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Aspects Of Using Animal-Assisted Interventions In A Coaching Model

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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: Larry Starr

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Aspects Of Using Animal-Assisted Interventions In A Coaching Model

Abstract

The purpose of this capstone is to describe several aspects of using an Animal-Assisted Intervention in a coaching model. My assumptions and arguments are based on eighteen years of volunteer work using dogs in hospital environments as well as the use of horses in therapeutic applications. The format for my capstone is framed by four courses completed in the Organizational Dynamics program each of which addresses a core component of my coaching model. Topics addressed include the background of Animal-Assisted Interventions and possible applications to a coaching environment (DYNM 641 The Art and Science of Organizational Coaching); a discussion of the ownership of the animals involved in a coaching role (DYNM 671 Ownership Matters); an analysis of the various risks that might be encountered in such a business (DYNM 604 Risk Management); and finally, my personal stories that support my belief that I can launch a viable enterprise using animals in a coaching environment (DYNM 673 Stories in Organizations).

Comments

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ASPECTS OF USING ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS
IN A COACHING MODEL

by

Lisa Serad

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

2010

ASPECTS OF USING ANIMAL-ASSISTED INTERVENTIONS
IN A COACHING MODEL

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this capstone is to describe several aspects of using an Animal-Assisted Intervention in a coaching model. My assumptions and arguments are based on eighteen years of volunteer work using dogs in hospital environments as well as the use of horses in therapeutic applications. The format for my capstone is framed by four courses completed in the Organizational Dynamics program each of which addresses a core component of my coaching model. Topics addressed include the background of Animal-Assisted Interventions and possible applications to a coaching environment (DYNM 641 The Art and Science of Organizational Coaching); a discussion of the ownership of the animals involved in a coaching role (DYNM 671 Ownership Matters); an analysis of the various risks that might be encountered in such a business (DYNM 604 Risk Management); and finally, my personal stories that support my belief that I can launch a viable enterprise using animals in a coaching environment (DYNM 673 Stories in Organizations).

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I also wish to extend my deepest appreciation to my other readers, Jane Combrinck-Graham, JD, and Andrew Lamas, JD. Their level heads encouraged me to think about many aspects of this business that I hadn't fully considered, and for that, I am eternally grateful.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I have been volunteering in the field of Animal Assisted Therapy since 1992. I often joke that if I only were paid for the volunteer work I do, then I would not need a job. In theory, it would be wonderful to earn a living for doing something that I love so much, I do it for free. I used this Capstone project to more deeply answer some questions about myself and my interests including: Could I work with people and animals on a platform that would be for-profit? How would that look? What issues would I face?

In Chapter 2, I worked with one of my coaching professors, William Wilkinsky, PhD, to answer a question concerning the use of animals in a coaching or team-building environment. I offered a theoretical argument to apply animal assistance to coaching tools I have learned. If I choose to pursue an MPhil, my focus would be to test the animal assisted model to coaching.

In Chapter 3, my Ownership Matters professor, Andrew Lamas, JD, and I teased out some of the issues surrounding the fair use of the animals including answer to the following questions: What are the central issues? How are animals viewed: as partners, slaves or employees? Are they entitled to share in any profits? I reviewed literature on the human-animal relationship throughout history, and discuss differences between treatments of pets versus animals produced for the food industry. This helped

me formulate my vision of how a coaching practice using animals might be shaped to benefit both the animals and the clients.

Chapter 4 deals with how I might structure the business of a coaching practice using animals, as well as thinking about risks I may face. Working with my Risk Management professor, Jane Combrinck-Graham, JD, I identified and analyzed risks including how they could be managed when turning my avocation into a vocation.

Chapter 5 helped me to understand my past and envision the future. Janet Greco, PhD, my professor for both Foundations in Organizational Dynamics and Stories in Organizations, helped me revision some stories from my past, applying tools and knowledge from my Organizational Dynamics journey, as well envision potential stories for my future as an organizational actor, regardless of what organization I find myself in.

CHAPTER 2

USING ANIMALS IN A COACHING ENVIRONMENT

In this Chapter, I respond to the following questions about the use of animals in therapeutic environments provided to me by Dr. Bill Wilkinsky from whom I completed DYNM 641 Art and Science of Coaching: Do you feel that the use of animals is applicable in an organizational coaching (or team building) environment? Are there any specific populations that this may work particularly well with? Do you anticipate specific populations where this would not be beneficial? How do you expect to alter coaching tools you have learned to fit within this model?

Personal Connection

There is a growing field using animals in therapeutic environments (e.g., dogs in hospitals and nursing homes, horses in therapeutic riding programs, animals with ADD and ADHD populations.) I have been volunteering in Animal Assisted Therapy and Animal Assisted Activities since 1992. I have worked with four of my pet dogs and several horses at a local facility that helps the disabled to ride. Several years ago, I attended a conference sponsored by the University of Pennsylvania's Veterinary School's Center for Interaction of Animals and Society. One of the Speakers was Dr. Aubrey Fine. Had I heard Dr. Fine speak while I was still in college the first time, my career path would have undoubtedly been altered. Dr. Fine is a faculty member of California State Polytechnic University, who also has a clinical practice focusing on "the

treatment of children with attention, behavioral, adjustment, and developmental disorders.” (from Dr. Fine’s bio) He described his office, and his “partners” that happened to be dogs, birds, and fish, among other species. He spoke of his sessions with clients, and having the animals help elicit responses from them, or using the animal’s behavior as a metaphor for their own. I was spellbound, and filed that memory away, hoping that one day, I would be able to merge my passion: working with animals; my hobbies: working with animals; and make them a career.

I began my journey towards my MSOD in the Leadership and Management track, and in the homestretch of that journey, stumbled upon the emerging academic domain of coaching. As I took more coaching classes, I began to envision using animals in the coaching arena, just as Dr. Fine used them in therapeutic sessions with his young clients and so in the remainder of this paper, I propose and describe Animal Assisted Coaching (AAC).

The Blurry History of AAA and AAT

There are disputes as to who first began using animals in a therapeutic manner, and exactly when they were used. There are several species that are used, such as dogs, birds, and horses, to name just a few. Some people take their own pets, usually dogs, into hospitals and nursing homes to visit with patients. Others use animals from a shelter or zoo program. There are many medical professionals who use animals in their practices. There are even differences in how each species is utilized in the therapeutic process. Some therapists use the horses for the patients to ride, because the motion of the horse is similar to walking, and they feel people with physical limitations can benefit

from this form of “hippotherapy”. Other therapists use the horses to mirror a client’s behavior, or for use in “trust” exercises. One of the earliest examples I can find is from Professor James Serpell from the University of Pennsylvania’s School of Veterinary Medicine, who writes that a psychiatrist, James H. S. Bossard claimed in 1944 that pets could help children with their communication, self-esteem and empathy (Serpell, 1986. p. 93) It was not until the 1960’s that the term “pet therapy” was used by another psychiatrist, Boris Levinson. Serpell writes,

In 1964 an American child psychiatrist, Boris Levinson, first coined the phrase “pet therapy’ to describe the use of pet animals in the treatment of psychiatric disorders. ... the animal acted somehow acted as an ‘ice-breaker’, first helping to soften the child’s initial hostility and reserve, and then providing a focus of communication between patient and therapist. (Serpell, 1986. p.89)

As we see, to further muddy the waters, there is no real uniformity in the terms for the use of animals in therapeutic environments either. What is generally accepted are the terms the Delta Society uses: animal-assisted activities (AAA) which are not goal directed, such as pet visitations for the purpose of making the patient simply feel better, or lifting the spirits of those in hospitals and other institutions (commonly referred to as “pet therapy”); and animal-assisted therapy (AAT), which is usually practiced with by, or under the guidance of a licensed medical professional, with a formulated treatment process and defined goals. For the purpose of this paper, I will refer to Animal Assisted Coaching as AAC.

In my 18 years of volunteering, I have had the opportunity to participate in both AAA and AAT with 3 different dogs, all my pets, all registered with a group called, Therapy Dogs International. True to my experiences, I read that others have similar

experiences, as Christiane Deaton writes, “As with many other disciplines that are still in the early phases of professional development, there is no general agreement on how AAA or AAT is to be conducted. We find many variations, depending on setting and target population.” (Deaton, 2005. p. 48) Katherine Kruger, MSW and Professor James Serpell, both of the University of Pennsylvania, have chosen to group them together in their writings, under the general term “animal-assisted interventions” – defined in their writing as “any intervention that intentionally includes or incorporates animals as part of a therapeutic or ameliorative process or milieu.” (Fine, 2006. p. 25)

The “softening” of children that Levinson describes is what I have witnessed many times, in my years of volunteering at an inner city children’s hospital. Many patients, especially teenage boys, simply melt when my 95 pound Rhodesian Ridgeback dog enters the room. As tough as some attempt to act, then usually revert to just being kids, with a big puppy in their midst. Professor Serpell credits Levinson with much of the groundbreaking work in the field of “pet therapy”:

Clearly, ‘pet therapy’ or at least the notion that animals can have a socializing or therapeutic influence was not new, but until Levinson came along it had been hardly more than an appealing idea with little sensible theoretical underpinning, and no scientific credibility whatsoever. (Serpell, 1986. p. 93)

To confound the arena even more, there are widely varying views if it even is of any help to people. There is very little quantitative research on the phenomenon of “pet therapy.” There are reams of anecdotal evidence that it works, and I can share my own 18 years of experience, but many people state the same thing in many ways, that there needs to be quantitative research done on the human-animal realm of therapeutic interventions.

Many people discount the studies that do exist for many reasons, many of which are valid. Some lack a control group, others have too many variables to test against, and some are deemed too subjective because of self-reporting biases on the part of the participant or the researcher. As summarized by Jan Yorke, *et. al*(2008).:

Research has shown that relationships with companion animals (e.g., dogs, cats) may have positive effects on depression (Odendaal 2000), blood pressure (Katcher et al. 1983), coronary survival rates (Friedmann et al 1980), and quality of health among the elderly (Seigel 1990). (Yorke, 2008. p. 18)

In the study on coronary survival rates by Erika Friedmann, Professor Serpell discusses her study of heart attack patients, who lived both with and without pets, and learned that pets appeared to enhance their owners' recovery:

it appeared that pets actually enhanced the recovery of their owners irrespective of the seriousness of the original attack. They even countered the suggestion that pet-owners were psychologically different from non-owners and were therefore predisposed to survive better. ... Friedmann and her supervisors, Aaron Katcher and James Lynch, began looking for this explanation in people's physiological responses to animals. If it could be shown, for instance, that pets somehow helped their owners to relax physically then it would be possible to argue in favour of a direct therapeutic influence of pet-ownership. (Serpell, 1986. p. 98-99)

Christiane Deaton' article discusses research that was conducted in Lima, OH, at a state hospital for the criminally insane. She writes that patients on the ward with pets needed less medication, and were less violent than wards without pets:

A study conducted at Lima (Lima State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, Lima, OH) in 1981 compared patients on a ward with pets to patients on a ward without pets. Lee reported that 'the patients with pets needed half as much medication, had drastically reduced incidents of violence and had no suicide attempts during the year-long comparison" (p 232). The ward without pets had eight documented suicide attempts during the same year. (Deaton, 2005 p. 50)

She also warns that the staff on the ward with pets was very much in favor of the idea, which may have led to any number of reporting biases.

One thing that is very different between using AAT in coaching, is the idea that in coaching, we are not trying to “fix” anything with the client. Our professors advise us time and again, that if we suspect any sort of psychological issues, we should refer them for help. Even in a correctional institutional environment, the goal is to “fix” the person, as Deaton explains,

Traditionally, educational programs in correctional institutions which intend to rehabilitate (or habituate) adult and juvenile offenders stay within proven, safe parameters considered appropriate for this setting. Most address specific “deficits” of the offender, such as lack of vocational skills, basic education needs/GED, drug and alcohol abuse, etc. (Deaton, 2005. p. 46) She further clarifies that there needs to be more research on the topic “as with any developing field, there is more literature available on practice than on research. (Deaton,2005. p. 48)

Applying Psychological Theory to Coaching

To begin the stretch of associating AAA and AAT to the coaching environment, we must think about some of the underpinnings of coaching. Although we are not to address psychological issues and try to “fix” people, that is what has been done in AAT to this point. Most of the groups studied using animals as a therapeutic tool have either been children, the elderly, or the institutionalized. What about healthy, “normal”, coaching clients? We have learned that the goal in coaching is not to fix something that has happened in the past, or to work with psychoses; we are to refer people with problems such as those to a therapist. Our goal in coaching is to help clients find their strengths, and help them to clear away the clutter that has been keeping them from performing at their best. This boundary may be unclear at times, but we should focus on the client’s strengths. In the book Co-Active Coaching, Whitworth writes the following about the boundaries between the two, “Unfortunately, the boundary between

counseling and coaching is not defined by a set of absolute terms. ... Coaching, however, does not focus on the emotional problem. Emotion may be present in the conversation, but it is not the work of the coaching.” (Whitworth, 1998. p. 180)

In their book, Goldsmith and Lyons, write that, “All coaching clients are not the same. They often have very different needs, and a cookie-cutter approach will not work.” (Goldsmith/Lyons, 2006. p. 113) Could one of the things that are missing be animals? Fine argues that animals can help restore our well being:

Freud’s concept of the “id” as a sort of basic animal essence in human nature bears more than a superficial resemblance to animistic and shamanistic ideas concerning animal souls and guardian spirits and the “inner” or spiritual origins of ill health.” ... “The solution to this growing sense of alienation was, according to Levinson, to restore a healing connection with our own unconscious animal natures by establishing positive relationships with real animals, such as dogs, cats and other pets. He argues that pets represent “a half-way station on the road back to emotional well-being.” (Fine, 2006. p. 14)

This is one of the reasons I feel that AAC may be beneficial with some clients, especially those who are animal people and/or feel that they do not have enough interaction with nature. Dr. Aubrey Fine discussed “Walking Therapy” in his talk I attended. He described how he sometimes uses this method with his clients. He will leash a dog, or take a bird and place it on his shoulder, and go for a walk with the client. What a wonderful coaching environment that would be, especially if one is stressed at work! Leave the place of stress, even if just for a short time. Perhaps taking a walk will get the endorphins flowing and your client will have an easier time moving some of their roadblocks, with less leading from his or her coach,

Goldsmith and Lyons also write that, “New coaches need to develop a wide repertoire of approaches, treat each situation as unique, and above all, listen to and respect the perspectives and ideas of their clients.” (Goldsmith/Lyons, 2006 p. 115)

This statement reminds me of another potential avenue for coaching: taking the coaching experience to the client’s “safe place.” In my few years in horses, most of my fellow horse owners are professionals: doctors, lawyers, nurses, accountants. Many of them claim that their time at the barn is their “therapy”, so why not coach at their barn? Apparently, some researchers have found the same holds true for others,

The barn was often described as a ‘nest’ or safe place that provided the context for healing. ... one participant explained, “Going to the barn and mucking out, and turning out, and feeding, being out in the country, being at one with nature, there’s a whole warmth to it, and it’s a very healing, positive warmth.” (Yorke, 2008. p. 25)

Usually, a horse is a good mirror for a person’s behavior. When the 1500 pound horse misbehaves, does the owner get angry? Do they look for a physical reason the horse is misbehaving? Do they look for a visual reason, such as a trash bag being blown along the driveway, or an unsecured tarp waving in the wind? Do they jokingly tell the horse it’s nothing to worry about, or, do they lash out at the horse, yell at it, or worse, hit it? These can be powerful insights as to how they behave in situations with people.

I spent many years as a dog obedience instructor, and now I am a certified Therapy Dog Evaluator. I can see the same connections between horses and their owners, and dogs and their owners. How a person reacts to a willful, misbehaving dog is usually a powerful insight into how they deal with coworkers and family members as well, so I can imagine this sort of mirror even being applied to the interactions between

the client and the family dog. Another thing about working with animals is that they know no class or rank. They are blind to titles. The horse or dog does not know the difference between mail room clerk and the CEO.

Establishing Rapport

The first step on the Wilkinsky Nine-Step Process, is the First Meeting. This may be a good place to bring in an animal assist. A recurring theme in much of the literature surrounding AAA and AAT, is that the animal serves to help establish a rapport between the therapist and the client. Of course, you would want to prescreen as much as possible to ensure there are no allergies, cultural objections or other problems such as the location of your meeting and if it is pet-friendly, or if the client has phobias, but this may be a great way to get to know your client. Dr. Fine discusses the presence of animals, “AAI practitioners and theorists have suggested that animals stimulate conversation by their presence and unscripted behavior and by providing a neutral, external subject on which to focus (Fine, 2000; Levinson, 1969).” (Fine, 2006. p. 28)

I have seen this myself in the volunteering I do. If I knock at a patient’s door, as some stranger who wants to talk to them, they aren’t interested. That was true twenty years ago, but now, with the flood of distractions such as cell phones, video games and laptops that children have in the hospital with them, it is even more obvious. But, when I knock at their door with a large, clean, happy, tail wagging dog, most of the time I get a very enthusiastic greeting. There is also a spillover effect in hospitals; often, the visitors and staff enjoy interacting with the dog as much as the patients do. Dr. Fine explains this concept in the following manner, “In therapeutic contexts, animals are often

described as alleviating the stress of the initial phases of therapy by serving a comforting, diverting role until the therapist and patient have developed a sound rapport.” (Fine, 2006. p. 30)

Social science indicates that perceptions are different when one is seen with an animal and without. Dr. Fine, who uses this extensively with his patients writes:

Studies of the ability of animals to alter perceptions of social desirability and to increase positive social interactions between strangers have been uniformly positive. When considered alongside the large numbers of anecdotal statements attesting to the power of animals to hasten the building of rapport between patients and therapist, as well as to facilitate meaningful interaction between the two, these findings have important healthcare implications. If the presence of an animal can make the therapist appear happier, friendlier, less threatening, and more relaxed, it seems reasonable to believe that some patients would achieve a greater sense of comfort more quickly. In addition to enhancing the patient’s perception of the healthcare provider, the presence of an animal provides a benign, external topic of conversation on which to focus, which may further hasten and enhance the development of a working alliance. (Fine, 2006. p. 29)

Professor Serpell also discussed social scientific works that relate to perceptions of humans and animals. In particular, he comments on the work of psychologist Randall Lockwood, and his Thematic Apperception Test or TAT, “Almost without exception he found that situations involving animals were perceived in a more positive light, and that people with animals were seen as friendlier, happier, less tense and less of a threat to others.” (Serpell, 1986. p. 103)

The idea that an animal can be so successful at bridging the gap between client and therapist makes one consider attachment issues. Will the client become overly attached to the animal and not interact with the therapist? In the volunteering I do, I have been asked many times if my dog was for sale, to which I reply that they are priceless. This often leads to discussions of where the parent can get a pet for their child when they recover or their condition improves to the point that they can leave the

hospital. Professor Serpell discounts the idea of a person becoming overly attached to animals,

Contrary to expectation, patients did not become so attached to their pets that they lost the will to interact with other people. Rather, the dog acted as a social catalyst, forging positive links between the subject and other patients and staff on the ward, and thus creating a 'widening circle of warmth and approval'. (Serpell, 1986. p. 94)

Fortunately, the Ninth Step of the Wilkinsky Program addresses disengaging and closure, and this can be addressed for both the coach and any animal assistant the coach utilizes in the coaching process.

Another Tool in the Toolbox

I do not expect one could have a practice of strictly working with people using animals as a tool to gain insight to their clients. What I would expect is that using animals can be one of many powerful tools a coach might have in his or her toolbox for overcoming obstacles they might face in their coaching practice. After all, coaching can be quite a bit of work, for both the coach and the client. Change is difficult! But animals have allow for something that is not permitted with human coaches: utilizing the sense of touch,

Aaron Katcher, an American psychiatrist, has compared this essentially one-way dialogue between owner and pet with the kind of empathetic, non-interventional relationship which certain types of psychotherapist attempt to establish with their patients. Furthermore, pets have an added advantage over human therapists in that one can stroke and cuddle them at the same time. (Serpell, 1986. p. 141)

In further support of this comment, in a study of the equine-Human bond of people recovering from trauma, "Riders emphasized the accepting and nonjudgemental nature of horses compared with humans. Most strikingly, they talked of the deep bonds forged

by exchanges of physical affection – something not ethically possible in therapist-client relationships.” (Yorke, 2008. p. 26)

According to Goldsmith and Lyons, status does play into the coaching environment,

How the coaching/consulting relationship evolves will depend on the rank and organizational position of the person being coached. Sociologically, the higher a person’s status, the more sacred one is as a social object, and the more care one must take in maintaining appearances. (Goldsmith/Lyons, 2006. p. 21)

The way animals help in this regard, is that they do not see status, rank or positions. They only see how they are treated and respond to it. If they are treated kindly then will be responsive to the person providing that kindness. If they are screamed at, hit or otherwise abused, then they will shut down, flee or strike back. In other words, they will be anything but responsive. Animals provide us with their own form feedback, and it is extremely important that a coach who is working with animals in their practice have extensive experience with the species of animal they are working with, as well as the individual animals that they are using in their practice. After all, predators and prey animals often respond quite differently when afraid. We cannot expect our client to be able to read the animal. Instead, it is the coach’s job to use the animal to help them read their client.

The Animal as a Mirror

The eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant also argued that ‘he who is cruel to animals becomes hard also in his dealings with men’, and more recently, Mahatma Gandhi suggested that the moral fibre of a nation could be judged by its treatment of animals. (Serpell, 1986. p. 105)

Christiane Deaton studied a correctional institution in New Mexico that used horses in a vocational program. The head of the program commented that he had seen

tremendous changes in the prisoners, “Especially the more violent guys... a lot of them have intimidated people with their size in their lives, and they seem to respect the power and strength of the animal. It humbles many of them.” (Deaton, 2005. p. 58) Again, this may be a stretch, but just as the power of the horse humbles the most violent and large inmates, I would expect that the same would be true of high ranking people. The animal assistant does not know if a person is a CEO of a Fortune 500 company, or an intern from a struggling start-up. The animals treat everyone in response to how they are treated. Deaton goes on to explain that, “Many inmates lack social upbringing and rely on power and control. To work with a horse, you have to have effective communication” (Deaton, 2005. p. 59) In many organizations, the lack of communication is often one of the biggest problems people face. I have learned with LIFO and HBDI, that sometimes, even if we are communicating, we are not hearing each other because we prefer different styles of communication. If inmates can learn to communicate with horses, surely, colleagues can learn to do so as well.

I had the opportunity several years ago at a conference, to speak to a woman who was running a Program at Chamonix Stables in Fairmount Park. They run a program called “Work to Ride”, which has received a good bit of press over the years. They take inner-city kids, and allow them to work at the barn and with horses in exchange for riding lessons. They even have a polo team that plays against the exclusive suburban schools in the area. They wanted to start a counseling program, and in order to reduce the insurance costs, the counseling program did not involve riding the horses. What the social worker did was to pair teenage clients with horses of a similar personality, and have them follow an obstacle course. She said that many of them, especially the most

stubborn kids who were paired with the most stubborn horse, struggled intensely with this task, but after they had time to reflect on the experience, many of them commented, “Wow, now I know why people get so short and frustrated with me!” This is an exercise I can envision being used after step 6 with a coaching client, especially with one who refutes what a feedback from their colleagues. Something like this may help them see themselves through the mirror of the horse.

Another exercise I can envision being used in team-building coaching scenarios are “Trust exercises.” I have participated in many “trust exercises” at management retreats over the years. One recent retreat, involved twelve people with a facilitator. Eight were blindfolded and seated at a large round table. The other four were not blindfolded and were instructed to allow not physical harm, or anything embarrassing to happen to anyone in the group. The facilitator was there to keep everyone on point. What was our task? To assemble a puzzle; blindfolded. The pieces were large, and not very intricate, and our team did accomplish the task. I have read accounts over the years of people using similar approaches with pairs of people, one blindfolded and one sighted, working with horses. Of course, a facilitator with extensive animal experience and knowledge of those specific animals is a must in an exercise such as this.

Of course, these are only pieces of the coaching work. As we read in Co-Active Coaching, by Whitworth,

A workshop, seminar, or off-site retreat can have extraordinary impact, but that impact may easily fade as individuals are separated from the experience over time. Coaching keeps the learning alive; in fact, it nourishes the seeds that were planted in that initial experience. Consultants and team leaders are turning to

coaching more and more as a means of sustaining change. (Whitworth, 2007. p. 185)

I would envision doing exercises such as those I described above as a part of a coaching assignment. The animals would be a small part of it, primarily at steps 1, 5, 6 and 9 of the 9 Step Process.

Considerations

I cannot say it enough, that due to a risk management standpoint, a coach should use animals only if they have extensive experience working with the species they are choosing, and they should have considerable experience with the individual animals with which they are “partnering”. Dr. Fine also reminds us that we should consider their welfare, and always provide shelter, water, and a place away from the work environment, “Questions regarding an animal’s suitability for therapy work arise primarily from risk management considerations (e.g. patient safety; liability issues) and concerns about animal welfare.” (Fine, 2006. p. 24)

Also, in the case of the animal, many patients at the hospitals I visit see my well-behaved dog, and jump to the thought that they should get one. I try to advise them, especially parents of children with extremely special needs, that it takes a tremendous amount of work to train a dog to the level at which mine work. Goldsmith and Lyons, as well as Wilkinsky in his 9-Step Process, discuss exit strategies in the coaching relationship. “It is very important that the coach and the client agree on an exit strategy at the beginning of the coaching relationship. It is even more important that they adhere to it.” (Goldsmith/Lyons, 2006. p. 114) I feel this is especially salient in light of any

human-animal bonding that occurs. Perhaps the coach will suggest that the client obtain a pet, or if their lifestyle is not conducive to pet ownership, maybe they can volunteer at a shelter or serve on the board of a zoo. But the coach must be clear that the client will not have access to the coach's animals after the end of the coaching engagement.

