

D R I V I N G
F E A R
O U T • O F • T H E
W O R K P L A C E

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This paper is meant to be a comprehensive overview of the book "Driving Fear Out of the Workplace." I have written it so that it is not necessary to read the actual text to grasp the major concepts presented. *Throughout the paper, you will find this size and style of text. This represents my commentary regarding the book and the integration of the subject with Principle Centered Leadership and the inclusive content that we teach.*

FORWARD

by Joshua Hammond, American Quality Foundation

Fear: The Last Taboo in American Business

In preparing for the opportunity to introduce the compelling analysis and recommendations in *Driving Fear Out of the Workplace*, I repeatedly bumped into an unspoken notion among senior managers that fear is good, that a certain level of fear in the workplace is beneficial. These otherwise serious-minded executives, managers and business analysts reacted to the idea of a book on fear int. workplace by saying that the real problem is not how to drive fear out of the workplace but how to keep it there and use it more effectively. They went on to say that their ability to use fear is being hampered by all the recent emphasis on the human side of quality.

There are two kinds of fear - Biological and Psychological. Biological fear occurs when we are physically threatened and Psychological fear occurs when we are emotionally threatened. Psychological fear takes two forms, intrinsic and extrinsic. Stage fright is an example of the former; and the fear of being fired is an example of the latter.

Our extensive research at the AQF on personal quality improvement and on the impact of management practices on profitability, productivity, and customer-perceived quality has led me to conclude that intrinsic (internally motivated) fear is essential but extrinsic (externally imposed) fear is destructive. Externally imposed fear results from things we cannot control that threaten our self-confidence and internal security. It is usually the product of interpersonal tensions or miscues, and it is often the result of a power play, whether we are conscious of it or not. It is always manipulative. It is disruptive and demoralizing. Our ongoing multivariant analysis of these actual management practices (to use fear as a means of higher productivity, effectiveness and profitability) produce negative results in the long run.

Insofar as fear is self-imposed (intrinsic), then, it is healthy and productive. When we set out to solve a problem or do something we have never done before, naturally we are fearful - will we figure out how to do it? Will we finish the job by the deadline? This kind of fear is not only effective but efficient. But when we are also concerned about whether we will be penalized by our boss if we do not succeed, that is bad fear, and that is the type of fear the *Driving Fear Out of the Workplace* addresses.

In our studies at the AQF, we learned that Americans need and want open and honest relations and the opportunity to make and benefit from their mistakes. When these elements are present, we are able to gain knowledge and build trust, and thus increase values that drive our behavior: personal accomplishment, security, peace of mind, and fulfillment - the very antitheses of fear.

Stephen talks about the four basic needs which coincide quite closely with Joshua Hammond's findings, which are: To Live, To Love, To Learn and To Leave a Legacy. Obviously, fear is a barrier for these four conditions to take place for both an individual and an organization.

We cannot have it both ways. Either we can continue to manage through fear and get contrived, short-term improvements, or we can tap into our intrinsic values and get breakthrough improvements. The only danger in this book is that once we have read it, we have no excuses.

Focus on behavior and attitude and get small, undetectable results; change our paradigm, the way we see things, get "breakthrough improvements." Einstein said something like: "Every significant 'breakthrough' is first a 'break-with' the old way of thinking.

Joshua Hammond
President
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PREFACE

In the business realities of the 1990's, executives and managers are discovering many barriers. The emerging dilemmas include the significant gap between work force skills and business needs, the appropriate use of new technologies, and the difficulty of managing people. Hidden behind these barriers you can also recognize the presence of fear. We see fear as the background phenomenon that undermines the commitment, motivation, and confidence of people at work. - It is most easily observed as a reluctance to speak up about needed changes, improvements, or other important work issues. To move forward into this new decade, organizations must break through this barrier to create environments where quality, productivity, and innovation can flourish.

One V.P. of a Fortune 500 company said, "fear is at the root of all the time people spend in meetings not saying what's really on their minds." These silences at all levels of the organization, plague most managers and leaders. This book describes:

- The areas people cannot talk about openly at work
- The reasons they do not speak up
- The impact fear has on individuals and organizations
- Practical methods managers can use to encourage people to speak openly and turn patterns of fear into creativity and trust

The Structure of this book

This book has four parts:

- Part One: The dynamics of fear. Comprises chapters one and two.
- Part Two: Explores research findings on how fear operates in organizations. Comprises chapters three through seven.
- Part Three: Details strategies that build high-trust work environments. Comprises chapters eight through fifteen.
- Part Four: Creating a quality organization through implementing some of the previous strategies in part three. Comprises chapter sixteen.

Obviously throughout this book the word 'fear' will be used. For the purpose of integrating this material with the PCL & Seven Habits content, the authors could have just as easily used the words 'low trust' or 'no trust'. Because trust is one of the four key principles and foundational to improving the culture of an organization, it is significant to note that this book has many themes that are both consistent with, as well as complimentary to the things we teach.

PART ONE: THE DYNAMICS OF FEAR

1 HOW FEAR PREVENTS PEOPLE FROM DOING THEIR BEST

The authors want to make it clear that this is not just a problem of a few unassertive souls who lack confidence. Virtually all of us, at one time or

another, have hesitated to talk about certain specific work-related issues. When that hesitation is linked to concern about personal negative consequences, we become victims of fear. Consider:

- The manager who feels frustrated by, but unable to talk about, the direct power a CEO exerts over personnel selection in his division.
- The secretary who quietly resents the fact that she is really doing her boss's job.
- The human resources specialist who cannot confront her supervisor's public negativity about changes and new initiatives
- A front line manufacturing worker who hesitates to tell a new supervisor about practical ways to make the work go more smoothly.

The fear behind these scenarios generates negativity, anger, and frustration. It depletes pride and undermines quality, productivity and innovation.

KEY THEMES

The Relationship with the Boss is of Key Importance

One person said, "It all depends on who you're working for." Also, "People need a climate where they can grow." A second level manager from a Fortune 100 company commented, "some bosses are better than others. If they react without thinking, you can't trust them. Very few set the right environment.

Some of these comments, including many others not represented, allude to the fact that managers would be significantly more effective if they would be proactive. Also, the comments create an interesting expectation that managers are responsible for creating favorable conditions for maximum effectiveness. Similar to creating the necessary conditions for empowerment to take place, as opposed to something that is given.

IN INTERVIEW AFTER INTERVIEW, THE PATTERN WAS THE SAME, REGARDLESS OF THE LEVEL OF THE PERSON BEING INTERVIEWED. THE QUALITY OF THE RELATIONSHIP A PERSON HAS WITH HIS OR HER DIRECT SUPERVISOR IS A KEY DETERMINANT OF THE FEAR - OR LACK OF FEAR - THAT PERSON EXPERIENCES AT WORK.

