University of Pennsylvania
ScholarlyCommons

Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics Theses

Organizational Dynamics Programs

10-1-2008

Coaching Stories: A Kaleidoscopic Anthology

Vanessa M. Kraus
University of Pennsylvania, vmkraus@sas.upenn.edu

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics in the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the University of Pennsylvania

Advisor: Janet L. Greco
This paper is posted at ScholarlyCommons. http://repository.upenn.edu/od_theses_msod/18
For more information, please contact repository@pobox.upenn.edu.

COACHING STORIES:

A KALEIDOSCOPIC ANTHOLOGY

by

Vanessa Marie Kraus

Submitted to the Program of Organizational Dynamics
in the Graduate Division of the School of Arts and Sciences
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Science in Organizational Dynamics at the
University of Pennsylvania

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

2008

COACHING STORIES:

A KALEIDOSCOPIC ANTHOLOGY

Approved by:

_____

Larry M. Starr, Ph.D., Program Director

_____

Janet L. Greco, Ph.D., Advisor

ABSTRACT

A symbolic compilation of stories centered in a variety of organizational settings is presented. Through fictional characters and organizations, the narrative illustrates a variety of models, theories, and techniques that coaches might utilize when working with clients. This series of professional parables brings to life an assortment of executive coaching situations and leadership dilemmas where individuals are challenged to address issues, alter approaches, and overcome obstacles. While all persons, places, and activities are imaginary, the approaches and recommendations represent real-world descriptions. Each of the five stories told offers opportunities for both coaches and clients to strengthen their communication skills, to connect with each other by establishing common ground, and to contribute to their respective roles in the workplace as well as the world. This collection of models in action is a blueprint for building relationships, a framework for moving forward, a catalyst for creating change, and a template for taking the next steps.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Appreciation is extended to Dr. Larry M. Starr, Program Director of Graduate Studies in Organizational Dynamics, for his open mind and for allowing my star to shine brightly beyond Locust Walk and Walnut Street and to Dr. Janet L. Greco, my capstone course advisor, for giving me the unique opportunity to tell my story, for recognizing my talent, and for being a treasured mentor and exceptional writer. Their inspiration and guidance throughout the thesis process transformed the preparation of this document from possibility into the reality of its publication.

I would also like to thank the following professors for their advice, encouragement, cooperation, and expertise throughout my tenure in the Organizational Dynamics program: Stephen Dunning, Ph.D., the late Paul J. Korshin, Ph.D., James M. Larkin, Ph.D., Rodney W. Napier, Ph.D., Anna M. Reyes, Ph.D., and William S. Wilkinsky, Ph.D. Special recognition is granted to three members of the program staff: Elaine Calabrese, Becky Collins, and Rasheeda Hubert. Their helping hands and kind hearts were available, without question and regardless of the request, over the years.

To my circle of support and strength – Kimberly Hoyer Henrich, Judith M. Hoyer, Marc G. Hoyer, Kenneth L. Huey, Suzanne P. Huey, Damian E. Kraus, Robyn P. Kraus, Lauren R. Steidel, Sr. Eileen Trinity, RSM, and Jennifer M. Wingard – the family and friends who have patiently and proudly stood beside me, cheered from the sidelines, cared for my child, shaped my character, celebrated my courage, and participated in my many academic projects, I gratefully and humbly acknowledge that I would not be here without you.

How blessed I am with my precious daughter, Eva Elizabeth Kraus, whose beautiful soul breathes new life into me each morning and reminds me what really matters every evening. In her smile, I see the gift of today; in her eyes, I imagine the hope of tomorrow; and, in her voice, I hear the reasons to dream, to continue even when uncertain, and to always believe in miracles. Our story is my favorite one for all time. Thank you for being mine forever.

Be assured, I share my success and happiness with all of you!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
ABSTRACT		iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS		iv
CHAPTER		
1	Introduction	
	Background	1
	Convention	3
2	The Coaching Experience: A Purposeful Journey	6
3	To Listen… is to Learn… To Learn… is to Lead…	14
4	GMQ to the Rescue: Synergy and Strategy Conquer the Status Quo	23
5	Through the Stained Glass: Success of Strategic Design	46
6	American Achievement for a Chinese Client	55
7	Conclusion	63
REFERENCES		67
APPENDIX		
A	LIFO – Personality Types	69
B	Job Assessment Form	70
C	The Group Management Questionnaire (GMQ)	74
D	GMQ Graph	82

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

The investment of an education is invaluable. Following years of determination, contemplation, and investigation, I was overwhelmed and overjoyed at being accepted as a graduate student at The University of Pennsylvania in the summer of 2003. The course content, intellectual rigor, seminar style, and university reputation compelled me to pursue a Master of Science Degree in Organizational Dynamics (MSOD). A critical thinker, I welcomed the challenge of a cutting-edge, comprehensive, and competitive curriculum, taught by academic and industry leaders. Within the classrooms of Penn, I planned to participate in a vigorous learning environment and to subsequently sharpen the skill set I proudly brought to this prestigious institution. Among colleagues and professors on campus, I expected to share lifetime experiences and cultivate lifelong relationships.

Those students, like me, who began the MSOD program in the fall 2003 semester, were required to declare a track, or concentration, within the curriculum. Given my business background, I initially chose leadership. That seemed to make the most sense. After completing a few semesters, however, I learned that organizational coaching would be offered as a new track. That was an appealing addition, especially since my professional resume included some experience with both coaching and consulting during the past few years.

Carefully considering every semester's course offerings, I chose those that would enable me to study what I preferred and what were essential to earn certificates in both coaching and leadership. During my first coaching class, it became abundantly clear that this was the perfect pathway to achieving my educational and professional goals. This was the subject matter that interested and challenged me in ways that made a profound difference in how I viewed people, connections, and relationship development.

As noted by Simmons, (2001), "Every choice we make could be the one that makes all the difference in bringing about the changes we wish to see" (p. 175). And so it was when I registered for the course, DYNM 673: Stories in Organizations: Tools for Executive Development. Two years into the program and committed to the coaching track, I found myself "building more bridges" (Simmons, 2001, p. 171) and broadening both the sphere and "technique of influence" (Simmons, 2001, p. 189) that I utilized in many areas of my life. Now, I was ready to go to the next level and integrate more of what I did normally with what I had learned academically in organizational dynamics. Specifically, I was looking for additional tools to enhance my leadership qualities and to solidify my coaching skills. What originated in these Friday afternoon conversations with my classmates and our professor, Dr. Janet Greco, proved to be invaluable – the foundation for categorizing and chronicling information and ideas moving forward. It became a pivotal chapter in my own story.

Telling stories is as natural to me as buzzing is to a bee. My kindergarten report card noted my penchant for parables. Decades later, my narrative style

continues to permeate personal as well as professional conversations. Such communication has served me well. Talking with others has afforded me the opportunity to impart knowledge, and listening to what they have to say has impacted my thought process. My passage through the Organizational Dynamics Program, and more specifically in the Stories course, has enhanced my appreciation for every narrative told and heard. Those moments in time are motivational, magical, and memorable. The value of a story is in the voyage of the storyteller. This exchange of ideas can direct decisions differently, reinforce reasons to reflect and retreat, and ultimately have a profound and powerful effect on the people involved.

Convention

The purpose of this thesis is to "convey a [series of] believable [stories] that spotlights" (Simmons, 2001, p. 166) the significance of coaching in the development of others. Five varied fictional scenarios each present a different set of circumstances, client, and coach. Within each story, dramatic situations illustrate the challenges, conversations, and choices that occur with the imaginary characters and organizations. These accounts, although unreal, offer real-world options for both executive leaders and coaches who choose to help themselves. In some cases, these narratives may depict people or practices with whom the reader finds familiarity; however, they have been created from whole cloth for the purpose of presenting educational examples. For those interested in organizational coaching, these stories can exemplify approaches to typical client

situations. Individually and collectively, they can also provide a platform for processing problems, assessing information, and guiding clients toward goal acknowledgment and achievement.

Each chapter is designed to depict someone's search for a successful coaching engagement. Every narrative exploration is an examination of struggles and an explanation of effective techniques and tools for triumph. The reader is introduced to personalities and predicaments where the outcomes are not necessarily predictable. Within these next five chapters, experiences evolve, lead characters become caring leaders, and the stories suggest solutions to ordinary organizational problems.

Methodologies such as appreciative inquiry (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000), the Executive Coaching Model (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000), and the Collaborate Change Model (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000) are integrated into the practices of the coaches throughout the stories. While not discussed conceptually, these models are "realized" as applied to the specific situations and fundamental to the final outcome in each of the narratives. References embedded within the fiction reflect scholarship and are used to underscore the mistakes, mindset, and meaningful makeover of those in leading roles. I chose to embody lessons from the coaching courses within these accounts to bring them to life. The dramatic framework of fiction illustrates the coaching tools in action.

The stories of others are often captivating and colorful. While working 15 years in several organizational settings, I have seen leaders struggle with similar

issues like the ones found in these stories. The executives in these situations could have realized better results had they used coaching as an effective alternative to change. As a writer, I am compelled to chronicle the valuable learnings I acquired in earning my MSOD. This capstone project is the perfect platform to combine the coursework of the leadership and coaching tracks into a topic that has traction beyond the classrooms on Penn's campus. Collectively, the readings and reports associated with the classes I completed represent a crystallization of education and opportunity. Leading others means looking inside ourselves first, asking for help where necessary, contracting with a coach to chart the course of change, and implementing the outcome of that introspection.

I chose to create these fables to identify common challenges professionals face and to interpret coaching strategies for them to put into practice. Although fictional, these tales stand out as typical scenarios. Actually, the qualities and questions of these characters also reside in us. Each story calls for the reader to dissect the details, to dig deeper into the dialogue, and to learn from the lessons as the characters learn.

CHAPTER 2

THE COACHING EXPERIENCE: A PURPOSEFUL JOURNEY

Sarah Sain graduated with an MBA in May 2006 from the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern University. Yet, the excitement of such an accomplishment was undoubtedly diminished by an overwhelming concern for the future. Uncertain about her professional path, Sarah was uneasy about the financial pressures facing her, unsettled about a near-ending lease, uncomfortable about professional perceptions of her success, and seemingly unaware of her own potential as well as the endless possibilities surrounding her.

Prior to moving to Chicago, Sarah had worked in Indianapolis, Indiana for a health care consulting company, Nesmith One Nutrition. Responsible for project management, she left the organization just days prior to her five-year anniversary to begin the master's degree program at Kellogg. School was finished, and Sarah needed to resume her place in the workforce. She had her sights clearly set on making a career decision. Sarah was extremely cautious about making all major decisions. This one was no different; however, there was a great deal even more at stake in this situation. She was essentially starting over, at least from her personal perspective.

After making some inquiries followed by a few phone calls, Sarah made contact with Therese Zelien from Celeron Coaching Services. Therese's expertise was in guiding clients onto new professional pathways. In their first meeting, Sarah emphatically expressed her goal: To align my strengths with my

ultimate career choice. During a candid conversation with Therese, she seemed ready and willing to immediately immerse herself in a structured coaching engagement – one that would meet her expectations. Therese sensed, however, that underneath her energetic exterior, Sarah was lacking in confidence and nervous about the next steps.

Embracing the Executive Coaching Model (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000) and more specifically, the Collaborate Change Model (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000), Therese recognized early that to be most effective as Sarah's coach, she would help her "see that [she] was not as powerless" as she believed (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 60). This approach meant "focusing [her] to be [her] very best" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 62).

As Therese listened "sensitively, [she] began to piece together how" Sarah "[constructed] herself in her own world" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 58). Moreover, Therese was "wary of telling the client what to think," rather, as the coach she would "ask good questions that [left] room for self respect" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 55). The more appreciative inquiry (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000) Therese provided, the more she watched Sarah respond and grow. It was the combination of capturing clarity, prompting the existence of abandoned or unknown possibilities, and assembling accurate information that made each meeting more meaningful.

Most of their sessions occurred in the conference room and/or library within Sarah's apartment building. She was close to home – the place where she best defined who she was, and the space in which she searched for who she

wanted to become – yet in a separate setting that resembled the corporate milieu she wanted to potentially occupy. This was a comfortable coaching environment for both client and coach.