Conclusions

The relationship between animals and humans is still blurry. There still is no quantitative evidence. There are people who swear on their lives that it benefits both people and the animals involved, and there are people who swear it is useless. Almost all of the material I have read begs for carefully done, impartial studies, with control groups

For some people, it might work very well. I can imagine that for people who have lives that do not afford them the schedule to have animals, but who would like to have them, might really enjoy working with a coach who will share dogs, cats, or horses for a few hours. However, one must be sure to prescreen their clients with whom they would like to use this approach as it will not work with everyone. We must be conscious of people who have health or cultural considerations that are dissimilar to our own. After all, in the West, dogs are loyal members of the family, but in the Middle east, especially in Muslim cultures, the dog is often viewed as unclean and a pariah. In the Far East, we are horrified by the thought, but the fact is that dogs are eaten as a delicacy. In the US, horses are seen as symbol of freedom: the Wild West; however, they are hauled to Canada and Mexico in droves to supply the European taste for horsemeat. There are also considerable barriers to overcome, as there are problems of access to office

buildings where a client may work, time for the client to travel to the location where horses are stabled, as well as the previously discussed health and culture aspects. One must maintain the mindset that a well-trained, well-behaved, dependable animal that likes people, is great tool to have in your coaching toolbox.

When I volunteer in the hospital, not everyone wants the dog to visit. It is not my place to ask why. Allergies, phobias, cultural issues may be the reason, but because of privacy concerns, I cannot and should not, ask why. I simply bid them a good day or evening and go to the next room. The same will be true of AAC. It will not work for everyone. In the 18 years I have been volunteering in hospitals, I have seen what I believed were breakthroughs, but what I later learned the patients and their families thought were miracles. Those high points make the low points worthwhile.

As for all of the blurriness surrounding AAA and AAT, perhaps, it was best summarized by Dr. Fine

However, if the field is to move beyond its fringe status, it must begin to follow the path taken by other alternative and complementary therapies, (e.g. acupuncture, chiropractic) that have established their credibility by means of carefully controlled clinical trials and valid efficacy studies. (Fine, 2006 p. 22)

CHAPTER 3

ARE THE ANIMALS PARTNERS OR PRISONERS?

In this Chapter, I answer a set of questions formulated in collaboration by Professor Andrew Lamas based on my course DYNM 671, Ownership Matters. The questions were framed through this course which examined who is allowed to own what, and why. If I were to consider using animals in a coaching environment, some of the questions Professor Lamas urged me to think about were: I should address the following questions: What is the animal? Is it a moral creature, like humans? If money is made in part because of the animal, does the animal (or his/her species) have a claim on at least a part of the profits so generated? If so, how would this practically work? Do you own your pet? If not, then exactly what is the relationship? Is the word pet the right word, or is that problematic? If so, why? Are there ways of thinking about governance and ownership forms of organizations in ways that ensure that animal interests are taken into account?

What is the Animal?

I have been working (both for profit and pro bono) with animals for decades. In particular, I have been volunteering in the field of Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT) for eighteen years, using my “pet” dogs in a local children’s hospital. The dogs are a wonderful catalyst for starting conversations with patients, and the dogs are happy to collect their dog biscuits as we work. After taking several coaching courses, I thought about some of the similarities between the volunteer work I do in hospitals with the dogs, and potential for using them in coaching work, which for be for profit. So, in this relationship, what role does the animal I am working with play? What is an animal?

If I were to agree with the Christian religious teachings, I would believe animals were put on the earth to serve humans. I prefer to follow the theory of evolution, that as animals and humans evolved as thinking, feeling beings, but humans domesticated the species of animals they found most beneficial to their survival. Among those species, there are hierarchies: why are most mammals held in higher esteem than birds? Cows and chicken both provide meat, so why is the cow held in higher regard by most cultures than the chicken? In her book, The Death of the Animal, Paola Cavalieri suggests that,

these practical hierarchies are almost universally muddled and conceptually incoherent. All humans rank above all animals (and thus our hierarchies are vulnerable to species overlap arguments), and some animals rank much higher than others, usually mammals and birds above reptiles and fish and all vertebrates above invertebrates. Value usually drops near zero for insects, and effectively never extends to microorganisms. (Cavalieri, 2009. p.66)

I would have to agree with her on an intuitive level, but why is this the case? I think it stems from the idea of human superiority, and the fact that the closer an animal seems to be related, if you will, to humans, the higher the species is regarded.

Where did this idea of human superiority originate? There must be more to the emergence of the human as “master” than our possessing opposable thumbs and language. Apparently, the argument that humans are superior to animals has been in place since the times of ancient philosophers. Professor James Serpell, of the University of Pennsylvania’s Veterinary School writes,

Aristotle also argued that ‘Nature does nothing in vain’. In other words, Nature is purposeful; it designs organisms for specific purposes, and the undoubted purpose of lower organisms was to serve as food or labour for those higher up the scale. Aristotle used the same argument to condone the Grecian slave trade. (Serpell, 1986. p. 151)

This idea, that animals were lower organisms than humans, remained prominent in many cultures from the time of the ancients up until the middle ages, when some pushback began to occur in some cultures. If we trace the timeline Serpell suggests, in the middle ages a French Philosopher, Michel de Maigne (1533-92), was an early animal advocate of “humane treatment of lower animals.” (Serpell, 1986. p. 160) He also discusses that various religious leaders fought to keep animals from being elevated to a position remotely near that of the humans.

And not surprisingly, the Catholic Church remained consistently dubious about people’s moral responsibilities toward animals. As late as the middle of the nineteenth century, Pope Pius IX refused permission for the establishment of a Society for the Prevention to Animals in Rome because he deemed it a theological error to suppose that man had any duty toward animals at all. In many predominantly Catholic countries, the notion that ‘animals have no souls’ is still commonly used as a means of justifying indifference to their welfare. (Serpell, 1986. p. 162)

In many ancient civilizations, the local priest was essentially the town butcher, and the belief that animals are soulless was held firmly by priests, who often slaughtered animals, and used the term “sacrifice” to validate their actions. After an animal was slaughtered in a religious rite, the townspeople feasted on the meat of the animal. Although this was done as an offering to whichever god(s) were being worshipped, the benefit was that the townspeople were no longer hungry, further solidifying the priest’s elevated position in the society. Serpell suggests that in times of antiquity, the animals that were going to be sacrificed were treated with respect and often even pampered before they were killed, almost as a form of payment to the animal, in exchange for its life. This unfortunately is not the case today, and he suggests that Christianity should shoulder some of the blame for that, “Under

Christianity, this sort of respect for the animal's feelings became entirely superfluous. Animals had only one purpose on life, and that was to serve human beings. (Serpell, 1986. p. 209)

Part of the reason the church held so strongly to the belief that animals had no souls, Serpell argues, is so people would not feel guilt when they slaughter an animal:

If one believed that animals, like people, had souls and could suffer, then one would be plagued with guilt every time it was necessary to slaughter them, even if such suffering was ordained by God. But if one accepted the Cartesian view that animals were soulless, insensate machines, then one could do what one liked to them without any moral compunctions whatsoever. (Serpell, 1986. p. 170)

Science cannot show us whether or not people have souls, let alone whether or not animals do, but science can prove that animals can think, and do feel pain, and feel fear. Cavalieri writes "That nonhuman animals are conscious and capable of happiness and suffering, or at least pleasure and pain, almost no one denies." (Cavalieri, 2009. p.60) In most areas of the world, animals are no longer "sacrificed" as in times of antiquity. Instead, they are often raised in factory farms where the only goal is to produce more: more meat, more milk, or more offspring to produce more animals to perpetuate the cycle. Professor Serpell comments on this phenomenon, "As one textbook so blatantly puts it: "The sow has one commercial purpose in life which is to produce weaners and the more effectively she does this, the higher will be the profit margin on any pig enterprise." (Serpell, 1986. p. 12)

Regardless of how a person treats their pets, we do not have the same level of control over how animals that have been commodified by the food industry are treated. The only means of control we do have is to make that choice with our purchasing

power: we can choose to buy organic or free-range meats; or we can buy whatever happens to be on sale, not caring how the animals were raised or slaughtered. As for the food animals, how do we explain, both to ourselves and other people, that we eat them and use their by-products? Professor Serpell suggests that the more the animal is similar to humans, the more we attempt to separate the animal from the meat that is carved from them after they are slaughtered: “Verbal concealment is also commonplace. We talk about ‘beef’, ‘veal’ and ‘pork’ rather than bull-meat, calf-meat and pig-meat because the euphemisms, in every sense, are more palatable than the reality.” (Serpell, 1986. p. 196) In contrast, he points out that we do not do this when the animal is very different from ourselves: “Again, the need for verbal concealment decreases the further the animal is from a human being. Hence, we call chicken ‘chicken’, fish ‘fish’, and frog’s legs ‘frog’s legs’ without apparently spoiling our appetites.” (Serpell, 1986. p. 197)

Temple Grandin, PhD, an Associate Professor at Colorado State University is one of the world’s most prominent scholars in the field of feedlot and slaughterhouse design and management. Her work focuses on humanely treating animals that are ultimately going to be slaughtered. Professor Grandin happens to be autistic and claims that because of her autism, she sees in pictures. She argues that animals see in pictures as well, which is why she has been so successful in her field: she sees as they do. She addresses the fact that the entire world will not become vegetarian overnight, so the least we can do for the animals that will eventually end up on our plates, is to try to design and maintain their environment so they are not living in fear. Professor Grandin has written extensively on these subjects, and hypothesizes that the feedlot

and slaughterhouse experiences must be terrifying for the animals. She claims that being transferred from a dark truck to bright light back to a dark building, travelling through chutes and dunk tanks is terrifying for the animal, and that we owe it to them to alleviate as much of that terror as possible.

Her research into normal behavior patterns in many of our “food animals” has led to changes in how feedlots and slaughter plants are designed, with curved turns instead of 90 degree turns, and gradual descents instead of abrupt drop offs, in the hopes of making their final moments of life more peaceful than it currently is. We may never get back to the days of antiquity when an animal to be slaughtered was pampered prior to meeting its fate, but keeping the animals from being terrified is at least a move in the right direction towards our being grateful for their existence and the sustenance we get from them.

The single worst thing you can do to an animal emotionally is to make it feel afraid. Fear is so bad for animals I think it's worse than pain. I always get surprised looks when I say this. If you gave most people a choice between intense pain and intense fear, they'd probably pick fear. (Grandin, 2005. p. 190)

I found another author who appears to be in agreement with Professor Grandin's theory; in Paola Cavalieri's book The Death of the Animal, Harlan B. Miller (2009) writes “The mental life of many animals may be much more complex than we imagine. But, second, even if it isn't, even if animal minds are much simpler than ours, their happiness and suffering may be as important as ours.” (Cavalieri, 2009. p.66) He describes a hypothetical situation in which both he and his cat required dental work. He suggests that they would both feel pain and discomfort, but he feels that because he understands what is going on, and knows that it is a temporary situation, he can accept the experience more readily than his cat. He thinks that because the cat does not

understand that the dentist was trying to help him or her, nor the period of restraint was only temporary, that the cat would be absolutely terrified, in addition to being in pain.

In light of Professor Grandin's research, I propose that we add to the list of concerns for the welfare of any animals used in any animal assisted enterprise: that they are not made to feel afraid. This is especially true with any prey animals that might be used in a retreat-type environment. When I mention prey animals, I mean animals that usually opt for flight rather than fighting when they are afraid, such as horses, which are often used in therapeutic environments. Grandin advises that these flight, or prey, animals, such as horses and cows, are usually hyper-alert animals. The facilitator or coach using animals in a program should structure the environment to be one that is very serene, so the animals are less likely to be afraid. Grandin advises that,

While all animals can be overwhelmed by terror, prey animals like cows, deer, horses, and rabbits spend a lot more time being scared than predators do. You've heard the expression "like a deer in the headlights" – that pretty much sums up the prey animal's psyche. They are very nervous animals, because the only way a prey animal can survive in the wild is to run. Since a prey animal has to start running *before* the lion does, that means it has to be hyper-alert all the time, keeping a watch out for danger. (Grandin, 2005. p. 190-191)

The Idea of the Pet

In western cultures, there are two ways of treating domesticated animals: as our pets, on whom we lavish affection; and as animals used for food and supplies, who are treated as commodities as I have previously discussed. I passively support that dichotomy myself: I own two dogs and a horse, all of whom are my pets; yet I do eat meat and use animal products such as leather. I provide my pets with shelter, food, companionship, grooming, attention, affection and veterinary care. In exchange, I do train them in ways that may be unnatural to them, such as teaching the dogs not to

chase everything that moves and basic commands; and teaching the horse to carry a rider and respond to leg and seatbone pressure, all within reason, of course.

To illustrate how I am using the qualifier “within reason”, just last month my three-and-a-half year old dog and I were participating in a Therapy Dog test, which is a 14 part test that an evaluator uses to determine if the dog is suitable to work with people in environments like hospitals, schools and nursing homes. The dog is evaluated on how they interact with people as well as performing several basic obedience exercises to demonstrate that they can follow instructions given by their handler. I asked the dog to lie down, and as she hovered a few inches off the floor, she stopped and looked at me. Since she is a short haired breed, I try to be conscious of the environment she is in, so I touched the concrete floor, and found it was freezing. I asked the dog to sit (which she had been comfortable enough to do a few moments before), and asked the evaluator of the test if I could place my coat on the floor for her to lie on. The evaluator agreed, I placed my coat on the floor, asked her to lie down, and she promptly did so. I felt that if obeying a command would cause my dog discomfort, she should have the option to not follow my instructions, and I should understand her reason for disobeying the command.

In reading much of the research material for this section of my capstone paper, there is a great deal of discussion about the slave/master relationship many people have with their animals. I prefer to think that I have more of a manager/staff relationship with my pets, however, if it were believed to be more like a slave/master relationship, I want to be the most caring, thoughtful and fair master that I can possibly be, making their environment so ideal that they would not want to leave.