A Little Bit of Fear Goes a Long Way

We are confident that the greatest percentage of intimidating behaviors are committed unconsciously by managers who have no idea how their behavior is affecting others. Moreover, employees expect to experience repercussions even though there may be no immediate evidence that they actually will occur. These two factors continually lead to misunderstandings and distance between people.

When Threatened, People React with Strong Emotions

People are not objective about their jobs; they take their work very personally. Their feelings cannot be separated from their productivity and the quality of their work. When they cannot do the right thing or do a good job, it bothers them a great deal. And when the fear of repercussions is a barrier to quality work, their emotions are strong ones.

When we asked people to tell us about the impact of the situations in which they did not speak up, they talked to us much more about what they *felt* than what they *thought*. Sixty percent of their responses involved strong emotions.

This is why the character side of Habit 5 is so important. Not so much the skill of listening, but rather the ability to feel what the other person is feeling. And making sure before you continue that a person feels understood.

ACHIEVING A VISION OF QUALITY, PRODUCTIVITY, AND INNOVATION

At a deeper level, reducing fear is an essential component of organization transformation. In subtle ways this effort changes the underlying characteristics of the whole organization, thereby liberating it to achieve, in new ways, a vision of quality, productivity and innovation. Reducing fear (increasing trust) help people to reconsider their organization's possibilities and to step outside the box of existing methods. People can then develop faith that their vision for a quality organization really can be attained.

Organizations without fear in their culture are not necessarily utopias. They face plenty of problems and conflicts. But when problems do come up, managers and employees throughout the organization approach them with a positive, nonblaming, data-based perspective. The motivation is to solve the problem and eliminate the barrier - not to point fingers or place blame. There is freedom to openly disagree, to consider all relevant information, and to challenge the status quo without defensiveness. Mistakes are acknowledged and people are supported based on their intentions or their new approaches, or improvements.

Or in other words they practice Habits 4,5, & 6 in their interpersonal relationships and individuals have an abundant mentality. Consider the following in further support of the public victory:

Most importantly, manager-employee relationships are based on trust, respect, and mutual credibility (*i.e. trustworthiness, a function of character and competence* *We cannot get to 'We' until we first get to 'I' and 'Thou'*). Positive intentions are assumed. When either person is confused or frustrated by the other's action, the response is one of curiosity and a desire for information, rather than suspicion and a need to find fault.

The Boundaries of Fear

This chapter has three components which provide support for the information and suggestions they present in some of the following chapters. these three objectives are: (1) outlining the theories and research of others who have linked fear to work environments, (2) describing their field study, methodology and sample, and (3) presenting and illustrating the definition of fear in the workplace used throughout the book.

What Others have said About Fear

While the authors found many references to fear, trust, the organizational climate, and relationships, no one major work directly addressed the topic of their exploration.

While many authors were represented in this chapter, we won't take the time to explore them all. One of significance was Chris Argyris. He found that the negative impact that intimidation and fear have on an organization "prevent learning and thereby prevent organizations from investigating or eliminating" their underlying problems. Also, Dr. Edwards Deming says that "the fundamental problem in American business is that people are scared to discuss the problems of people"

About Our Field Research

During the course of their standardized interviews, they asked four basic questions:

- What issues have you hesitated to talk about at work in the last five years of you job experience?
- Why didn't you talk about them?
- Did you hesitate to speak up on an issue because you feared some type of repercussion?
- What were those threatening situations and what impact did they have?

Our Definitions

The authors define fear in the workplace as *feeling threatened by possible repercussions as a result of speaking up about work-related concerns*. These feelings of threat can come from four sources:

- Actual experience in the current situation, or in a past similar situation

- Stories about others' experiences
- Assumptions and private interpretations of others' behaviors
- Negative, culturally based stereotypes about those with supervisory power

Definitional "Yes-Buts"

There are some fears which on the surface seem to be excluded from our definition. Further reflection shows that they are sometimes prime examples of fear at work. Discipline, for example, is a concept that raises "yes-buts" about the fear of speaking up. In certain circumstances, a supervisor may claim that she or he was left "no choice" in imposing a particular disciplinary action - or even that it was to the employee's overall benefit - when in fact the corrective action was a form of reprisal.

Similarly, some dismiss others' fears of repercussions as a sign of personal insecurities. Because of our culture's myths and traditions, often times people who express their fears can be labeled as immature, cowardly, or overly emotional. Thus, to suggest that someone else is fearful can be an extremely powerful form of retaliation in itself. In effect, those who complain about fear-oriented management practices risk being labeled as insecure or weak.

In our organization this can often take on a different look, but the results are still the same. Here is what I mean. It is easy because of the nature of our content to use the Seven Habits as a weapon. If we are not careful, we are often too quick to prescribe before making sure that people are understood. A common prescription for all problems can easily be, "stop being a victim, just 'Be Proactive'". This admonition from management, if people do not feel understood, can lead to increased fear and lack of proactivity in bringing up concerns in the future.

PART TWO

HOW FEAR OPERATES IN ORGANIZATIONS

**UNDISCUSSIBLES:
SECRETS THAT
EVERYONE
KNOWS**

A new manager who worked for a manufacturing firm was aware that several of his employees had complaints about how the operation had been going. He knew this because they had talked to him individually about their concerns. He made a point of bringing up these complaints at a staff meeting, believing that people would appreciate the chance to discuss and resolve some of them. To his surprise, when he raised the issues there was dead silence. People would not talk openly about what they had privately expressed. The manager and his group had run into a brick wall of undiscussable issues.

Recently, Stephen M.R. was doing a presentation to a mixed group of Sr. Managers and line people at a car manufacturing plant in the midwest. When he attempted to do the 'If Only' exercise to demonstrate reactive language, he posed the question, "Subaru/Isuzu would be a great place to work 'If Only'". There was dead silence. No one would volunteer information. In fact, one of the Human Resources people in the back of the room pointed silently at the V.P. (an action that could only be seen by Stephen) as if to say 'no one is going to say a thing with him in the room. The fear and lack of trust was so blatantly obvious you couldn't help but be uncomfortable.

WHAT IS AN UNDISCUSSABLE?

The authors use the term to name the issues people are afraid to discuss. They define two components of an undiscussable, as it relates to issue of fear in the workplace. First, it is a *problem or issue that someone hesitate to talk about with those who are essential to its resolution*. Second, the fact that it is not discussed represents a *potential barrier to doing quality work or building an effective work relationship*.