Since Sarah was currently unemployed, minimal data gathering was done in a non-invasive manner just with her. Therese introduced her to Stuart Atkin's (2002) Life Orientations Theory (LIFO). This concept, described in his book, *The Name of the Game* (2002), pays close attention to the particular attitudes, behavioral patterns, and communication preferences that people exhibit when viewing the world and operating in it. LIFO stresses the strengths of each life orientation [see Appendix A], and celebrates the positive aspect of human existence and how each contributes to success in its own characteristic way. Subsequent discussions were designed to help Sarah identify her strengths, minimize her excesses, and develop strategies to win in the business arena.

A primary question arose with regard to Sarah's LIFO results: Which elements of her personality can be a liability? This query was meant to examine characteristics of concern, as she prepared for individual job interviews. During their discussion on this topic, Sarah agreed that she is introverted, tenacious, practical, steadfast, methodical, analytical, and detail-oriented. Therese noted that her perception confirmed those personality traits. A "conserving-holding" type, according to Atkins (2002), Sarah was unwilling to make decisions by default, and wanted to be sure she had all the facts before moving forward. Coach and client quickly came to the conclusion that Sarah often succumbs to paralysis by analysis and is almost defeated before any decision can be

determined. In addition, she has been perpetually plagued with low self-esteem and poor self-confidence. Sarah has struggled to set her own course, but feels herself under the microscope of societal scrutiny. Years of fearing failure and yearning to succeed have taken a toll; Sarah is often unable to light her own fire because she is saturated in self-doubt. Educated, well read, and extremely talented, she is hesitant to acknowledge all she has to offer. Instead, she describes herself in narrow terms – now holding a graduate degree from an impressive academic institution, relocating too many times in her lifetime, taking some time off from work, and positioning herself to find the right job. Sarah is slow to run a race she is uncertain she can really win.

In an attempt to focus Sarah's attention on previous accomplishments, Therese reviewed her resume – identifying areas of expertise and asking what she enjoyed doing the most in past positions. This discussion led the way to "discovering new talents and new ways to use old talents that lead to far greater effectiveness" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 61). She sensed that many of Sarah's abilities had either been hiding or lying dormant. Since this concerned the coach somewhat, Therese was cautious in taking a deeper dive into Sarah's primary professional pathway. They evaluated the decisions that brought her from the corporate conference room to Kellogg's classroom and from Indiana to Illinois.

By confirming Sarah's choices, Therese allowed her client to feel more in control of the situation. Sarah began to see beyond why she preferred certain options in the past and what strategic drivers she would employ in the future.

Therese encouraged her to offer many explanations for leaving opportunities on the table and to role-play scenarios with multiple outcomes, “while respecting the individual’s freedom to direct and control her own destiny” (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 53).

To assist Sarah in appraising the positives and negatives of any job search or career categorization, Therese created a Job Assessment Form (see Appendix B). This tool was designed to measure each opportunity according to its own attributes as well as to rank every prospective position against comparable competitors.

Following each job interview, Therese would debrief with Sarah. Within every summary was a re-occurring theme: Sarah validated the qualities of each person with whom she met, hailed the highlights of the meeting, and then, in some fashion, diminished what she had done. It was as if she could not congratulate herself for a job well done – under any circumstance. Therese repeatedly reigned in Sarah’s fear of failure, and re-focused the conversation. The coach would verbally re-wind the tape, persuading Sarah to recall the same stories, thereby promoting her qualities – the promise that she held for a successful career. Moreover, Therese pushed her to re-focus the premise of the précis to include what she spoke of, what she shared, and what she solicited during the interviews.

Once Sarah was able to “discuss and take ownership of her experience” it empowered her and Therese to “create an open system” (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 55). This made all the difference in their time together. With

each step she took toward achieving her goal, Sarah became more comfortable and more courageous. She admitted it was hard to see her own strengths. Yet, she did not surrender to the insecurity that encircled her. Sarah struck gold when she realized that in order to market herself, she would need to verbalize what she is good at – this was a tipping point in her progress. The pebbles in her shoes were looking more like pearls to wear around her neck.

During the next few weeks, however, there was an undercurrent of ambiguity. Sarah first referenced location, experience, salary – all professional prorities – then she shifted to topics that included career option overload, discouragement, and expectations of family and self. She seemed divided between identifying what she wanted to do and finding where she wanted to be. No longer was Sarah completely focused on her career.

It was Therese's use of field force analysis that fundamentally changed the compass of this coaching project. As Therese probed what life factors Sarah was actually facing, one after the other – lack of income, expiring lease, the need for a more rural and less urban residence, the insatiable thirst to again perform with a musical theatre troupe, the upcoming arrival of a sibling's new baby, and a chronically-ill family member – it became abundantly clear that Sarah was seeking to balance her life, to take the right route as a person… not to only make the right career choice as a professional.

This myriad of things that matter most was what she needed to manage. Climbing a mountain of such magnitude made her simultaneously stronger and vulnerable. As her coach, Therese made the decision "to help [Sarah] achieve a

personal meaning and more worthwhile purposes [in her work] and even in life" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 61). Her role then became pivotal in "bringing the whole person, with (her) heart, into (her) life and work" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 53). Sarah's positive reaction was evidenced in her solicitation of feedback – she was receptive to "widen (her) perspective, leave (her) comfort zone, and admit and learn from mistakes and successes alike" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 56). Therese's client began to sketch out a plausible plan, one that both stated and separated the specifics. For starters, Sarah called her former landlord in suburban Indianapolis to inquire about available apartments. Then, she called several colleagues with whom she lost contact while studying in Chicago. Her conversations centered on re-connecting with professionals and mentors who could help Sarah make the connections she needed to re-launch here career. Moreover, if she decided to move back to the area, Sarah would have a base from which to build both her personal and professional worlds. Finally, Sarah reached out to her family and offered some help – to her brother and sister-in-law who were just a few weeks away from becoming first-time parents, and to her mother who was caring for a parent afflicted with late-stage Alzheimer's disease. She had crossed the threshold of being controlled by her world, to being the one in control of her environment. The options that had once overloaded her were now the keys that could open the doors of opportunity.

Finally, following several weekly sessions of working with her coach, Sarah began searching for salient solutions. She cast aside stale thoughts,

calculated her next move, and refused to acquiesce as the queen in checkmate. Sarah really did the work herself; she stretched in ways that at one time seemed insurmountable. Therese watched her "gradually see the opportunities and ingest learnings from the challenge, a big step toward taking effective action," (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 56) and a celebrated change from the first conversation just three months earlier.

Therese, as Sarah's coach, assisted her client in acknowledging her "authentic self, an integration of a wonderful collection of parts" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 61). Sarah, through this defining developmental experience, was ultimately able to ascend from the audience, step to the stage, and become a congruent conductor. In addition, Therese was able to "provide the context for Sarah to find purpose and meaning" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2002, p. 61) in something that truly mattered. The coach guided the client to an awareness and appreciation of herself that had the potential and possibility to yield unimaginable results.

CHAPTER 3

TO LISTEN… IS TO LEARN… TO LEARN… IS TO LEAD…

In June of 1974, Georgia Graham hung her high school diploma on the wall of her parents' den and walked onto the manufacturing floor of Wanaksink Wire Company. At 18 years of age, she took her place among other lathe operators. Thirty years later, Georgia now hangs her white coat and safety goggles in the office that bears her name and title: G. M. Graham, Quality Assurance Director. It has been a long road from laborer to leader. Georgia has had an extensive employment with the company, but a rather tumultuous history. A self-proclaimed expert, she gets the job done, often without involvement of others and according to her own plan and timeline. Success, in her eyes, is about reliability, tenure, and meeting production deadlines. Georgia has confused her loyalty and output with a license to say whatever comes to mind and to take whatever action she pleases, regardless of the situation.

Committed to the corporation, convinced that Georgia is an employee worth retaining, and concerned about the lack of cooperation from his subordinate, Jerry McQuewn, vice president of operations, turned to Bostwick Business Partners for help. He contracted Kelly Massena to coach Georgia, who had been labeled "a good performer with a bad attitude." Selected for her solid background in working with managerial clients in the manufacturing sector, Kelly accepted the assignment and scheduled an introductory meeting with Georgia.

A person who swims in the pool of negativity, Georgia easily finds something wrong with everything and everybody. She struggles to step out of yesterday's battlefield and into today's uncharted terrain. An idea only holds validity and value if Georgia was instrumental in its inception. Her relationships, rooted in rigid discussion and details, require others to hear and heed what Georgia has to say. While Georgia's work ethic never wanes, she does not welcome new or alternative ways of approaching a project. Jerry recognized the need for some of her behavior to change. Without modification, he believed the quality assurance department would be unable to progress and flourish amidst the ever-changing and competitive landscape.

A successful coach must be a good listener. Georgia wasted no time in telling her coach the terrible tales of woe. Since Georgia was so focused on the way things used to be, Kelly decided to help her client "make sense of the past and so move into the future" (Denning, 2005, p. 189). Overflowing with "scapegoat stories" as well as "stories of helplessness" (Denning, 2005, p. 198), Because she found herself more of a misunderstood marginal player, Georgia saw each day as a quandary caused by someone else instead of a chance for her own change. Though Georgia's tales of anguish prevented her from seeing things outside her own reality, Kelly noticed something significant in her stories. They focused more on failure than on success, more on the past than on the future, and more on the demands of protocol than on the direction of possibilities. It was in their details that the coach began to piece together how Georgia constructed herself in the world—personally and professionally.

Georgia believed her only choice was to continue what she was doing, and then others, especially her manager, would eventually see her value. Kelly understood “the client is seen as the expert on [her] own experience,” and “the practitioner can facilitate the client’s growth by engaging the client through the process of the interaction” (Stober & Grant, 2006, p. 21). Georgia was intelligent, articulate, and her accounts were very detailed. It became immediately clear to Kelly that in order to effectively coach Georgia and secure the desired results of the engagement, they would “swap stories” (Denning, 2005, p. 189). This strategy opened the door to opportunities for both.

Although Kelly typically discussed goal setting in the second coaching session with clients, she decided to abandon that approach with Georgia. “The purpose [grew] out of the actual situation” (Bridges, 2003,, p. 63). Instead, Kelly took the lead in highlighting an example she had when working in a corporation a few years ago. This story included Kelly’s frustration with a perceived apathy among colleagues assigned to a particular project. She talked about being “primarily concerned with action, getting things done, [and] achieving plans and goals” (Chapman, Best & Van Casteren, 2003, p. 18), and how the missteps and mistakes of others put her behind schedule. This was music to Georgia’s ears. Soon and with seemingly little effort, Georgia was relating to the characters and interjecting her own opinions and explanations – all of which were reflective of what she had also experienced in the workplace. Kelly’s story was not finished. Having captured her client’s full attention, Kelly continued the narrative and “translated the idea of” a brick wall “into the picture of” the yellow brick road

(Bridges, 2003, p. 64). She explained to Georgia that by dismantling the mortar blocks that are standing in the way of progress, the client could re-arrange them to build a road that provide a journey to new discoveries, stronger relationships, and desired success. A breakthrough in Georgia's thought process had occurred. No longer did she consider herself the victim. Rather, she saw the possibility of victory and understood her responsibility in the coaching engagement.

The next session centered on establishing goals for Georgia's success. Kelly called on Georgia to focus on a "positive story" (Denning, 2005, p. 184); there, she was able to find a comfortable place to start scratching below the surface. Interestingly, Georgia included Jerry in her rendition of a recent meeting held to handle a crisis with a key customer. She mentioned her manager's willingness to allow her proposal to avert the potential problem, which would have cost both large amounts of dollars and design reconfiguration time. Kelly simultaneously saw a proud smile on her client's face and rays of hope peaking through the otherwise faded plaid curtains in Georgia's office. Then, Kelly communicated a similar set of circumstances where a manager did not take the same course of action that Jerry did. The intention was not to vindicate Georgia's manager or to vilify the other; rather, it was meant to demonstrate the difference a decision can make for all those involved. Georgia was silent for a few minutes. What was she thinking? "So, things could maybe change around here for the better if I think before I open my mouth, and react differently even when I am frustrated," remarked Georgia. She was beginning to look at the big

picture through the scenes they shared. Kelly believed that while many possible land mines were yet to be uncovered, solid ground could also be covered in the process.

Constructive communication was the goal established for Georgia. Kelly asked her to keep a journal, writing down the various experiences she encountered, the approaches she took, the things she said, and the results of her choices. Sometimes, Georgia was so excited about a win, that she would call her coach days before their next meeting. Inspired by Georgia's honest, motivational entries and the chance to take "new energy in a new direction" (Bridges, 2003, p. 57), Kelly decided to also keep a daily diary. This document would serve as her personal portfolio of progress. Her "personal experiences," her "own encounters with both success and disappointment – and [her] willingness to reflect on each [made Kelly] a better coach" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 95).

