**Brian Yost’s Tenfold Capability Development Experience**

**I. My Experience**

Up until my mid-thirties, I had gone to the best schools in my field, read all the best books, attended all the best conferences, and though I skyrocketed up a few corporate hierarchies, I was still limited in what I could do to enable significant capability development and performance improvement – the impact was incremental at best.

I was then hired by Crown Zellerbach Corporation, as Director, Organization Effectiveness, to help guide the turnaround of this struggling Fortune 100 forest products company. It was once one of the pillars of the business community in San Francisco, but had fallen to the bottom of its industry. This was a dream opportunity for me, reporting to a sophisticated Sr VP of HR from P&G, with values similar to my own. He let me design my own job and set my own salary, which was pretty rare, as far as I knew.

After getting familiar with the situation, I hired a researcher from UCLA to identify the most impactful organization change methodologies we could use. He showed me the entire field and its options, with one approach I hadn’t heard about, that was “off the chart” that he created, compared to all the rest. But it was proprietary and held confidential as a competitive advantage, and therefore unavailable to us. So, I tried to get the most progressive managers at CZ to try the methods I knew about -- but was surprised that most were resistant to new terminology and reluctant to try anything new. I was only able to, and get the opportunity to, provide a few workshops in topics like performance planning and appraisal.

Some dramatic changes in the executive team were made during this time, including replacing the CEO, who had fired the HR Sr VP that had hired me, and moving the EVP of our Timber and Wood Business Unit to Chief Administrative Officer, managing all the corporate staff units. I was very fortunate that I was assigned to report directly to the CAO, who turned out to be very wise, people-oriented and receptive to learning. One of his early moves was to commission the HR Manager of one of our Business Units to study the leading companies and practices out there for guidance on what we should be doing. I guided the Manager on where to look.

Shortly thereafter, I was introduced by an external consultant to my company who knew I was searching for something better, to two internal consultants at Raychem, a high-tech materials company in Silicon Valley, who had recently left P&G, arguably the most innovative, admired, awarded and successful company on the planet over its 150-year history. P&G was the source of the advanced methodology my researcher had previously described. These consultants were about to join a new external consulting network that was going to offer this methodology. They described it to me, and though it was like nothing I had ever heard before, I was confident that this was what we needed to do.

Interestingly enough, I had been introduced to this methodology by my graduate school advisor about eight years before this time, but had found it incomprehensibly outside the box I was in. He showed me an article in which the traditional job was depicted as a box, into which a supervisor intruded with work instructions, and compared this to a more advanced organization design where the roles of team members, centered around a core production process, were depicted as a set of ever-expanding self-managing roles, with no supervisors. It looked like the petals of a flower, nothing like an organization chart I could relate to. So, this time, I arranged for the most credible member I knew of this consulting network, Jim Clark, formerly a Harvard and UCLA professor, to speak to our most innovative and receptive management team.

We got one young manager of an experimental plant to try it. They had great success there, which was noticed by the leaders of our largest paper mill at the same location, who jumped at the opportunity to learn about it as well, and started to improve performance, too.

Myself and my boss decided to capitalize on this receptivity. We made a presentation to our new CEO about how we were likely to fall even farther behind the competition, but that we could get back to the top of the industry, by building leadership capability across the organization, at the operational, business unit and executive levels, in parallel. We called this initiative Competitive Intercept, which the CEO championed.

This initiative was aimed at organization redesign, with an emphasis on evolving governing ideas, social processes and human capability, and centered on developing intellectual capabilities. It was pioneered at P&G, and was based in part on the P&G premise that,” … the quality of thinking is the prime determinant of organization and business success, and the one variable we can rely on in all markets and conditions.”

The learning process was foreign at first, a Socratic, self-discovery learning process, working with natural teams at all levels, in large-scale developmental events and supported in application on the job by internal consultants. The new thinking processes were applied to real issues and opportunities, and transformation, through organization redesign of the essential design elements of governing ideas and processes like thinking, learning, planning and leading.

People everywhere learned to out-think the competition, and as a result, significant improvements were generated in all areas of the company. The cumulative effect was that the company went from the bottom to the top of its industry and less than two years, something which had almost universally been considered to be impossible. It was a ride beyond my wildest dreams, and, as far as I know, the most intensive, comprehensive and successful corporate transformational turnarounds in history.

