem in my upstate New York territory. David Nales seems to be drinking so much, it is getting in the way. I hate to come carrying tales, but I am worried.

Jake: Sounds serious. What do you think is going on?

Jerry: What seems to be happening is that he is OK until lunch time and then he has too much to drink and doesn't make any more calls. I knew something was wrong because some of his reports were very similar, and it crossed my mind that he was inventing a few. A friend of mine in Syracuse just happened to see Dave two afternoons in a row, and he was acting strange each time. He gave me a call.

(pg. 118 original)

Jake: I have known Dave quite a long time. I know he ties one on occasionally, but this sounds more serious. What do you want to do?

Jerry: I feel like firing him, to tell you the truth.

Jake: That is certainly an option (There is a great temptation to take over Clientship when an extreme suggestion is made. It takes some flexibility and restraint to keep in mind that Jerry is exploring. To cut him off with your solution might solve the problems of Dave, but it sends a powerful message to Jerry, 'Don't use your whole head--I will do the problem solving for you'). Any other actions you might take?

Jerry: I could fly over and see him--I guess I would want to do that in any case. Before I I think I will go and talk with Ed (the company doctor), he must have had some experience with things like this.

Jake: Good thought. You know, we had a real problem drinker on the West Coast a year or two ago, and Doc gave us some good help. Anything else I can help with?

Jerry: No thanks. I will let you know what happens.

Jake: Yes, do let me know your plans. Remember, if you want to get together a couple of the other managers we can have a session and develop other ideas and options should you need them. I believe all of us have had this problem at one time or another. You might want to talk with Jim. He had something like this a couple of years ago--well, keep in touch.

Jake could easily, probably more easily, told Jerry exactly how to handle the Dave problem. He had a strong wish to do so and save time and trouble. He held off in favor of giving Jerry an opportunity to experience achievement on his own. That does not mean that Jerry will get no help. He will get all he wants, but he will get it when and in quantities he wants. He will solve a problem over which he has Clientship.

Contrast what happened above with what might have happened in a more traditional, authoritarian setting.

Jerry: Jake, I have a problem in my upstate New York territory. David Nales seems to be drinking so much it is getting in the way. I hate carrying tales, but I am worried.

Jake: Sounds serious. We have a strong company policy about this. You hop a plane and go up there and talk with Dave. Talk with his wife too. If it looks as though he is drinking too much, tell him he has two choices: to quit or to come here and talk with Dr. Schwartz. Ed Schwartz will take it from there. Whatever happens, call me and we will begin to work on someone to cover for Dave. OK?

Jake looked like the ideal decisive, knows-what-to-do, let's do it kind of manager we are taught to admire. We know that what he has done is hand Jerry a completely left-brain assignment and deprived him of the learning and the satisfaction that a culturally knowledgeable manager would have given him.

Other Kinds of Meetings

Problem-solving sessions and one-on-one meetings are only two of a great many different meetings that go on in a company. The prudent, culturally informed manager uses every one of these meetings as an opportunity to exhibit his cultural flexibility. He or she is the most important model their people have.

The Informal Bull Session

These are the kind of meetings held over lunch or over morning coffee. Often the manager feels that these are an opportunity to let down and just 'be one of the boys or girls'. It is ideal to use the opportunity to deal as equals, and a culturally knowledgeable manager will strictly observe the actions he or she has learned in meetings--such interaction skills as acknowledging what a speaker has said before giving one's own opinion; refraining from such invitations to win/lose as "I disagree"; (It is perfectly OK to have a different opinion, but "I disagree" indicates the other point of view is wrong, and this has unwanted consequences.); being careful to make comments that are consistent with the going conversation; not taking more than one's share of air time, and so on. It is too easy to slip back into the old cultural rigidities of carelessness.

Information Meetings

These are the most demanding of care in designing because the usual image is that I feed information to a group of people, and they understand what I am saying. This assumption, given the way each person must personalize in order to really understand, is unsafe. My ideal image is that about every time a point is made, someone who is acting as a shill asks the speaker "Would you tell me what that means to me?"

If I prepare the information so that those questions can be readily answered, the chances are I will do some communicating.

Agenda Meeting

I will use the meeting we monitored earlier only this time we have a Facilitator and use cultural flexibility. The general principles behind this design of a meeting is first, to clarify and protect Clientships, second to give enough air time to each participant, and to keep total time spent to a minimum.

Before the first meeting, the Facilitator asks each member of the group to give him the items he or she would like to bring up at the meeting. In practice, we disguise the item with a single key word. The rational explanation is that if there is a particularly high interest item, like bonuses, it will not be recognized and take attention away from more Mundane items. Another reason for the code, just as good as the first, is that it adds to the enjoyment as people make far-fetched connections. Below is the agenda for the meeting we will observe.

Name	Subject	Est.-Time	Actual-Time
Pete:	1) Fish 2) Flow	1) 15 2) 5	
Sam:	1) Race	1) 2	
Mike:	1) Time 2) Shutdowns (added)	1) 15 2) 15	
Red:	1) Angel	1) 2	
Mark:	1) ---		
Ed:	1) Blood	10	
Tom:	1) Money 2) Help	1) 1.15 2) 2.15	

Note that there is a Time Estimated and space for Actual Time. We have found that if a person is asked for a time required for his or her item, the estimates get more and more accurate with experience. This practice also focuses attention on time so that a minimum is wasted.