Not every owner treats their pets as I do, and unfortunately one need only look as far as television shows like Animal Cops on the Animal Planet channel to see this fact commercialized. In fact, Matthew Calarco writes in The Death of the Animal, “Never before in human history have so many animals been subjected to horrific slaughter, unconscionable abuse, and unthinkable living conditions.” (Calarco, Cavalieri, 2009. p.83) The thing about animal-keeping, whether pet or livestock, is that the people who are keeping them are like drivers. If someone else is moving faster or slower than you, you assert that they have something wrong with them. If they are doing the same thing you are, then you think they are fine, and they know what they are doing. With animals, since they are living, feeling, beings, we have to realize that there are many ways of seeing the situation and think about Berger’s Ways of Seeing, where he writes, “We can never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves.” (Berger, 1972. p.9)

Can Pets be Owned?

My argument is that yes, pet animals can and should be owned. Legally, in the US, they are treated as property. I believe that we, their owners, caretakers, or whatever term you choose to use, need to take responsibility for them. Legally, owners are required to provide food, water, shelter and veterinary care for both pets, but I argue that we should also provide for their entertainment, comfort and safety. If we do not provide for these additional aspects of their lives, many unwanted behaviors can result. In pet animals, some of these unwanted behaviors manifest when the animal is confined in an unnatural environment, does not get enough exercise, or mental stimulation

through association with their herd or packmates, or their owner providing them mental exercise through games. Some of the most common unwanted behaviors I found when I was teaching obedience classes for dogs and their owners were: destructive behaviors; separation anxiety; running away; and aggression issues. In horses, there is “stall-walking”, where the horse compulsively walks in circles in their stall, cribbing, where they destroy wooden surfaces by chewing them wooden while sucking air, and various aggression issues ranging from aggression directed towards handlers and caretakers, other animals, or both.

Should Animals Share Profits?

I argue that my animals do get compensated for their “work” already. It costs me, on average, \$700 per month to keep a horse, and \$150 per month to keep each dog. That does not include my time providing services for basic care. I estimate that the horse (he’s boarded at a facility that provides all day turnout with other horses, shelter, water and food) requires approximately 5 hours of my time per week for the most basic care (grooming, hooves, light exercise), and the dogs, who live in my home, require approximately 7 hours per week for grooming and exercise.

If I were to use my pets’ in an animal assisted coaching or animal assisted teambuilding practice, it would require funding in addition to the \$1000 per month for the additional veterinary care (required for certification) required for them to work. Perhaps a better way run a business such as this would be to operate a rescue, to rehabilitate, retrain and rehome domestic animals, and use these animals in programs that are being run with clients. This way, any profits could go directly back into the rescue to support the mission of rehabilitating and rehoming the animals. This may increase the potential

for accidents and other problems, and I would have to perform a risk management analysis to plan for how to best protect my interests.

I feel strongly that if one is working with animals and people, they should have a strong knowledge base in working with that species of animal, and with those individual animals as well. Apparently I am not the only person who feels this way. Again, I refer to Professor Serpell, who writes,

Traditionally, successful animal domestication and husbandry has always depended on the shepherd, farmer, or stockman having a detailed understanding of his charges. Ideally, he or she will need to get to know them, not just as a group, but as individual personalities, each with distinctive moods, characteristics and temperament. (Serpell, 1986. p. 186)

If I were to choose to work with rescue animals, I would suggest that only animals that are in late stages of retraining, and nearly ready to be rehomed, should be actively part of the program, so I would have had several weeks or months to work with them and can accurately assess their temperament.

Another option might be to partner with an existing rescue group, and donate a portion of the program fees to them in exchange for the use of their facility and animals. This might be a better situation in this economy, in that I can assist an organization that is largely dependent on grants and donations with an additional revenue stream. I will be looking at this possibility in the next section of my paper, on the risk management aspects of an enterprise that might use animals with clients.

Who Will Protect the Animals' Interests?

There are many governing bodies such as the Federal government and the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (SPCA) that set minimum standards of care for animal. The usual minimum standards call for food, water, shelter and basic

veterinary care. Temple Grandin, PhD also advises that the animals need to be kept in an environment in which they are free from fear as well. One must realize the position that companion animals hold in the US, and use that as a barometer that the animals should be kept healthy both physically and mentally. The status that pet animals have attained in the Western countries and the conditions many are kept in far exceeds the living conditions of many people in Third World countries; perhaps even in our own backyards.

The position pets hold in the hierarchy of many US households has changed very much in just the last decade. Along with this hierarchical change, there has been a significant change in the number of American households that have pets. A 2005 American Pet Products Manufacturer Association's survey shows that 63% of all US households own pets – that represents 69 million households. According to a survey by the AVMA, in 46.9% of pet-owning households, pets were considered to be part of the family; in 50.9% they were considered a pet/companion, and in 2.2% the pets were considered property. This implies that pets that once warranted a place in the backyard doghouse have moved into the home, sleeping in the bedroom or even on the bed. Pets have truly become part of the family, and the family has become concerned with meeting more than just the basic needs of their pets.

Our pets are now indulged, as children often are. We feed them specialty foods formulated for their age, weight, and body size. We brush their teeth, buy them toys, hire pet sitters for them, and we can even buy health insurance for them to cover the ever escalating cost of state of the art veterinary care. According to the American Pet Products Manufacturing Association, in 1994, Americans spent \$17 billion on pet

products. That figure soared to \$34.4 billion in 2004, with estimates of \$35.9 billion for 2005. This is more than half of the gross domestic product of Iraq and several billion more than North Korea.. For veterinary care alone, the AVMA (American Veterinary Medical Association) reported in 2005 that Americans spend more than \$18 billion a year on pet health care alone (this is small animal pets; horses, cattle, goats, etc. are not included in this figure.)

We should remember that not all relationships between people and animals are harmful. There are many animals that would not be able to survive in the wild, and due to alliances with humans, they are sheltered, fed and cared for in exchange for their companionship. That is the existence of a pet. Not everyone agrees on how best to care for them, as I may think mine should be free to roam my home when I am at work all day, and therefore keep possible burglars at bay, and you may feel they should be in a crate for their own safety. The point we can agree on is that there is a basic level of care we have to give them, because they have been selectively bred by humans so long that they cannot survive in the wild. Because of this selective breeding over thousands of years of domestication, we have become reliant on one another as species. Serpell advises that,

Domestic livestock must be controlled and confined, using force if necessary, to prevent them wandering off and reverting to a wild state, or being eaten by predators. The entire system, in fact, depends on the subjugation of nature, and the domination and manipulation of living creatures. (Serpell, 1986. p. 218)

I think John Coetzee would agree with Professor Serpell; he argues that because humans chose to domesticate some species of animals, that they have developed a dependence on us

As a result of actions that human beings took in the remote past, some species of animals (hereafter, for the sake of simplicity, called slave species) have become dependent on us. Simply stated, such slave species as sheep and cattle cannot survive in the world as it presently is without our care and assistance. (Coetzee, Cavalieri, 2009. p. 90)

If this is truly the case, that many species are so dependent on us due to actions we have taken in the past that they would perish without us, I think we owe them the a life without fear, hunger, thirst, and with some enjoyment.

Looking Forward

As I learned in from John Berger's book Ways of Seeing, just as there are many ways of seeing an object, there are just as many ways of seeing an animal, and the use of the animal. More of the people living in western cultures are seeing animals as living, feeling, beings, and less as mere property. Professor Serpell discusses the explosive growth of organizations that exist to protect animals, and the power and influence they have:

Over the past three centuries, ethical concern about the callous exploitation of animals, fellow humans and the natural world has been growing steadily, and within the past twenty to thirty years it has emerged as a force to be reckoned with. Philanthropic societies and foundations, antinuclear campaigns, animal protection groups, international conservations organizations and national ecology parties have been gaining ground at an almost exponential rate, and all of them now exercise far greater social and political influence than ever before. (Serpell, 1986. p. 233)

I agree with him and add that I feel it is long past due that we trying to correct our course. Cavalieri suggests that "We cannot reject sexism and racism while defending "speciesism." (Cavalieri, 2009. p. 36) I have to disagree slightly. While I support her assertion that we have to reject sexism and racism, I think we have to reject the differentiation between human and non-human, and not speciesism. I think there is still an argument for speciesism, after all, not every species is suitable for every purpose.

Tzachi Zamir wrote an essay discussing the use of various species in Animal Assisted Therapy (AAT), explaining that some species, particularly dogs and horses, are more suitable for these therapeutic interventions than other species. Of course, there are individual members of those species who are more or less suited for the work, and that must be considered by handlers. Zamir writes,

Forms of AAT that rely on horses and dogs are continuous with the welfare of those animals. Without a relationship with humans, an overwhelming number of these beings would not exist. Their lives with human beings exact a price from them. But given responsible human owners, such lives are qualitatively comfortable and safe, and they need not frustrate the social needs of these creatures. (Zamir, 2006. p. 195)

People in Western countries are paying more and more every year for pet products and veterinary care for their pets. More and more animal protection groups, rescues and springing up all over the country. Some do wonderful work, while others fall short, trying to do too much with too few resources. The media has given us entire television channels that highlight the good, the bad and the ugly of the pet and animal world. We can tune into shows such as It's Me or The Dog and watch people who overindulge their pets, Animal Cops which highlights people who neglect their animals, or The Dog Whisperer, a show about a "celebrity" dog trainer who works with dogs with aggression problems. All of this points out that the human-animal relationship is on a trajectory that shows no sign of declining.

In light of this, I believe we owe it to the animals we work with to give them the best care and environment we can. When I was looking for a facility to board my horse, I wanted nothing short of 'horse heaven'. It took some time, but I did find it: a farm with 120 acres, only 10 horses, and the horses are turned out together in groups, running in

40 acre fields that are dotted with 3-sided roofed shelters, all day. When they are brought in at night or in bad weather, they have 12' X 12' stalls bedded down with knee-deep straw, with plenty of water and full racks of good hay. Needless to say, this 120 acre farm is in a nicer zip code than the one in which I live.

Since horses are herd animals, they are happiest when living in a herd. Some of the horses with the worst behavior problems are those that are kept alone in a stall, with hardly any time turned out with other horses. Similarly, dogs are pack animals, and need to be part of a pack, comprised of humans, other dogs, or a combination of the two. My two dogs have run of my house, since they are housebroken and no longer destructively chewing. They have opportunity to socialize with other dogs a couple times each week, and an approximately 100' X 100' fenced yard to run and play. The dogs and the horse all get good, quality food, grooming, attention, interaction with members of their own species, and veterinary care. In exchange for this, I do expect a few hours work from them every week. I do not think this is an unfair agreement. If I could have my food, shelter, medical bills, entertainment and grooming paid for, and I only had to work 4 or 5 hours per week, I think I would be pretty happy with that arrangement.

CHAPTER 4

LOOKING AT THE RISKS

In this Chapter, I identified various risks associated with a venture that uses of animals to assist in coaching, analyzed the risks and planned effective risk management techniques with Professor Jane Combrinck-Graham, JD, from whom I completed DYNM 604, Organizational Risk Management. I also addressed several measures of success with which I could track the progress of a business that has a tremendous amount of uncertainty. The question I addressed was: If you were to start a consulting and coaching practice using animals in some aspect of the coaching model, as you do in your pro bono enterprise, what tools would you use to help you envision your risks, and how would you mitigate them? How would you structure this venture?

Identifying the Venture

As I discussed in the first part of this paper, I am hoping to start a consulting practice, focusing on coaching and teambuilding, using animals in some aspects of the coaching and teambuilding models. I have eighteen years of pro bono experience working with dogs in a hospital environment, with patients, staff and visitors. I love both animals and working with people, so volunteering in this capacity is my dream job. The problem for me is that hospitals and other facilities will not pay for this type of service when there are volunteers who will do it for free. Since I really enjoy doing this but cannot give up my paying job to volunteer, I thought I would apply the use of animals to a field that will pay: organizational coaching and teambuilding. I do not have quite as many years of experience working with horses, but I see how therapeutic they are for

me and others; because of this, I hope to share the experience with others. I have also found both horses and dogs to be very helpful to mirror how we treat people, and I hope to use that metaphor to help my clients gain insights to their own behavior.

The volunteer work I do with animals has transcended every job I have had. At one point in my life, when the company I worked for closed, I volunteered at Children's Hospital several times a week. My dog and I were assigned to the physical therapy lab, and we loved the work. The time flew by. When I got a full-time job and told them I would have to scale back to one visit a month, I joked and told them if I ever became independently wealthy, I would be on their schedule several times a week again. When I began to learn about organizational coaching in the Organizational Dynamics program, I started to think about apply the animal assistance to coaching. I think I can apply the use of animals to some of the models I have learned. If I could do that: work with animals in my career, and break away from a 9-to-5 routine, I could volunteer at the Children's Hospital more often.

I know that there is a great deal of risk associated with starting any venture, and especially one using animals. In The Book of Risk, the first step the author Dan Borge, recommends in managing risk is quantifying the risks you anticipate. I am going to follow his advice to look at some of the risk I would expect in this business. He suggests that, "in trying to quantify risks, however imperfectly, you are forced to think harder and more concretely about your risk exposure than if you relied solely on hazy intuition or gut feel." (Borge, 2001. p. 68) In all aspects of life, there is a window of *not knowing what you don't know*. Consciously stopping and considering your risks, begins to help you close that window of exposure.

