THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED LEARNING AND

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FOUR REFLECTIVE ESSAYS

By:

Edward Barger

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Approved by:

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Professor Brian Shapiro, MA, Advisor and Reader

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Professor Amrita Subramanian, MSOD, ABD, Reader

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Professor Alan Barstow, PhD, Reader

ABSTRACT

This paper will be a collection of responses to questions posed to me by four professors with whom I studied while completing the coursework for the Masters of Science in Business Administration at the University of Pennsylvania. These professors and their respective courses were purposefully chosen for their impact that the curriculum and application of the learning had on my personal and professional development. Additionally, the perspective of the learning and applications is from that of an adult learner, an important element of the overall thesis of the importance of continued learning and professional development throughout one's career. The first question, posed by Professor Barstow, was a task to further explore how we can best understand the benefits of diversity of thought and other differences among generations to ensure to harness and align them to build strong teams and promote innovation in organizations. A question from Professor Subramanian to explore further was to contemplate as a leader, how does one leverage paradox in organizations and the power of diversity in thought? Professor Shapiro asked a two part question: First, what is the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos in everyday communications both up and down the organizational chart, and how and why to consciously inject them into the conversation? Second, how can an MSOD alumnus distill the lessons of a Penn classroom into coaching / mentoring sessions in the workplace? The fourth and final question was also from Professor Shapiro and was also a two part question: First, how does one default to structure consistently in effective presentations, and how can an MSOD alumnus distill the lessons of a Penn classroom into coaching / mentoring sessions in the workplace? Second, how do you leverage the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos (effective communications) into presenting

effectively? Ultimately, the project will weave the learnings of the four most influential classes to me in the Organizational Dynamics program here at Penn, through academic analysis and personal reflection, into a single message of the importance of continuing education and professional development.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

There are so many people that have helped me achieve this goal, with the road to this point having been so long. I’d like to start with some generalities; thank you to my boot camp instructors, NCOs, and Officers from the fleet who first instilled true discipline and direction. Next, thank you to the amazing colleagues and professional friends that have coached, mentored, inspired, and set the expectations to achieve more and finish my education.

To my Capstone Team, Professors Shapiro, Subramanian, and Barstow – not only have you helped guide me through this rigorous process, but your classes in the program truly had an impact on my personal and professional careers through learning, inspiration, and application. Also, to the rest of the staff at Penn and the Organizational Dynamics program, it is only with your help that this has been able to happen.

Lastly, but most heartfelt, is thank you to my wife and two teenage daughters for the love and support over the last nine years while I was a professional student, completing two degrees, in addition to trying to be a husband and father. Long nights of class after work, being unavailable on many occasions while I completed homework assignments would have taken a toll on lesser team mates. I appreciate all they have done for me on this journey.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This Capstone is the culmination of years of various experiences, both personally and professionally, that have shaped who I am in both elements today. The common theme will be the specific and most impactful lessons learned in my MSOD studies here at Penn, coupled with previous learnings. An important dynamic throughout is that I will graduate with my Masters at 50 years old, having just completed my Bachelor's at 47. Through military service, some hard times, and general life experience, the value that I now place on a formal education is exponential of what I had previously. Combined with years of work, specifically corporate experience, the Penn experience as an adult has allowed me to pick courses strategically based on known strengths and opportunities to improve. I was able to focus on what courses would make me a better leader, a better coach, and a better employee. It is these breakthroughs, reflections, and learnings that I want to explore and share.

In order to provide some context and properly frame out the impact of the MSOD experience, it would be helpful to have a better understanding of how I arrived here.

After graduating with honors from High School in 1989, I started my college career at Trenton State College. However, I did not have any real plans or goals – I was going to college because that was what you were supposed to do, what all my friends were doing, and what my parents expected of me. After almost two years of not accomplishing much of anything, I knew I needed a change. Coincidentally, this was happening at the same time that we invaded Iraq for the first time – so I signed up to join the Navy.

The Navy was a great opportunity to grow up, learn a skill, and be productive while serving our country. For four years I repaired nuclear submarines, while learning responsibility, leadership, and real world skills. These skills and accomplishments allowed me to advance in rank and have some great life experiences that I still apply today, both personally and professionally. While stationed in Hawaii, I took advantage of the military's tuition assistance program, and took several courses at Hawaii Pacific University on a part time basis while performing my military duties.

Upon being honorably discharged after four years of service, I came back home to New Jersey and enrolled full time at Rowan University. Unfortunately, I struggled with the overall transition to civilian life. One of the biggest elements was the prioritization of time between work and school, and the financial challenges that this created. Ultimately, I made the decision to leave school and go back to work full time in the same career field as my Navy experience, welding and pipefitting. As difficult as this decision was, it allowed me to get back on my feet financially, re-emancipate myself from my parents, and created a more stable and adult environment for me to finally move on and complete the adjustment to civilian life.

The next period of my life was a pivotal transformation of my personal and professional life, and set the course for the path that I have been on ever since. First, after 10 years working in the blue collar aspect of my industry, I transitioned into the white collar aspect, taking a position in inside sales, selling the products and services that I had been using every day. This was an important leap forward in terms of quality of life, income, career satisfaction, and direction. Secondly, I married my girlfriend of 6 years in November of 2001. Initially, we were going to get married that following spring, and had a majority of the plans in place, including deposits down the wedding venue, photographer, and DJ. However, the attacks of September 11th caused us to reevaluate the priorities of life, and we cancelled the big wedding and eloped on a destination wedding with invitations for anyone to come and meet us there if they wanted.

After excelling in inside sales, I took a promotion and the opportunity to be relocated to the metro Atlanta area. This was a great exercise in change management, corporate policy and procedure, as well as exposure to doing business and living in a different environment. I was able to make some more progress towards a Bachelor's degree by attending Mercer University in Atlanta, taking evening classes while continuing to work full time. We also celebrated the birth of our oldest daughter, Emma.

After a couple of years in Georgia, we moved back to New Jersey through a work related relocation. Once again, I was able to increase my responsibility, title, and compensation without a college degree and continued to move up the corporate ladder. This period saw continued personal and professional development. An important event for our family during this time was the birth of our youngest daughter, Maya, and getting both of our girls through infancy and into school full time. We also settled into our community and social circles, and an intercompany transfer that again increased my responsibility, title, and compensation.

The next and most pivotal chapter in the story is the aforementioned spring of 2012. After 21 years in my industry, steady and continuous advancement through different positions, and having made some progress towards a degree at four different universities, the fact that I did not have a Bachelor's degree had not been a hindrance to anything that I had set out to do. Admittedly, this fact actually led to a stagnant period, from 2003 to 2012, where I did not attend school at all, having grown complacent and overconfident. Then, in the spring of 2012, my company announced reorganization at the executive level that was going to create a vacancy for the Area Vice President of my territory. By all accounts, I was the lead candidate. However, at the end of the interview process, I was informed that I had not been chosen for the position because I did not have a bachelor's degree.

After 21 years, I had finally reached the point where advancement was not going to be possible without a college degree. Mentally, I had needed more than just the need to put a check in the box to inspire me to go back to school; I knew I needed to be fully convinced and committed to be successful in returning to school. This event of not being promoted was the turning point. In working with colleagues, HR, and a mentor, I was able to identify deficiencies in my business aptitude, the value of seeking more collaboration, and the need for the seasoning and foundation that only a formal education could provide. Accepting that I had these deficiencies was an important mental obstacles to overcome. But now, having come to this realization and acceptance, I was now properly motivated and mentally ready to go back and finish college, with the support of my wife and daughters.