The Meeting

Facilitator: Let's get started the total time estimated is an hour and nineteen minutes so let's make a contract for no longer than an hour and a half. Today let's start with the bottom of the agenda--Tom, which of your items do you want to start with?

Tom: I will start with the Treasurer's report indicated by Money.

Facilitator: Are you giving information, seeking information, or problem solving?

Tom: Giving information right now.

NOTE: The Facilitator, by this question, let's the group know how to listen to what the speaker is saying.

Tom: I have asked Ted, who put this information together for us to make the presentation. (Presentation of slides with explanations follow.)

Pete: Ted, you are showing a four million increase in our loss where does that come from?

Ted: It comes from a decrease in sales--our performance -did not come up to forecast.

Pete: Do you know about this, Sam?

Sam: I know about \$800,000 of it; I will have to look into the rest.

Pete: Would you do that, please, Sam, and report back. This is getting to be a real problem.

Facilitator: Do you want to put a timetable on this?

Sam: By the end of the day, if not before.

Facilitator: (writes)

Tom: If we project out to the end of the year, we are looking at a \$30,000,000 shortfall and that is going to make a rotten looking report. I could use all the help you can give me to make it look better

Facilitator: This sounds like your second item, Tom, and we will get to it later. Time was 17 minutes. Pete, you are next. Which of your items do you want to take?

Pete: The first, Fish was to remind me of Killer Whales and that reminds me of the most famous one: Orca for Orca Engineering.

Facilitator: Pete, are you giving information, seeking it, or problem solving?

Pete: Seeking information--a decision from everyone. I want to discuss Orca Engineering as a possible acquisition. I have asked Ted to put together the figures on it, and it looks like a good buy--it would put us into that Northeastern region in a hurry.

Red: Given our cash situation, let's borrow the money to buy Orca, get distribution we are after, then sell it.

Facilitator: Sounds like you have some ideas for a problem-solving session. I will make a note of it as a 'How to' (writes it on easel pad). Pete, are you open to a problem-solving session?

Pete: Not really, we have discussed this back and forth and I believe we are ready for a decision.

Sam: I have not been over these figures in detail; are they really making a profit?

Pete: Just about. We will have to dig deeper, but one of the reasons their price is so reasonable is their sales are way down nationally. (After a brief discussion, Pete asked for a vote. All were in favor except Tom, the treasurer.)

Tom: I will abstain rather than vote against it. Fiscally, we really should not be spending money on this.

Pete: If you feel that strongly, Tom, I do not believe we should proceed. Facilitator, let's have that problem-solving session Sam wanted.

Facilitator: OK, shall we have it now, or set aside a time for it?

Pete: Let's schedule it for a time slot of its own.

Facilitator: Right, who do you want to participate?

Pete: Tom, Samwell hell, we need all of us. Let's set a date soon because this is hot (Facilitator arranges meeting).

Facilitator: Actual time on Fish is 12 minutes. Sam, you are at bat. Are you giving information, seeking it, or problem solving?

Sam: Giving information. Race is to remind me of the sales race we have scheduled. (He explains some of the measures he is taking to bolster sales.)

Tom: If we could just turn those receivables into cash!

Red: When you had Yugoslavia-

Facilitator:(interrupting) Sounds like another issue. Is this something you want to go into, Sam?

Sam: No.

Facilitator: Tom and Red, when your turn comes around if you would like to deal with this, you can substitute it for another item.

Sam: I would like to discuss shutdowns.

Mike:(interrupting) I would like to also. Would you add that to my agenda? items, Facilitator?

Facilitator: Sure, how much time do you estimate?

Mike: Fifteen ought to do it.

Facilitator: Sam, are you complete on your item?

Sam: I am if there are no more questions.

Facilitator: Actual time 4 minutes (writes it up). Your turn, Mike. Which of your items do you want to take first?

Mike: Time.

Facilitator: Are you passing information, seeking information, or problem solving?

Mike: It's a problem and-

Facilitator: Would you word it as a 'How to', please, Mike? (The Facilitator has heard that there is some heat in Mike's voice, and he wants to avoid an angry transmission.)

Mike: OK. How to get better cost and delivery estimates from sales. (The Facilitator is aware that this is a loaded 'How to' and so he intervenes.)

Facilitator: Mike, as I understand it, sales, engineering, and you generate cost and delivery. Could you reword this to include all the guilty parties?

Mike: OK. How to get accurate, reasonable cost and delivery estimates.

Facilitator: (Writes it up.) Thank you. Now would you give us some quick background on the problem. (Mike does.) Sam, would you or Ed like to add to this background? (They do.) OK, Team, let's go for a few Springboards.

The Facilitator runs a mini-session to get a few ideas and then, as it becomes apparent there are some serious problems and there will not be time, he sets up a time for another, longer meeting to deal with the topic with the understanding that the group will report back to the committee. This procedure increases the chance that a problem will really be taken care of. The management team has gotten a taste of its complexities. The next meeting will involve some of the people who are actually on the firing line, so the resolution will be realistic, and there is pressure from the top to get it done.

The Agenda meeting procedures are effective for larger meetings where there are several Clientships involved. It is also useful for full department meetings where everyone has an opportunity to air anything he or she wants. The structure keeps it orderly and yet open.

Managing Cultural Flexibility

The Facilitator in the above episode is following the same principles as the manager in the case of the alcoholic salesman and the Facilitator in the seat belt problem. Each is aware of the words, vocals, and non-verbals and possible consequences. Each intervenes or responds to give the greatest possible chance that there will be cooperation to achieve the objective of the meeting.