Week after week, Georgia and Kelly shared stories. This protocol, for Kelly, was much more than "the simple sharing of knowledge or information" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 159). It became the gateway for Georgia's growth and eventual attainment of her goal. During one particularly detailed discussion, Georgia diverted for a moment, stopped being serious, and joked that she felt as though they were no longer meeting in an office environment, but that they were actually wandering through her grandmother's attic where new and interesting treasures awaited them every Wednesday afternoon. "There are landmarks in the territory of mindfulness" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 61), and this turned out to be a tipping point for the coaching assignment. Though somewhat concerned about

exposing too much of herself, Kelly used her own scenarios to demonstrate similarities and learnings – and, in so doing, she modeled for Georgia that everyone is vulnerable at times.

The more Georgia and Kelly talked, the more compelling their authentic accounts became. This coach and her client chronicled the present with the past and packaged Georgia's priorities for the future. Their conversations were constructed in such a way that they both were excited to move forward "step by step" (Bridges, 2003,, p. 67). Any barriers dissipated as they connected through the stories.

Reaching new heights meant clearing new hurdles. Using real-life situations, Georgia and Kelly role-played how to overcome obstacles and ultimately to strengthen the manner in which Georgia conversed with her colleagues. Clearly, her feelings of diminished competence had taken a heavy toll and Kelly knew it was time for Georgia to "return to [her] former effectiveness" (Bridges, 2003,, p. 71).

During the course of this three-month coaching engagement, Kelly had undergone a transformation, too. She questioned her own distinguishing attributes as Georgia's coach, asking herself: What is my overall coaching style? Am I coaching for development, skills, or performance? What are my client's needs? What factors contribute to the success of this client? Kelly reminded herself "the learning and growth of the client are central to the purpose of the coach in a given situation" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 15). It was those "personal experiences" as well as her "own encounters with both success and

disappointment – and [her] willingness to reflect on each—[that was making Kelly] a better coach" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 95). She internally evaluated how it was equally advantageous to both coach and client to quietly contemplate, to calm the conversation, and to ultimately be proactive instead of reactive. Georgia challenged Kelly to meet her client where she was– in her season and in her natural place – not with hesitation, but rather with motivation and appreciation. Kelly could acknowledge how their differences complemented each other; she was able to identify what she had learned from Georgia's thoughts, actions, and decisions. She was thinking about where she needed to adapt and grow. Still feeling somewhat "pressured to demonstrate [her] expertise" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 3), Kelly was actually developing herself as a coach, and Georgia was helping her. "Coaching is an action-oriented learning process for the client. It should be for the coach, as well" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 61).

As the contract was coming to a close and she was preparing the client's final report and evaluation form, Kelly reminded herself how much "knowledge resides in stories" (Denning, 2005, p. 198). Moreover, she continued making entries in her journal – for her coaching story had many more chapters to be written. Kelly took time to determine, digest, and document her key take-aways – those reminders of what it means to hold the lives of others in her hands, to extend a part of herself to help them understand and enjoy their own life's expedition, and to make every conversation – every coaching session – count.

Early on, Kelly and Georgia were synchronized – through sharing of stories; they were aligned in their expectations and compatible in many of their

core values. Moreover, the honesty and integrity of the relationship were evidenced as each of them exposed more of their talents, their thoughts, and their tenacity. This connection was the underpinning for what was achieved during the first few weeks of the coaching agreement. Kelly wrote: “To do our part well, we must understand clearly what we bring to the relationship: our limits and biases as well as our skills and expertise. To do this, we must know the territory inside ourselves” (Silsbee, 2004, p. 3).

Seeing things through her own eyes and sharing in Georgia’s vision for her personal and professional development, Kelly was stimulated to step out of her comfort zone and to repeatedly ask the question, “How does empathy, experience, and external data change each of us?” The response was in the reciprocal way in which both coach and client were influenced and impacted. Kelly leveraged herself in a courageous coaching capacity that prompted her to participate with Georgia in a real-world, introspective activity. They channeled ideas internally, communicated openly, and with momentum managed to move the needle. “The coaching process, when effective, always reveals insights for both coach and [client]” (Chapman, Best & Van Casteren, 2003, p. 23). It “requires an active engagement of the practitioner in facilitating the client’s own awareness of how they experience themselves, their situation, what it means, and where they want to go with it” (Stober & Grant, 2006, p. 21).

“Self-awareness means the capacity to observe oneself in action” (Silsbee, 2004, *p. 88*). The pages were filling up fast in Kelly’s diary. She now understood that if she did not know herself, who was she to claim any knowledge

of someone else? Moreover, she was confident that "identifying the right path" would enable everyone – herself included – to "reap a high reward" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 5). While Kelly felt sometimes "pressured to demonstrate [her] expertise" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 3), she noted that success is possible only if she "is willing to make mistakes and learn from them" (Hudson, 1999, p. 16).

Kelly put pen to paper for the final question: Did I adequately "deliver the most service" to my client, Georgia Graham? Have I empowered her "to discern what actions and investments of energy" will yield the best results for herself, for her team, and for the organization (Silsbee, 2004, p. 2)? The answer was a resounding, "Yes." Then she added, "I must do the same for myself as a coach." The final entry in this chapter read: "Understanding and acknowledging these things about myself has been important for me, both personally and professionally" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 2).

She confidently closed her journal, and returned it to her briefcase. The phone was ringing now. Hopefully, this call was another opportunity awaiting her. Kelly reached to answer, and thought, "the journey to coaching craftsman continues" (Chapman, Best & Van Casteren, 2003, p. 3).

CHAPTER 4

GMQ TO THE RESCUE: SYNERGY AND STRATEGY CONQUER THE STATUS QUO

SYNTHESIS—the marketing production and services department of a large management consulting firm, Edgehill Enterprises—had provided artistic design, editorial support, and materials distribution for the past decade. Their creative contributions were well respected among most managers in both marketing and sales. However, the company was in flux, and SYNTHESIS, like other areas of the organization, was now challenged to demonstrate value, according to distinct definitions within a changing landscape.

The corporation's matrix structure was a direct result of a past merger, and while this operational construct had been informally in place for almost three years, SYNTHESIS had not really functioned within such boundaries. There was good reason for that. In the past, their projects and deadline demands were not linked to a corporate-level project team. Rather, their Edgehill internal clients chose to use SYNTHESIS to complement the advertising agency or outside group. Moreover, the matrix model had been a prototype practice that was about to become an institutional standard. To complicate things further, SYNTHESIS had been given the opportunity to be named the official advertising agency of choice, thereby raising their individual and collective bar of respective responsibilities. This team needed to identify how the change in configuration would place them in a position of success. As with most departures from the

“way things have always been done” to the potential possibilities of the future, came the “prove it” part – and here is where the story really began.

SYNTHESIS had all the right players in leadership roles. The Director of Creative Services, Henry Jameson, was the team leader and undoubtedly had assembled a strong and solid team. His staff admired him, and it was common knowledge that he appreciated each of them. Henry’s resume showcased the significance of a broad range of experience coupled with all the right academic accomplishments. In charge of getting things done and out the door, Vaughan Mitchell, the Production Manager, was a tenured employee who knew the industry’s intricacies, and had become a father figure to many of his less-seasoned colleagues. Reserved and well regarded, Vaughan worked tirelessly to focus on every request made by the front lines. He consistently crossed the finish line in a quiet and quintessential manner.

Considered a creative genius because of her success in the Soho studios of New York City, Colette Ellsworth, the Graphic Design Manager, had made her mark in Manhattan a few years before joining this company. She was both feared and revered. Colette would make whatever demands necessary to meet a deadline. Her direct reports genuinely wanted to make her proud, yet were plagued by what she might do if disappointed.

The Distribution Manager, Martin Wilhelm, had climbed the proverbial career ladder and had no intention of returning to the warehouse where he had started more than a decade ago. Customer satisfaction consistently underscored

his series of distinguished performance evaluations. Martin was focused on keeping his own clients content.

A published author who clearly enjoyed fiction more than fact, Tron Carson, the Managing Editor, was never seen without his tattered leather journal and nib-tipped ink pen. Colleagues and critics alike wondered what secrets were written in that baffling brown book. Although outwardly a man of few words, his reality was believed to reside in the language he scribed in liquid – the quiet, safe way by which Tron chose to communicate. Few could argue, however, that his innate ability to achieve success on paper was both recognized and relished by those who sat on the senior leadership team.

With a dotted line reporting responsibility to Colette was the Senior Graphic Designer, Pauline Porter. She was as organized as she was original, and as passionate as she was peculiar. After several years as a free-lance artist, Pauline had decided to enter a corporate environment for the security of bi-weekly paychecks and guaranteed health benefits for her family. She was recently plunged into the role of sole provider when her husband's career made a detour that resulted in a wrong turn; Pauline was, therefore, the newest member of the team.

Although Bette Philips functioned in a more administrative than managerial role, she was confident and competent beyond the scope of her responsibilities. Close to retirement age, Bette was usually not flustered by most decisions, yet she is not in favor of most of them, either. In addition, she strove

to provide equal assistance among the team members, almost like a mother managing all the needs of her many children.

Once the permanent change to the matrix model became evident, Henry initially requested the insight of a coach, Andrew Kalstern – an outsider who knew enough to offer an opinion of what his strategy was to combat the challenges faced by this team. A founding member Stepping Stone Services, Andrew met Henry several years ago when Henry worked at Integrated Imagery, Inc. They had developed and maintained a professional relationship that continued to carry both of them through countless corporate changes and priceless personal achievements. They shared lunch on a quarterly basis, and most of their conversations centered on their sons who played soccer on two different regional rosters.

When Andrew suggested a closer look at some of the systemic issues within SYNTHESIS, Henry welcomed the opportunity to peel back the onion, despite the many layers and potential tears. They discussed several scenarios that would ultimately grant Andrew the best access to the world according to SYNTHESIS. Given his positive relationship and former coaching experience with Henry, coupled with the urgency of this situation, Andrew decided that he would observe a weekly meeting. This avenue of admittance seemed to be relatively non-intrusive, non-threatening, and wide open for witnessing how this team functions on a daily basis. In addition, Henry and Andrew concurred that subsequent steps would be taken to evaluate the group's dynamic, educate the leader using feedback from data-driven exercises, and engage SYNTHESIS in

an action plan carefully constructed from these results. This agreed-upon measure was critical to the overall success of SYNTHESIS, especially given the changes being faced by the entire organization.

SYNTHESIS's weekly meeting was held in a conference room with plenty of physical space to comfortably accommodate 20 people. Preferred seating seemed a bit haphazard, and Andrew was unable to discern whether or not individuals just found a random spot or strategically rationalized where they sat. Instinctively, Andrew thought chairs were occupied on a first-come, first-served basis. Henry did not position himself at the head of the large, oval-shaped table. Instead, he took what appeared to be the seat closest to where he found the coffee and brownies. It was well known that he had a fondness for flavored java and anything baked with fudge. Moreover, while Henry was, in fact, the team leader with all team members having a direct reporting relationship to him, he did not demonstrate—either verbally or via body language—a position of power. Rather, any new or unknowing audience member would have found Henry to be an equivalent, yet integral, ingredient among this mix of managers.

Team meetings have been held every Wednesday morning from 9:00 until 10:00. During this time together, each manager reported on successes achieved and challenges faced. All managers are direct reports to Henry and they have latitude with running their own businesses, as long as goals are reached and client commitments are kept. In these weekly meetings, it is perceived that every member has equal opportunity to participate in an open, welcoming environment.

Currently, SYNTHESIS is upset and uncomfortable about the new changes facing them. This group has successfully delivered services for many years and continues to be a solid team in their own eyes as well as in those of onlookers throughout the organization. Turnover has been rare, and each manager is proud of his or her individual contributions. Now, they have been forced to step out of their comfort zones and re-align resources in conjunction with a critical change in corporate structure. This news has not been well received, to say the least.

Henry is well respected; this team has been recognized as very effective; countless accolades have been received under Henry's direction. Interestingly, most members of the team are soft-spoken, industrious employees who really just want to do a great job and get the work done. When an idea is brought forth, it is usually only Colette who challenges every comment and offers her opinion on every topic and idea. She takes the floor, without intervention by Henry, the team leader. Since Colette pushes harder than anyone else for what she wants, it was difficult (and almost impossible) for others to get any talk time or the opportunity to make a solid case for their needs and wants.