Undiscussables are not talked about in the setting where they can be explored, explained, or resolved. They are the secrets that almost everyone knows about. The longer they remain undiscussed in the appropriate forums, the more they contribute to a climate of fear within the work environment. And the longer they remain undiscussed, the harder it becomes to talk about them. They are at the same time both a cause and a result of fear.

In spite of the definition, people **do** talk about undiscussables. Sometimes a lot. They are discussed privately in the halls and bathrooms, over lunch or after work, during breaks at meetings, and on the job when other work should be attended to. They are discussed between friends, family and co-workers.

WHAT PEOPLE ARE NOT TALKING ABOUT

Undiscussables are the window through which it is possible to see the dynamics that frighten people at work. The following Table summarizes the types of undiscussable issues identified by those we interviewed:

Undiscussable Issues

Category	Percentage of Response
Management practice	49
Co-worker performance	10
Compensation and benefits	6
EEO practices	6
Change	4
Personnel systems (other than pay)	
Individual feelings	2
Performance feedback to me	2
Bad news	2
Conflicts	2
Personal problems	2
Suggestions for improvement	2
Other	9

"Management practice" is by far the largest category of undiscussables. It includes a variety of issues related to how managers behave. People commented generally about managerial performance, about the technical competence of their bosses, and about the way in which their superiors managed people. Heavily influence by perceptions of interpersonal communication, this area describes how managers interact with and provide leadership to their subordinates. Other aspects of management practice which were identified as undiscussable are:

- Decision making - how decisions get made and the quality of decisions
- Favoritism
- The boss's role in promotions, assignments, and terminations
- Information flow that does not relate to decision making
- Too heavy a work load
- Ethics
- Assumptions about management motives

- Corporate politics

THEMES AND OBSERVATIONS

The following are emerging themes in the undiscussables, unresolved workplace issues.

Management Practice Is a clear Focus for Undiscussables

There Was No Basic difference in Undiscussables from One Level of the Organization to the Next

Items Related to Human Resources Issues and Systems Totaled 16 Percent of Undiscussables

People Voice very Carefully Worries about Race, Gender, Age , or Other Harassment of Discrimination

Problems with Co-workers Were Less Frequent Than Those Related to Bosses

People Rarely Said That They Were Unable to Speak up About necessary Improvements of Innovations

People will deal with their personal concerns first. An individual's reaction will always be personal before it will ever be focused on organizational concerns. When people are faced with new, ambiguous, or threatening situations, they have emotional reactions that understandably relate to their self-interest.

When management performance or organizational systems make life uncomfortable or more complicated, people naturally focus on self-protection and staying out of trouble. They are much less likely to be thinking about the success or failure of business strategies and how their ideas might make a positive contribution.

Employees are culturally programmed not to trust their bosses.

One of the reasons why concerns about management show up so often is that they are symbolic of a culture of mistrust and blame.

When employees focus on self-interest and see their bosses as the competition, they will not be concerned about making creative contributions to the organization. "Them versus us" thinking does not lead to collaborative problem solving.

THE REPERCUSSIONS OF SPEAKING UP

The individuals we interviewed gave four primary explanation for not speaking up: fear of repercussions, a sense that speaking up would do no good, a desire to avoid conflict, and a reluctance to cause trouble for others. However, fear of repercussions was far and away the reason most frequently cited. In fact, at least 70 percent of all the people we interviewed said that one of the reasons they did not speak up in certain situations was because they feared some type of repercussion.

Major Fears of Employees

Repercussion	Percentage of Response
Loss of credibility or reputation	27
Lack of career or financial advancement	16
Possible damage to relationship with boss	13
Loss of employment	11
Interpersonal rejection	9
Change in job role	6
Embarrassment/loss of self esteem	5
Job transfer or demotion	4
Other	9

"Loss of credibility or reputation" includes being seen as a troublemaker, boat rocker, agitator, or not a team player, or being given other labels that mark the individual as a problem to the organization; this category also includes fear of losing influence or of being seen as not possessing good judgment or acting in an unprofessional way.

"Loss of career or financial advancement" includes losing one's changes for promotion, being rated down on performance appraisals, and losing pay increases, bonuses, or other discretionary perks.

"Possible damage to relationship with boss" includes antagonizing or upsetting the boss, engaging in a confrontation or criticism which could lead to difficulties or long-term tensions, having fears about the boss "making life unlivable at work," and other similar comments.

"Loss of employment" is the fear of being fired, but almost always through a less direct approach, such as being laid off during a down-sizing or reorganization, having job tasks pulled away until no assignments are left, or being harassed until one quits.

"Interpersonal rejection" consists of being disliked as a result of speaking up, being seen as not fitting in the organization, not having the right image, or being isolated or shunned by others.

"Change in job role" expresses fears that small changes in assignments will take place, such as no longer being able to participate in certain meetings; that choice assignments will be given to others and less desirable assignments will be given to the employee; or that subtle changes will be made in the role and importance of the employee's work.

"Embarrassment/loss of self-esteem" includes being embarrassed or humiliated in front of others, particularly one's peers or powerful people in the organization, and fear of looking ignorant or unskillful.

"Job transfer or demotion" includes being sent to another part of the company or being given a job with less status or money.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SUBTLE, INDIRECT REPERCUSSIONS

Over half of the stories we heard about repercussions were about the indirect, subtle consequences associated with speaking up. These stories were characterized by four themes:

Subtle Repercussions Have Large Potential Impact

Subtle Repercussions Are Untraceable

Subtle Repercussions Are Unpredictable

Subtle Repercussions Are Not Contestable

These four characteristics are a central part of why people do not speak up. They express the qualities that create a sense of danger and helplessness. As one person in our sample said, they generate a low-key, "long-enduring mental anxiety." The characteristics especially highlight the importance of maintaining a polished reputation and a good relationship with the boss.

HOW REAL ARE THE REPERCUSSIONS?

This list of repercussions may raise the question of how realistic these fears are. Do these repercussions really occur? When time permitted in our interviews, we asked people to tell us more about the way in which they became afraid. Were there actual events they could point to where obvious repercussions had taken place? Or was there some other dynamic at work?

We have come to believe, however, that the percentage of actual repercussions is far less than those which are perceived or imagined.

As we have said before, fear is not a rational topic. People's fears are real, if not all their facts. It does not matter if the perception or imagination is grounded in "reality." The issue is the fact that individuals hesitate to speak up because they fear some type of harm if they do. A senior-level engineer told us that he worries about possible repercussions. When we asked if there had been actual cases of repercussions, he immediately answered, "Oh, yes." When we asked for details he vividly recalled an event that had taken place *eight years* earlier.