The last step in the process was to identify where I wanted to apply. Because I worked in the metro NYC area at the time, and being aware of the prominent stature of NYU and the value of the education here, I decided to apply to NYU and only NYU – there was not a fallback position or safety school. I was accepted to start classes in the

Summer Session 2012. Returning to school as an adult, and with not getting the AVP position as a motivator and wake up call, allows for a greater focus, appreciation, and understanding of not only the academics, but also some of the more subtle but no less important aspect s of the NYU experience – competitive climate, of the best minds in the area, finding common ground and collaborating as we all strive for common goals and accomplishments.

In May 2018, I graduated from NYU with a degree on Organizational Leadership and Management as an Honors Scholar (3.58 GPA). This total experience over the years has taught me the value of an education, not just for the sake of the accomplishment but also of the countless times that the learning is utilized both personally and professionally on a daily basis. I am now also more aware and appreciative of the people around me, and value their input as a stakeholder in my world and as a function of good leadership.

To continue down this path, I then decided to pursue a Master's Degree to further my studies and keep on a path of continuous learning and improvement. Similarly to my decision to attend NYU, I again aimed high and only applied to the University of Pennsylvania. My experience in the MSOD program has been impactful in my professional career as well as my personal life.

In the next four chapters, we'll explore those details more, along with related academic research and supporting information. The essays will be relatively similar in structure, including an introduction, central argument, context and background, the question posed by the Professor, my response to the question, concluding remarks, and conclude with references. In Chapter 2 I will answer a question proposed by Professor Alan Barstow from class 631 – Everyday Intergenerational Conversations; Baby

Boomers and Millennials, in which I will address what I learned about how to navigate both the similarities and differences between the two. Chapter 3's question will be from Professor Amrita Subramanian regarding materials from class 620 - The Art and Science of Understanding Paradox in Organizations. The discussion here will be around the central theme of now being able to understand paradox, and the awareness of being able to see an issue from varying points of view. The third essay is from class 676 – Communication Competence from Professor Brian Shapiro. The important learning here was centered on how to effectively communicate within an organization, using the concept of the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos, which I have been able to apply to my everyday life. Finally, the last essay is also based on a question from Professor Brian Shapiro from class 643 – Effective Presentations in Organizations. In this essay we'll discuss how learning about structure and consistency leads to confidence and effectiveness in presentations.

This journey, which has included many challenges to attain a higher education while struggling with life, has made me appreciate the accomplishments. However, it was not just the value of the education, but a deep respect for the process and experience itself. While the trials and victories of the challenges of the process in their own way produce learning, the actual subject matter and ability to synthesize concepts to be a better professional and therefore make my team better is what I truly value and appreciate. This project represents the four most meaningful classes for me in the Organizational Dynamics program at the University of Pennsylvania. They have had a material impact on my life, and I utilize the concepts every day. I have realized that both the journey and learning are equally important for personal and professional growth, which has made me a life-long student and a believer in the importance of continuing education. This sentiment is expressed in this project entitled *The Importance of Continued Learning and Professional Development.*

CHAPTER 2

HOW TO NAVIGATE AMONGST GENERATIONS AS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

Introduction

My first essay will discuss the importance of understanding generational differences between Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. The essay begins with an understanding of generational cohorts, the existence of bias and overcoming it, and why this matters going forward.

Argument of the Essay

Although there are recognizable generational differences, acknowledging bias and overcoming it to them value to those differences, combined with recognizing similarities will propel and organization forward.

Context and Background of the Question

This question is rooted in the learnings and experiences of taking 631 – Intergenerational Conversations; Baby Boomers and Millennials. The lessons of this course brought to light how to recognize and overcome bias, both outwardly as well as directed at me, making me a more effective leader. With this being one of the top challenges we face in our organization, it was a fitting first essay in my Capstone

Question from Professor Barstow

The question posed by Professor Barstow to further explore: How can we best understand the benefits of diversity of thought and other differences among generations to ensure to harness and align them to build strong teams and promote innovation in organizations?

Response

First, it is important to understand and put into perspective what is meant by generations, in order to properly compare, contrast, and understand them. According to Cort and Zacher, generations

> "in its common sociological conceptualization, the term 'generation' refers to a group of people born during the same time span, who by virtue of their chronological age proximity have shared similar life experiences" (Cort & Zacher, 2017. Pg. 113).

Another similar and supporting view is to define generation as

> "a social category for people who have similar birth year, birth location, and life events at critical developmental stages. These cohorts are believed to share similar life experiences, which result in the development of personality characteristics that distinguishes them from other generational cohorts" (Eschleman, King, Mast, Ornellas & Hunter, 2017. Pg. 200).

For older generational cohorts as cited in Eschleman et al, there is not agreement in the birth year ranges of the older generations. However, there is consensus on the two of the most recent social categories – Generation X and Millennials.

Table 1. Inconsistent, Older Generational Cohorts

INCONSISTENT, OLDER GENERATIONAL COHORTS	
SOCIAL CATEGORIES	**BIRTH YEARS**
World War II-ers	1903 - 1933
Swingers	1934 - 1945
Traditionals	before 1940
Matures	1925 - 1942
Baby Boomers	1940 - 1964
Generation X	1965 - 1978
Millennials	1979 - 1994

(Eschleman et al, 2017)

In the class, to be relevant in learning how to observe and better understand those around us in both personal and professional settings, we focused on the three primary generations that are living and we are interacting with today in both our personal and professional lives – Baby Boomers, Generation X, and Millennials. Briefly differentiated, Baby Boomers are the grown children of the World War II generation from when they returned from war. Generation X "share life events of a childhood filled with financial and family insecurity, diversity, and rapid change", and "greatly influenced by the internet, AIDS, and MTV" (Eschleman et al, 2017). "Millennials share a life event of being the first born into an internet-laden ‘wired’ world” (Eschleman et al, 2017).

The demographics of the class was a key factor in the learning, with ample diversity in gender, ethnicity, and age. The class was structured to maximize interaction, sharing of experiences, ideas, goals, challenges, and projects, in conjunction with guidance and talks from the professors. The elements of the curriculum fostered trust and sharing, eliciting emotion and real moments of realization.

In class discussions and exercises, one of the foundational lessons was the existence of bias and stereotypes as a construct of human nature. The existence of bias can be present in intergenerational relationships and interactions as well. Although there may be some commonalities between the generally accepted generational cohorts, birth year parameters are not an accurate line in the sand for behaviors and thinking. There is a blending of behaviors and thinking that bridges the generations. This was expressed in a study finding that

> “compared to Boomers and GenX’ers at the same age, Millennials were less likely to endorse social values (such as making friends at work) and more likely to endorse leisure values (such as vacation time). For workplace settings, Millennials were less likely than those in Generation X to favor owning their own business or working for a large corporation and were less likely than Boomers to favor working at a social service organization. However, while mean-level generational differences were apparent, there were no clear cut-offs between generations. Instead, the trends were more gradual and linear, suggesting that generations might be best conceptualized as fuzzy social constructs” (Campbell, Twenge & Campbell, 2017. Pg. 130).

Another important learning regarding bias was to be self-aware of bias towards you from others. Just as it is important to control your own possible outward bias, is realizing how to control the bias of others. The awareness itself is thinking at a higher level, and can empower the individual to weather interactions that may otherwise be awkward and have a different outcome. Recognize the bias, search for common ground, connect, disarm, and move forward.

While it was important to acknowledge that bias and stereotyping creates differences that may not be there and create unnecessary barriers, it is also important to understand and embrace that the differences between generations are also something to be valued. Diversity of generational cohorts in any project or conversation will bring together different viewpoints of the same center that reflect their differences, and are all true – leveraging paradox. This will promote the best possible outcomes, build stronger teams, and promote innovation.