Such were the conditions in a pivotal meeting two months ago. While Colette dominated most of the discussion, Tron sat silently, only nodding on occasion. The others identified obstacles to success, and infrequently articulated any adjunct to Colette's plans. Henry worked tirelessly to overcome the objections, ease the upset, and put a positive spin on the new structural changes. Influencing and demonstrating more authority than was actually held,

Colette had a response to everything that was shared by the team, and that seemed to systematically shut many of the other managers down early in the meeting.

As an outside observer Andrew was picking up a double message in this 60-minute segment. To him, and surely to many others, things had been going along well. When each team member was able to manage his or her subordinates independently and almost like an individual enterprise, there was very little conflict. Now that they have been challenged to re-align resources, share staff, and re-configure their contributions within the commercial organization, some acute anxiety and perceived inequities had come to light.

In monitoring this meeting, Andrew was captivated by the conversation and disappointed by the lack of direction in making decisions. However, he was extremely concerned about the conflict that kept its place behind the curtain but left unresolved would undoubtedly reach center stage and radically reduce SYNTHESIS's rave reviews to harsh critiques. They had been seen as stars; however, they were not shining brightly now. This team was on the threshold of turning the spotlights down, if not off—instead of embracing the chance to choreograph a refreshing routine.

Henry was energized about what he considered to be a thriving staff meeting and was equally eager to discuss it with Andrew—especially since he was confident that Andrew had been obviously impressed with what he observed. A positive personality, Henry was comfortable with how his team

interacted and exchanged ideas. For him, it had been another winning Wednesday.

Rather than direct their focus to the meeting at this time, Andrew decided to introduce Henry to the Group Management Questionnaire (GMQ) [see Appendix C]. He explained that the "GMQ is an easy-to-administer instrument that requires each team member to respond to seventy-two positive statements — all proven to be important to effective teams. The questionnaire covers eight categories, each one having a huge impact on the team environment. Each category comprises nine related statements, which are interspersed throughout the instrument. Requiring only ten minutes to take and less than two minutes to score an individual questionnaire, the GMQ can easily create an understandable profile of a team's effectiveness." (Napier & McDaniel, 2006, pp. 267-68).

As he explained to Henry, this was an important next step in determining the direction of SYNTHESIS, given its new functional role within the organization. Moreover, the results of the anonymous evaluation would provide a solid starting point from which they could begin to sketch a strategy for success. Andrew requested SYNTHESIS's seven-member management team complete the GMQ. Curious and cautious, everyone returned the results to him within the week. SYNTHESIS waited for its next cue.

Once all information had been gathered and comprehensively reviewed by Andrew, the outcomes were outlined with Henry in an "effective feedback session" (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 36). Reference to both strengths and limitations reinforced a rich dialogue. After all, Henry recognized what was

as stake. This was a time of “major organizational change” (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 9), and SYNTHESIS was “in a state of reformulating its own identify, mission, and structure” (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000, p. 5). Willing to address areas of concern and to pilot the pending transformation, he continually contributed to a collegial conversation.

In an attempt to avoid information overload, Andrew covered each category as a separate entity first, and eventually integrated them into a final report. The following is a synopsis of the findings, including those low-score statements, and in some cases, ones that 60-70% of team members indicated were not present in the group’s behavior. A graph [see Appendix D] was also created to show the results of the data generated.

It is relevant to remember that for the past five years, SYNTHESIS has been a somewhat independent arm of the organization. It has functioned quite successfully within the business. The group has enjoyed the creativity and challenges of an entrepreneurial environment. Until now, projects were completed, in many cases, without corporate constraints. Accountable only to individual, internal Edgehill clients, the team rarely reached beyond their own department for direction to complete the productions. While their success was visible to many, it was no longer viable in its current form. Henry understood the urgency; however, he was stunned at the score in the Goals and Purpose category received – a 5. While this number does not represent a “red flag” and is not defined as a “level of dysfunction,” (Napier & McDaniel, 2006, p. 287), it caused a moment of pause for Henry. For him, the scores on item #9 about

values and item #18 about spirit brought uncertainty and discomfort. He had believed all team members were on the same page.

Andrew explained to Henry that the timing was perfect to define the group's goals. Here is where a paradigm shift was not only possible, but also necessary. Henry's initially seemed hesitant, though not resistant. He was quite surprised that SYNTHESIS did not unanimously feel guided, supported, and united. As Andrew explained to him, putting the team's purpose into a context congruent with the corporation's expectations would enable Henry to lead, and subsequently, empower SYNTHESIS to reach greater heights of success. He agreed that he had underestimated the value of the organization's SMART (Specific, Measurable, Action-oriented, Relevant, and Trackable) goals—and therefore, they had been put on paper, but not put into practice. When Andrew asked to see them, Henry was unable to locate the list. A new script was about to be written.

It was common opinion throughout the organization that Henry treated his team very well, and he was proud, although certainly not arrogant, about that behavior. When he read the 5.9 score for the Climate category, he asked, "What am I doing wrong?" Centering the conversation around what seemed most vague, especially with regard to item #26, Andrew reiterated this feedback really tries to ascertain whether "team members find relationships to be positive," and whether the "resulting level of trust exists" (Napier & McDaniel, 2006, p. 271). In order to better understand these results, Henry shared specific stories

surrounding the team's success with different internal customers. He delicately delivered detail, almost as if to dissuade the data.

Again, Henry was concerned about a less-than-adequate assessment of the climate. He was absolutely dismayed to discover that item #26 was not found to be more favorable among SYNTHESIS's members. Henry referenced the meeting Andrew had attended, and insisted that Wednesday mornings were weekly proof of a positive and productive environment in which the team worked. While it was tempting, Andrew did not abandon the GMQ graph or its results to re-visit the team meeting. Moreover, he confirmed his desire to discuss personal observations in the conference room; however, that would occur during a separate and future session. Andrew closed this circle with a concentration on the three high scores (9, 9, 8) and the high average score of 6—all much better than the three low scores of 3 (see Appendix D).

Looking like a little boy who had brought home a reprehensible report card, Henry could not comprehend the 2.3 score in the Conflict category. With continuous head shaking, he repeated, "We don't have any conflict; there are no arguments, no issues with reaching consensus, and no problems that prevent the work from getting done on time and on budget. I just do not understand how this could be. Did you miscalculate these numbers?" His reaction seemed to scream for silence. So, Andrew gave him some time to quietly contemplate item #3, item #19, item #35, item #51, and item #59; that seemed to calm the conversation.

Concerned about an undercurrent of conflict destined to damage SYNTHESIS's focus and future success, Henry sought ideas to avoid such

catastrophe. He and Andrew discussed the importance of bringing conflict to the surface first, and then addressing it with a defined skill set and clear expectations. They talked about “predictable patterns (hidden agendas, passive resistance, unbridled anger, frustration) that burst out at unpredictable times” (Napier & McDaniel, 2006, p. 272). Unaware of any outbursts—ever—Henry struggled to see where and with whom the conflict resided.

Before Andrew shared the score of 5.4 for Reward, Appreciation, and Recognition, Henry said, “Finally, an area where we will surely see a great number.” Almost aghast again, he said, “This just cannot be… my team is acknowledged, both financially and publicly, for a job well done. How can they say I don’t take good care of them?” Somewhat surprised himself, Andrew had checked and re-checked these numbers. This was a pivotal point in their understanding and appreciation of the GMQ – it was the litmus test for how this tool truly represents the individual, and often hidden, feelings of the participants. Henry and Andrew spent considerable time reviewing item #28, item #26, and item #68 and evaluating from what experiences the responses could have evolved.

During their in-depth discussion, Henry came to the conclusion that the reward component was not the issue. Salaries and bonuses were competitive and commensurate with high performance ratings. He was convinced that a perceived lack of appreciation and recognition were the reasons behind the score. With that said, however, Henry was unable to pinpoint the problems associated with these astonishing results. What was missing in the way

SYNTHESIS was celebrated? Was value voiced or void? Was there a vulnerability that eluded him, the leader, as well? These questions provoked Henry's thought process and permeated his decision to dive deeper into this situation.

Certainly, SYNTHESIS, in the services they provided to the rest of the organization (artistic design, editorial support, including the written word), would be among the best communicators, or at least that is what Henry expected the GMQ would reveal. Imagine how disappointed and disillusioned he was with the lackluster score of 3.9 in the Communication category. He responded upon the revelation, "So, does my own team think that SYNTHESIS is a fraud?" With compassionate caution, Andrew explained that most corporations struggle to communicate effectively. Studies indicate this area causes significant stress in all segments of society – fragmented families, unraveled relationships, and of course, burgeoning business, too. Communication is complicated at its very core. Most members of any group commonly identify communication as a serious source of strife. The key is to be attracted to the possibility of change and not to be repelled by the complexity of the problems. Once they talked in those terms, Henry was able to adequately assess item #21, item #45, and item 69.

Still struggling to accept the accuracy of the communications score, Henry did admit that SYNTHESIS rarely brought problems to the forefront of any meeting or time together. When he polled the group, he only heard harmonious voices. When he took the team's pulse, everything seemed to be exactly as it

should be—strong and not missing a beat. Questioning his own leadership ability, Henry committed to immediately improve communication. He and Andrew agreed to finish the GMQ analysis before defining any decisions or new direction.

Expecting the Meeting Design category number to be very high, Henry was pleased to learn this result. Andrew's reaction to a 7.1 score on the other hand was complete shock. Having watched SYNTHESIS in action during a recent meeting, he would not have determined such enthusiastic results. Candidly, the understated participation of most of the group concerned him. Colette controlled much of the conversation – it was not always what she said, but often when she opted for silence herself or offered no response when the others spoke. Henry expressed great pleasure in keeping to the one-hour timeline, following the same protocol each week, and encouraging everyone to share his or her experiences (successes and challenges) with the team. He saw himself as the conductor of an orchestra who delivered quality and consistency every Wednesday morning. Henry did not feel the need to discuss much here. Ironically, here is where Andrew saw so many signs of danger—pitfalls that could paralyze this otherwise productive team. Henry basically dismissed item #62, the sole statement that received low scores. His focus was on the super score.

Realizing the time they would allocate time to addressing issues around membership, effectiveness, and group dynamics, Andrew suggested that they complete the final categories of the GMQ. Henry thanked him for the progress they had made thus far.

Henry's reputation as a strong, fair leader is well known throughout the organization. He had earned the respect of senior-level leadership, garnered the trust of subordinates and peers alike, and enjoyed a flourishing career. With more than ten years tenure, he is considered one of the good guys and held very dear by those he has helped during the last ten years. It was a bit surprising, however, that the score in the Leadership category was 6.3—low for a leader who is so revered. Perhaps SYNTHESIS felt comfortable with the manner in which meetings were managed – previously highlighted with a score of 7.1 – however, they had some concerns about Henry's style of leading those weekly conference. Clearly, he was upset that this number was not much higher. While it was not obvious what deciding factors computed this disconnect, more than 70% of respondents gave Henry a very high score. There was only one low score as well as one average indicator. Yet, this average dealt a blinding blow to Henry. This was personally painful for him. Again, Andrew reiterated how the numbers added up, yet that did nothing to ease his discomfort. In reviewing the one statement, item #55, with low scores, Andrew explained that this area also considered the leadership within the group. "I give everyone the chance to influence and impact," was Henry's emphatic response to this line item. He did not understand and could not accept this "failing grade." It represented a poor performance rating, and one that he felt was untrue and undeserved, to say the least.

The second-lowest score (3.1) of the GMQ, the Supervision category spoke more loudly than anticipated by Henry and Andrew. Henry questioned

what it really defined, given the leadership category identified earlier. What a perfect segue to review the standout statements – item #40, item #48, and item #72.

Having been on the leadership team who established the company's new evaluation process, Henry said he felt "violated" by these responses. From what he knew (or thought he knew), the organization had embraced the new review practice and results had been favorable across the board. As Andrew tried to re-direct the conversation away from him personally, Henry expressed his overwhelming apprehension at facing the challenges that faced him and the SYNTHESIS team. "With these kind of low marks, how can we get to where we need to be?" he asked.