We know that people believe very strongly in the *possibility* of repercussions. This is often the case even when they cannot name a specific situation or tell a distinct story verifying that repercussions have occurred. As one person neatly summarized:

"If you get to the point where you should speak up, you look at how your boss has treated you over the past few months. Were you put down in front of co-workers? Was your pride or dignity insulted? Did the choice assignments go someplace else?"

If the answer to these questions is yes, or if people believe the answer could be yes, the response is usually the same: silence.

THE OTHER REASONS FOR NOT SPEAKING UP

Next in importance to fear of repercussions, "Nothing will change" responses stood out. These responses were often characterized by a sense of cynicism or futility, a feeling of certainty that speaking up would come to nothing.

"I'm a peon; management is powerful."

--Internal auditor

"Management turns its back."

--Lead assembler

"My boss says, 'Uh huh, uh huh,' but doesn't do anything about the problem."

--Clerical employee

Why People Do Not Speak Up

Reason	Percentage	of Responses
Fear of repercussions		44
Nothing will change	17	
Avoidance of conflict		7
Don't want to cause trouble for others		5
Miscellaneous	27	

5

THE HIGH COST OF FEAR

One manager we interviewed explained that topics like fear are not talked about at higher levels in his organization because executives have a low tolerance for ambiguity. Measuring its impact is neither easy nor exact.

Fear's cost largely comes down to figuring the influence of negative emotions on people's work. As we interviewed, we asked individuals to identify how fear affected their feelings, relationships, quality of work, and productivity. While their answers were highly negative, they--and we--found it very difficult to translate the responses into concrete costs. It was like trying to calculate the dollar impact of a dissatisfied customer.

NEGATIVE FEELINGS ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION

Included in this area are loss of trust or pride, increase in political or self-protective behavior, contemplated or real job transfers, and petty revenge or sabotage.

Loss of Trust or Pride

The largest set of responses had to do with a loss of trust or pride in the organization. People said that they became less dedicated or committed. As one long-term, very loyal employee of a bank stated, "I need to be proud of where I work." Undiscussables and fear of repercussions undermine the ability to experience this pride.

Speaking of an undiscussable change in business philosophy, a staff member of the same organization stated:

"The bank has changed its relationship to its employees. Loyalty, trust, and the family sense are gone. It's them and us--they would lay you off tomorrow if it fit a corporate interest. This certainly has reduced loyalty in return. I wouldn't recommend this bank to a friend."

The Impact of Fear

Issue	Percentage of Responses
Negative feelings about the organization	29
Negative impact on quality or productivity	27
Negative feelings about oneself	19
Negative emotions	12
Other negative effects	11
Positive effects	2

Increase in Political or Self-Protective Behavior

A supervisor told us:

"I really want to approach people on a face-value basis, but around here politics are everywhere. Some people just have the right connections. Merit doesn't have much to do with it, so I'm looking for a mentor to help me get ahead. I know that the people who get ahead are liked by senior management. If you smile the right way you can get the job."

Another aspect of self-protective behavior is the time spent engaging in "CYA" activities. For example, a number of individuals commented that they kept note files on what was happening to them or around them or in their work.

I was recently flying from Indianapolis to Salt Lake City and as sitting next to a manager from one of our client organizations. He had worked for this company for almost 30 years and was to retire in 3. I asked him what the culture was like. What was it like to work in the day to day routine? His reply was, "It is such a buracracy. So much paperwok. So much wasted time and energy. I'll bet 80% of the paper work we do is CYA stuff. Oh well. I will just put in my 3 years and retire. If I didn't already have 30 years in, I'd quit now."

Contemplated or Real Job Transfers

Petty Revenge or Sabotage

When people feel insulted and afraid they withdraw their allegiance to the company and the boss. We are reminded of a manager in our acquaintance who was one fond of saying, "I expect everything but loyalty. I demand loyalty." However, this is just the reverse of what we found to be possible. Loyalty is perhaps the one thing which cannot be demanded.

NEGATIVE IMPACT ON QUALITY OR PRODUCTIVITY

This area includes lack of any extra effort; making and hiding mistakes; failure to meet deadlines and budgets; loss of effective problem solving; work on wrong priorities; poor methods; and loss of creativity, motivation, and risk taking.

Lack of Any Extra Effort

An important pattern emerged for us as we asked people about the impact of fear on productivity. Many people described doing what they were told, but as a result of fear, they did not go beyond expectations or work to their full potential. They came up to the line of a particular performance standard but did not surpass it. In its simplest form, this pattern was often expressed as resentment.

People were explicit that where fear and resentment are present, doing extra work only comes from a sense of personal pride, not pride in the company. A social services professional made this point by saying:

"I am going to meet my quota for client placements--past that, what more incentive is there? I do things above and beyond sometimes due to dedication to the program. But I only work forty hours a week. I go above and beyond, but not as far as I could go."

Making and Hiding Mistakes; Failure to Meet Deadlines and Budgets

Loss of Effective Problem Solving; Work on Wrong Priorities; Poor Methods

People constantly having problems with not being able to understand and implement Habits 2 & 3.

Loss of Creativity, Motivation, and Risk Taking

NEGATIVE FEELINGS ABOUT ONESELF

Along with the foregoing effects, individuals also often reported a mild to serious loss of self-esteem. Comments such as the following were common:

"Your value as a person is definitely in question."

"I was a total mess."

"I had a feeling of stress, self-doubts, a trapped feeling."

"I take it out on those I can affect--the 'kick the dog' syndrome."

NEGATIVE EMOTIONS AND OTHER NEGATIVE EFFECTS

Among this range of emotions, perhaps one of the most devastating, in terms of its impact on people and organizations, is cynicism. Cynicism causes people to assume that the negative feelings are a permanent fixture of the workplace. It is taken for granted that things will not get much better. These feelings serve as a barricade to trying harder, taking risks, and achieving aspirations. A clerical worker told us more about the problem.

POSITIVE EFFECTS

CAN FEAR BE A POSITIVE MOTIVATOR?

THE CUMULATIVE IMPACT OF FEAR

Once the experiences of those in the silent organization are evaluated carefully, the costs are disturbing. The lost commitment, motivation, and confidence, unmeasurable as they may be, can represent an enormous waste of human resources.

Managers often do not see fear's impact dramatically because it is concealed in the process of how the work gets done. As one front-line employee pointed out to us, ours is a result-oriented culture. People do not look at *how*; they only look at *what* and *when* and *how much*. It is a sign of toughness and impatience with bureaucracy and excuses. When one is concentrating on short-term outcomes and the immediate bottom line, it is easy to overlook the long-term loss. For example, when a boss calls employees in to badger them into meeting unrealistic schedules, management often does not see the real problems: how the schedules and project costs were established in the first place, and the real or perceived unwillingness of upper management to hear the true estimates. These issues remain undiscussable and the exhortation to meet the schedule is most likely viewed as a tactic deliberately designed to threaten employees. As such it has the long-term effect of creating greater silence between employees and their bosses.

