

Pictures are Worth a Million Words

by

C. Kenneth Meyer and Lance Noe

Maureen Ross had been a human relations trainer for as long as she could remember, and was presently a senior consultant for the Viva Consultant Group (VCG). She had facilitated training programs for a wide variety of organizations and was knowledgeable about many of the traditional topics connected with organization behavior, development and change. Her familiarity with the essentials of management theory put her at ease with her audiences regardless of their level of experience. She felt comfortable talking about the intricacies of job design and redesign, leadership traits, and the value of leadership inventories. She was conversant with the advantages and limitations of decision making techniques ranging from brainstorming, Nominal Group Technique (NGT), and the uses of the Delphi Method. She often stated that when supervisors speak derogatorily about group decision making and its accompanying low level of decision making adequacy, they are wrongly placing blame on the members of the team, rather than the technique or processes used to reach consensus.

Additionally, Maureen had a good understanding of Maslow's Hierarchy of Human Needs and could present Frederick Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory of Motivation with eloquence and "parsimony." Her colleagues often commented on the expertise she demonstrated with the notions of management gurus such as Fiedler, McGregor, Vroom, Argyris, Likert, McClelland, Waldo, Simon, and Juran. Her subject mastery was impressive and this roster of names and their contributions to the professional literature rolled off her tongue like "Life Savers." She could playfully interact with trainees, connecting their practical problems to the theoretical contributions of these historical giants and maintain an intellectual spirit of interest in the learning center. Of course, she was also informed and conversant with federal, state and local laws pertaining to discrimination and her knowledge of Supreme Court decisions and case law was extraordinarily impressive.

Maureen had been in the trenches and had earned her spurs the hard way as a training consultant. She understood the sundry training topics that her organization was called upon to teach. She often would quip, "I've been there and I've done it," when questioned about a specific presentation problem or training issue. She knew and understood things political and managerial and no one in her organization doubted her when it came to dealing with these sticky wickets. Although she was a seasoned veteran in sizing up organizations and that was a major reason why VCG's training know how was sought by other organizations, some of VCG's higher level executives had serious concerns about how well she was leading, managing, and motivating her own team. Maureen felt she was doing an outstanding job, of course, but there were rumblings in the hallways that not all was as well as it seemed.

Maureen's team was asked to participate in an afternoon training session in which the climate of the unit would be talked about. As an advocate of continuing education she felt it was a good idea and that it was, in fact, long overdue. Her colleagues told her that initially they felt a bit threatened by the prospect, but now felt that their worst anxieties and fears would not be realized! Hearing this, Maureen, wholeheartedly embraced the training her team was about to receive.

The three-hour training period was duly scheduled and all member of Maureen's team were able to participate. Noteworthy, Maureen did not take part in the training exercise and could easily hear that the training

and assessment was going well by the amount of laughing and periodic applause that she heard coming from the training room.

When the training was completed, the facilitator, Harold Glassner, an experienced organizational and leadership consultant in his own right, met with Maureen and revealed the results of a collage of pictures that her group had created and on which there was group consensus. The group was asked by Glassner to utilize the Web and select visuals (icons, symbols, words, etc.) from the thousands of pictures that were available, that accurately portrayed their own unit (see **Exhibit 1**), and contrast it with their idealized organizational model (see **Exhibit 2**).

The team was comfortable and pleased with what they had put together and Glassner learned what each panel on each row of the display symbolized. Glassner, who had a great deal of experience dealing with assessing organizational climate and culture, was not in the slightest surprised by what their idealized organization looked like. However, the pictures and symbols that the group selected as representative of their own unit portrayed some leadership and organizational problems that he had not anticipated.

Harold Glassner studied each frame, each picture of the two collages and tried to put down on paper what they symbolically represented. He was aided by the fact that Maureen's group interpreted each panel as part of the training assessment and debriefing they had just completed, but he wondered if there was more to the pictures and symbols than met the eye!