As with any great production, there are both players and scenes that need more work than others before it can be ultimately seen as a success. It is in the revision and consequent practice of such changes that effectiveness is attained. Henry acknowledged and accepted that SYNTHESIS had to revise how it performed and delivered services if it were to survive under the pressure of the organization's demands. While he had believed that the team was far more effective than the GMQ had demonstrated, Henry was ready and willing to adjust.

Sharing his observations of the meeting Andrew initially attended seemed to be the best place to begin the discussion of change. For starters, membership among the group seemed imbalanced. Colette was either given or she had taken the lead role. Notwithstanding her ability and desire to excel, Colette was causing distress by her diva status. The other people were underperforming, and

it was undermining SYNTHESIS's presentation. Henry admitted that he had given Colette more latitude on occasion, for the simple reason that she seemed to be a natural leader. Now, her dominance had become the norm. It was time to modify the Wednesday morning meeting, and Henry agreed.

Intentional, strategic leadership was paramount to this production's success; so was Henry's taking his place back in the director's chair. This approach seemed antithetical to the high score for meeting design within the GMQ; however, without starting here, Andrew was doubtful that victory would be possible. Any successful transformation initiative requires leadership that is courageous, effective, and intellectual, and this became Henry's mantra moving forward in this process. Change was inevitable, and this reality was no longer invisible.

Daring, yet diplomatic, Henry worked tirelessly to incorporate the GMQ results into a meeting agenda. He requested that Andrew attend the next Wednesday morning meeting; Andrew welcomed the opportunity. After careful consideration, they decided that Henry would deliver the data—from his leadership position. In addition, he would solicit suggestions from all team members, striving to bring everyone center stage. Andrew's role would be that of a critic—providing a review of the meeting following its completion.

Since the agenda was usually e-mailed late on Tuesday afternoons, often those team members who arrived in the conference room before visiting their offices were unaware of what topics would be talked about during the meeting. For the most part, the GMQ would be a foreign language and one without any

translation. Henry understood that obstacle would have to be overcome within minutes of saying, “Good morning.” Purposely positioned in the same spot Andrew took during his previous visit, he was not sure what would transpire with this team.

Following the early day greetings, Henry passed out the schedule and simultaneously explained that he and Andrew had been working together on a project that would better equip them for the course of change the organization was expecting of them. While Andrew anticipated a negative response, he was pleasantly surprised when Tron spoke up and said, “Well, my wife’s department recently went through this process with someone from Stepping Stone Services, and they came out of it relatively unscathed.” Henry used that comment as the catalyst for the conversation, which followed.

With the precision of theatrical timing, Henry captured each category’s results in a real-world, real-time manner. He moved from one area to the other, outwardly expressing his appreciation for the team’s honesty, bravery, and cooperation in this process. This discussion was void of verbal reaction from his subordinates. However, all eyes were on Henry, and the group listened intently to every sentence he spoke.

As Henry wrapped up the bundle of data, he made a case for the interaction among the staff of SYNTHESIS, identifying how imperative their introspection and ideas were to what had just been shared with them. Silence ensued… for just a few moments. They are thinkers.

Fancy footwork belongs not only to Gene Kelly and Fred Astaire—it is what makes or breaks a facilitator. Up from seat, Andrew jumped to his feet and walked to the flip chart, moving it from the back of the room to the front of SYNTHESIS's members. He wrote each category on the white paper, each with a different colored marker, and suggested that they look at every topic as an entity unto its own. Andrew asked the members to rank them—in order of priority—at their places. For example, number one would be the first area to be given attention, whereas number eight would need the least consideration (for now). Articulating a sense of urgency, giving them guidance, and putting them in a position of power without pressure motivated SYNTHESIS to get engaged in the meeting. Henry was the first to open his notebook, tear out a fresh page, and write. Immediately, the others imitated their leader. Never had scribbling sounded so musical.

Within ten minutes, the pens came to a full stop. Collecting the score sheets, Andrew began to record the results. Literally and figuratively, SYNTHESIS was on the same page. Their faces transformed from expressionless to the look of children on Christmas morning. The obvious choices had climbed to the top of the flip chart, without competition. Ultimately, their efforts would concentrate on conflict and communication. Although Supervision had received a lower score than Communication in the GMQ (3.1 versus 3.9, respectively), in this tally it did not top the list.

An unintended consequence of this exercise was that the results re-awakened the conversation. With just moments to go until the clock struck ten

o'clock, Henry asked the team if they wanted to continue this project now, or if they wanted to wait until next Wednesday's meeting. Again, another unanimous decision came from the floor. Requesting a five-minute break, the group was ready and willing to re-convene for another round. Individually, they called staff to check messages; collectively, they changed their calendars for the remainder of the morning.

"What just happened here?" inquired Henry. Andrew smiled and said, "Well, we have not cracked the code of conversation, but we have discovered dialogue can dance here today." With that, he refreshed his coffee and found fresh markers.

When the group reconvened, many ideas were ignited, and SYNTHESIS fast-forwarded into a constructive conversation centered on conflict and communication. Emphasizing the low GMQ scores in these two areas, Andrew suggested that they concentrate on conflict first. "Being in conflict is no fun. It's stressful, unpleasant, distracting, intrusive, and annoying" (Kheel, 2001, p. 17). Andrew applauded their achievements to date. Moreover, he explained how impressive their work had been to those internal clients as well as to the senior leadership team. However, changes in the corporate structure could be seen as either opportunity or obstacle. It was their choice to succeed or fall short of expectations. Andrew reminded them, "Houston, we have a problem," and in the next breath said, "Failure is not an option," another apparent line from the *Apollo 13* movie. They had the talent; they had the drive; they had the potential to reacher great heights.

Andrew asked each of them to imagine what their world would look like, if they were chosen to be the company's advertising agency of record. Now, "How would they get there?" was the next question. Closing the circle, he assured SYNTHESIS that "in many conflicts anger is kept hidden" (Kheel, 2001, p. 4). Their willingness to address the issue actually set them apart from the others who were content to hide backstage.

Henry leaped from his director's chair. Confidently, he started to approach the GMQ feedback in a more favorable way. Clearing up any preconceived notions of perfection, he told his team, "I am proud of each of you. You have done extraordinary work, and for us, the best is yet to come. Like all teams, however, SYNTHESIS is less than perfect." Stressing the need to get back to basics, Henry continued expressing his gratitude and emphasizing the need for change. As the leader, he did a nice job of integrating the needs of the group with his own, incorporating the challenges of their roles with those of the company, and inviting each member to seek a solution to the problem. "Conflict costs money" (Kheel, 2001, p. 17). More importantly, "time is money. How much time is wasted on interpersonal conflict?" (Kheel, 2001, p. 18), was a question few within SYNTHESIS could answer.

The group agreed that even their underexpressed "conflict was wasting valuable time in other ways" (Kheel, 2001, p. 19), too. What accomplishments were they compromising because of conflict? Andrew shared some startling statistics with them. "Research studies show that up to 42% of employees' time is spent engaging in or attempting to resolve conflict" (Kheel, 2001, p. 19). When

they calculated that to equal two out of five days per week, the team took notice. Finally, he reminded SYNTHESIS that “making *any* decision requires that you have relevant information” (Kheel, 2001, p. 20).

Recognizing that today’s discussion had just begun to uncover the needs of the group—primarily conflict and communication—they adjourned the meeting with a commitment to charge ahead, lead by Henry, and climb the mountain of success.

Two hours in duration, this particular Wednesday meeting surpassed any other—both in length of time and quality of discussion. Henry was ecstatic and optimistic. Andrew cautioned him, however, that much more work had to be done before SYNTHESIS would receive a standing ovation. Surely, it was tipping point in the team’s progress. The design—although impulsive and unplanned—had pulled back the curtain and exposed the players. However, they actually knew their lines and were more lined up than anyone had known, including Henry and Andrew. What occurred in the conference room called for a new way of conducting weekly meetings, a fresh look at the faces of SYNTHESIS, and an environment that espoused healthy exchange among all team members. They were not ready for opening night, yet they were now a more prepared and positive cast.

Henry did not anticipate a quick fix; however, he expected a win-win situation. Anchored in equity and striving toward equilibrium, he challenged himself to foster feedback in a more consistent, productive manner. No longer, he told Andrew, would any one member of SYNTHESIS quietly or overtly

dominate the Wednesday morning meeting. As a leader, Henry did understand, however, that conflict can be healthy, especially in a creative environment but skills are required so that people recognize it and are comfortably able to raise it and use it to the team's benefit. Conversely, unexamined conflict could undermine their potential project list as well as their profits. The company was counting on his team to step up and steal the show. Henry wanted that as much, if not more, than the senior leaders. He believed the GMQ, complete with its comprehensive results, was the template from which SYNTHESIS could change unproductive patterns and re-configure their current and upcoming performances.

CHAPTER 5

THROUGH THE STAINED GLASS: SUCCESS OF STRATEGIC DESIGN

Ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1995, the Reverend Angela Maevan believed her prayers were answered when she was named Associate Pastor of Plainview Presbyterian Church in 2005. Angela was enthusiastic about this opportunity; especially given the parish had about 1,000 families on the rolls – a vibrant community that was flourishing in spite of a downward trend in membership for most churches, regardless of denomination.

A fourth-generation minister, Angela was born and raised in Topeka, Kansas, earned her Master of Divinity Degree at Harvard University, and settled in the Boston suburbs to work as the pastoral care manager in a residential treatment center for troubled children. Throughout the early years of her career, Angela was well known and well respected as a kind, compassionate, and honest professional. In addition, she had made many friends, and worked hard to establish her credibility as the right candidate for the role she had accepted at Plainview Presbyterian Church.

Fast forward three months. Angela found herself in tears on more days of the week than not, and she was beginning to question her decision to accept this appointment. Committed and intentional, Angela was now being confronted with conflict during staff meetings that she could not explain or understand. It seemed that every idea she introduced was rejected; every comment that she made was challenged; every question that she asked was dismissed. Angela's new staff was not welcoming her – they were making her miserable.

Recognizing she needed more than a shoulder to cry on, Angela's friend, Vera, suggested that she hire a professional coach. It was painfully obvious that this problem needed a solution – it was not going away, and Angela did not want to go away, either. Well connected in the business world, Vera recommended Lillia Gordon of The Greenlee Group. Lillia had extensive experience working with team dynamics, and was willing to step into this uncomfortable set of circumstances—she was ready to help Angela find resolution in this church conflict.

Angela was conflicted and somewhat apprehensive about how her staff members – a director of religious education, a youth group director, a choir director, a groundskeeper, and a secretary – would respond to the arrival of a coach. She felt strongly they would see this move as intrusive and unnecessary; she did not need any more ammunition for them to alienate her; yet, she was desperate to maintain some calm amidst this storm.

As Vera explained to her friend, coaching can help people perform better and feel more satisfied at work. She continued to advise Angela about the success of such a worthwhile endeavor. The end result is dependent on the "relationship between the coach and the client." Progress is predicated on making sure "the coach is able to ask questions, offer insights, and help the client develop new skills, perspectives, and understandings" (Stober & Grant, 2006, p. 77).

While validating Angela's legitimate concern about the reaction of her colleagues, Vera also reminded her that such distress needed direction.

Allowing the conflict to lie dormant would probably cause a more damaging eruption later. After careful consideration, including recognition of the situation's volatility, Angela agreed to bring Lillia on board as her coach.

In lieu of an introductory session, Angela asked Lillia, a practicing Catholic with a minimum appreciation of the Presbyterian religion, to attend a Sunday service where she was the principal minister. Obliging her new client, Lillia sat among the church community and seemed to blend well into the woodwork of the sanctuary occupied by the burgeoning congregation. Angela delivered an impressive sermon, her demeanor was warm, and her message was in line with the values of Christianity. All appearances indicated a faith-filled, friendly environment. After the service, conversation and coffee flowed without incident as families visited with each other and seemed to be at ease with Angela. There was no indication of conflict in the church congregation.

To adequately identify the issues, Lillia told Angela that an informational meeting with the staff was imperative for progress. Angela agreed, and relied on the commitment and creativity of her coach to properly prepare her for such a task. Positioning Angela as the facilitator would place her in a position of authority – exactly where she should be, but where she has not yet been with this group. Now was the time to observe interactions, ask questions, and ascertain what next steps would be taken. Via an e-mail meeting request, Angela invited the five staff members to an official team meeting.

Two weeks later, the group convened in a conference room on the church's beautiful campus. The negative energy saturated the small space.