When there is a lack of alignment or a misunderstanding between different groups in a business environment, there

> "is a tendency to see those on the opposite end as being wrong-headed about how they do things. When working together, the challenge is not to prove how you are right and they should see your way, but to first understand that the view has value to them. It is how they are used to see and do work in environments they are familiar with. If you want to succeed in working together then have the conversation about the particular difference. Somewhere along the line of accepting, understanding or challenging, is compromise" (Shah, 2014. Retrieved on-line).

Concluding Remarks

The reason I chose the MSOD program here at the University of Pennsylvania was to become a better leader, which relates back to the title of my Capstone *The Importance of Continued Learning and Professional Development.* Each class was chosen purposefully. This class was impactful in that the material was not just learning but self-reflection, impacting others, and has practical application that will help make me a better leader and build stronger teams. These include:

- Recognizing bias towards others
- Recognizing bias towards myself, and how to neutralize it
- Generations differences; embrace and leverage
- Generational similarities; finding common ground, build relationships
- Leading diverse teams; see table below as example

Leadership not just in the future but now needs to leverage the dynamics of the workforce demographics in order to build successful teams. “Generations should be recognized by leaders and their organizations as important parts of the diversity mix as race, religion and gender are. Meredith et al. (2002) believe that the different core attitudes and values of generations often are the most important diversity determinants of workplace behavior. Therefore, leaders of organizations need to recognize and understand that generations develop a unique persona that translates into a mind-set that has different emotions, attitudes, beliefs, preferences, and embodied activities. This mind-set creates differences in how a person of a generation leads or how they prefer to be led” (Arsenault, 2013).

Table 2. Preferred Generational Leadership Styles

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Generation	Preferred leadership style
Veteran	Tend toward a directive style that is simple and clear. Rationale for this style was that Veterans were organization men who were loyal to the organization. Within each organization there was a clear well-defined hierarchy with very formal, military-like relationships. Authority was highly respected
Baby Boomer	Prefer a collegial and consensual style. Passionate and concerned about participation and spirit in the workplace. They espouse lots of communication, sharing of responsibility, and respect from each other's autonomy. Baby Boomers despise the traditional hierarchy and make every effort to turn the hierarchy upside-down
Generation X	Tend to be fair, competent and straightforward. Do not respect authority as did past generations as they prefer egalitarian relationships. Like to be challenged and thrive on change. Brutal honesty is a trademark of this generation
Nexters	Prefer a polite relationship with authority. Like leaders who pull people together. Believe in collective action and a will to get things changed

Sources: Adapted from Zemke *et al.* (2000) and Conger (2001)

Table II.
Preferred generational leadership styles

(Arsenault, 2013)

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CHAPTER 3

UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING PARADOX AS A LEADER

Introduction

The second essay will discuss how leaders can leverage paradox in organizations and the power of diversity in thought. It begins by defining paradox, then goes into some details of how the lessons of the class were applied to the atmosphere at the company I work for after we had been acquired.

Argument of the Essay

Without an understanding of paradox, differentiating points of view can be seen as something to be solved rather than an opportunity. Diversity of thought is vital for innovation and growth; leveraging paradox can be a powerful tool for leaders to accomplish these things.

Context and Background of the Question

This question is based in the learnings and experiences of taking 620 - The Art and Science of Understanding Paradox in Organizations. The lessons learned in this course are very relevant to my current professional situation after we were recently acquired; it has been helpful to be able to not only change my frame, but to help others to the same.

Question from Professor Subramanian

The question from Professor Subramanian to explore further became: As a leader, how does one leverage paradox in organizations and the power of diversity in thought?

Response

At face value, paradox can simply be defined as:

> "1: a tenet contrary to received opinion. 2a: a statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true. b: a self-contradictory statement that at first seems true" (Merriam-Webster, 2021. Retrieved online).

However, this definition itself can be a paradox, and certainly the understanding of it can be as well.

Through exercises in class, both individual and in breakout groups, we were able to explore what paradox meant to us, its place in our lives, as well our roles in our own paradoxes. These included exploring the "what" of paradox as well questions of paradox. Another method we learned in theory and application is the Four Levels of Analysis. These four levels include:

> "The individual level of organizational analysis see problems or issues arising because of an individual's behavior. This behavior is taken to be a manifestation of the individual's personality, internal dynamics or issues, or level of stress. We thus might attribute what happens in an organization to a particular person's personality, upbringing, or ability to handle stress" (Subramanian, 2019. DYNM 620 course materials).

> "The interpersonal level of analysis takes as the unit of measurement the relationship between two individual in an organization. Within this level of analysis, an

> organization would look at the relationship between two people for the source of a conflict or problem" (Subramanian, 2019. DYNM 620 course materials).

"The group and intergroup level of organizational analysis places emphasis on individuals as representatives of different groups in an organization" (Subramanian, 2019)

> "The organizational level of analysis is the "all problems or issues represent collective forces. From this perspective, individuals and groups in an organization are the actors in a larger drama which is mostly controlled by the organizational environment" (Subramanian, 2019. DYNM 620 course materials).

Through reflecting on the academics and the exercises, the learning produced an understanding of paradox, and identifying our own paradoxes, those around us, and within our organizations. This naturally leads to recognizing the value of diversity; diversity of inputs, interpretations, ideas, and recommendations, as examples. In valuing diversity, we see that

> "the true value of diversity emerges when there is not only physical difference, or difference in viewpoint represented, but when there is creation of an environment in which these and other real differences are actively leveraged to move an organization in a new and novel direction. It is expected that the resulting direction would be different from the one emerging in an environment in which diversity is neither sought nor celebrated. In short, it is diversity of *thought* that allows for a milieu to generate new and fresh ideas, to allow each of us to hear of, and ultimately better understand, the multiple angles that can be taken to view any particular issue" (Findeiss, Spencer & Ray, 2017. Pg. 2).

It is important, as we become aware of paradox around us, there can also be paradox in valuing it in

> "that those who value diversity as a group attribute may strive to be with and live in communities of like-minded others, people who also value diversity. Ultimately, this may create groups and communities composed of multiple social categories and a variety of competing identities, but members who are united by a shared, and thus

> homogeneous, appreciation for community diversity" (Hacket & Hogg, 2014. Pg. 416).