As fear accumulates in an organization, the *commitment*, *motivation*, *confidence*, and *imagination* of individuals are surely diminished. Those are the real costs.

Recall some of our findings and outcomes that we learned as a team as we worked through the 'Glub' example in our PC Cycle workshop.

**BEHAVIORS
THAT
CREATE FEAR**

There are four major arenas of fear-provoking behaviors. To eliminate fear in an organization ultimately means dealing with each of these arenas. They are:

- Abrasive and abusive conduct by managers and supervisors
- Ambiguous behavior by managers and supervisors
- Poorly managed personnel systems
- The culture of the organization--"how we do things here"--with special emphasis on the performance and conduct of top management

**ABRASIVE AND ABUSIVE CONDUCT
BY MANAGERS AND SUPERVISORS**

- Silence
- Glaring eye contact: "the look"
- Brevity or abruptness
- Snubbing or ignoring people
- Insults and put-downs
- Blaming, discrediting, or discounting
- An aggressive, controlling manner
- Threats about the job
- Yelling and shouting
- Angry outbursts or loss of control
- Physical threats

Withdraws from the Emotional Bank Account

**AMBIGUOUS BEHAVIOR BY MANAGERS
AND SUPERVISORS**

Next to abrasive behavior, we believe that ambiguous behaviors cause the most tension for employees.

Ineffective Problem Solving and Decision Making

Lack of or Indirect Communication

- How much information to share
- Who to share it with
- How to make sure it gets to people in an accurate, timely, and consistent manner

Lack of Responsiveness to Input or Suggestions

Inconsistency or Mixed Messages

Uninviting Behaviors

A number of those interviewed commented on the fact that their bosses rarely acknowledged them when they passed in the hall. This lack of common courtesy was taken as the signal of a caste system.

A manager talked and acted fast. her impatience communicated the message, "How come this isn't done? I told you to do it!" Even though employees recognized that she was simply being impatient and not abrasive or aggressive, the behavior startled and intimidated those who reported to her.

Unethical Conduct

POORLY MANAGED PERSONNEL SYSTEMS

In addition to abrasive and ambiguous behavior, employees worry about how others around them are treated. As one first-line supervisor who had been with her company twenty years put it: "The way another person is treated here equals the way I could be treated. If the company is not loyal to a friend and co-worker, it could happen to me." She expressed this concern because she had watched a top manager who was her friend get "pushed out" of the organization.

The key to the ninety and nine is validated here. How we treat the one employee whos views are different, the one 'bratty teenager', or the one disobedient child really matters. It can create a lot of fear, or trust, depending upon who we respond, with the rest of the group.

THE CULTURE OF THE ORGANIZATION

Many other routine elements of the work environment contribute to fear, particularly those aspects that relate to the conduct and performance of top management. These are often the traditions, habits, and accepted methods of the organization: the "norms" by which it operates. Whether the organizational style is formal or informal, some habits are likely to cause anxiety. Following are examples of tension-creating norms reported by people in our sample:

"We have an artificial atmosphere that we have to maintain--the dignity of the corporation. We believe our own press clippings. We must always have confidence."

"It was the kind of place that supported me-first, aggressive, deceitful behavior."

"People have to prove they can operate in loose structures. people who want a lot of structure become performance problems here."

7

CYCLES OF MISTRUST THAT PERPETUATE FEAR

As we evaluated the data from our interviews, we often asked ourselves about the patterns that keep fear in place. If fear's impact is so important, why have people not naturally discarded the practices that continue its presence? Understanding why and how supervisors and employees continue to threaten one another lays the foundation for developing a different perspective on work relationships.

SELF-INTEREST, MISTRUST, AND FEAR

The most basic negative assumption which lies at the root of the problems we have described so far is that supervisors and employees do not trust one another. Each side assumes that the other operates from a philosophy of self-interest. Each is expected to try to achieve its self-interest at the expense of the other party. *Win-lose scripting*

In practical terms, supervisors and employees must trust each other to some extent if the work is to get done. But trust is definitely a matter of degree. Even in an otherwise positive relationship, underlying doubts and cautions usually exist which surface easily in times of stress.

THE CYCLE OF MISTRUST

The virus that causes this organizational flu is complex. It combines negative assumptions and self-protective behavior in a self-reinforcing relationship which repeatedly traps both supervisors and employees. The cycle can start anywhere (Figure 3). We have chosen arbitrarily to describe its seven steps beginning with a manager's negative assumptions.

1. *Negative assumptions.* A manager adopts negative stereotypes based on assumptions about an employee's self-interest and ability to create organizational problems.
2. *Self-protective behavior.* The manager behaves in ways that are self protective, acting to defend against the employee's potential to live up to the negative stereotypes.
3. *Observed aggressive behavior.* The employee sees the manager's self-protective behavior and interprets it to be aggressive and closed.
4. *Reinforced negative assumptions.* The employee sees the manager's aggressive behavior is a sign of mistrust and possible manipulation. This reinforces the negative assumptions and stereotypes the employee has about managers.
5. *Self-protective behavior.* The employee acts in self-protective ways in order to defend against the manager's potential to live up to the negative stereotypes.
6. *Observed aggressive behavior.* The supervisor sees the employee's self-protective behavior and interprets it to be aggressive and closed.
7. *Reinforced negative assumptions.* The manager believes that the employee's aggressive behavior is a sign of mistrust and possible manipulation. This reinforces the negative assumptions and stereotypes the supervisor has about employees.

"We don't see the world as it is, but as we are." One of the reasons paradigms are so powerful is that we find behaviors to validate the paradigms we have, no matter how incomplete they may be. The Cycle of Mistrust is describing this. That is why it is important to work from the inside-out and on our own circle of influence.

Here is an example of how the cycle might work in a particular situation:

1. *Negative Assumptions.* A new manager has been told by a trusted mentor that employees will "test" decisions and policies to "see how far they can go." Based upon her own past experience, he believes this can be true. One of his employees is a few minutes late to work twice during the same week.