There was apparently so much anger among these people, and Angela was fearful and tired. She had never been in this type of situation, and she did not really know where to go from here.

Having been prepared by her coach, Angela knew the staff would be on guard, but she wanted to gauge their level of engagement, the foundation of their frustration, and their reasons for such hostility toward her. Angela was keenly aware that official jobs in this church are influential – with these roles comes power and prestige in many cases. She solidified her "presence as a listener" and gave the group her "full attention" (Silsbee, 2004, p. 93). To make it a pleasant experience, Angela explained that being the newest member of the parish she had so much to learn from the church members – especially the ones in the room – and was therefore anxious to have them teach her a thing or two.

Appreciative inquiry (Goldsmith, Lyons & Freas, 2000) was the route Lillia recommended that Angela take. So, searching for the positive rather than past failures, the new minister asked the group a series of questions: What do you like best about Plainview? What is your most memorable experience? If you could change one thing, what would it be? The silence of the group both astonished and unsettled Angela. What was really wrong?

Angela, the newcomer, had actually been viewed as the one who had replaced a middle-aged man, named Reverend Stephen Roberts, for the past 15 years. When he "accepted the call" for a pastor's position in Denver, Colorado, the church community was devastated. How could he leave them? The staff even talked about what the move had done to both Stephen's children and the

youth of the church. These people were betrayed and heartbroken. Their status quo had been shattered, and it did not matter who had replaced Stephen. Perhaps it was not Angela's arrival – but rather Stephen's departure – that had made this team so dysfunctional.

Out of five staff members (excluding Angela), four of them had enjoyed church membership for over 20 years. The youth director had been raised in that church, married another member of the church, and aspired to work there since she was ten years old. For her, there had never been any change until now. To complicate things further, the only other female staff person was the secretary. In her mid-30's, Angela was not supposed to be at the pulpit, she should have been picking up her children from school instead. To most of them then, she was in the wrong role, at the wrong time, in the wrong church—it was three strikes against her before Angela ever arrived there.

Lillia's repertoire did not have a ready-made remedy for her client. However, Angela was committed to making this work. In discussing this dilemma, Angela and Lillia both agreed that the real issue was about change itself, the fact of no longer being what they had wanted to be. The same had been replaced with different – and very different, indeed. There were few similarities between Angela and Stephen. Actually, from everything Angela gathered in observing the team during the past few months, they had never thought about the church with someone else as Plainview Presbyterian's pastor. Stephen had not consulted them, he had not asked their permission, and he had

gone on to a new life without them. He was a part of their family who had abandoned, in their minds, a good world that they had made for them.

Angela needed Lillia's help in convincing them that their church family could move beyond the shock, the feelings of betrayal, and begin to construct an environment in which Angela would be welcomed and they all would be productive, positive – and happy, again.

For two weeks, coach and client contemplated how to approach this challenge. The underlining theme throughout the initial discussion was "what was lost." In some ways what the staff described almost elevated Stephen to saint status—so, it was not surprising that Angela seemed to be wearing the devil's horns. Their church went from heaven to hell. This group seemed to be people rooted in religious tradition and beliefs. Church was not just a place of worship; it was also their job and their extended family. Angela had been relegated to the basement as the redheaded stepchild. If Lillia did not help her get back upstairs soon, she would not see the light of day.

Lillia worked with Angela and created a design that was specific for this situation. Confident in her coach's diagnosis of the problem, Angela stepped out of her comfort zone and decided to move forward. Hopefully, it would work.

Titled, "Three in One," this strategic design was predicated on the concept of The Trinity—three persons in one God. This ideal was the core of Christian belief, regardless of what missal one sang from on Sunday mornings. The goal was to reach a consensus that this team would give Angela another chance as

their associate pastor. In turn, she would recognize each of them for the contributions, talents, and needs as part of her new church family.

At the beginning of the next meeting, Angela would ask every person to write down – it did not seem viable to do it verbally just yet – three things they wished for in someone as their church leader. Obviously, these three characteristics would capture the essence of a perfect associate pastor and at the same time be realistic. For example, kind, compassionate, and empathic would top Angela's list if she were a participant. In her mind, if those qualities exist, the rest becomes easier to manage. Then, the second step would be to determine one attribute that is absolutely unacceptable—like cruelty. Guiding them in that direction would hopefully eliminate any extreme responses. At the conclusion of the design, Angela would then paint the picture for them of what they actually have in each other, including herself. The message is that not all is lost, but rather, so much more has been gained. It felt right, and it could be a win-win situation.

With Lillia's encouragement, Angela centered herself on the strategy and walked into the conference room. She thought to herself, "Many caring people really occupy this space." The sun was shining through the beautiful stained glass windows, and she took this as a good sign. Could the vast array of colors – unique individually and complete collectively – provide a beacon of light, a new beginning, for the staff that worked here? At the onset of the meeting, Angela underscored its importance and requested their openness and honesty in moving forward. All agreed to honor that.

Passing out paper and pencils, Angela carefully described the process of the team mediation exercise, and shared an example to guide them. Hidden was Angela's overwhelming concern – she was certain they would use Stephen as their prototype profile. As a matter of fact, she had already prepared her response to address the unfair and unfounded things she feared they would say. What a lesson. This small group astounded Angela with their candid answers. Their "Three Absolutely Perfect Attributes" included warm heart, integrity, fun, loving, gracious, appreciative, honest, non-judgmental, willing to help, interested in others, good with children, caring, and strong faith. On the other side of the paper "One Unacceptable Trait" included dishonest, apathetic, unwilling to see other viewpoints, selfish, lazy, and inconsiderate.

The sense of unity that came from this simple design was significant. They began to agree with each other – acknowledging the "wonderful ideas" that Angela had, too. She took it one step further, asking the group to spend the next two weeks observing each other. Then, concentrating on the good qualities – the positive energy that surrounded them – quietly identify just one moment when a specific characteristic was center in a conversation or in an action. The group would then share those experiences with each other during the next staff meeting. No longer was Stephen with them. For the first time, his name was never mentioned. It would be a long journey, but one filled with possibility and success.

How easy it was for everyone to point fingers and assign blame. How easy it would have been for Angela to walk away. How detrimental each of those things would have been to the success of the staff and to Angela's career.

"Good coaches are good communicators" (Hudson, 1999, p. 17). While Lillia could not determine that her strategic design was undoubtedly the best approach for Angela to executive, and it was certainly not the only one available, the reward was both in the risk and results. She provided her client with a relatively easy solution to them, without making it the problem colossal. Angela needed help, and so did her staff. They were mourning Stephen's loss—so, any morning with Angela was not a good one. Every interaction was clouded with negative emotions—anger, fear, and sadness. Things were beginning to turn around now.

Sharing of information is pivotal to the success of decision making in a group. The commonality of ideas is not necessary; however, the desire to reach the same goal is critical. Sometimes, it takes an awkward situation to create an awesome scenario.

CHAPTER 6

AMERICAN ACHIVEMENT FOR A CHINESE CLIENT

In 2005, Ping Chang joined Platinum Investments, a financial services corporation with more than two decades of demonstrated success in the industry. Of Chinese descent, Ping left his native land after college to pursue a career in America. He is a pricing strategist and considered a strong staff contributor; however, his reserved responses during meetings and his struggle to deliver effective presentations are now determined to be detrimental to his professional progress. During Ping's most recent performance appraisal, his manager recommended that an executive coach work with Ping to help him communicate more effectively, especially in meetings with management. Ping willingly agreed, in conjunction with his recent development plan, to participate in the coaching engagement, albeit his lack of familiarity with the process and subsequent scenario.

Chosen for this assignment was Jennifer Monet of Chestnut Street Coaches, Inc. Since 2002, she has worked with a number of other managers at Platinum Investments, and is regarded as an expert in the field. Her extensive experience with culturally diverse clients was a significant consideration in the selection interview, and one that could hopefully serve Ping well.

During their introductory meeting, Jennifer decided to take a chance and share a personal story; her goal was to establish common, comfortable ground. This was important, given the cultural challenges potentially facing their coaching experience. Jennifer's cousin, Eugenie, had recently adopted a baby girl from

China. With incredible ease and an almost natural exchange, Ping and Jennifer talked about the southern Chinese province, Guangdong, first called home by the child, the cuisine served in the most prominent restaurants, and the grueling process faced by parents desperately desiring a daughter from China. He offered no opinion, just a wealth of interesting information about something both were able to discuss without distraction. Despite this successful starting point, Jennifer noticed that the transition from personal to professional talk was not very smooth.

Ping exhibited some apprehension, not with Jennifer, but rather with the task at hand. He seemed somewhat unsure of what was expected of him and what they were to actually accomplish. Ping explained, in his gentle, unassuming way, that he was concerned that he had failed his manager in some way. Clearly, this reaction correlated to the "Chinese concept of face," which is an "unwritten set of rules by which people in society cooperate to avoid unduly damaging one another's prestige and self-respect" (Gannon, 2004, p. 382). Ping was trying to "save [himself] and everyone else from embarrassment" (Gannon, 2004, p. 383).

Recognizing that "the Chinese tend to seriously take their relationship with others" (Gannon, 2004, p. 391), Jennifer quietly and respectfully allowed Ping to express his viewpoint as well as his anxiety. Then, she reassured him that their time together would be designed to specifically identify ways in which he could build upon his current success. Seeing the situation through Ping's eyes, Jennifer was careful to avoid the terminology of strengthening his skill set, as the

Chinese are known for typically “avoiding strength” and striving to “win without fighting” (Gannon, 2004, p. 385); such assertive behavior is reserved for superiors or authority figures. Ping was primarily focused on the success of his entire team and not on his individual achievement. He also saw his own needs as secondary to the manager’s perceived desires. A consistent contributor, Ping sees himself as one of the group who works on project production and delivering results for the manager to share, not the one on whom the spotlight should shine. Now, center stage, he admits to a lack of confidence – both in his command of the English language and in his ability to adequately and properly present in front of an audience.

In the United States, individual initiatives are highly valued. In most situations, feedback is focused on specific behaviors. Often, discussion demands debate, and those involved will openly challenge each other. Such immediate interaction is not only accepted, but may be expected. Contrary to the American approach is the Chinese communication tactic, by which “the Chinese usually spend a long time getting to know people before doing business with them” (Gannon, 2004, p. 391).

Ping’s style of rhetoric has been shaped by his country’s customs. Knowing that “Chinese culture is closely linked to language (Gannon, 2004, pp. 384-385),” Jennifer kept in mind that, on the other hand, “English language is a low-context language that is direct and understandable” (Gannon, 2004, pp. 384-385). Conversely, “Chinese language is high-context – complex meanings force the writer/speaker to choose words carefully” (Gannon, 2004, pp. 384-385).

Here is where Ping's cultural perspective is pivotal to the progress and success of this coaching commitment. His reticence in meetings is rooted in reverence, especially for senior managers. Additionally, he has difficulty persuading people within a professional environment, perhaps due to a notion that only managers have the power or right to cause others a quandary of "face" that persuasion per se may seem to present. Ping's hesitance to speak is housed in a communication framework unfamiliar to most of his American colleagues and superiors. "Most leaders in the United States believe that the majority of the people who work for them want to develop interpersonal relationships characterized by trust and open communication" (Adler, 2002, p. 147). For Ping, this is unnatural, uncomfortable, and almost unfathomable.

What are the differences that matter? Cultures are situational and complex. Ping originates from an environment where the norms for employees place contemplation above conversation. Power is derived from withholding information, not by openly sharing ideas. He has realized success within his current role to this point; however, future achievement and culturally recognized contribution are now dependent on the boundaries of his comfort zone being challenged and changed. China is a collective society, unlike America, which is rated the most in individualism. The common good is always the priority. Asking Ping to prove himself by personal public presentation in a group forum is a foreign concept in his mind. To his manager, it is absolutely fundamental to his professional growth – he must be able to be strategic and speak well, too. "English-speaking countries ranked higher on individual achievement and lower

on the desire for security" (Adler, 2002, p. 159). In contrast, subordinates in China find safety in following the direction set forth by superiors; they consistently reach for universal goals within the walls of the corporation.

Jennifer's responsibility as Ping's coach is to "help [him] achieve [his] goals, to realize what matters to [him]" (Rosinski, 2003, p. 172). This coaching engagement is predicated on "helping [Ping] discover new options, shifting perspectives, and possibly leveraging different orientations" (Rosinski, 2003, p. 75). Harmony and balance are important values in Chinese culture, and incorporating them into the overall development plan will keep Ping "listening to [his] needs and to the needs of others" (Rosinski, 2003, p. 83).