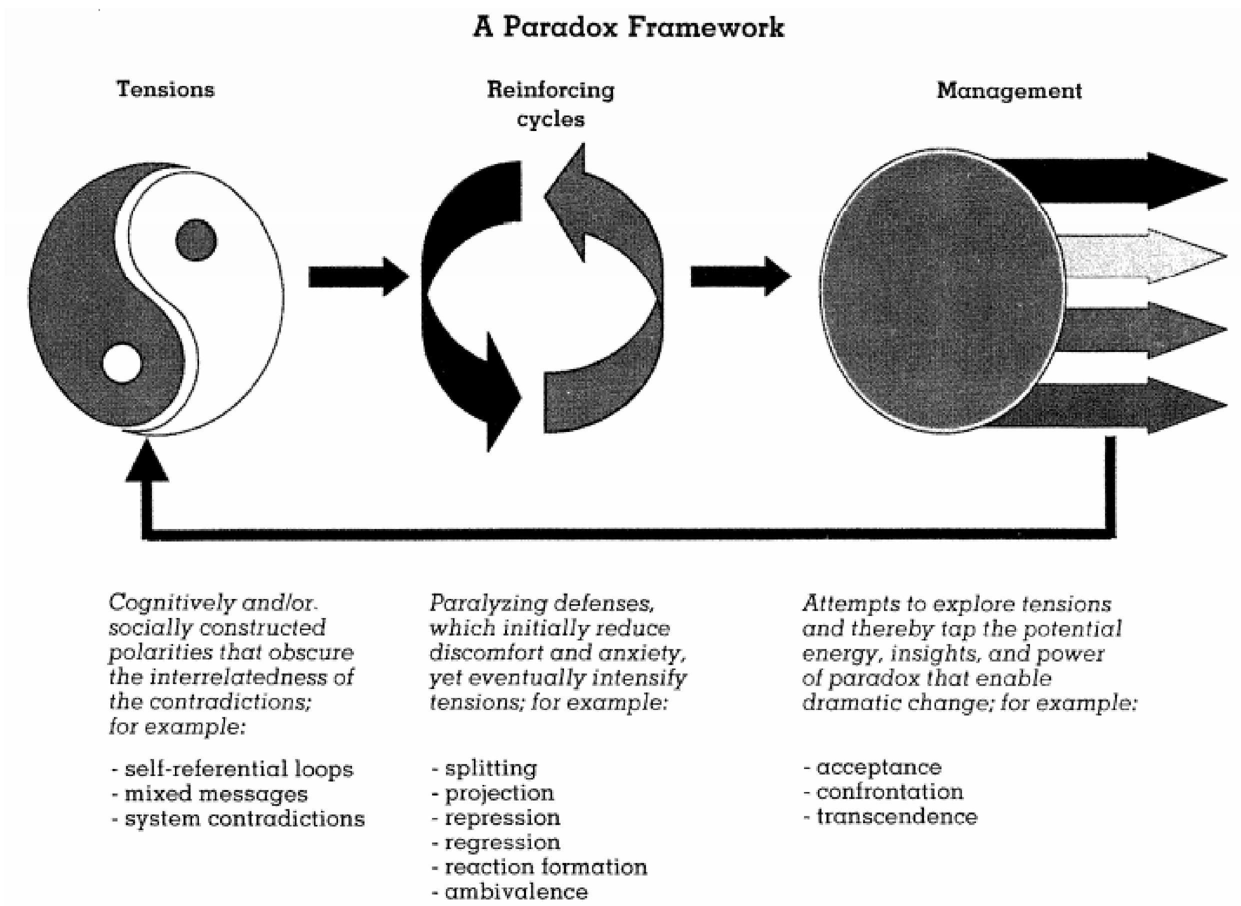
As the learning progresses – recognizing paradox, understanding roles, and embracing the value of diversity of views, it was time to choose a situation in reality to apply the lessons and practice. For me, there was an obvious choice; recently the company that I had worked for, a US-based Fortune 500 Company in the chemical segment, was purchased by a large multi-national company based in Paris. The integration of culture, managers, and employees has been a challenge in change management; and up to that point had not realized that it was also full of paradoxes. In looking at the three major elements of the newly formed system of culture, structure, and strategy after several years, much had been accomplished in unifying the two entities in structure and strategy. However, there is still more that needs to be accomplished in these elements, and even more opportunity with culture.

In looking for paradoxes in the new system, I could recognize the importance of

"the ability of network members and leaders to capitalize on and use these paradoxes to, at the same time and with equal attention, important demands that require directing energy in opposing directions. This contrasts with other approaches to managing paradox, such as ignoring it, confronting it to try to resolve it, suppressing one of the tensions or merely accepting the trade-offs of unequally managing each demand" (Lewis, 2000. Pg. 763.)

In applying the paradox framework below to our integration challenge, the similarities can be seen in that there are tensions (self-referential loops, mixed messages, and system contradiction) and reinforcing cycles (repression, regression, reaction formation, and ambivalence). It seems where the framework is broken for us is the management phase, with little to no appetite, or the wrong people engaged, to explore the tension to tap the potential of the paradox, or choosing to ignore it. (Lewis, 2000). There is also the presence of management viewing paradox as something to be solved (Subramanian, 2019).

Figure 1. A Paradox Framework



(Lewis, 2000)

To explore this more, we looked at the four levels of individual analysis to apply to the integration: individual, interpersonal, group & inter-group, and organizational (Subramanian, 2019). When looking at the differences between these levels, and applying them to the paradoxes related to the acquisition integration, it could be seen that thinking of paradox as a problem to be solved was at least in part due to viewing it from an individual or interpersonal level. In order to change our frame to a more productive interpretation, we would be better served to elevate the levels of our analysis to group & intergroup and organizational. "The group and inter-group level of organizational analysis places emphasis on individuals as representatives of different groups in an organization" (Subramanian, 2019), and "from an organizational level of analysis all problems or issues represent collective forces" (Subramanian, 2019). In changing the frame to the macro view, different conclusions are drawn and therefore result in different paths forward.

There are several characteristics between the two integrated companies that are vastly different in all elements of the system; structure, strategy, and culture. There are several examples of this: first, integrating an American and global workforce, with primarily French leadership. Second, a legacy short-term to medium term outlook, combining with a medium-term to long-term outlook. Another would be a difference pace – fast versus under control, tangentially impacting work-life balance. The experience created by management but felt down to the ground level is that

> "there is a tendency to see those on the opposite end as being wrong-headed about how they do things. When working together, the challenge is not to prove how you are right and they should see your way, but to first understand that the view has value to them. It is how they are used to see and do work in environments they are familiar with. If you want to succeed in working together then have the conversation about the particular difference. Somewhere along the line of accepting, understanding or challenging, is compromise" (Shah, 2014. Retrieved online).

Another applicable lesson applied to the integration was the Uniqueness Paradox, and in looking at some common cliché business storylines, we were able to associate a like story from our organization to most of them. The story that was the easiest to find related stories for is 'how organizations deal with obstacles'…which was then tied back to the use of the acquisition to work through our relationship with paradox. "The common stories seem to express tensions that arise from a conflict between organizational exigencies and the values of individual employees, which are, in turn, reflective of the values of the larger society" (Martin, Feldman, Hatch & Sitkin, 1983). This duality is certainly present in the business integration process we are all going through together.

> "Dualities cause tension, at least in Western industrialized settings, because there is a desire to believe that a resolution exists, if only it could be found. Organizational stories, then, express tension created by dualities, perhaps reducing the tension by expressing it" (Martin et al, 1983. Pg. 447).

The final learning in this class to apply to the integration was the use of lenses or frames. We've walked through the process of understanding paradox, tools for analysis, and the value of diversity of inputs on the same subject – while all being different can also all be true. Next is the concept that the same person can look at a subject and adjust the frame through which they observe it through, producing different outcomes – which can also all be true. It is important to understand that the diversity of frames used by a single observer is just as important as diversity of observers. The synergistic effect is a rich interpretation of the paradox.

For practical use, the class included materials that provided a list of 18 strategic lenses that could be used to identify, interpret, and leverage paradox in organizations. These lenses are:

- Machine
- Family
- Socio Technical Design
- Culture
- Management Innovation
- Democracy
- Community
- Collegiality
- Development / Growth
- Moon shots
- Organizational Change
- Leadership / Management
- Organismic
- HBDI
- Organization as Brain
- Systems Thinking
- Organizational Power and Politics
- Stories

In order to change the frame through which I was looking at our integration paradox, I chose to use the Organizational Power and Politics Lens and the Management Innovation Lens, both seen below.

Figure 2. Strategic Lenses – Two Examples

Organizational Power and Politics

What Questions Naturally Arise	Which organizational dynamics are highlighted?	Which Organizational Dynamics are Disregarded or Invisible?	How might the dynamics fostered by this lens be useful in an organization? When in your organizational life have you been grateful for the outcomes derived from these dynamics?	What can each lens contribute to helping you engender the conditions for optimal organizational life or performance or sustainability or, simply, for your energy and joy.
Is it ethically permissible to use politics?	The decision-making process			Help me see that I want a new job
				Get me more resources
	How well people collaborate/work on teams	Voice of the minority (low power) views	Successful use of politics gets things done	Being able to choose my own path
Who has power? Who is not in power?	Competition	Organization charts	It can help ease communications	Even when being dominated, I still have a choice
		Technology	Can result in better quality of work	
Are the people in power making the right decisions? Are they asking the right questions?	How information is shared or hoarded	Creativity/innovation	It can help identify the "weather report" of your people (help you get a feel for how they are doing)	
	Levels of trust			
Is power shared and, if so, how is it shared?				