2. ***Self-protective behavior.*** The manager, without investigation, wonders if the employee is testing the policies concerning attendance. He makes a comment at a staff meeting about the importance of attendance and says that he will not tolerate abuse of the rules.
3. ***Observed aggressive behavior.*** The employee is surprised by his manager's comments about attendance. He believes that he has been criticized in front of co-workers. He feels embarrassed, angry, and generally insulted.
4. ***Reinforced negative assumptions.*** The employee decides that his boss is insecure and is "just power-tripping" on the issue of tardiness. He concludes that his boss is insensitive and treated him unfairly. He is afraid she will include his tardiness in an upcoming performance appraisal as a way to make him toe the mark.
5. ***Self-protective behavior.*** The employee nervously confronts the manager, demanding to know exactly how many minute late constitutes tardiness.
6. ***Observed aggressive behavior.*** The manager feels that she has been placed in an uncomfortable position by a defensive and aggressive employee. The employee's question in itself displays a serious lack of accountability.
7. ***Reinforced negative assumptions.*** The manager feels reinforced in the belief that employees will test decisions and policies and must be carefully monitored to ensure compliance with the rules.

This cycle happens over and over in many different ways at all levels of organizations characterized by fear.

NEGATIVE ASSUMPTIONS, SELF-PROTECTIVE STRATEGIES, AND REINFORCING PERCEPTIONS

In order to make this cycle of mistrust more vivid, we have catalogued for both managers and employees lists of negative assumptions, self-protective strategies, and reinforcing perceptions. We know that such lists can easily be glossed over rather than read slowly and carefully. We encourage careful consideration of each of the items presented here, which relate to the points on the cycle.

Negative Assumptions Managers Make About Employees (Point 1)

Employees

- Do not take accountability
- Do not really care about their work beyond getting their paycheck

- Are unwilling to look at a big-picture view
- Look for excuses
- Test policies and rules
- Need structure, control, and limits in order to stay focused
- Will not contribute unless they are forced to do so
- Do not understand political realities and budgetary pressures, and are unwilling to do so
- Focus on rights, benefits, money, and other "entitlements"
- Are capable of dishonesty and sabotage

Self-Protective Strategies Adopted by Managers (Point 2)

Managers will therefore

- Micro-manage employee's' work
- Restrict participation in policy or other important workplace decisions
- Institute new performance standards that focus on commitment, attitude, and loyalty
- Emphasize a formal chain of command for handling employees' complaints or suggestions
- Develop tighter personnel rules
- Limit the information communicated to employees
- Transfer or reassign people
- Take, or attempt to take, disciplinary action with employees who appear to be causing trouble for management
- Restrict meetings to upper-management groups
- Nip dissent in the bud
- Come down hard on people who are screwing up as an example to others
- Criticize employees; hold them up to ridicule
- Focus on their "rights" as supervisors

How These Self-Protective Strategies Look to Employees (Point 3)

Employees see

- Two sets of rules--one for managers, one for employees
- Employees transferred, reassigned, or terminated without explanation or apparent rationale
- Rumors about possible changes in the work, layoffs, or reorganization without confirmation or denial by management
- Announcements of new rules that restrict behavior without input or explanation
- Closed-door meetings by managers
- Managers' actions not corresponding with stated fair treatment policies on promotions, training, appraisals, EEO matters, or other human resources issues
- Warnings by managers to employees not to take their complaints or suggestions higher in the organization
- The immediate supervisor being the only person allowed to take good ideas to higher levels of management
- Managers who think that ridiculing, harassing, or punishing employees is acceptable

Negative Assumptions Employees Make About Managers as a Result (Point 4)

Managers

- Are insensitive to the personal life and legitimate needs, rights, and interests of employees
- Are secretive about motives and decisions; operate behind the scenes
- Have as their biggest interest personal control and power; use organizational power to achieve private ends
- Operate as a privileged elite, a closed club that creates a "caste system" in the organization
- Continuously try to get more work out of employees with no additional rewards
- Play politics; are more interested in politically correct solutions than technically correct ones

- Show favoritism and bias
- Are defensive about ideas they did not generate themselves
- Ask for input as a sop to employees' emotions, but are never really influenced by employees' ideas or interests
- Are insecure and threatened by competent employees
- Will do whatever they need to do to promote their own careers
- Think that they are better than employees with less power

Self-Protective Strategies Adopted by Employees (Point 5)

Employees will therefore

- Openly suggest that management or particular managers are incompetent
- Prevent information and data from flowing up the system
- Allow a manager to make mistakes in front of the manager's supervisors or peers
- Blame others or circumstances for performance problems
- Ask for more money or better working conditions
- Joke about or make fun of the manager with co-workers
- Challenge all management decisions
- Complain to vendors or competitors about the organization's problems
- Not contribute at meetings, but complain about them afterward
- Refuse to do overtime work required by an urgent issue or problem
- Seldom acknowledge their own contribution to a problem situation
- Fail to inform managers of pertinent stories on the rumor mill
- Send grievance petitions to high-ranking or influential people
- Form a union; focus on their "rights" as employees
- File a legal complaint or lawsuit

How These Self-Protective Strategies Look to Managers (Point 6)

Managers see

- Excessive time spent resisting reasonable requests; a general lack of cooperation
- Excuses; people not taking responsibility for problems they have caused or could correct
- Employees not giving the organization a reasonable chance to correct problems
- Requests for personal leaves or other benefits that will slow down the work
- Considerable time spent with co-workers complaining and "whining"
- A lack of new ideas to improve the product or service
- Frequent requests for new benefits
- Petty complaints represented as serious organizational problems
- Statements which do no support the organization and its customers
- People not working up to their potential
- Aggressiveness
- People working the system for personal gain

The cycle of mistrust, of course, is not the whole picture. The fear that inhabits the background of organizational life is counterbalanced by the talents, positive experiences, and hopeful ideals of people.

PART THREE: STRATEGIES FOR A HIGH-TRUST WORK ENVIRONMENT

8

BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITHOUT FEAR

Throughout our research, we did not meet a single person who did not want his or her organization to be successful. People want to do a good job and be proud of their work. They want to contribute to a success that is greater than their own. They want to have good working relationships and feel respected as competent employees and valuable individuals.

Just as managers and employees have the capacity to negatively affect each other's lives, they possess a similar potential to positively contribute to one another's success. In order for this positive potential to work, people must examine and discard the old patterns of mistrust and cynicism. Their instinctive habits of making negative assumptions about each other must be broken.

THE NEW VISION

The first step in moving away from the fears described in the last seven chapters is to understand a new vision of workplace relationships. In a variety of small groups, we have asked them to define their ideas of a great working relationship.