"The coaching relationship assumes equality" (Rosinski, 2003, p. 123). Wanting to maintain a solid relationship and to make substantial progress with Ping, Jennifer was careful to clarify the ways in which she hoped they would both develop during this experience. Identified as his coach – in essence, a change agent working in conjunction with him – Jennifer would explore all avenues of excellence and pave the way for him to accomplish great goals.

His manager had already determined the area of focus. In some respects, this was a positive platform to have in place, because the Chinese have an unrelenting respect for authority. Therefore, Ping would not challenge the directive. Jennifer did ask Ping, however, to define a development plan from which they would distinguish degrees of improvement, identify actions to be taken, describe measurements of change and effectiveness, and list benefits to himself, his colleagues, his manager, and the organization.

Given the cultural considerations, Ping's concerns, and the corporation's expectations, Jennifer chose Rosinski's (2003) Visionary Model as an exploratory exercise with Ping. They met in the lobby of a hotel across the street from his office. Creating a safe environment off site was a deliberate design decision on the coach's part. Jennifer asked Ping to describe for her the ideal situation in which he could deliver a positive presentation. He was pensive – characteristically so – and then answered in one sentence: "I just need to do well, so they are not disappointed." Clearly, he was uncertain about how to verbally illustrate what success in this situation would look like. In a somewhat informal fashion, Jennifer then asked Ping to "identify the levers (motivators, competencies, culture, etc.)" (Rosinski, 2003, p. 87) that would portray a presentation for which he could be proud. He requested some time to think about it, and then sent Jennifer his answers on paper. She accommodated this appeal, because it seemed the best way at the time to continue in their coaching endeavor. Since Ping was already willing to write, Jennifer suggested he expand his thoughts to include enablers and obstacles for his success. His answers would undoubtedly underscore and facilitate the follow-up session.

As Jennifer explained to Ping and his manager, she needed to spend some time in-house with them to "identify key stakeholders, find synergies, and deal with challenging situations" (Rosinski, 2003, pp. 138-139). Her immersion into the situation was intended to help Ping "find a similar wavelength" (Rosinski, 2003, p. 116) with his communication style and those of his colleagues, and effectively establish an "intersection of desires" (Rosinski, 2003, pp. 114-115) for

himself, his manager, and his team. It was only in watching what transpired during meetings and discussions that Jennifer was be able to first “step back and look at the big picture” (Rosinski, 2003, p. 103), gather data from others, and then embark on the comprehensive coaching journey with Ping.

Next steps for Jennifer included securing videotapes of Chinese presentations, to review the way in which they convey messages. Watching the group dynamics, body language, and audience reactions helped to “ignite [Jennifer’s] thinking” (Rosinski, 2003, p. 177); “such careful observation is what enables intuition to generate valuable knowledge” (Rosinski, 2003, p. 179). By comparing the similarities and differences of two cultures, she could “help [Ping] make changes and venture into new territories” (Rosinski, 2003, p. 181).

Jennifer and Ping agreed to work together, on a weekly basis, for three months. Some of the coaching sessions, depending on calendar conflicts and logistics, occurred via telephone. In addition, Jennifer shadowed Ping, paying particular attention to how he navigated meetings and how the others in the room reacted to his participation. Coach and client debriefed each experience, and then discussed Ping’s signature strengths, his communication style, and his continued concerns. Meeting Ping where he is today will empower him to move into the future.

At the six-week mark, Ping’s confidence became increasingly evident. So, Jennifer encouraged her client to take a bold, decisive step forward. The timing was perfect. Ping’s manager provided a deliverable date—March 15—when Ping would be listed on the agenda as the primary presenter for the team’s

monthly status meeting. Recognizing this as an opportunity, Ping also understood that measurable outcomes are the result of managing obstacles. He needed to prepare, practice, and ultimately execute with precision. The efforts and effectiveness of this coaching engagement could ultimately strengthen both Ping's position within the organization and his skill set for the future.

Ping stepped to the podium, and delivered a presentation that was technically flawless, and in his mind, surprisingly favorable with the audience. Of course, he knew the data inside and out, but now he was able to answer the questions with poise. He worked hard to establish and maintain eye contact – something that Ping struggled with, because it was not natural for him or common in his culture. The smiles from across the room signaled he was speaking at a good pace, and his words were welcomed. Ping's achievement became abundantly clear when his manager shook his hand, following the unexpected and formerly unknown applause.

Jennifer and Ping were able to leverage components of his culture and his current accomplishment to build better bridges. Moving forward, synergistic solutions can alter the way in which Ping views his own success. Moreover, they could also reinforce the mission of both the manager and the team. For the Chinese, "action must have a purpose" (Gannon, 2004, p. 383). While this coaching experience may not have necessarily catapulted Ping's career, it certainly did become the catalyst for his personal and professional change.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION

As my professor, Dr. Janet Greco, says, “Stories bring the bullet points to life.” That is exactly what I sought to accomplish in authoring and assembling this collection of coaching stories. It is in the minds, the words, and the actions of these fictional characters working in imagined environments that I hope the reader is able to assimilate the differences in their decisions, directions, and development. Through their journeys, the juxtaposition of coaching theory, techniques, and tools are presented.

Woven into the tapestry of this thesis are tales that bring together common criteria of coaching engagements, facilitation strategies that foster behavior transformation, and concrete conversations that are essential to professionals in a selection of organizations. I specifically created circumstances that are analogous to many aspects of corporate life. Most people can hopefully relate to a majority of the characters as well as the plights within each plot. With ease, the reader may leave the sidelines and step into the story lines.

Stories offer learning in a form that is easy to assimilate and integrate. They allow us to put ourselves in the place of the central character with minimum effort. By inhabiting for a moment what that person imagines, feels, and decides, we are able to gauge our own growth and perhaps bypass missteps we would have otherwise taken. We actually gain maximum benefit from seeing the situation unfold and then flourish.

People mostly love to talk about themselves. Giving them a platform to share their passion through personal narratives opens the door to dialogue and connects the dots of communication. Stories are diagrams that demonstrate where human beings have been, where they are now, and where they hope to be in the future. They give us all the chance to highlight the happenings that make the most sense, to understand the purpose of probing for the best answers, and to bring clarity of thought to moments of uncertainty.

"Listening to stories makes you smarter" (Simmons, 2001, p. 195). An increase in my intellectual capacity occurred during the Stories in Organizations course. This change had nothing to do with I.Q. and everything to do with knowledge. Along the way, each of us gathers multiple selves that provide enough diversity so we can function in life. These identities are a composite of the mental constructs in which we see the world and ourselves (McAdams 1993). Responding to the complexity of internal and external influences, we choose important things to remember. We also rank the experiences that are most challenging, most promising, and most memorable. Each person organizes life differently, according to preference, potential, and possibility. As we journey toward our optimal life, development occurs in different places at different times and with different people. Stories help us move out of the neutral zone and into an area of action (Bridges, 2003,). The use of stories can augment transition and provide objective evidence of good decisions.

The content of Stories in Organizations coupled with my decision to pursue the coaching track within the Organizational Dynamics (OD) program

simultaneously provided me a parallel between coaching and storytelling. Action-oriented and client-centric, these two activities have a symbiotic relationship. When we listen to someone's story, we validate that person. "Sharing an important story is a bonding experience," and "you never know how much you will learn" (Simmons, 2001, p. 190). Eventually, we can become characters in each other's life chronicles, too.

During the remainder of my tenure in the OD program, stories were the energy that powered my kaleidoscopic journey in the coaching studies concentration. Unique and intriguing at every angle, with each turn, this curriculum has equipped me with the tools to pursue new opportunities with a responsibility that is both monumental and multi-dimensional.

Life's lessons and personal histories are housed in stories, like the ones in Chapters 2 through 6. Through creating those characters, their circumstances, and the choices they made, I have installed the instruments I plan to implement myself in an effecting coaching practice. In addition, I have identified several principles that I believe would be pivotal to the success of that pursuit.

When faced with what sometimes seems an insurmountable array of problematic situations, I will seek solutions. In building strong teams, I will tackle the unthinkable and thrive. Making sound decisions requires that I stand firm in support of the significant. In order to direct my own development, I must confidently step out of the comfort zone. Guiding others to their optimal life, I will honestly acknowledge the potential in every person. As a conscientious coach I will continually recognize the remarkable and remain a resource to my clients.

To maintain balance in all relationships, I will work to establish equilibrium when nothing appears equal. When necessary, I will carefully stage the time to step up and also the point at which it is appropriate to step away. Navigating through negotiation, I will diffuse dilemmas with sound and strategic designs. Understanding that variety is invaluable, I need to be cognizant of the common and colorful threads of one's personal and professional worlds. Open to observation and subsequent discussion, I will be mindful there is always more to someone than meets the eye. Sensitive to how my client might feel, I will be daring and diplomatic in receiving and delivering data. In an effort to reveal more of myself, I will be more courageous and less certain. Finally, the most meaningful measure I can take on the coaching quest is to embrace everyone's story – which always has the right to be told.

REFERENCES

Adler, Nancy J. (2002). *From Boston to Beijing: Managing with a World View.* Cincinatti, Ohio: South-Western.

Atkins, Stuart. (2002). *The Name of Your Game*. Los Angeles, California: Bcon LIFO® International, Inc.

Bridges, 2003, William. (1991, 2003). *Managing Transitions.* Cambridge, Massachusetts: Da Capo Press.

Chapman, Tony; Best, Bill; Van Casteren, Paul. (2003). *Executive Coaching*. New York, New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

Denning, Stephen. (2005). *The Leader's Guide to Storytelling*. San Fransisco, California: Jossey-Bass.

Gannon, Martin J. (2004). *Understanding Global Cultures.* Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.

Goldsmith, Marshall; Lyons, Laurence; Freas, Alyssa. (2000). *Coaching for Leadership.* San Fransisco, California: Jossey-Bass/Pfeiffer.

Hudson, Frederic M. (1999). *The Handbook of Coaching*. New York, New York: Jossey-Bass.

Kheel, Theodore M. (2001). *The Keys to Conflict Resolution*. New York, New York: Four Walls Eight Windows.

Leibling, Mike; Prior, Robin. (2003). *Coaching Made Easy*. Great Britain, UK: Clays Ltd, St. Ives plc.

Lippit, Gordon; Lippit, Ronald. (1986). *The Consulting Process in Action.* San Diego, California: University Associates, Inc.

McAdams, Dan. (1993). *The Stories We Live By*. New York, New York: The Guilford Press.

Napier, Rod; McDaniel, Rich. (2006). *Measuring What Matters*. Mountain View, California: Davies-Black.

Orenstein, Ruth. (2002). Executive Coaching: It's Not Just About the Executive. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 38(3): 355-374.

Rosinski, Philippe. (2003). *Coaching Across Cultures*. Boston, Massachusetts: Nicholas Brealey Publishing.

Silsbee, Douglas K. (2004). *The Mindful Coach*. Marshall, North Carolina: Ivy River Press.

Simmons, Annette. (2001). T*he Story Factor*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Perseus Publishing.

Stober, Dianne R.;Grant, Anthony M. (2006). *Evidence Based Coaching.* Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

APPENDIX A

LIFO – PERSONALITY TYPES

SP/GV = Supportive/Giving

Values EXCELLENCE.
Goals: Prove Worth, Be Helpful
Strengths: Principled, Cooperative, Dedicated, Pursue Excellence

---

AD/DL = Adapting/Dealing

Values HARMONY.
Goals: Know People, Get Along, Be Likeable
Strengths: Flexible, Harmonious, Tactful, Aware

CS/HD = Conserving/Holding

Values REASON.
Goals: Be slow! Be sure.
Strengths: Systematic, Unified, Maintain the Course, Tenacious

---

CT/TK = Controlling/Taking

Values ACTION.
Goals: Be competent, Get Results.
Strengths: Persistent, Urging, Initiating, Directing

APPENDIX B

JOB ASSESSMENT FORM

Is this job for me?

DATE: _____

CORPORATION: _____

POSITION TITLE: _____

What do you expect to gain from joining this company?

_____

_____

To what extent does this position meet your career goals? (Please circle).

Completely				Somewhat				Not at all	
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

How would you rate this overall career opportunity? (Please circle).

Excellent				Average				Poor	
10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

What elements of this position do you find particularly compelling?