Management Innovation Lens

What Questions Naturally Arise	Which organizational dynamics are highlighted?	Which Organizational Dynamics are Disregarded or Invisible?	How might the dynamics fostered by this lens be useful in an organization? When in your organizational life have you been grateful for the outcomes derived from these dynamics?	What can each lens contribute to helping you engender the conditions for optimal organizational life or performance or sustainability or, simply, for your energy and joy.
How can we engage others in the innovation process?	Creativity	Acknowledgement (lack of)	This lens is useful because it challenges the management paradigm by questioning, "Why do we do what we do?" It helps people in the organization ferret out automatic behaviors that may not be serving the interests of the organization any longer. This lens considers all of the organization's practices to see if the reasons for a process are still valid, if the process is effective, and if it is using the right metrics to measure its effectiveness. This lens also makes sure that everyone who is involved in the process is able to contribute to improving it or making innovations.	
How can we begin an innovation process?	Enthusiasm	Freedom (lack of)		
Who owns the process?	Processes	Organizational culture aspects that are not measurable or managed		
What are the objectives of the process?	Decision-making practices	Engagement of people (outside of their involvement in the specific processes)		
What are the metrics for success?	Process shareholders	Politics (except for decision-making criteria of processes)		
What are the decision-making criteria?	Lines of communication	Straight line and consistent		
How are decisions communicated and to whom?	Not a straight path, more S shaped with peaks and valleys	In a time Warp		
Who else needs to weigh in on the process?	More efficient – supply chain, 24/7	Mechanizing	Creativity can help a company grow and gain a sense of community from its employees. Engaging all in the process, can make each individual feel welcomed and eager to go to work each day.	
Do you belong to an organization that has a flat or hierarchy scheme?	customer service	Bureaucracy		
How efficient is your organization and are they open to new ideas?	Adaptable	Power		
Have the organizations procedures	Engaging		I'm fortunate enough to work in an organization that promotes	

(Subramanian, 2019)

In viewing our integration paradoxes through different lenses, by applying questions in the matrix, I was able to see some challenges from a different perspective.

For example, in using the Organizational Power and Politics Lens, I concluded that the acquiring company was not abusing the political power that they had, but were in fact taking small steps to bring along the acquired associates. This was contrary to my opinion using my 'standard' lens. As an example from the Management Innovation Lens, I realized that our legacy company lacked any commitment to innovation, so there was nothing for associates to be involved in. However, the acquiring company had a robust innovation strategy on a global platform, with not just opportunity to participate but encouragement to.

Concluding Remarks

I purposefully chose this class in order to sharpen my cognitive abilities: analysis, reasoning, recognizing assumptions, and diversity of thought, to name a few. It is important to be able to recognize paradox

Self-reflection and being able to outwardly impact change, both in myself and others, using these lessons and tools are a skill necessary for good leader to have. This relates back to the title of my Capstone *The Importance of Continued Learning and Professional Development,* as I continue to strive to be a professional Leader.

The grounding concept in the value acquired is that people

> "aren't randomly credulous. Presented with someone else's argument, we're quite adept at spotting the weakness. Almost invariably, the positions we are blind about are our own (Kolbert, 2017. Pg. 68).

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CHAPTER 4

USING ETHOS, PATHOS, AND LOGOS TO EFFECTIVELY COMMUNICATE IN ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

The third essay will discuss how to be a more competent communicator using Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs of ethos, pathos, and logos (trust, emotions, and reason). It begins by discussing the importance of being a good communicator, then goes into thoughtfully applying trust, emotions, and reason to improve one's communication skills. Third, it transitions into communication in teams, pivoting into communication up the organizational chart. Finally, it discusses the practical application of Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs and how to help others use these tools as well.

Argument of the Essay

The argument of the essay is the importance of being a competent communicator, which can be described as

> "when the manner in which a message is communicated is acceptable to both parties, NOT the content". "An exceptionally human communicator expresses herself in a manner that is acceptable to both herself and her receiver. It's really the ability to keep other people positively engaged with us" (Shapiro, 2016, Pg. 20-21)

When competence has been achieved, it produces better relationships between the communicators and receivers, regardless of the content or result. Competence is a process and practice that once known and understood, can help develop skills to become a more effective communicator. It is those practices that we will discuss here. Being purposeful and disciplined in understanding Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs for what they are, and purposefully applying them in interactions with your audience can help you be a more competent communicator.

Context and Background of the Question

This question is based on the learnings and experiences of taking DYNM 676 – Communication Competence in the Organizational Dynamics program. The lessons learned in this course are very relevant to my personal and professional development, and have had a profound impact on my ability to exert impact and influence.

Question from Professor Shapiro

Professor Shapiro asked a two part question: First, what is the importance of ethos, pathos, and logos in everyday communications up and down the organizational chart, and how and why to consciously apply them in conversations? Second, how can an MSOD alumnus distill the lessons of a Penn classroom into coaching / mentoring sessions in the workplace?

Response

Effective communication is an important life skill, and even more so in the workplace.

> "During the past twenty years, deficiencies in communication skills of business graduates have been criticized by both business leaders and academicians. While it is generally recognized that both written and oral communication skills are necessary for success in all fields of business and educators have attempted to improve

> students' abilities, both employers and educators continue to perceive recent graduates as deficient in communication skills" (Bean & Watanabe, 2011. Pg. 1).

Being an effective communicator can set you apart from others, as "communication skills are important in the ability to be promoted, performance appraisals, and successful relationships with colleagues and clients" (Bean & Watanabe, 2011).

One of the important elements of effective communication is the concept of context, which is impactful in all communication – both specifically mentioned and inferred.

> "Context is the who, what, when, where, and why of our communication. Context has a powerful influence on the facts and reasons in our messages, and it is powerful in part because it is often invisible. Context tends to be implicit in our messages rather than explicit. Context is about the assumptions we make about the message we are sending – and as we all know, wrong assumptions lead to wrong messages" (Shapiro, 2016. Pg. 84).

The foundation of both my learning is the understanding of Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs; what they are, what they mean, and then the practical application in relating to the audience and delivering the message. The first of the Rhetorical Proofs is Ethos, which is intended to relate to character, or more specifically trust. Trust is the foundation of relationships, and an important element to be present if you are going to communicate competently. "When we are talking about our communication practices, it is important to recognize what specifically about our communication builds trust and establishes credibility" (Shapiro, 2016). Not only is it important that you trust those you are communicating with, but equally important that you as the communicator are viewed as trustworthy yourself. What the audience thinks matters. Trust leads to credibility, which can be impacted by many things, such as the presenter's appearance, education, reputation, and experience (Shapiro, 2016). Ethos is the grounding element that must be present for competent communication, and being aware of this helps create context for everyday interactions, and how that's important for setting up future communication with those around us.

The second Proof is Pathos, or "eliciting a desired emotional state in another person" (Shapiro, 2016). Understanding and being able to impact the audience's emotional state through content and delivery is essential to being able to competently communicate, and ensure that the audience is listening to and receives the message. The emotional state of the audience is important to how the information is perceived, and is a relevant consideration in effective communication. An important element in succeeding in this is to express empathy to those you are communicating with. Empathy is our ability to be able to understand what others are feeling, and have them believe that we understand them. This elicits positive emotions, which can impact trust (ethos) and help ensure the intended message is received (Shapiro, 2016).