Commonly cited qualities are

- Mutual helpfulness, understanding, and trust
- Serving as a reality check for one another
- Providing feedback for one another--on strengths as well as areas that need improvement
- Influencing each other's ideas and decisions; willingness to be influenced
- Humor; enjoyment of each other's company
- Creative, synergistic problem solving where the results are greater than the sum of the parts
- Respect for different backgrounds and talents; reliance on each other's expertise
- Willingness and ability to work through conflicts and disagreements
- Common commitment to the same goal; commitment to each other's success
- A high level of rapport and honesty with one another
- Straightforward communication

These qualities suggest an interpersonal relationship which genuinely supports the performance and success of both people. *Habit 4, Think Win/Win*. We call these qualities *core behaviors* because they form the basis for excellent work relationships, regardless of hierarchical levels. They describe partnership and teamwork at their best: individuals doing high-quality work directed toward common goals and achieving personal satisfaction at the same time.

In such relationships, there are strong feelings of trust. Collaboration is seen as a joyful, positive thing, even when it includes or has been generated by disagreement. When undiscussable issues are discovered, they are quickly brought to the surface. Conflicts and negative feedback, while still painful, are recognized as a powerful source of mutual learning and growth. People can be vulnerable with one another and confident that their interpersonal risks will pay off.

PUTTING THE CORE BEHAVIORS TO WORK

When peers or managers and employees function according to the core behaviors, they completely reverse the reciprocal self-protective strategies that are a part of the cycle of mistrust. Their undiscussables disappear, and new opportunities for business success and professional development emerge. When this happens within the context of a manager-employee relationship, it is especially heartening—given the cynicism and mistrust that typifies so many of those relationships. People of different authority levels can, and do, behave in the following ways:

1. Instead of blaming each other, they give credit for good work that is being done. *Habit 1, Habit 4*
2. People take responsibility rather than making excuses. *Habit 1*
3. Information is shared rather than restricted.
4. People collaborate on important issues. *Habits 4, 5 & 6*
5. Instead of creating "us and them" distinctions, people talk in terms of "we." *Habits 4, 5 & 6*
6. People focus on the big-picture issues and do not get sidetracked by differences in the details. *Habits 2 & 3*
7. People respect organizational structures and roles and do not use them as weapons.
8. Rather than discrediting each other's competence, employees and managers value each other's background and experience. *Value the difference, Abundance Mentality*
9. Concerns, criticisms, and conflicts are openly voiced.
10. Rather than expressing cynicism, employees and managers speak positively about their work, the organizational, and the future.

In our experience, the broad, flashier approach tends to be found alongside a general philosophy of impatience and short-term thinking. This tendency reflects a misunderstanding of how people-management initiatives work best. Too often such initiatives are approached like engineering projects—as a

planned, logical sequence of steps with a designated budget and time frame and quantifiable outcomes.

Our view is that the culture and relationship changes suggested in this book are not amenable to being implemented in this way. Rather, they are likely to occur as an exhilarating but messy, often excruciatingly slow learning process in which mistakes and dilemmas are frequent. These unexpected, sometimes disappointing outcomes are not signals that the method is a failure or the intention is wrong. Rather they should be taken as catalysts to new understandings and additional steps. Reducing fear is a long and winding road.

SKILLS REQUIRED OF MANAGERS

To carry out any of these strategies a manager must behave in certain ways:

1. Demonstrate that you are listening.
2. Serve as a role model. Be willing to do what you ask others to do.
3. Be an initiator. Take the lead in turning fear into trust.
4. Be open to feedback.
5. Be willing to make personal changes. Be open to adjusting personal behavior as a result of feedback or other learning.
6. Be vigilant.
7. Deal with your own fear of speaking up.
8. Facilitate, rather than direct, discussions and meetings. Be a catalyst for others' discussion and reflection.
9. Take a developmental, learning-oriented approach.
10. Bring in an outside consultant.

9

ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRESENCE OF FEAR

Once fear's presence has been acknowledged, planning for and implementing a new course of action can begin.

To do so, you can begin by voicing your own concerns about fear and its effects. Model the level of openness about this topic that you would like to achieve with others. Do not feel you need to have all the answers.

This section gives specific techniques on what managers can do to develop a fear free environment. Although the technique recommendations are good, the authors missed the boat on the deeper reasons to why the problems exist. i.e., paradigms, scripting, Win/Lose systems, dependence.

OVERCOME DENIAL

Place the Topic of Fear in Context

Take a "Systems Approach" to Fear, Rather Than Blaming People For Its Presence

Concentrate on the fact that fear is a heritage based on hierarchical systems and negative assumptions, not just temperament or the flaws of individuals.

Take a Developmental Approach to Fear

SHARE YOUR CONCERNS WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP TEAM

MODEL WHAT YOU WANT

A market analyst for a corporation said it this way: "Most managers don't understand how damaging the gap is between words and actions and don't see the gap they create." In the effort to move forward and to create change, managers frequently trip over their own feet by not modeling what they want. Because of this, despite a world of good intentions, they do not get what they want. Unless you, as a manager, are willing to make some type of visible change in the way you manage and interact with others, those who report to you will not believe that you really want to reduce the amount of fear in your work environment.

1. If you want people to disclose their fears, recognize and be able to talk about some of your own.
2. If you want people to speak up about sensitive issues, demonstrate that you can communicate about such issues. Perhaps more importantly, show that you are willing to listen to the concerns of others--even if what they present is difficult for you to hear.
3. If you want people to stop making negative assumptions, freeze those assumptions in yourself. Notice them as they come to mind and consciously bypass them in favor of a more constructive, accurate view of people and their motives.
4. If you want others to ask questions about fear's presence, be willing to

ask those same questions first.

10

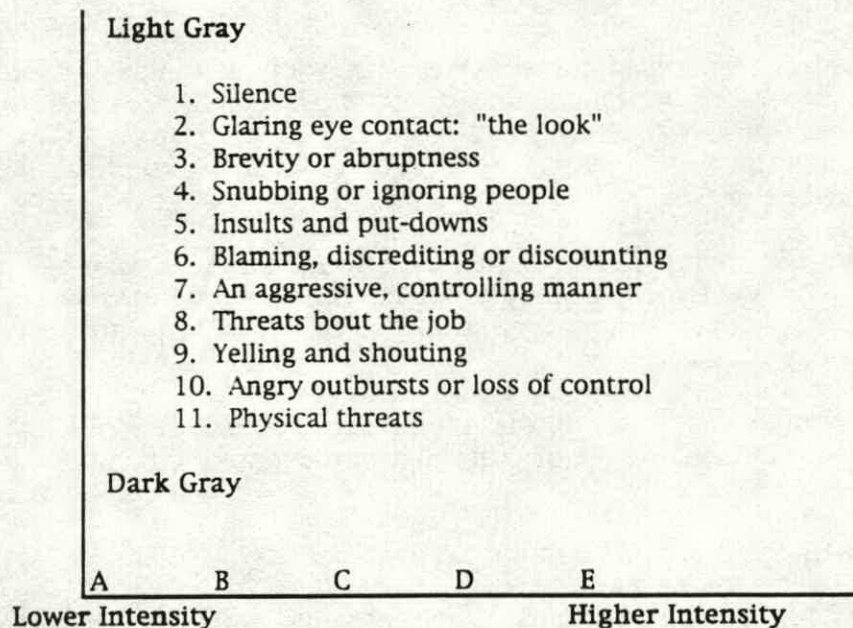
**PAY
ATTENTION
TO
INTERPERSONAL
CONDUCT**

**SHADES OF GRAY:
THE CONDUCT PEOPLE NEED TO AVOID**

In Chapter Six, we reviewed a broad variety of managerial behaviors and organizational practices which frequently cause people to be afraid and presented a list specifically describing the abrasive behaviors to be avoided.