Identifying the risks

There is a tremendous amount of financial risk in any start-up business; a venture like the one I propose is no exception. Not only are there the investments of time, money and effort, but at this point in my life, in my forties, I feel I have more to lose than I can possibly gain if I were to “quit my day job” to launch a new venture. Because of that, I have planned to launch this business part-time, and invest only a portion of my savings that I feel comfortable losing, should the business not succeed. As a part-time or freelancing consultant, I will have the ability to keep the steady income of my regular job, my medical benefits, and retirement savings benefits. If I chose to remain with my current employer, I can also use my tuition benefits if I want to continue my education. My job affords a generous amount of vacation time, so I intend to coach and run programs on weekends and on vacation days. If I can grow demand for these services, then I can weigh giving up my regular job to consult exclusively. Right now, I do not have the confidence that I can make the salary I would have to earn to leave my primary job, nor do I want to take the risk of taking on a great deal of debt by taking out loans. Instead, I have a have a tremendous network of friends who have offered to donate everything from website design to legal services. With my salary, I can afford some of the start-up expenses as well. I expect to spend more social capital than actual capital in the early stages of this venture.

Another financial risk is determining a fee structure. Thanks to my full-time job at the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania, I do have a frame of reference as to what facilitators charge for teambuilding “retreats”, and what consultants bill for various services. A risk would be to set my price so high that I have no clients, and the

inverse of setting it so low that I am not being adequately compensated for my time and related costs of running the programs from office supplies such as flip-charts, markers and any hand-outs; to catering expenses if a client requests that for their staff. Of course, I can choose to offer low rates on an introductory basis to create buzz for my business, and hopefully as the demand for services increases, I can raise the rates and settle on a figure that the market will bear.

Credit risk is another obstacle I may have to contend with. Simons writes that

Credit risk occurs when a creditor becomes bankrupt or insolvent and is unable to pay contractual obligations as they become due. All businesses that extend payment terms are exposed to credit risk, although some strategies expose the business to more credit risk than others. (Simons, 1999. p.4)

The many consulting and coaching businesses I have worked with usually operate by invoicing for services after they are provided. With some clients expected to pay in thirty to sixty days, I would still have to pay my expenses during that window of time. According to Borge, this category of credit risk can encompass more than simply bankruptcy, and be simply an unwillingness to pay, perhaps because they are dissatisfied with the service I provided, the facility in which they were provided, or any number of things. I would have to be aware of this possibility, because I would still have to pay my partners for their facilities that I used for my programs. Of course, I could try to collect from the clients in various ways, but in the interim, I would have to pay for any program expenses, or possibly damage the relationships with my vendors.

I would also need to be concerned with operating risks in my business. Borge explains that operating risk is, "uncertainty about potential losses caused by mistakes or accidents, criminal acts such as fraud or theft, breakdowns in equipment or technology, and natural disasters." (Borge, 2001. p. 125) He explains that these losses are normally

infrequent, but severe, if not catastrophic in nature. One of the key differentiators between other coaching businesses and my proposed venture is the use of animals in various coaching models. Adding animals to the physical environment adds an entire dimension of risk many other businesses need never encounter. Some of these animal-specific operating risks would be: the possibility of the animal kicking or biting a client or staff member; an animal damaging a client's property; a client's allergic reaction to an animal or something in the animal's environment; or less likely, but still possible in some high-risk groups, are zoonoses, which are illnesses and diseases that an animal may pass on to a human. In addition to these animal-specific operating risks, there are the more common operating risks such as trips, falls, fraud and theft.

I should also consider that I might be injured and not able to lead programs. I am the key to the animal piece of this business. Many people can coach, but they do not have the years of experience working with people and animals that I have. If I am unable to run a program, the program would be cancelled the clients disappointed and the income may be irretrievable lost. If the client did not require the use of animals, and I could refer them elsewhere, they may choose to remain with the other business if and when I recover and can return to work.

Other operating risks are facility related. There is the need for a specialized facility that must be kept in good working order, specifically one in which the animals can be kept safe, healthy and happy. If the animals are not healthy and happy, they will become unreliable (or even dangerous) to work with. Another problem would be facility damage due to fire or storms, which would be compounded if clients were inside the facility at the time, Since a facility and animals are a huge part of the expense, but only

a piece of the business, it would probably be best for me to partner with an animal rescue or shelter, that already has a facility, preferably an ADA accessible one, that would like an additional income stream to help support their mission.

The whole aspect of “partnering” is fraught with risks as well. Since a facility with animals are an integral part of this business, but an enormous expense, I am planning to look for organizations such as rescues and shelters that have facilities I can “partner” with by paying them for the use of their facility and animals on the days I run programs. This will allow me to focus on the coaching aspects of the business, while the shelter or rescue can manage the upkeep of the facility and care of the animals. The problems that I can foresee vary from: the partner rescue or sanctuary closing and leaving me with confirmed clients, yet without a facility and animals to use for my programs; a scandal at the partner facility that taints my brand by association; a deviation in the mission of the partner, that would negatively affect my venture’s brand; or perhaps the management of the partner organization may change and the new managers may feel association with my venture is damaging to their brand.

Of course, there is always the risk that I will not meet my goals. On a professional level, the risk is that I just will not be able to sell this idea. I will have to work diligently and hope for the best, but I must be prepared to lose my sunk costs, and give the dream up if I cannot sell the program to potential clients. The other possibility is on a personal level: what if I dislike the work? I love doing this work as a volunteer, and as a volunteer I work with sick kids, hospital staff and the kids’ families, for a few hours every month. But, what if I did not like doing the same thing in a different format:

with healthy adults? I should have a plan in place for these scenarios, one that allows me to roll down the business if I do not choose to continue.

Analyzing the Risks

Unfortunately, overconfidence is a problem that many leaders experience when launching businesses because they tend not to think through all of the risks that may be involved in a venture. This overconfidence causes leaders to take unnecessary risks. Borge writes that we often underestimate possible outcomes, and I have been a participant in many teambuilding retreats where I have seen that is true. He finds overconfidence is often rooted in optimism,

The consequences of overconfidence can be to take excessive risks or to pass up attractive opportunities. As it happens, we are more likely to underestimate the risks rather than the opportunities because of another habit of mind that can lead us astray – optimism. (Borge, 2001. p. 87)

I think I am erring on the side of caution by planning to launch this business on a part time basis, and that may help mitigate against these problems of overconfidence and optimism. If anything, I think I am not confident enough, which itself can be a risk

If I were to consider which risk would be most likely to occur, I would think it would be an operating risk: an injury, accidental or otherwise, due to an encounter with one of the animals. I am an experienced horseperson, and I can attest that accidents happen and that I often get hurt. Just in the past two months: my horse has accidentally stepped on my foot because I stepped in too close to him; I slammed my finger in a stall door; I slid in mud and pulled something in my thigh, and my head collided with my horse's. All of these things happened on the ground, and all were accidental. Luckily, I was wearing proper gear such as boots, gloves and a helmet, so they were only minor injuries. It was also my horse, so I would not sue myself. But what if it were a client

that was injured? What is the probability of getting hurt around the horses? If I were to estimate that I make 16 visits to the barn each month that would equate to 32 visits over two months, resulting in 1 injury in every 8 visits, or a probability of 12.5% for accidents on the ground. Ironically, I am less likely to get hurt on the horse. I've only fallen off three times (so far) in the three years since I started riding again. I would estimate that I ride about 100 times a year, so falling once each year is a probability of only 1%.

Selecting the Best Risk Management Techniques

There are too many potential risks to choose the risk management technique of accepting the risks without any mitigation techniques. My simple analysis alone shows a 12.5% probability of getting hurt, accidentally, working on the ground with a horse. Our society is very litigious and I do not believe that any business, large or small, can tolerate doing nothing when facing a number that size.

Diversifying risks is one of the techniques I plan to employ. I plan to minimize my risk by not working strictly with animals in coaching. I plan to offer traditional coaching, consulting, and teambuilding services. The animal work is a small piece of the overall practice, perhaps 25% of the business. Borge advises that diversification is a very powerful tool; that it can reduce risk without reducing gain, however, he warns that, "In real life, diversification is usually not free and at some point further diversification would not be worth the extra cost." (Borge, 2001. pg 75) Once again, this is a place where I expect Discovery Driven Planning to assist with any course corrections the venture will need. If the diversification is not worth the extra trouble of partnering with a facility to offer coaching and teambuilding using large animals such as horses, I will not have a great deal of sunk costs, and can end that part of the venture to either: refocus my time

and attention to the traditional coaching, consulting and teambuilding services; or remain in a traditional job, not working for myself.

I have to keep the other consulting, coaching, and team building channels open, and force myself not to focus solely on the animal assisted aspects of the coaching and teambuilding venture. Since I expect the animal assisted aspects to only be 25% of the business, I cannot seize upon the animal-related aspects and steer away from working in what is most likely going to be the other 75% of the business. Diversification should be a key ingredient in my proposed business, no matter how much I may want to work with people and the animal model.

In partnering with a rescue or farm, I can reduce some of my risk, such as the care, sourcing, and training of the animals, and the maintenance of the facility. Of course I would assume additional risks, such as the partner experiencing financial difficulties and not maintaining the animals and/or facility, or a scandal might befall them. It would be a good practice for me to plan to consider diversifying in terms of the facilities I choose to partner with as well. This would help to protect from the risks I have mentioned, and from risks such as a facility sustaining damage from a fire or storm, and being unavailable for business.

Since this is a rather novel business idea, and there is no history to look at, I would propose utilizing McGrath and MacMillan's article Discovery Driven Planning (1995) to determine how viable this enterprise might be. McGrath and MacMillan recommend using the Discovery Driven Planning method when planning a new venture and envisioning the unknown. "The point is not to demand the highest degree of accuracy but to build a reasonable model of the economics and logistics of the venture

and to assess the order of magnitude of the challenges.” (McGrath, 1995. p. 53) They recommend using four pieces of information: a reverse income statement; pro forma operations specs; a key assumptions checklist; and a milestone planning chart. The purpose of the reverse income statement is to start with the profits you require and work backward. In my case, if I were planning to leave my job, I would have to consider my salary and benefits package, and associated fringe benefits, at minimum. Since I am planning to begin on a part time basis, I need to think in terms of paying myself for the vacation day I will use to run the program, in addition to any time for pre-work that will have to be done with the client. (This assumes partnering with an organization that has animals and a facility to run programs.)

As for the pro forma operations specs, this entails “laying out activities to produce, sell, service and deliver product or service to customer.” (McGrath, 1995. p. 54) Again, operating under the assumption that I will be partnering with another organization, this would include my venture’s expenses, and the fees I would have to pay my partners for the use of their facility and animals.

The purpose of the key assumptions checklist is to, “ensure that each assumption is flagged, discussed and checked as the venture unfolds.” (McGrath, 1995. p. 54) Running through the key assumptions checklist would be an excellent exercise to perform quarterly, in the early stages of the venture. Sull writes in his article that, “A common source of failure occurred when founders and investors committed to a business model too early.” (Sull, 2004. p. 73) In trying to temper overconfidence, I believe it would be better to err on the side of caution early on and establish a strong foundation. In the early stages, I would hope it would be less painful to everyone

involved if it were deemed that the venture is not working as planned, and some things must be changed. I would prefer to morph the business into something else, or merge with another organization early in the process, rather than several years down the road, when I am more likely to have staff and tangible assets involved.

I would expect that the milestone planning chart, intended to be an indicator to, “postpone major commitments of resources until the evidence from the previous milestone event signals that the risk of taking the next step is justified” (McGrath, 1995. p. 54) to be helpful for use in concert with the key assumptions checklist early in the lifecycle of the venture. I would hope that the venture would grow and mature, and that the key assumptions and milestone planning could be run yearly, instead of quarterly, as there was more history to look at.

As McGrath and MacMillan intend, the Discovery Driven Planning is meant to be used when there is a great deal of uncertainty. The more history an organization has, the less uncertainty we can expect to manage. I would anticipate that in an established, mature organization, the Discovery Driven Planning process might only be used when beginning a new initiative, or somehow changing the organization, such as opening another location or offering a franchising option. As they explain:

Discovery-driven planning is a powerful tool for any significant strategic undertaking that is fraught with uncertainty – new-product or market ventures, technology development, joint ventures, strategic alliances, even major systems redevelopment. Unlike platform-based planning, in which much is known, discovery-driven planning forces managers to articulate what they don’t know, and it forces a discipline for learning. As a planning tool, it thus raises the visibility of the make-or-break uncertainties common to new ventures and helps managers address them at the lowest possible cost. (McGrath, 1995. p. 54)

If the DDP suggests that I should move forward with this business, one of the first things I would propose would be to form a Limited Liability Company (or LLC) corporation in

order to limit my personal liability. My planned structure for this LLC would be to have my mother as a member in addition to myself. She is a retired paralegal, has extensive experience in running her own businesses, and I plan to enlist her assistance in some of the day-to-day operations and accounting aspects of the business. I would also have to file for a federal EIN because I do intend for both of us to be paid for our work.