The last Proof is Logos. "Logos refers to the use of reason or logic. Reason and rationality are what distinguish us from all the other species on our planet" (Shapiro, 2016). Logic is a calculated argument, supported by evidence, that leads to a probable conclusion. An important thing to understand about reason is that the logic does not necessarily have to be true, just to be believed by the audience, most often with ethos and pathos present helping to sell a false claim. This is where logical fallacies come into play, so there are ethical considerations when applying logic. (Shapiro, 2016). It is important to understand and effectively utilize Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs in order to be a competent communicator.

The significance of Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs is that they appeal to the relationship between the communicator and the specific audience addressed. It is critical that in order to be truly listened to, the communicator must have established trust with the audience, appeal to their emotions positively or negatively, and the message itself appears to be reasonable. Although these elements are always present, understanding them and being able to use them strategically is important to being a competent communicator.

The concept of Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs was further explored in the class using tools and exercises in preparation for formal interactions. An example of this was a template of how to prepare for important upcoming interactions, either at work or personally. The template included sections for ethos, pathos, and logos, with the objective being to identify the audience of your upcoming interaction, and prescribe how you would satisfy all three elements with the intended audience. In preparing this way, the interactions were more productive in their outcome because there was a purposeful plan to guide the discussion. In doing this several times over the semester, we were able to see where we were both successful as well as those times when it may not have gone as planned. The discussion in class afterwards and subsequent learning provided insights for corrections in strategy and tactics, so as to prepare differently for future interactions.

Another element of the learning is the concept of effective communication in teams, and its importance. Collectively as well as personally, the ability to be a productive and successful team member will be an essential job skill both in the present and beyond.

> "Slow-moving, top-down bureaucracies are disappearing. Disruptive technologies have increased connectivity and the speed of communication. Work is becoming more flexible – and just plain faster. Organizational boundaries are blurring" (Newberry, Boyer & Moussa, 2016, pg. 173).

Within organizations we can see examples of

> "the well-documented problem that dogs every top team, at every level of an organization: team members fall out of sync, just as married couples do. You think you are clearly communicating your intentions, but really you are speaking to yourself about the assumptions you are making about what you believe others are hearing" (Newberry, Boyer & Moussa, 2016, pg. 153).

Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs play an important role in effective group communications as well. When it comes to teams, where there is often already established trust and reason by virtue of organizational culture, camaraderie, and aligned goals – emotions are still an element that need to be managed by both leaders and individual members of the team. Awareness and management of the pathos element that is vital to competent communication amongst teams can be accomplished by utilizing the following:

Awareness of Own Emotions

> "Team members higher in emotional self-awareness are more likely to recognize the appropriate emotional intensity levels required during team exchanges and be better positioned to promote team relationships" (Troth et al, 2012)

Awareness of Other's Emotions "An individual needs to accurately identify the emotion a fellow team member is experiencing to effectively respond to emotions in a team" (Troth et al).

Managing Own Emotions "Skill in managing one's own emotions may be the key to better resolve team conflicts productively and without emotional escalation" (Troth et al, 2012)

Managing Others' Emotions "Managing others' emotions enables a team member to regulate the emotional tone of interpersonal exchanges within the team so they can be productive" (Troth et al, 2012).

In being both aware of and managing the emotions of ourselves and others, we can project how we want to be perceived while also expressing empathy to our audience, both of which help us be competent communicators within teams.

An important element of communication in an organization is the ability to "communicate up", or provide information and feedback to those above you on the organizational chart.

> "Critical upward communication improves decision making in organisations. Without it, senior management teams become out of touch with the mood of their people, and underestimate or miss emerging problems in their marketplace. They are more likely to produce strategies that are misaligned with the perceptions of their employees. The possibility of successful strategic implementation is therefore dramatically reduced. This suggests that two way communication and critical feedback is vital to organisational success" (Tourish, 2005. Pg. 485).

Being able to effectively communicate up the organizational chart is not just critical for the organization as a whole, but impacts an associate's upward mobility and career opportunities. This is because of the impact and influence that can be gained, assuming you have successfully satisfied the requirements of trust, emotions, and reason from those you are imparting influence on. To have made this impact will be to have helped those above you, and therefore the organization. There are many benefits to effective upward communication that can have an impact on both an individual and the company. Examples of these include:

- The promotion of shared leadership, and an enhanced willingness by managers to act on employee suggestions
- A greater tendency by employees to report positive changes to their manager
- Actual rather than perceived improvement in management behavior following on feedback, beyond what could be attributed to regression to the mean
- A reduced gap between manager's self-ratings and those of their subordinates
- The creation of improved forums for obtaining information, garnering suggestions, defusing conflict and facilitation the expression of discontent
- An enhancement of organizational learning
- Better decision-making – currently it is estimated that about half of decision in organizations fail, largely because of insufficient participation and a failure to carry out an unrestricted search for solutions
- Enhanced participation

(Tourish, 2005)

The last element is the concept of practical application and distilling these learnings to others. With ethos, pathos, and logos being the foundation of competent communication, there has to be a commitment to the mental process of preparing for key interactions, whether personal or within an organization. First, understand that trust, emotions, and reason, although always present in communication, they can be leveraged in your favor to increase communication competence if properly planned for. Second, chart the interaction:

- Who are you communicating with?
- What is your relationship?
- What do want to accomplish?
- How will you establish trust?
- How will the audience react?
- How will you react to their reaction?
- Is your concept / question reasonable?
- How will you handle questions or objections, while maintaining the three pillars?
- How will you keep your own emotions in check?

It takes a commitment to the process to get comfortable, but with repetition and learning from both successes and mistakes, the process can eventually become a habit.

As an example of using ethos, pathos, and logos in a practical commercial application, there was a study on customer engagement that specifically used the three pillars as reference points. In this study, customer engagement is

> "a psychological process that models the underlying mechanisms by which customer loyalty forms for new customers of a service brand as well as the mechanism by which loyalty may be maintained for repeat purchase customers of a service brand (Bowden, 2009. Pg. 72).

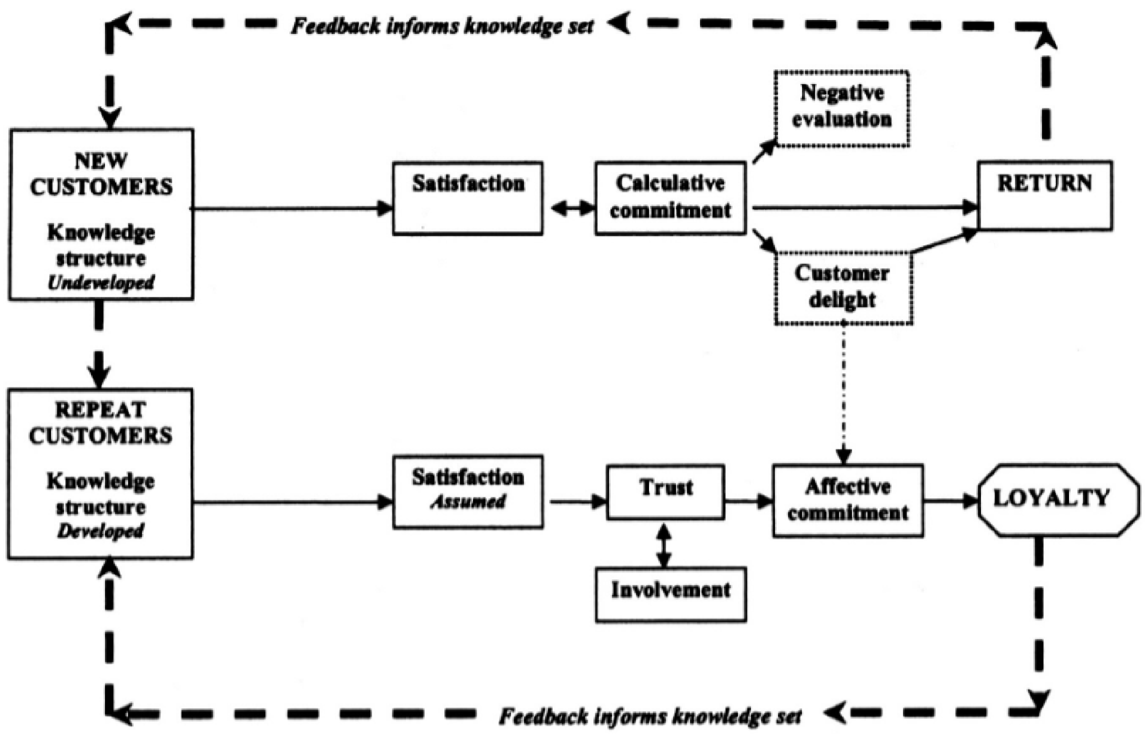
Bowden then dialed in a model showing the process for customer engagement, which included elements that were correlated to Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs:

