

Changing Organizational Culture: Unleashing Creative Energy

1) Attributes of Healthy and Unhealthy Organizational Cultures

One way of looking at healthy and unhealthy organizational cultures is to consider Gerald Caiden's definition of bureaupathology (as derived from James Thompson). Any or all of the following characteristics of bureaupathology can be found in an unhealthy organizational culture:

Process is more importance than purpose;

Authority is more important than service;

Form is more important than reality; and

Precedence is more important than adaptability.

(Gerald E. Caiden, **The Dynamics of Public Administration**,
New York, Holt, Reinhart, and Winston, Inc. 1971, p. 8)

By contrast, purpose, service, reality, and adaptability are hallmarks of healthy organizational cultures.

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2) Attributes of Healthy and Unhealthy Organizational Cultures (Continued)

Herbert Shepard's Primary and Secondary Mentality Assumptions provide another way of looking at organizational culture.

Shepard's Primary Mentality Assumptions:

Coercion
Cut-throat competition
Compromise of principles

Shepard's Secondary Mentality Assumptions:

Cooperation
Collaboration
Consensus-seeking behavior

Herbert Shepard, "Changing Interpersonal and Intergroup Relationships in Organizations." In **Handbook of Organizations**, pp. 1115 - 1143. Edited by James G. March. Chicago: Rand McNally and Co., 1965.

In healthy organizational cultures, secondary mentality assumptions are the norm.

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3) Attributes of Healthy and Unhealthy Organizational Cultures (Continued)

Healthy and unhealthy organizational cultures can also be viewed in light of Ruth Benedict's concepts of high and low synergy groups and societies.

Benedict's Concept of Low Synergy

A low synergy group or society is one in which the interests of individuals and the interests of the group as a whole are at odds.

Benedict's Concept of High Synergy

A high synergy group or society is one in which the interests of individuals and the interests of the group as a whole are in harmony.

(A.H. Maslow, "Synergy in the Society and in the Individual."
Journal of Individual Psychology. 20 (November 1964): 153-164.)

Healthy organizational cultures are characterized by high synergy.

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4) Attributes of Healthy and Unhealthy Organizational Cultures (Continued)

In Mary Parker Follett's view, the role of the leader or manager is to unleash creative energies in ways that nurture the healthy development and contribute to the highest purposes of individuals, organizations, and society in general.

Mary Parker Follett's Concept of "Power Over"

A "power over" approach to management and leadership is characterized by an authoritarian approach to the wielding of power.

Mary Parker Follett's Concept of "Power With"

A "power with" approach to leadership and management empowers others, nurturing the development of their capabilities and increasing their capacity to take on and carry out increasing responsibilities.

(Mary Parker Follett, "Power" in Henry C. Metcalf and L. Urwick, eds., **Dynamic Administration: The Collected Papers of Mary Parker Follett**, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1941, pp. 95 - 116.)

Organizations with healthy organizational cultures have leaders and facilitators who use power in nurturing and empowering ways. The use of "power with" approaches can be key to transforming unhealthy organizational cultures into healthy organizational cultures; unleashing creative energies, and sustaining the health of healthy organizational cultures.

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5) Other Attributes of Healthy and Unhealthy Organizational Cultures (Continued)

The nature of the motivation of leaders and managers can be key to the healthiness of an organization's culture. The kind of motivation that psychological healthy leaders and managers and self-actualizing individuals have can be characterized as "metamotivation," a term coined by Abraham Maslow.

Abraham Maslow's Concept of "Metamotivation"

Maslow defined "metamotivation" as
"being as concerned for the welfare of others
as one is for one's own welfare."

Self-actualized individuals are metamotivated.

See Abraham H. Maslow, "A Theory of Metamotivation:
The Biological Rooting of the Value-Life," **Journal of Humanistic
Psychology**, 7 (Fall 1967): 93 - 127.)

Organizations that have healthy organizational cultures have leaders and managers who act in "metamotivated" ways in crisis as well as non-crisis situations.

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6) Other Attributes of Healthy and Unhealthy Organizational Cultures (Continued)

A model of leadership based on Maslow's concept of "metamotivation" was developed by Paula Gordon in her Master's thesis entitled "Leadership in Task-Oriented Work Groups" and in her dissertation: **Public Administration in the Public Interest**.

A Metamotivational Leadership Model (Gordon as based on Maslow)

The "metamotivated leader or manager" is one who helps foster and sustain

~ a collaborative culture characterized by honesty, trust, and openness;

~ a culture that is conducive to creativity and "thinking outside of the box";

~ a culture that empowers individuals and nurtures their development and their capacity to assume increasing responsibility in carrying out the mission of an organization;

~ a climate conducive to decisions and actions that are in the best interests of individuals in the group, the organization, and society as a whole; and

~ a common sense of mission or what Follett refers to as the "invisible leader". Such a sense of mission can help energize and drive the efforts of an organization.

(Note: Follett's concept of the "invisible leader" is discussed in her lecture "The Essentials of Leadership" reprinted in **Classics in Management**, edited by Harwood F. Merrill, American Management Association, New York, 1960.)