I considered incorporating as a 501(C) nonprofit organization because my dream would be to create a foundation to raise funds to study and disseminate knowledge about what is termed the human-animal bond, in addition to rescuing and rehabilitating abused animals, and those missions fall under USC 501(C)(3) (IRS Publication 557.) However, I decided that, given the likely size and earnings of my organization, it would offer no foreseeable financial advantage. I reached this conclusion based, among other facts, on the ideas that: I do not intend to hold real estate or other taxable property that would be otherwise tax exempt under a 501(c)(3); and if I were to pay myself, as I hope to, under this type of organization, it must be as an employee, given that dividends to shareholders violate the non-profit status. Therefore, any salary paid to me would be as an employee of the organization and subject to all taxes as any employee of any organization.

A key part of mitigating against risks in any venture involving animals is making a good faith effort to prevent them. In a quick analysis, I see that there is a 12.5% probability of getting hurt when working on the ground with a horse. I realize that this is an unscientific analysis, but it is still a warning that I should heed. Nearly every barn I have visited has signs advising you not to smoke, run, feed the horses, etc. Some facilities require proper attire, such as boots, helmets, gloves, and long pants. Others

even require that you sign a liability waiver, whereas others, in states such as Pennsylvania, merely have to post a sign stating PA equine liability law. Since I realize that not everyone has experience with animals, I plan to conduct safety briefings for clients, staff and partners. This will help the clients feel at ease around the animals, as well as mitigate some of these risks. Another item that may help with preventing potential problems is thoroughly vetting proposed partner facilities, or possibly not having an exclusive partnership with any one facility, but teaming up with several facilities. If I think I might be serving several types of clients, I may want to have several facilities from the very basic, to the historic, to the ultra-modern to choose from to complement the clients' expectations and corporate culture.

Because of all of the unknown and potential for risk, mine is a business that I expect will encounter some type of a crisis at some point. Whether the crisis be minor or major, public or private, something will happen, and the Six Steps referred to in Norman Augustine's article are a brilliant plan for managing crisis. I think these steps should be embraced, practiced, and learned, so that they can be easily implemented when the time is at hand. Crisis will happen – it is a matter of when, not if – and the business must have plan. According to Augustine (1995), the six steps are: avoiding the crisis; preparing to manage the crisis; recognizing the crisis; containing the crisis; resolving the crisis; and, finally, profiting from the crisis.

Stage 1 is Avoiding the Crisis: Augustine advises that this step is all too unfortunately skipped altogether. The training briefing I planned to implement for all participants to inform clients of the basics of expected behavior of the animals, and explain to them how they should handle themselves around the animals is a good

starting point to avoid crisis. This would also be a good time to manage expectation of clients, and discuss some of the upcoming exercises.

Stage 2 is Preparing to Manage the Crisis: there is a lot of pre-planning involved in this area. Augustine advises that drills should be performed at this stage, and he points out that a good network is important in times of crisis. I would also plan to have a mental list of friendly journalists and newscasters. I would invite them to see a program in progress, if the client was not opposed, to get their support for the programs. In doing so, when the inevitable crisis happens, the press might shed a more favorable light on me, my partner(s) and the program.

Stage 3 is what is thought to be the most basic, but often overlooked stage: Recognizing the Crisis. Many times, a minor problem quickly escalates into a crisis, but because we have been looking at it as a minor problem, we fail to see it. Just as we fail to see the dead tree at the edge of the forest, until it falls, taking powerlines and blocking a road. Augustine suggests that it is often an outsider who first sees a crisis, or "it is often public perception that causes the crisis." (Augustine, 1995. p. 152)

Stage 4, or Containing the Crisis is a crucial part of the management of the crisis. "Some reasonable, decisive action is almost always better than no action at all. The problem in this stage is that usually you don't know what you don't know." (Augustine, 1995. p. 154) He advises that the best thing to do, even if you do not know much at all, is for you to state that you do not know all the facts, but to state what you do know, and do it as soon as possible.

Stage 5 – Resolving the Crisis: "In this stage, speed is of the essence. A crisis simply will not wait." (Augustine, 1995. p. 156) This is a great time to reassess your

actions of the day, and perhaps do a brief After Action Review, if one hasn't already been planned. I work for an organization that routinely does AARs for both successes and failures. Once the people involved in the business view AARs as a routine occurrence and not a blamestorming meeting, the AAR will help guide you on the path to successfully accomplish turning the crisis into a learning experience.

Stage 6 – Profiting from the Crisis: this is the stage that Augustine advises that you should make lemonade from lemons. Just as Johnson & Johnson did with the famous Tylenol case, you should capitalize on how well you handled the crisis, how much worse it could have been, and move on, exemplifying to others how a crisis should be handled.

So by all means avoid involving your business in a crisis. But once you're in one, accept it, manage it, and try to keep your vision focused on the long term. The bottom line of my own experience with crises can be summarized in just seven words: "Tell the truth and tell it fast." (Augustine, 1995. p. 158)

My dogs have passed a test developed by Therapy Dogs International, Inc (TDI), a non-profit in New Jersey that promotes volunteers taking their well-trained pets to visit in hospitals and nursing homes. Once my dog passes the TDI test, I pay approximately \$35 per year for the privilege of being covered under TDI's insurance policy. The insurance they provide is primary insurance that covers volunteers and their dogs while they are on a volunteer visit to a nursing home, hospital, school or library. However, TDI's rules are very clear: if you are using your dog to work with people in your profession, the insurance will not cover you. Similarly, I belong to the Pennsylvania Equine Council, and pay \$26, in addition to my annual dues, per year for horse owner liability insurance. This insurance covers accidental damage and injuries

caused by my horse, regardless of who is handling him or riding him. This is important to me because I board my horse at a nearby farm, and he is not under my control at all times; there are times when other people have to handle him for me. Again, the rules are clear: the insurance does not apply if I am using him in the course of a business.

Insurance is a definite must for a venture such as this: liability insurance; certifying the animals that are being used with the appropriate registries that provide insurance for their actions when working in a professional capacity; and carrying industry standard insurance for myself, personally, are all avenues I can insure. With the idea that the probability of someone getting hurt is 12.5%, insurance should definitely be considered. Even if I could reduce that number to 5% through safety briefings for clients, if I have 100 clients, the potential for 5 people getting hurt should make me pause and consider the severity. Even if only 1 of those people requires hospitalization, several thousand dollar hospital bills are not out of the ordinary. After getting insurance quotes, I would decide which aspects I choose to insure against, because you simply cannot afford to insure against everything that could possibly go wrong. I would consult with my insurance professional, at minimum, and obtain a liability insurance policy for the business, add an umbrella policy to my personal liability insurance. I think I should also seek the advice of an equine insurance professional about the partnering aspects of the business. In addition to insurance, I would make sure I have legal assistance to draw up the proper contracts between all parties, along with their recommended waivers and hold harmless releases.

Measurements of success

Determining what measures of success I should use when looking at this proposed venture are probably the quarterly key assumptions and milestone checklists in the DDP that I suggested. These parts of the DDP give a good “Go/No-Go” assessment. Since I am only in the planning stage, I should ask myself several questions, and think about possible measures. I should consider that there will be many forks in the road, and different directions may lead to different measures of success.

The US economy is in a very fragile place, and not many people or companies have room in their budgets for training, development and team-building. This may be a good time to plan out this company, do a soft launch, and offer a few programs at a reduced rate to start some buzz, so I can be poised to act when the economy begins to improve. Even though I intend to work part time at this business, I expect that it will take several months to: incorporate; locate and contract with partner facilities; have documents drawn up ranging from contracts with partners to waivers for clients; and obtain insurance; so I can market the programs.

One of the first questions I should ask myself is: Is the venture worthwhile? I should consider whether I am truly being compensated for my time. In order to do this, I should record my thoughts, when determining a fee schedule, of exactly how much work I think it will be to run a program. If I am contracted for a one day workshop, how much pre-work is involved? There is a great deal of difference between having a few telephone conversations ahead of time to shape the day, and having four or five, in-person, pre-work sessions with a committee tasked to plan a retreat for the client. These scenarios will help me think about the actual time involved, record my findings

and revisit them to see if they are accurate. If I do not think about these things in advance, I will probably not notice if the part-time venture starts to spill over into my full-time life. I should note whether I find myself working on the part-time venture on my lunch breaks, evenings and weekends. If so, the work is not contained in a part-time window, yet the income derived is only part-time compensation, and I should either correct the fee structure, or if the market will not allow for correction, consider not pursuing the venture any further.

Another question to consider: What demand is there for coaching, and specifically animal assisted coaching? I write about the workload spilling out of the part-time window I proscribed, but, is the work correlated to additional demand for service? In other words, am I doing a lot of work, for essentially no money? Or am I turning down additional work? If the work is contained in the part-time window, the compensation adequate, yet there is more demand that I cannot satisfy on a part-time basis, it may be time to think about launching the business into a full-time venture.

My ideal time line for this business would be to form as an LLC, engage partner facilities such as animal rescue facilities or therapeutic riding centers, and market to potential clients. Perhaps I could offer some reduced rate introductory programs to create buzz as part of the marketing campaign. As I have mentioned several times, I initially plan to run this venture on a part time basis, with limited administrative help, but if it were to become profitable, I would not be opposed to leaving my job to work full time. If it were to expand to the point that I could not handle all of the work, I would seek out associates, possibly fellow Organizational Dynamics alumni, to team up with

me. I am not in a rush to get to that point until the business is running smoothly. As

Sull advises:

Startups enjoyed a much higher likelihood of success if they delayed hiring key managers until initial rounds of experimentation had produced a stable business model. Entrepreneurs and their investors could then specify the expertise and experience they needed. (Sull, 2004. p. 74)

I have learned that it is advisable that I should be very clear in the mission statement of the business, but not be so invested in making the business work that I blindly move towards a goal without evaluating the path towards it. Sometimes, roads wash out and bridges fall and I must be able to sacrifice my sunk costs, which may not be much in terms of absolute dollars, but will be high in social capital, and move on if the idea is not working. In their article, Roberts and Barley suggest that

Entrepreneurs have to have a clear sense of the opportunity and how to build the business. That is why we're willing to bet on them and what we're paying them for. But, the best ones are willing to reexamine their assumptions, and are willing to veer left or right or pivot all the way around when the data suggests they're headed in the wrong direction. They amble around until they find something good. The bad ones typically get overcommitted or wed to a particular idea. (Roberts/Barley, 2004. p. 2)

I think that by forming an LLC, using the Discovery Driven Planning model, being prepared to handle crises, insuring some of the risk, and training my partners and clients in best practices of working with the specific species that are part of the coaching experience, many of the risks associated with this venture can be successfully managed. I will need to keep revisiting the milestones that I thought were measures of success to see if I am really meeting them, or if I am chasing in the wrong direction, after a dream.

CHAPTER 5

COMING UP NEXT

In my closing chapter, I respond to the questions concerning my stories: the stories of my past and the stories I hope will be my future. The questions that evoked these stories were posed by Professor Janet Greco, PhD, from whom I completed both DYNM 501, the Foundations of Organizational Dynamics, and DYNM 673, Stories in Organizations. The questions Professor Greco asked were: This essay is designed to help you think about both the highlights of your career, pro bono and professional, to date and the prospective highlights from career paths moving forward. Using the lifeline technique, identify some signature stories that illustrate your interests and energy providers (*including some powerful possibly taxing stories that yielded important lessons.*) Show how these stories can be used – with explanation grounded in the literature on stories and development – to serve as the basis for the stories you'd like to build into your next career options. Be as specific as you can with the future stories.

She also asked me to: explain how the HBDI set of lenses is guiding you in creating both this exercise and help you outline the elements of some attractive career pathways. If there are other lenses on either organizational dynamics or personal development, use them to complement this effort.

McAdams (1993) writes, "Simply writing or performing a story about oneself can prove to be an experience of healing and growth." (McAdams, 1993. p. 32) I think the process of affixing "lessons learned" to our stories does help us heal and grow. We can idealize how the situation may have played out had we said this, or done that. There are many stories in my past that I now affix the "should haves" when I retell them.

These are the stories that I hope will help another person avoid the missteps and mistakes I've made in my life. I would imagine that McAdams would agree with this because he writes, "Reconciliation is one of the most challenging tasks in the making of the personal myth. Psychologically, we are not generally prepared to face this challenge until our middle adult years," (McAdams, 1993. p. 112). I am glad I waited until my middle adult years to go back to school. Admittedly, I would not be in a place to work on story revisioning in my twenties or thirties. I do not even think I realized what I was doing until I was removed from the situation by a few years and was looking back on those stories through different lenses.

The process of story re-visioning is the basis of a form of narrative therapy described in their book Story Re-Visions by the psychologists Alan Parry, PhD and Robert E. Doan, PhD (1994). The concept behind story re-visioning is that our lives are a series of stories. I can reflect on my stories, deconstruct them, re-examine them, and revise them, within the framework of truthfulness and authenticity. I can look at the stories of my past, not through the same lens used in the past with the emotions, education and experience I had then, but through the lens I have now. I can look at the story with a lens that has the filters of experience, knowledge and one that is more emotionally impartial. With this detachment, we can break down the events that happened, examine them and reconstruct them by highlighting some aspects of the story and minimizing others.