1. Ethos (trust): "Increased levels of involvement concomitantly supported by increased levels of trust for repeat purchase customers" (Bowden, 2009).
2. Pathos (emotions): "The development of affective commitment toward the service brand which is considered to be a more emotive base for purchase and which may ultimately eventuate in a state of enduring brand loyalty" (Bowden, 2009).

3. Lagos (reason): “The formation of a state of calculative commitment for new customers which is considered to be a largely cognitive basis for purchase” (Bowden, 2009).

These concepts can be clearly seen in the model’s two comingled flowcharts, which express the different events in the sales cycle of both new customers and repeat customers.

Figure 3. Process of Customer Engagement



(Bowden, 2009)

The model of the process for customer engagement results in three major implications for managers in understanding customer engagement. First, the model

> "contributes further to the debate concerning the continuing tendency of management to use rather simplistic and substantially flawed measures of customer consumption responses" (Bowden, 2009. Pg. 71).

Second, the model

> "provides a means by which management can better understand the relationships between customers' goals and expectations, and the range and depth of customers' cognitive and affective responses toward a service or brand" (Bowden, 2009. Pg. 72).

Finally, "the model draws attention to the quite different cognitive and affective preconsumption states of new versus repeat purchase customers" (Bowden, 2009).

In conclusion, the model of the process of customer engagement allows business leaders to better understand customer engagement through a lens that includes Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs of ethos, pathos, and lagos. By considering and applying these elements, a deeper connection can be made with the customer – leading to customer retention and increased sales.

<u>Concluding Remarks</u>

I purposefully chose this class in order to increase the value of my interactions with others, specifically with key personnel in my professional life, and to generally be a better communicator. The concept of establishing competent communication through Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs of trust, emotions, and reason resonated with me. I was able to understand my own feelings and reactions to being communicated to. This, in turn, helped me understand how to apply these Proofs to how I communicate with others. Most importantly, I left the class understanding how to execute the concepts, and how to prepare to be a more competent communicator. The fact that I left the class with a tool kit and practical process to use and share, brought about significant value as well as positive impact in practical application. This relates back to the title of my Capstone *The Importance of Continued Learning and Professional Development,* as I continue to strive to be a professional Leader. This is important because

> "leaders who are communicative are not just good at communicating, which all leaders and members do continuously, but that they are 'good communicators' – thus there is a competence aspect of the that which implies that this communication competence can be developed" (Johansson, Miller & Hamrin, 2014. Pg. 148).

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CHAPTER 5

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRUCTURE AND CONSISTENCY LEADING TO CONFIDENCE AND EFFECTIVE PRESENTATIONS

Introduction

The fourth and final essay will discuss the foundations of effective presentations, how to apply a standardized structure to improve how messages are received, and do so consistently and with confidence. Before taking this class, although I often had to deliver presentations as part of my professional position, I was not very skilled. I would over prepare, and constantly make changes to the material prior to the event. Lack of confidence in the material would lead to me being nervous, which came through both audibly and physically during the presentation: it made it hard to make a connection with the audience while delivering the message. An example of this would be presenting area performance in the annual business review to our corporate officers. Historically, based on feedback from peers and audience members, my presentations came across as awkward due to both the flow of the material and nervousness in the delivery. This class provided a framework that has allowed me to properly format and prepare for a presentation, which has led to increased confidence, and being able to better connect with audiences. This essay will also cover how to share this knowledge as a leader and mentor, as well as some of the cross-over of Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs from DYNM 676

Argument of the Essay

The argument of the essay demonstrates the importance and value of having an established and reliable structure for crafting and delivering presentations, which leads to increased confidence and clarity, resulting in increased effectiveness in delivering messages.

Context and Background of the Question

This essay is based on the learnings and experiences of taking DYNM 643 – Effective Presentations in Organizations. The lessons learned in this course are very relevant to my personal and professional development. They have had a profound impact on my ability to be more confident in presenting and therefore more effective, as well as how to help others do the same.

Question from Professor Shapiro

Professor Shapiro challenged me with a three part question: First, what is a reliable, standardized structure that can consistently be applied to deliver effective presentations? Second, how can an MSOD alumnus distill the lessons of a Penn classroom into coaching / mentoring sessions in the workplace? Finally, how do you leverage the importance of Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs and competent communication into presenting effectively?

Response

In addition to the importance of being a competent communicator for organizational success, it is equally important to be a competent presenter. The ability to inspire, exert impact and influence, therefore affecting career trajectory can only be bolstered by having this skill. Being a competent presenter means you have

> "the ability to craft and deliver your message in such a way that the person or people you are sending it to will find the delivery acceptable, even if they disagree or find the content upsetting" (Shapiro, 2016, pg. 20-21).

Regarding skills at the macro level, I was looking for instances of being an exceptionally human communicator, which is to "apply time honored techniques in what appears to be effortless, yet is done in a highly strategic manner" (Shapiro, 2016, pg. 3). As a presenter, it is important to consider how you are coming across to your audience, both physically and subliminally. This can have several applications, including the way you are dressed, your body language, your confidence level, and your perceived authenticity.

As important as being a good presenter may be, it can be an underdeveloped skill set that has the potential to inhibit leaders from achieving their goals. As stated by Randall and Harms:

> "too often, leaders wing their way through their communications, only to find that they aren't getting the results they want. For example, a leader presents a new strategy to his employees, but middle managers don't enthusiastically support implementation. Or, a leader presents an innovative plan to the board, but the resulting board discussions don't produce decisions that support the plan. In such situations, even if the ideas were sound, the audience wasn't motivated to take action. The problem was that the message leadership delivered was not convincing or clear" (Randall & Harms, 2012. Pg. 21).

This is where we can tie in the learnings from DYNM 676, the importance of trust, emotions, and reason in competent communications, by applying Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs.

While presentations also take on many forms, they are not limited to long formal ordeals in front of a large audience. They can be as simple as a small speech at a meeting, or even an impromptu coaching moment with a direct report. All of the same characteristics, challenges, and needs of the audience apply.

When it comes to audience needs, effective presentations have at their core a focus on the audience; their interests, what's in it for them to pay attention. Randall and Harms addressed the needs of the audience driving presenter's behaviors.