Questions and Instructions:

1. If you were Harold Glassner, what would you say the panels presented in Exhibit 1, The Organization in Disarray, represented? Please be specific.
2. In five minutes or less, please explain to Maureen Ross what you have learned from her group and what she ought to do if some of the most obvious organizational problems were to be addressed. (Please select a partner to role-play or act-out your counseling.) Will you use directive or non-directive counseling techniques? Please explain and demonstrate.
3. Similarly, in analyzing Exhibit 2, The Perfect Organization, what organization and leadership attributes and characteristics were desired by Maureen's team? Once more, please elaborate on the pictures and illustration and be specific as to their meaning.

Stop! Please complete Part 1 before proceeding to the next part of the case study.

Maureen Ross' team completed their pictorial assessment of how they perceived their training unit and provided the attributes that they wanted present in their idealized organization. Their collage was made up of pictures, words, symbols and icons that they felt would be representative of the traits that would be valued by VCG's customers. Accordingly, as revealed in **Exhibit 3**, The Idealized Customer View of VCG, the collage portrayed a number of images that one would suggest as common elements and thus were expected, yet others were clearly at the cutting edge of image marketing and management.

Questions and Instructions:

4. Please examine Exhibit 3 and indicate what attributes the team felt their customers /clients wanted Viva Consultant Group to exemplify? Please be specific.

5. From your own perspective and experience in dealing with organizations of different kinds and what you judge to be of worth or value, are there any attributes you found missing in Exhibit 3 that you would add to the collage? Please explain. Are there any attributions you would delete from the Exhibit 3? If so, please provide the rationale or justification for your decision.

6. If you were asked to make an assessment of the prevailing organizational climate and culture of your own organization, other than using a survey or questionnaire, what innovative approach would you suggest? Please prepare an example of what you would propose and what form your evaluative instrument might take.

Exhibit 1: Organization of Disarray



Exhibit 2: The Perfect Organization

The Perfect Organization

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES

market SUCCESS

strategic PLANNING

Satisfaction happy customers ATTRACT

Network

increased productivity

Succession Planning

ideas Talent Technology Technique

unbelievably spectacular quality selection and customer service

Work Life Balance

Home Life Balance

Benefits

Leadership is serious business

LEADING THROUGH Growth

salary increases

Equal Opportunity Employer

vision

DIVERSITY

TEAMWORK

Ethics

BUSINESS TODAY

Listen

Above & Beyond THE CALL OF DUTY

Exhibit 3. Organizational Attributes Desired by Customer

Ability to Answer Questions	Accessible
Accommodating	Accountable
Attentive	Caring
Commanding Presence	Common Sense
Considerate	Consistency
Courteous	Creativity
Easy to Understand	Educated
Effective Communication	Efficient
Empathetic	Even Handed
Experienced	Factual
Fair	Firm
Fiscally Conservative	Flexible
Friendly	Genuine
Genuine	Helpful
Helpful	Honest
Informed	Informed
Integrity	Kind
Knowledgeable	Objective
One-Stop Shop	Patient
Polite	Polite
Problem Solver	Prompt
Prudent	Respectful
Responsive	Skilled
Thorough	Timely
Unbiased	

Case 6: Pictures are Worth a Million Words

Name:

Case Log and Administrative Journal Entry

This case analysis and learning assessment is printed on perforated pages and may be removed from the book for evaluation purposes.

Case Analysis:

Major case concepts and theories identified:

What is the relevance of the concepts, theories, ideas and techniques presented in the case to that of public management?

Facts — what do we know *for sure* about the case? Please list.

Who is involved in the case (people, departments, agencies, units, etc.)? Were the problems of an “intra/interagency” nature? Be specific.

Are there any rules, laws, regulations or standard operating procedures identified in the case study that might limit decision-making? If so, what are they?

Are there any clues presented in the case as to the major actor’s interests, needs, motivations and personalities? If so, please list them.

Learning Assessment:

What do the administrative theories presented in this case mean to you as an administrator?

How can this learning be put to use outside the classroom? Are there any problems you envision during the implementation phase?

Several possible courses of action were identified during the class discussion. Which action was considered to be most practical by the group? Which was deemed most feasible? Based on your personal experience, did the group reach a conclusion that was desirable, feasible, and practical? Please explain why or why not.

Did the group reach a decision that would solve the problem on a short-term or long-term basis? Please explain.

What could you have done to receive more learning value from this case?