For example, I recently was shredding old documents in the desk of my home office. I found some documents from a previous career that reminded me that I used to make double the salary I now make. A few things made this realization sting even more

were: I had a good deal of responsibility in that job; I really enjoyed the job because I got to be part of building things; and I did not even have a college degree when I worked in that position. What made things worse was that at that moment I was facing my 30-year grade school reunion. I felt like an absolute failure, that I had worked so hard to get an education, and despite my struggles, was falling farther behind my peers. After offering this situation for discussion in one of my Stories in Organizations classes, I felt much better when my professor and classmates offered suggestions to “revision” this story. I told the story to my classmates, and several of them offered different ways to frame these experiences in a positive manner. Instead of making less money than I did ten years ago, I should acknowledge that I was able to get my education at minimal cost. I was also reminded that I might not have had the opportunity to attend classes and do the work if I had a more responsible job like the one I had previously, which required a good deal of travel which would make me miss classes..

Instead of focusing on how much I had lost, and how far behind my peers I felt I was, they suggested that I focus on the positives. For one, I finished my undergraduate degree and was nearing the completion of my MSOD. I was in a place of power, where I had the time and opportunity to decide what my next career move would be, and still had a job with health benefits and a boss who was completely supportive of developing her staff. I had to make the choice to highlight the positive aspects of my situation and minimize other, less appealing aspects. Parry and Doan suggest that, “every story is a form of censorship in that it is based upon paying attention to certain events at the exclusion of others, as well as applying particular meanings to the events thus selected rather than other possible meanings” (Parry/Doan, 1994. p. 64).

When we are revisioning our past stories, we must keep in mind the theory of cognitive dissonance, which states that "humans have a need to feel consistent. We are comfortable when our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are aligned, and we are uncomfortable when they are in dissonance." (Peltier, 2001 p.140) If I were to revision this story in a manner that was inconsistent with the truth, I would have difficulty with the discrepancy between what happened in the story, and how I am re-visioning the story. I would "either deny it, thereby reducing dissonance or change my story to accommodate the new data into [my] self-image." (Greco, 2010 private conversation) To re-vision my story in a healthy fashion, I choose to keep it within those bounds of truthfulness and "add its lessons to my healthy adult "version" of the story." (Greco, 2010, private conversation)

Another way to revision stories that allows for the discrepancies between what happened in the story and how we are revisioning the story is through the "Telling-of-Multiple-Stories Exercise" (Parry/Doan, 1994. p. 96). They offer a few ways to re-vision our stories such as taking an uncomfortable story and finishing it with the worst outcome we can imagine. By doing this, how bad can our actual story really be? They also suggest ideas such as constructing two or three versions of a story based on the same events, and decide which fits our current situation, and which would fit the people we would like to be.

The Lifeline

Over the course of my working years, I have had several distinct careers in a more than a few industries. Using the lifeline technique, which is an exercise in which a person draws a line from birth to present day, and marks high and low points along the

line, and is illustrative of the high and low points of our life. It often helps if one marks the line with a story to illustrate these points. The purpose of using the lifeline technique in this essay is to determine what have been high and low points in my career that might help me identify the next steps along my career path. I used this particular exercise in DYNAM673 to help pinpoint these peaks and valleys I have experienced to date. I learned that I have been working in jobs that I do not enjoy for too many years, while working my way through school. These jobs have zapped my strength and clouded my vision of what I want to do next.

At the first stop on the lifeline, in my first job straight out of school, I worked for a small family-owned company and finessed my way from a receptionist to an inventory control manager/purchasing agent in their industrial hardware company. I worked there for twelve years and got to see the business from the ground up. I was also working there at a very unusual time: I was there for the transformation of the company when they decided to utilize a computer system to automate the business. Everything from order entry, inventory, purchasing and accounting would be computerized. People, who are working with computers today, have no idea of the systems behind the scenes that computers have replaced. My early grounding in computers has led to an incredible appreciation of what they can do, and how big of a part the proper planning is in systems. In addition, I feel I have a support base, that if the computer fails, I have a mental picture of the work flow and may be able to retrace steps to complete a task, something a person lacking this experience may have difficulty grasping.

Prior to the computer system, when a customer called to order one, or a dozen items, you had to write them down, send the paperwork to the warehouse and the order

was picked, shipped and billed. If it was a very important customer, and they needed the material the next day, you would often do those steps yourself. If something on their order was on backorder, our purchasing management system was something called the “want board.” It was a clipboard, with pieces of paper listing which customer wanted which item, from what vendor it could be obtained, along with the date of the original order and the price quoted. If post-its had been in existence, they probably would have played an integral part of the “want board.” Their order stayed on the want board, until we had enough for a minimum order from that vendor. Imagine taking the entire process electronic! The possibilities were endless... endless after you inventoried every item in the warehouse, and did all of the data entry, of course. It took months of team planning, looking at business processes, and more team planning, but there were still items overlooked. All of that time spent digging into the systems that were in place and plotting the flow of work flew by. I found myself very energized by this “new frontier” and could not wait to get this into place and get it running. I found that once the system was in place and running smoothly however, my interest in my work waned.

Ironically, after the system was up and running, part of my job was to “work around” the system. Basically, I had to make things that did not neatly fit into the computer system they purchased, such as in-house tool repairs and warranty repairs, fit the system. We needed a way to track the dozens of tools that flowed in each week for repair. Many of these tools cost in excess of a few thousand dollars; there were very few cordless drills and circular saws. Most of what we handled was heavy construction equipment. I suggested we treat these tools to be repaired, just like an order that was on backorder from the factory. When the repair was complete, or the warranty repair

came back from the vendor, we treated it as if it was a new item fulfilling a backorder, received it into the system, and shipped it to the customer. I think this early exposure to computers, and learning about how work flows through groups and systems, has helped me tremendously to see and respect the interconnections in organizations.

I had a brief pause on the lifeline during a career change. Since this was a family-owned company, and it was owned by someone else's family, I knew there was a very low glass ceiling, and I left there when I got an offer to be a marketing assistant at division of a hospital. That was a fiasco in management. I remember my mother's calling me as soon as I got home and asking me how my first day was. I burst into tears. My first morning, I found that the person I replaced had not billed any of their clients for over three months. On day two of that job, I immediately set about learning the workflow, and setting them up with processes and procedures so this would not happen to them again. No matter what I tried to implement, the manager argued that it would not work in their environment. I felt like it was an uphill battle that I would never win, and one I did not want to die trying to fight. I started looking for another job my very first week due to the constant battles with the manager, and after thirteen months I found a new job.

A High Point on the Lifeline

The next stop on the Lifeline was a start-up, and also where I found my "fit". This was an exhilarating job at a forward thinking start-up. I loved all aspects of the company: the founders, the rest of the team and the scope of my work. The company managed and marketed rooftop space to wireless communication companies. The scope of my job was to survey and assess new sites being added to the portfolio, help

design new construction on them and manage the construction process of each site. I finally had a job where I could be creative, but grounded in my strong knowledge of process and systems! Almost every day was energizing; even the longest ones when I was commuting from Philadelphia to New York. There was always a new problem to try to either: smooth out, knock down, blow up, or circumvent. There was never a dull moment.

The HBDI

One developmental aspect I learned from working with systems and processes was working with the people and personalities behind them. I did not realize it at the time, because I had dropped out of college, but there is a world of theories, tools and practices out there to help work with the people and the personalities. One of those tools that I am now very familiar with and use often is the Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument, or HBDI (Hermann International, 2008). The HBDI gives people and teams, depending on how one chooses to utilize the information, a color-coded chart, based on your preferences for thinking both under normal circumstances, and under stress. The idea behind a tool such as the HBDI, is that better you know yourself, the better equipped you are to work with others. To extend this even further, if a team knows how they function as individuals, both under normal circumstances and under stress they can better tailor their communication styles to their teammates and can change that style if their teammate is under stress. If the entire team is plotted on a chart, they can also spot gaps or weaknesses in their team. Balancing out a group is helpful not only to learn strengths and weaknesses, but to insulate against negative interactions such as groupthink.

One story I often tell that helps illustrate how powerful a tool the HBDI is and how it gives you insight into other people's actions allowing you to be a more effective organizational actor and try to turn a bad situation into a positive one instead of acting on your impulses and making things worse is one I had when I was working for the start-up company. I was leading a team of about 18 men assembled at midnight, in the bitter cold, next to an office building near a shopping mall. They were trying to get a part called a gib that an arm attaches to a crane so they could lift steel beams, an equipment building, and antennae onto the roof. The crane crew could not get the pin into the gib (so they could not attach the arm to the crane). I suggested that since it was a brand new crane, that the paint on the gib was preventing the pin from sliding in and if they scraped the paint out of the hole, the pin should slide right in. It was probably engineered very precisely, and the paint was throwing everything off. They dismissed me, based on previous experience with this crew of contractors, most likely because I was the only girl there, and therefore couldn't possibly be right. Instead, they called for an engineer to drive down from New York.

Rather than whine and complain that no one would listen to me, I calculated the weights on the assembled steel platform, and asked the crane operator if the crane could handle that load, once the engineer arrived, chipped out the paint, and installed the pin in the gib, attaching the arm. He assured me that the crane was rated for 100 tons, and could easily handle the 20 ton assembled weight of the steel platform in one lift. So, I sent another guy from the crane crew back to the yard to get me a smaller crane, while I went on a coffee and donut run for the 18 guys standing around in the freezing cold (because, you know that's the girl's job!) When I returned with coffee and

donuts for everyone, I brought together the people I'd polled about the weights, the additional crane, and the foreman. I suggested that they build the platform in the parking lot of the mall with the smaller crane (it was midnight, we had plenty of room) and then pick the entire platform up once they had corrected the problem with the larger crane, and lift it onto the roof. Caffeinated and fed, they liked the idea of 18 men who were getting paid time and a half for doing nothing, to actually do some work, and they went to work assembling the steel beams and grates to form the platform.

By the time the engineer arrived from New York, the platform was built in the parking lot. When he told them that they had to sand the paint out so they could insert the pin in the gib, I fought back a smile, and stifled my giggling into my coffee cup. We had the crane operator lift the completed platform up onto the roof, secured it, and then they lifted up the shelter, antennae and associated equipment. We had the build wrapped up by 6am as the building owner requested. Had we not built the platform in the parking lot, we would have not finished until well after 9am; well past when people would have started arriving for work and working around all of those people may have been hazardous.

This story illustrates a saying that my grandmother always told me, "You get more flies with honey than you do with vinegar." There was a time in my career when I would have argued with them for dismissing me, which would tap into the very emotional, feeling, or "red" aspects of my HBDI profile. Instead, I detached, drawing on my experimental "yellow" self, and went into the safekeeping "green" thinking which is not my preferred method, and thought about what was intimidating them, what was keeping them from feeling safe, and realized they wanted me to behave in a manner

that they felt I should as a woman: to wait on them. I thought I could convince them to do what I wanted them to do by doing what they expected me to do: go for coffee. Once I performed the role they expected of me, I was less intimidating to them and was able to persuade them to do what I needed, after I checked with the experts that it could be done. In checking my ideas with the various experts onsite, I appealed to their rational “blue” selves and gave them the data that I had gathered from the various people on the team. They seemed to be more open to my suggestions when I behaved in a non-threatening manner according to their expectations. I think back to that day and think that that all happened before I learned about tools such as the HBDI, and long before I knew that I was triple dominant on the HBDI, and that my least preferred way of thinking is the safekeeping self.

Pro Bono Enterprise

A parallel line to my lifeline is a pro bono enterprise. What has also helped me in all of those business dealings was pro-bono work that I did concurrently with all of these jobs. I have had several dogs over the years that have been trained to be “therapy dogs.” These are dogs that have nice temperaments and go through a training and certification process so they can volunteer in hospitals, nursing homes, and schools. My dogs, in particular, volunteer in a children’s hospital. The populations we work with have chronic, long-term illnesses and diseases. Due to HIPAA regulations, we cannot ask what is wrong with them, but many times the family will offer the information. If people think the tools they develop in managing and dealing with people are used only at the workplace, they should think again and stretch beyond the cubicle.

As a hospital volunteer, I have learned to moderate and control my emotions in front of patients, their families and visitors. I have to be compassionate, and empathetic, but I also have to have boundaries so I do not get too close to the patients, or so that they do not attach to me, and I have to be firm when asked to do something that would be unsafe for my partner, the dog that cannot speak for him or herself. These are very sick children with whom we volunteer. People often ask me how I have done it, month after month, for nearly eighteen years. All I can tell them is that it puts life in perspective: if I think I am having a bad day, and then work at the hospital, I realize that I do not have the slightest clue as to what a bad day is. The kids and their families, some of whom may not survive their hospital stay, are the people who know what having a bad day means.

In the DYNM501 course John Eldred (Eldred, 2009, private conversation) explained that Chief's Cases are cases that a hospital chief keeps to him or herself, partly to keep skills sharp, and partly as a diversion to their largely administrative role in a hospital. I have realized in my pro bono enterprise that I have my own version of chief's cases to balance for my role in work. I have been working at Children's Hospital for 18 years in their Paw Partners Program. From there, thanks to many years of experience in dog training and competition, I have gone on to become a certified pet therapy evaluator, which is also pro bono work. Over the years, I have been tapped to sit on numerous advisory groups, been interviewed on TV and asked to write articles about Animal Assisted Therapy. A few years ago, I was asked to go to Procter and Gamble in Cincinnati, OH, to be part of a summit on Animal Assisted Therapy and Animal Assisted Activities in Children's Hospitals that are part of the Children's Miracle

Network. I worked with representatives from the American Veterinary Medical Association, several Professors from various Veterinary Schools in the US, and several animal behavior experts, to develop guidelines for hospitals that would like to set up programs utilizing animals in their hospitals. These are things that never would have happened had I not done any of my pro-bono work.