> "Powerful stories can achieve significant purposes. Persuasive leaders have a concrete picture of what they are trying to accomplish with a story, and the actions they want the audience to take. Then they make sure that the story convincingly advances that purpose. The purpose of a story represents your reason for telling the narrative to this particular audience, at this particular point in time, and on this particular subject. What does what you have to say effect your listeners? What do you want them to accomplish as a result of your story" (Randall & Harms, 2012. Pg. 23)

However, not everyone is naturally or initially good at crafting and delivering a presentation. Common challenges include nervousness and lack of confidence. This was the position I found myself in when starting DYNM 643. Having often been in the position to give a presentation, I always found myself disorganized, with no sense of time, and making changes up until the last minute. This chaotic preparation always led to nervousness and lack of confidence, which came across in my presentation, impacting my effectiveness. This was based on feedback I received from both peers and members of the audience. I did not have good presence, which is important because

> "'presence' is a major asset in public speaking. The word defies exact definition, but in my view conveys an impression of assurance without condescension, of poise, and of serenity. Seriousness of purpose, perhaps occasionally relieved with a witticism, creates a good impression" (White, 1991. Pg. 71).

The learning in this course began with the basic tenet that giving a presentation is not just a process, it's an art form. First, is the elimination of chaos; a presentation has a very specific recipe, or cadence. This recipe can be applied to any type of speech, over any length of time, for any audience, and regardless of prep time. There is a pre-speech warm up routine meant to loosen up the mandible and its muscles, as well as foster relaxation and give you something to focus on. Once the day of the speech is here, there should be no more changes. The cake is cooked, and you are prepared. This formula for a successful presentation is:

Figure 5. Foundational Elements of a Presentation

Foundational Elements of a Presentation

- Introduction
- Attention Getter
- Abundantly Clear & Realistic Presentation Goal
- Relevance to the Audience
- Preview of the 3 Main Points
- Credibility
- Clear Transition to the Body

- Main Point #1
- Main Point #2
- Main Point #3
- Supporting Materials / Sources
- Counter Arguments
- Transition Between Main Points & Conclusion
- Conclusion (Recap, Call to Action, Parting Words)

(Shapiro, 2016)

Having an established and reliable process for creating and preparing for presentations created a comfort zone for me; it took the ambiguity out of what framework I should use in preparation for a presentation. I have used this technique at least once a month at our regional leadership meeting, and then several times in between for smaller opportunities to speak. Through discipline of use as well as repetition, I feel prepared when giving a presentation, which has downstream effects of no longer being nervous or uncomfortable. This can be heard in my voice and cadence, as well as seen in my body language. One example of the process leading to confidence is in the material itself. Contrary to prior practice, I no longer make any changes to the presentation three days prior to the actual event. Through repetition and consistency, I am completely comfortable and familiar with the material for the formal presentation. Another example would be the format of the presentation as seen in figure 5 above. The consistency and defined parameters creates a logical structure that keeps the message both on-track and meaningful for the audience, leading to confidence as the presenter. Referring back to the importance of the audience, and the need to satisfy trust, emotions, and reason to communicate competently, this structure has allowed me to greatly improve the degree of impact and influence my presentations have – with still room for improvement, of course. Although recent feedback since taking the course has been extremely positive regarding my presentations and delivering the intended message, there is still room to improve on overall presence and being comfortable in front of an audience. From a leadership and coaching perspective, I have been able to use this presentation formula to help both peers and team mates improve their presentation skills as well.

One example from my professional life is, once per quarter the District Managers that report to me present a business review directly to our President and CFO. Historically, there was always angst over the several days of preparation, with constantly changing formats and other changes. Despite coaching from me and a day of practice runs prior, the actual presentation never went completely smooth or as planned. However, after taking DYNM 643 and sharpening my own skills, I was able to transform how these presentations are prepared and delivered. For example, we established a consistent format to be used by all of the District Managers. This format is based on the presentation structure that was taught in DYNM 643. First, the introduction includes updates on safety statistics, financial performance, operational metrics, and personnel. Next was the body, which is made up of new business wins in the last quarter, new opportunities to close in the next quarter, and any significant losses or upcoming risks. Lastly, is the conclusion; financial forecast for the next quarter, and some kind of feel-good story related to associates and teamwork – ideally with pictures on the slide. Once the presentations are completed several days before the presentation, they get submitted to me as final; there are no more changes. The District Managers practice themselves with what they know will be the final version. This process has been used for the last two quarters, and has had a positive impact on their confidence levels and their ability to deliver their message. We know this to be true based on commentary from the District Managers after the last two reviews. They expressed being more confident in giving their presentations, which came through in the delivery of the message. This was also reinforced by feedback from the President and CFO, who were the audience. The ethos, pathos, and reason have all been improved upon because of the process.

> "Successful leaders inspire enthusiasm for change through communication that is fundamentally different from the traditional, abstract approach. They communicate by first getting attention, then stimulating desire and only then reinforcing with reason" (Denning, 2008. Pg. 11).

Concluding Remarks

I purposefully chose DYNM 643 in order to learn how to be a better public speaker and give more impactful presentations. The concept of being able to combine the learning in this class with that of being a competent communicator by consciously applying Aristotle's Rhetorical proofs of trust, emotions, and reason has had a synergistic effect on my communication skills. There is a direct link between DYNM 643 and DYNM 676, in that you first learn how to impact the audience through trust, emotions, and reason. Aristotle's Rhetorical proofs come through in the practical exercises and learning, which lead to a better understanding of ourselves, the audience, and how to improve upon our ability to deliver the message. In addition to connecting with your audience, you then learn an established and reliable process to create, prepare for, and deliver effective presentations. In all phases of the presentation process, the application of Aristotle's Rhetorical Proofs adds to the value and impact the presenter has on the audience, leading to competent communication. The fact that I left the class with an established and reliable process to not only use but also share brought a lot of value as well as impact in practical application. This relates back to the title of my Capstone *The Importance of Continued Learning and Professional Development,* as I continue to strive to be a professional Leader. Regarding presentations:

> "a good one, even if it ultimately conveys little detailed information, can have a powerful emotional impact. It can win people's trust and motivate them to act, thereby sparking organizational insight and change. And on a personal level, the ability to move an audience can shape the trajectory of a career" (Morgan, 2001. Pg. 113).

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EPILOGUE

The Importance of Continued Learning and Professional Development has been a project about overcoming obstacles in my adult life, achieving goals, applying the learning, and using that knowledge to help others.

First, in chapter one, I shared my story of overcoming obstacles over the years to finally earn a bachelor's degree at 47 years old. This was after dropping out of the first college I went to, joining the Navy and serving in the first Gulf War, getting married and starting a family, all while not valuing an education and continued learning. Through half-hearted efforts over the years, I eventually attended a total of four universities on and off before enrolling at NYU. The experience of the first-class learning there and being able to apply it in my role at work, both saved my career and gave me personal satisfaction for not only the accomplishment but the knowledge personally gained that I could now share with others.

Second, is the University of Pennsylvania experience, which drives the content of the four essays. These classes were chosen purposefully because their content matched with what I felt were personal opportunities to improve, as well as the potential to use the learning to help better mentor and coach team mates in my professional role. While most classes in the Organizational Dynamics program met that criteria, these four were chosen because of their profound impact beyond the end of the class. They provided knowledge and tools to instill established and reliable processes to accomplish important skills such as positively leveraging generational differences, understanding paradox, being a competent communicator, as well as an effective presenter.

Finally, and maybe most importantly for me, is that because each of these classes provided framework and process, the learning is something that I can use as a leader in my organization responsible for coaching and mentoring others. It is also useful as a husband and father to be able to exert influence and teach valuable life skills on the subjects at home as well.

In conclusion, my journey as shared in this project has made me a lifelong learner. I believe in *The Importance of Continued Learning and Professional Development*, because I have experienced the consequences of status quo and complacency; having prioritized other things over education and self-improvement. Continuous learning and self-improvement is vital to stay relevant professionally, both to the firm and to being able to lead your team. That is why I chose this project as my capstone.