_____

_____

What areas of this company/business/industry do you find particularly interesting?

_____

_____

How would you rate the interviewer(s)? (Please circle).

	Excellent					Average				Poor
KNOWLEDGE	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
PREPARATION	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
ENTHUSIASM	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
INTERACTION	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Comments

_____

_____

How would you rate yourself during this interview? (Please circle).

	Excellent					Average				Poor
KNOWLEDGE	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
PREPARATION	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
ENTHUSIASM	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
INTERACTION	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Comments

_____

_____

What interests you most about this job opportunity?

_____

_____

What concerns do you have about this job opportunity?

_____

_____

List the *pros* associated with this job opportunity.

_____

_____

List the *cons* associated with this job opportunity.

_____

_____

Overall, how would you rate this job opportunity? (Please circle).

	Excellent					Average			Poor	
KNOWLEDGE	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
PREPARATION	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
ENTHUSIASM	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
INTERACTION	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1

Will you take this job, if offered? Why? Why not?

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

THE GROUP MANAGEMENT QUESTIONNAIRE (GMQ)

The Group Management Questionnaire (GMQ)

Napier, Sanaghan & Roberts

in Napier & McDaniel (2006)

INSTRUCTIONS

Below you will find 72 statements relating to management and team effectiveness. While it focuses on a wide range of leadership behavior, we are primarily interested in the management process within the group context. Our assumption is that your team meets together on a regular basis and plays a functional role within the organization. This questionnaire will help the leader and the team itself evaluate their effectiveness as a unit in relation to various aspects of the group process. A smoothly functioning group which scores high in most of the elements of this instrument will have become an effective 'team'.

If you mostly agree that a particular statement is representative of how your group operates, place an X on the corresponding number in the Answer Grid. Thus, if you mostly agree with the statement "6, you would place an X on the line above the 6. If you do not agree that this is reflective of what occurs in the group most of the time, you would leave the item blank.

The analysis of data from you and the other group members will lead to some previously known information (though not necessarily addressed). In addition, there will undoubtedly be some new insights which may be useful in moving your group forward. Your responses will be anonymous. Clearly, the value of the exercise rests in the willingness of you and other group members to answer as honestly as possible regarding your perspectives of the group. With this valuable information, the group will have the opportunity to deal with the picture created from the data.

Please attempt to respond to all of the statements. If you are not certain, answer the best you can and move ahead. Because of the large number of statements, no single item will change the overall picture you or others create.

1. The goals of this group are clear and understood by all its members.

2. People in this group are committed to working collaboratively with the other members of the group.

3. It appears that we have the skills and resources within this group to deal with difficult interpersonal issues.

4. The people in this work group are rewarded appropriately for the work they do.

5. Communications/information is openly shared and accessible to all members of this group.

6. Individual opinions are solicited regarding the building of meeting agendas for the group.

7. When possible, leadership responsibilities are shared among the members of this work group.

8. Individuals within the group receive periodic feedback from their supervisor.

9. Values agreed to by the group are periodically measured against the actual behaviors used by members within the group.

10. Individuals feel free to express both what they feel and think within the group.

11. When conflict arises, the group is willing to deal with it in a timely manner.

12. Individuals feel affirmed and appreciated for their efforts and contributions.

13. Members of the group receive necessary information when they need it.

14. Agendas are communicated prior to any meeting with the group.

15. The leader or facilitator of the group actively solicits feedback regarding his or her performance in that role.

16. Supervision is valued in this organization; we know this because supervisors are provided with the time and incentive to do it well.

17. The group or team goals are specific and measurable.

18. There is a sense of camaraderie and spirit within the group.

19. Providing feedback is often seen as an essential part of conflict resolution.

20. People feel appreciated because all group members are informed of the accomplishments of one another.

21. Lines of communication and information are clear within the group.

22. There is consistent monitoring and follow-up of commitments made during meetings of the group.

23. The roles and authority of the various group members are clear.

24. Individuals are provided the time and encouragement necessary to develop new skills and professional interests.

25. There is a high degree of participation and, thus, ownership in the group's goals.

26. Individuals feel free to give honest feedback to other group members regarding what they do well and areas of needed improvement.

27. Most of the group members believe that conflict can be a constructive and necessary aspect of ongoing group development.

28. Both group and individual accomplishments are recognized and celebrated as a natural part of the life of the group.

29. Leaders of the organization respond to the concerns and questions of individual group members in a timely manner.

30. Meetings are evaluated and the information is used to improve the design and functioning of future meetings.

31. The leader has the ability to assess the different needs of individuals within the group and to intervene appropriately in a constructive and supportive manner based on this information.

32. Individuals receive in-depth evaluations of their performance which are based upon mutually established goals and measurable outcomes.

33. There is a high degree of commitment to the completion of the goals of the group.

34. People in the group feel heard by one another.

35. Differences in style and background are perceived as valuable assets during conflict situations.

36. Rewards are clearly related to the accomplishment of individual goals.

37. Individuals temporarily absent from the group are informed and kept up to date.

38. Meetings are “designed” effectively in advance of the session so participant resources are well utilized and time is used effectively.

39. The leader is a skilled facilitator with the ability to move the group forward and create changes as needed.

40. Work delegated to individuals challenges them and readies them for greater responsibility.

41. Progress toward group goals is evaluated on a regular basis.

42. Supporting and helping one another are valued as essential behaviors of all members of the team.

43. When conflict arises among group members, there is the belief that a fair resolution will be reached.

44. Rewards are perceived as being fairly distributed among group members.

45. Communication between this and other groups is effective.

46. People involved in meetings believe they contribute to the success of the meeting.

47. Group members believe they have the opportunity to influence both the tone and direction of the group.

48. Performance reviews are based on self reports, data from people influenced by the individual, and observations and experiences of the supervisor.

49. The goals of the group are a reflection of the values and the vision of the group.

50. Humor is used positively rather than as a put down that minimizes others.

51. Seeking data is often a means of creating an objective reality base in conflict situations.

52. People in the group tend to feel appreciated for the work they do rather than taken for granted.

53. Written communication is clear and used appropriately (not too much, not too little).

54. Having humor, fun and celebration in meetings is natural and occurs frequently.

55. Members of the group believe they have the ability to influence those decisions which impact them.

56. Supervisors take the time to support and coach individuals.

57. The mission of the group is perceived as dynamic and open to the changing needs of the workplace.

58. There is a high level of trust among the members of the group.

59. A key norm in the group is ‘dealing’ with difficult feedback or information up front rather than letting it fester.

60. Opportunities for advancement and special perks are seen as open to those qualified.

61. Lines of communication are open and fluid, with information and feedback being continually solicited and used.

62. The group has the ability to adjust meeting agendas to address the changing priorities of the group.

63. Individuals given positions of leadership are supported in clarifying their roles, authority and expected levels of responsibility.

64. Supervision is developmentally focused; there are opportunities for professional and personal growth.

65. The visioning process of this group creates a shared picture of the future; its direction and priorities.

66. Most often mistakes are treated as sources of learning rather than as signs of failure with blame attached.

67. During conflict the group is often able to break old patterns and reframe the situation to move to resolution.

68. Simple signs of appreciation and acknowledgement, such as “thank yous” are common.

69. When people have problems with another individual they communicate directly with that person rather than taking their concern underground.

70. Meetings of the group are rarely boring since each agenda item is treated as a unique event and carries with it an appropriate strategy.

71. Leaders are seen diagnosing individuals, their group or the larger system to make changes necessary for organizational effectiveness.

72. Periodically supervisors are reviewed by their direct reports, peers, and bosses in relation to their supervisory effectiveness.

THE ANSWER GRID

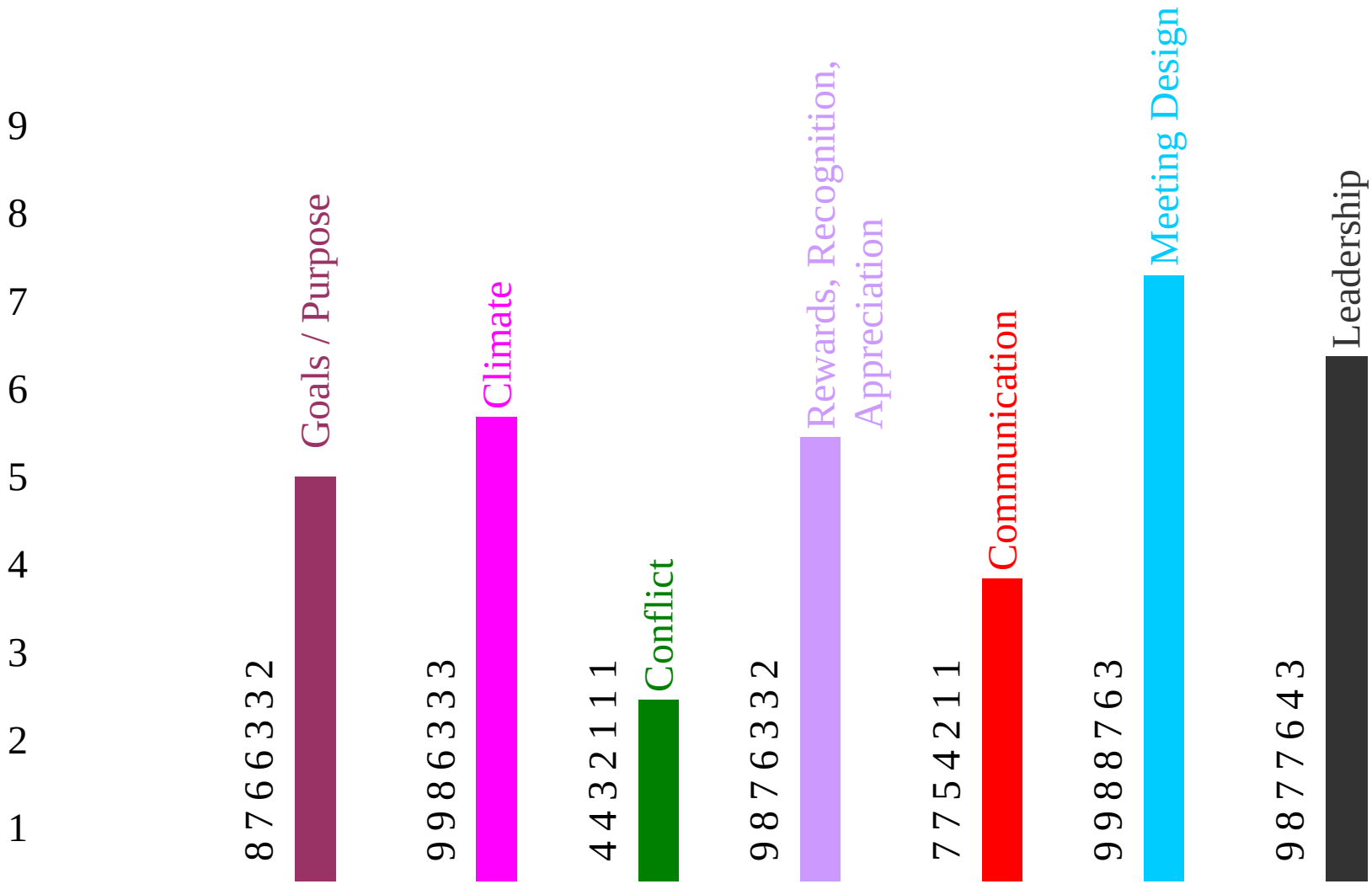
Each number in the answer grid corresponds to a statement in the following pages. If you MOSTLY AGREE to a statement as it relates to your particular work group, place an X over the number in the grid. If you do not mostly agree, leave the number in the grid blank. Working from left to right, please respond to each question.

Again, marking an X means you mostly agree that a particular statement reflects the way in which your group currently operates.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32
33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48
49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56
57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64
65	66	67	68	69	70	71	72

APPENDIX D

GMQ GRAPH



Average Score	**5.0**	**5.9**	**2.3**	**5.4**	**3.9**	**7.1**	**6.3**	**3.1**
Low Scores: 0-3	**3**	**3**	**5**	**3**	**3**	**1**	**1**	**4**
High Scores: 7-9	**2**	**3**	**0**	**3**	**2**	**5**	**4**	**1**
Individual Items With Low Scores	**9, 18**	**26**	**3, 19, 35 51, 59**	**28, 36, 68**	**21, 45, 69**	**62**	**55**	**40, 48, 72**