Through my involvement with animals, I have also had the opportunity to gain a tremendous amount of experience that I would not have had to opportunity to get in any of my jobs. I have been the chairperson for many events and committees, and served on several boards of directors for various organizations. I also taught dog training professionally for several years. These experiences further have afforded me the opportunity to practice working with teams, systems, and to manage volunteer teams and patients' families. In my experience, volunteer teams are often even more difficult to manage than work teams because everyone has his or her own reasons for being involved in the project, and they are often disparate and difficult to resolve. You cannot give anyone a paycheck or something tangible, so you have to work within extreme constraints to try to fulfill their perceived value derived from the experience. I have noticed in recent years that my ability to manage these volunteer groups has improved a great deal, and I attribute it to the many tools I have learned, especially the HBDI. I find myself acting as a translator in many instances, especially when working with a very blue, or data-oriented, person, who is trying to communicate with a very red, or feeling, person. In many of these groups, I find myself part coach, part referee, and part mediator, all for the sake of experience.

The dog training in particular offers another interesting perspective into the business world. Teaching training for several years gave me the opportunity to look at the dynamics of family members and how they related to their pet. There is an incredible amount of verbal and non-verbal communication, in addition to healthy and unhealthy behaviors at play in the family environment. When I observe this and have to pass what is often unappreciated advice on to a client, I have to be very careful in how I frame such advice. I wish I had had the knowledge of the many tools I have now back when I was teaching dog training. It is difficult to learn how to best package advice, and I was using trial and error, not HBDI recommendations. But, I knew I had to be audience sensitive and aware of my choice of comments. I had to deliver the advice in such a manner that it was accepted by my training clients (the family management), without having them retaliate against the staff (the pet).

It seems that my pro-bono experience has developed my instincts, and my coursework has taught me the theory behind what I had been doing for all of those years. In fact, Parry and Doan (1994) write that “‘family therapy’ can thus be done with individuals, families, businesses, governments, and potentially even countries. It can be done with one person, dyads, triads, or any other numerical unit that seems useful,” (Parry/Doan, 1994. p. 48) In retrospect, I see that before I even knew what I was doing, I was examining the relationship between the family members and the pet, almost thinking of it as a family therapy diagnostic. Now, after taking several coaching classes, a section of my capstone deals with using a person’s relationship with animals, either their animal or a trained animal not owned by them, to look at the relationships among people, their pets, and their colleagues. I should start to make that a larger piece of my

story re-visioning process. After all, not many people have the combination of experiences with both people and animals, and education I have had the opportunity to cultivate, and it is a very specialized lens through which I can look at these relationships.

A Low Point on the Lifeline

As much as I loved my job in construction management, I learned how little control we have over our work-lives when I was faced with a layoff. I loved the freedom of not being chained to a desk, of working in the field, and of not working 9-5 *all* of the time, as we'd occasionally have to work in the middle of the night at office buildings, so their workflow was not interrupted. I worked my way up in the company from an assistant to an associate to site manager and finally to a program manager (the next step was a director position), and never thought of leaving there... until the company closed. I was devastated and completely blindsided! Worst of all, I failed to keep a current resume. I didn't know where to begin pulling it all together! I now know that one should always keep her options open and have an up-to-date resume and a great interview suit. You never know when you're going to be either out of a job, or if in the course of conversation, someone may mention your dream job to you and ask for a resume.

The book, Managing Transitions by William Bridges, PhD (2008) brought back many memories of this time. This book highlighted every mistake that was made in the merger. First of all, there were rumors that we were being acquired because we were told to give a competitor sensitive documents if they asked for them. Ironically, the day before the news hit that the company was sold, the CEO sent an email that these

rumors were false and there were no discussions to sell the company. Once the merger was completed and we were folded into the new company, the transition was not managed at all: one day we were Company A; the next day we were Company B. About six months after we were acquired, we were unceremoniously closed.

They handled the closure by laying-off 80-plus people in three waves, and I was one of the final four, who were tasked with shipping everything to North Carolina and shutting out the lights. I must admit, we were a bit bitter when we closed the office. North Carolina wanted a complete inventory of the computers, so we gave them one. On Monday, we shipped them 87 CPUs; on Tuesday we shipped 87 monitors; on Wednesday we shipped 87 power cables; on Thursday we shipped 87 mice; and on Friday we shipped 87 keyboards. Along the way, keys fell off some of the keyboards. We made sure that we wrapped up the beige keys with the black keyboards, and vice versa. I am sure the corporate office expected to get a shipment of 87 computer systems. We made sure they got them, in piecemeal. Bridges (1991) writes in his book Managing Transitions that, “the existence of the plan sends a message: somebody is looking after us, taking our needs seriously, and watching out so we don’t get lost along the way.” (Bridges, 1991. p. 8) The company that acquired us either had no plan, or simply failed to inform us that they had one, so it is fair to expect that we felt that they did not care about any of us who were caught up in the transition.

How I Worked my Way Through College, and Learned About HBDI

During that five-month lay-off, I went to school to learn computer network engineering and threw myself into my pro bono work, spending every Monday and Friday at the Physical Therapy lab at the children’s hospital where I work with my dogs.

In desperation, I begged for a receptionist job at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School. I was extremely overqualified for the job, but it was a means to an end. Since I never finished college, I needed a job that would pay tuition benefits. I look at my jobs at the University of Pennsylvania as simply that: jobs. They were jobs that gave me the tuition benefits I used to move myself on to my next career. They story of my career at Penn is almost "how I put myself through college at 40-something." In light of that, I am not going to focus much on these jobs except to mention two people. I have had two supervisors at the Wharton School, and if I could model myself after any of my past supervisors, it would be a blend of these two: Professor Ian MacMillan of Wharton's Entrepreneurial Programs, and Deirdre Woods, the CIO of the Wharton School. Both have astounded me at how they manage such tremendously complex careers and the people associated with their departments, and do it seemingly with such ease and good humor.

Deirdre is very supportive of developing her staff through retreats, training and workshops. I learned about the HBDI in one of my Organizational Dynamics courses, but Deirdre uses it with her managers at Wharton Computing, where I was able to see other people have the same "light bulb" moments I had in learning about it. One of my colleagues, after a recent HBDI workshop, told me, "I have to go home and apologize to my wife!" He started to talk about the fact that they were communicating from two different vantage points: he was speaking in blue, or the rational self which is data oriented, and she was listening for red, or the feeling, emotive self. The workshop taught him that until one of them learned to speak in the other's "language," they would continue not to hear each other.

My own first “light bulb” HBDI moment came when trying to help a new hire obtain a work visa. He was in danger of having to return to Lebanon, and I was trying to work with a representative of the university’s office dedicated to helping International Scholars. The person I was working with would ask for several pieces of information, which I would give him. Then, he would email me that it was not correct and I had to resubmit the information. After three or four rounds of this, I was growing very angry that he kept bouncing everything back to me. I spoke to Deirdre about the situation, and she advised me that I was acting very yellow. Acting very yellow is indicative of the experimental self or “big picture” thinking; whereas the person I was dealing with was acting very green, which is indicative of safekeeping, or what we yellow people think of as micromanaging. To put it in simple terms, he would ask for A, B, C, and D, but I was giving him ABCD. I was giving him the correct information, but I was not packaging it the way he very specifically was asking for it. We had several problems with the visa, but the person, luckily, did not have to return to Lebanon.

That light bulb moment was a point on my lifeline about one year ago. In this year, I have learned to revision the events that unfolded as a successful part of my story rather than a failure. I have learned that simply by realizing both sides of our conversation were rooted in different ways of thinking, I succeeded. I was able to alter my preferred response to the other person in a way that he needed to receive it, to move beyond the conflict and resolve the situation.

My Future Story

Where will I stop next on the lifeline? What will my next story be? The Organizational Dynamics Program has given me the gift of time. Time to reflect on my

various careers. Time to think about what I would like to do next. Time to know myself a bit better than I did when I began this journey. As for the future, I have learned that the work ethic that has been instilled in me makes me strive to be good at everything I do. I think this diffuses my skills, and as a result I am good at many things but not great at any one thing in particular. Perhaps I need to make an attempt to specialize at something, instead of being a generalist? But what do I like to do?

The time that has been given to me over the last two years has helped me realize that I enjoy working what is new: fields; companies, and jobs. I have learned that I like to have a problem or set of problems to fix. I like creating things. I also realized that I genuinely appreciate working with a team because I cannot brainstorm alone. I enjoy having the flexibility of not working a traditional 9-5 job. I spent several years working in the field, and when I am at a desk from 9-5, I feel like I am literally enchained. This feeling tends to stifle my creativity and forces me to perform extreme-multitasking due to constant interruptions. As a result, I feel like I never get anything accomplished. I miss the sense of accomplishment I have experienced in my previous jobs. In Story Re-Visions, (1994) Parry and Doan write that “every story is a form of censorship in that it is based upon paying attention to certain events at the exclusion of others, as well as applying particular meanings to the events thus selected rather than other possible meanings.” (Parry/Doan, 1994. p. 64) This reminds me that I have to work on re-visioning my recent past and present story, to reconstruct it and reframe events in a more powerful way. I have been telling my recent story as if I were a passenger, rather than an active participant.

In my future vision, I see myself in a role where I am respected for my experience and my knowledge. As I look five or ten years into the future, I see a Friday afternoon in the spring. I am not wasting ten hours each week commuting to and from a cubicle in the city, but driving from a successful meeting with an established client. I am reflecting on the previous week and thinking of what I helped others accomplish. On Monday, I met with a team that was really struggling with a company merger. These are brilliant, hard working people who were just “stuck.” I know, because I have been there. I shared my experiences, especially the fact that I lived through it all, and told them that they will too. We used several story re-visioning techniques, such as the team members’ giving me the worst possible outcome to this story, and worked through the scenarios. The team seemed more positive about their future in the new organization after some of their outrageous worst case scenarios. On Tuesday, I met with several coaching clients. Since my therapy dog and I volunteer in the hospital in which they work, and I knew they all liked animals, my dog joined me in the coaching sessions for a change. We took advantage of the beautiful weather, and did some “walking” coaching, to get them out of their offices and free their thinking. All of them began to see some of their obstacles in a different light, and began reframing some of the events of their stories. Then my dog and I went to visit the patients on our usual unit; we cannot forget them, after all. Wednesday brought some downtime to: catch up on some reading about new research in the field; plan for a teambuilding session on Saturday; and finally tackling the month’s paperwork. I even got to take my parents to lunch in the middle of the work week! On Thursday I had a few potential clients to meet with followed by

potential partner facilities to tour, and Friday morning we launched a new website prior to the aforementioned client meeting.

It is such a nice afternoon, and since I will be leading a teambuilding retreat tomorrow at a partner facility, I think I will stop by the site to ensure everything is ready for tomorrow. You see, the teambuilding participants are staff of a friend's company, and they are "test driving" the idea of using horses in teambuilding. They were open to doing this on a Saturday so that they do not have to close their office for a work day. I check in with the managers and staff of the partner facility. It is a rescue organization, and the share of the fee they will get for allowing me to run the program at their facility will cover their feed bill for a couple of weeks. They are more than happy to assist, and the horses will get some much needed handling that will further their rehabilitation. We have been working with them for a few weeks, so we are sure they are gentle enough to use in the program, but they want to work with them a few more weeks before they deem them ready to be put up for adoption. It is a win-win partnership all the way around: for the rescue, for the animals, the clients, and for me. It is a win for me because I know I don't have to be there every morning and evening handling feeding, watering, cleaning and other chores. I am happy to help out a few hours each week, trimming hooves, grooming and helping with cleaning, and the rescue is happy to have the help; but they are happier with the possibility of additional revenue source, in exchange for using the facility for a day. It helps that my horse is boarded up the road, and I will be able to get a ride in before heading out for dinner with friends.

I see myself as part of a team, if not leading the team, in a start-up or fledgling business, in which we can sort of make the rules as we move along. I see complex

problems being broken down, and something, anything, created as a result of those problems being broken down. What will that creation be? Who knows, it might be physical structures, a product, a service, or perhaps the next 'can't live without' item. I know that I have the tools in my toolbox to handle most of the obstacles that might be placed before me, and I know that I need teammates who will bolster my weaknesses with their strengths, and maybe even temper my overplayed strengths with their weaknesses. I can introduce them to many of the tools I have learned so they can understand that these tools are more than just the tools to play "head games" that people who have not studied them assume they are. I hope to use stories to get my ideas across to the team, and our stakeholders. I hope I can work, at least part of the time in a home office and not have to drive into the city every day, and make a comfortable living, bringing me up to the standard I enjoyed ten years ago in my previous career. Who knows, with the time I used to spend doing coursework I may even have time to get some exercise in, and perhaps even have the energy to date. I gave up on finding the elusive "Mr. Right" in my twenties and again in my thirties. Maybe I will find him in my forties; at least with my knowledge of the HDBI, I should be able to communicate with him whatever his preferences.

I know this is a tall order. I keep reminding myself of the writing of Annette Simmons (2001): "Money, power, authority, political advantage, and brute force have all, at one time or another, been overcome by faith. Story is your path to creating faith." (Simmons, 2001. p. 3) I have to have faith in myself before anyone else will have faith in me. I need to keep reconstructing, refining and re-visioning my story, and then when it is how I want it, I need to invite others along to share the faith.

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