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7) Some Characteristics of Healthy Organizational Cultures

~ In carrying out their mission, those in leadership, managerial, and facilitative roles in healthy organizational cultures use non-threatening, non-coercive, and educational approaches that reflect ethical purposes and values.

~ The actions of those in healthy organizational cultures are not driven by negative motivators such as shame, fear, guilt, anxiety, distrust, or hatred. Leaders and managers in healthy organizational cultures do not act in controlling, manipulative, and stress-inducing ways that foster such responses.

~ Lessons are continually to be learned from experience, including problems and failures.

~ A supportive climate fosters risk taking and learning from mistakes and problems.

~ "Messengers" are not "killed" who convey "bad news" or who uncover and report on wrongdoing or problems.

~ When things go wrong, individuals are not scapegoated.

~ When errors, accidents, and failures occur; there is support, forgiveness, and understanding for those involved.

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8) Some Ways Unhealthy Organizational Cultures Can Be Inadvertently Fostered

~ If not sensitively handled, efforts to integrate "friendly" competitiveness or "entrepreneurial internal markets" can devolve into cutthroat competition. If such efforts are not guided by the highest of purposes and values, they can lead to a skewing of an organization's values and mission and turn a health organizational culture into an unhealthy one. The mission, values, and health of the organizational culture of government agencies can be affected in a negative way when agencies are required to compete with the private sector in order to keep services from being outsourced.

~ Attempts to merge two or more organizations that have dissimilar organizational cultures can present major obstacles. Such difficulties can occur when an "industrial" organization decides to adopt attributes of "smart" or "quantum" organizations. The effect can be to foster diametrically opposed value systems and cultures within the same organization.

(Note: See page 131 of **The Knowledge Dividend** (by Rene Tissen, Daniel Andriessen, and Frank Lekanne Deprez, Prentice Hall, 2000) for a matrix comparing the differences among these three types of organizations.)

~ Threatened or intermittent lay-offs as well the periodic firing of the "lowest 10%" of an organization can drastically affect the efforts of an organization and the healthiness of its culture. Any of these can be sources of untold stress and conflict within individuals and within organizations.

~ Different approaches taken by leaders and managers can reflect and generate conflicting motives. At one level or "on paper", the organization may seem to share characteristics of a high synergy organization, but in actuality, those in the organization may be acting in ways that are motivated out of self-interest and survival. This can occur within teams as well.

Note: Edwards Deming in his discussion of the deadly diseases of management has additional insights concerning factors that can undermine the health of organizational cultures. For a list, see <http://www.endsofthearch.com/Deming7Pts.htm>

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9) Many Lessons Can Be Gleaned from the Management of Crises

Much can be learned from studying crisis situations that were handled well. Some examples worthy of study include:

~ The Manhattan Project

(See the chapter on the Manhattan Project in **Organizing Genius** by Warren Bennis and Patricia Biederman, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1997)

~ The efforts of the ground crew in the rescue of the Apollo 13 astronauts

(**Apollo 13**, the film and the book by Gene Kranz, **Failure is Not an Option**, Simon and Schuster, 2000)

~ Mayor Giuliani and his staff in 9/11 response efforts

(**Leadership** by Mayor Rudy Giuliani, Miramax, 2002)

~ Verizon's role in 9/11 response and continuity of operations efforts

(Search on Chuck Lee presentation to the Executive's Club of Chicago, December 13, 2001 on Verizon's website.)

~ The efforts of the team leading the rescue of the Pennsylvania coal miners in the Que Creek mine disaster

Similarly, much can be learned from case studies such as the Johnstown Flood, the Bhopal disaster, the Centralia #5 mine disaster, the group decisionmaking processes involved in the Challenger and Columbia disasters, and numerous other disasters and catastrophes. Much can be learned from "The Dish," a film based on actual events involving the Apollo 11 manned mission to the moon. The film provides insight into how a team transformed into a functioning team with a healthy organizational culture when faced with a series of major challenges.

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10) Some Concluding Thoughts

~ A healthy organizational culture provides a supportive environment conducive to open, honest, and trusting communication; collaboration and cooperation; the application of common sense, experience, knowledge, wisdom, ingenuity, and creativity; and the realization of individual and organizational potentials.

~ Metamotivational, "power with" and high synergy approaches to leadership and management can help unleash creative energies and can play an essential role in cultivating and sustaining a common sense of mission.

~ Building healthy organizational cultures, transforming unhealthy organizational cultures into healthy ones, melding dissimilar organizational cultures into healthy organizational cultures, and maintaining the health of healthy organizational cultures are all essential to maximizing the potential of organizations and to unleashing the creative energies of individuals and organizations alike.

Paula Gordon is an Independent Consultant and a member of the Practitioner Faculty of the Johns Hopkins University. Her website on homeland security is at <http://users.rcn.com/pgordon/homeland/>. A link to her archived website on Y2K is also at that website.

Paula Gordon's doctoral dissertation, **Public Administration in the Public Interest**, is to authorized users of academic libraries through the ProQuest Digital Dissertations (PQDD) service and the "Current Research @" service.

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