Thereafter, I rode off into the sunset and became an external consultant, initially joining the network of consultants that helped us at CZ, then another network that was aiming to integrate all the best of the best organizational improvement methodologies, and was able to enable similar results to those at CZ again and again. I had achieved what myself and my colleagues began to call a “10-fold increase in my capability to make a lasting difference”.

**II. Specific Examples of Applications**

The major breakthrough for me was, as a result of Socratic coaching/self-discovery learning processes, **learning to think for myself**, rather than rely on authority figures and experts to give me the answers. At that point, I became able to learn on my own, figure things out on my own, and generate new material on my own. I could take radical ideas and figure out ways to realize them. I could use the new methods I learned to enable clients to make radical improvements.

Some of the new things I became able to do:

1. I was able to **redesign the methods and materials** by which I learned this methodology, in such a way that they became available to most everyone, as opposed to just a few elite companies that could afford the cost, time and energy, and people who were dedicated seekers of better ways to work.

* I developed ways of orienting people to new ways of learning (self-discovery), and getting complex ideas across.

2. I was able **to innovate and generate many models, frameworks and tools** that helped leaders improve performance, such as survey instruments like Levels of Organization Evolution, an organization performance improvement model, a strategy for organization evolution, concepts like limiting beliefs, and a framework for building thoughts in diverse groups.

3. I was able to **create organization assessment methods** (measures of organization design elements, capabilities, principles and practices) that could readily surface the typically invisible organization design flaws that were holding organizations back.

4. I was able to help leaders use disciplined methods for team performance, e.g., for those whose meetings were once unproductive, confusing sources of frustration, and degrading to relationships, to **design and execute meetings that were successful** in achieving results, building capability and building relationships.

5. I was able to guide leaders in **reconciling/breaking through conflict, and overcoming challenges believed to be impossible**, like forming union-management partnerships where there was once violence, enrolling religious zealots opposing merger processes, a transformational closure of high-tech facility, reconciling a year-long impasse between a corporate and a field organization, turnarounds of dying businesses, rescuing failing change initiatives, sheltering and enabling employee innovations for performance improvement.

6. Using what I had learned, I helped many businesses and corporations **achieve and exceed their visions** of what was possible.

* I was able to guide successful transformational turnarounds have five Fortune 100 businesses or corporations, i.e., Digital Equipment, AT&T, HP, Exxon Canada, Gulf Oil

7. **Virtually all of the approximately 2000 leaders** I worked with in these companies also achieved a tenfold level of capability development and radical performance improvements.

8. Given these experiences, I was able to **re-design an MBA program** to make it based on developing universal and timeless process skills (like thinking, interaction, planning, leading) instead of functional knowledge, that can become obsolete

**II. Specific Capabilities I Developed**

In essence:

I went from having some knowledge of a few things like:

* The leading organizational theories and methods of the day
* individual skills like communication and problem-solving
* leadership styles
* job and organization design
* management systems like performance planning and appraisal
* ways to design and deliver workshops and courses on these and coach people on their use

which enabled clients to be and do marginally better than they were…

to being also able to:

* help any team member or leader on virtually any performance problem
* help any leader dramatically improve virtually everything s/he does by developing thinking capability
* help significantly improve on universally recurring tasks and their gaps, flaws, weaknesses, e.g.:
* planning and executing tasks
* planning and executing meetings
* clarifying roles and relationships
* reconciling differences and conflict
* building thoughts in groups
* problem-solving
* help successfully address universal organization issues like:
* capability development
* engagement, retention, motivation, succession
* human performance problems
* organization performance problems on operations and business
* organization alignment on vision, goals and strategy
* organization change -- change management/leadership
* organization transformation – redesign for evolution and viability, vitality, competitive effectiveness
* coach leaders, executives and consultants in achieving personal transformation
* enable business breakthrough performance and transformational turnarounds
* rescue failing organization change initiatives
* stop doing the things I was doing that were counterproductive, such as providing my answers to people’s questions (inadvertently creating dependence on me) versus guiding and equipping them to answer the questions themselves (creating independent thinking capability – a huge, transformational improvement)