The gray scale and intensity dimension address the severity of impact in different ways:

1. The gray scale (numbers 1 to 11) describes the various types of behaviors. These are generally arranged in order of increasing impact. For example, yelling and shouting typically have a more serious impact than simply being abrupt. We would describe as *abrasive* behaviors that are the light-gray end; those at the dark-gray are described as *abusive*.
2. The intensity dimension (letters A to E) places each fear-causing behavior on a continuum of subtlety, generality, frequency, and exposure.



Subtle
General
Rare
Private

Obvious
Personal
Frequent
Exposed

Develop a Picture of Positive Relations by Involving People in a Norm-Setting Discussion

Record the Ideas from This Discussion and Distribute Them to Members of the Group

Describe and Discuss the Gray Scale of Abrasive and Abusive Behavior

USING THE GRAY SCALE TO ESTABLISH A STANDARD

Report some of your personal observations about behaviors in the group without targeting or embarrassing individuals. Reflect together about situations in which any of you might be inclined to exhibit some of these behaviors.

"Let's talk about the things that punch our hot buttons, causing us to behave in ways we don't like."

"What impact have we seen as a result?"

"Tell me, which of these do you see me doing? How are you affected when I behave this way?"

Develop a Standard for Your Work Area

Once awareness has been raised, help people collaborate on a code of conduct for the group. Depending on the amount of fear you sense in the line that reports to you, you can approach this task formally or in a more casual way. The less formal approach can take place in a simple continuation of the discussion described in the previous section. Say something like

"It sounds like we are all saying the same thing ... that we want to become more conscious of the ways we might intimidate those who report to us. Can we simply agree that we are not going to do any of the things we've got listed here?"

If you and your subordinates decide that the presence of fear is significant enough for you to want to take a more formal approach, we suggest the following:

- Write down the behaviors you intend to avoid.
- Consider publishing your standard so that your employees will know what to expect from anyone who is in a supervisory position.

- Along with you direct subordinates, meet with employees to describe the standard in more detail and explain why it is being introduced.
- Schedule discussions at regular intervals to talk about progress or backsliding.
- For those who need assistance, yourself included, apply some of the ideas we present in the next section on coaching.

COACHING SUBORDINATE LEADERS

Equal in importance to establishing norms and standards is giving and receiving feedback. When you see others exhibiting threatening behaviors--or the opposite behaviors which bring trust and support to relationships--you have an opportunity to intervene and to reinforce the goal of positive communications. The norms and standards that you and your team have developed, as well as the gray scale, provide a framework within which you can pass along your observations, accolades, and counsel and ask for feedback on your own behavior.

In each case, focus on describing concrete behaviors: what the person specifically has done or said that has created problems. If possible, describe the specific incidents and the pattern of behavior which has emerged. Then describe the nature of the consequences in each case. Listen to the employee's explanations carefully for clues as to why these behaviors are occurring. Then work together to establish more productive alternatives.

Finally, our best general advice on coaching your subordinate managers and supervisors is to sit on the same side of the table. Nobody wants to be isolated with a problem. Talking about your own past experiences, gaffes, and blunders will help build trust. Make your coaching a mutual learning effort. The feedback you provide may have a distinct impact on your employee's insight and confidence.

11

VALUE CRITICISM: REWARD THE MESSENGER

The phrase "shoot the messenger" is a cultural and historical symbol for what happens to people who speak up. In three words, the implication is clear: "If I bring bad news, I will suffer for it." In this chapter, we describe why messengers are shot and provide recommendations to overcome this pattern. These include way to hear and seek bad news and reward the messenger.

WHY AND HOW THE MESSENGER GETS SHOT

Messengers usually point out problems with people or systems--the messy situations that seldom have a simple answer or a quick fix. Those who hear bad news and shut off discussion may do so because they do not, in fact, know how to solve the problem. They worry, along with the messenger, that if the problem comes to light "I'll get in trouble" or "People will think I can't handle it." As one middle manager for a public agency commented, the "shoot the messenger" syndrome "comes from managers' fears of looking bad in front of their bosses. They all want to look like they are doing a good job."

Messengers also get shot because their listeners make negative assumptions about their motives.

HEARING THE BAD NEWS

Do Not React Defensively

Hear Out the Messenger's Full Message

Create a Comfort Zone

Search with the Messenger for the Systems Issues Behind the Scenes

SEEKING BAD NEWS

Responding to the problems that come to you is a critical skill, but it is still a reactive one. To really open up communication requires more forthright action. You need to go out and find the problems. The phrase "If it ain't broke, don't fix it" leads to a certain degree of armchair confidence. It is as if you are saying, "If nobody is bringing me problems, I guess there aren't any." A different approach is to find out what condition the organization is really in.

Ask Open-Ended Questions About the Work

"How are things going?"

"What kind of problems are you running into?"

"If you were going to do this again, how would you improve it?"

"What barriers do you anticipate in the next phase of the work?"

"What are our customers saying about us these days?"

Ask Your Team Directly for Feedback

Another important step in modeling the behavior you want is to ask your associates and subordinates to give you direct feedback on your performance and conduct. Our consulting experiences tell us that people who ask for feedback and create safe opportunities to receive it are truly playing out a leadership role. Asking for feedback gives you a better picture of the effects of your behavior on others. It will also reassure people of your intentions and accessibility in the long term.

REWARDING MESSENGERS

To fully turn around the "shoot the messenger" syndrome, managers need to make a conscious effort to reward people who speak up. The rewards we choose to highlight are not of a tangible nature. They emphasize appreciation for the openness and risk taking of the messenger. They demonstrate respect for the messenger's suggestions and observations through attentive follow-up action. They focus on building a constructive and ongoing relationship between you and the messenger. This will ensure your continued access to the information and insight of others.

Personally Thank people for Bringing Forward Their Concerns and Ideas

Tell Natural Messengers How Much You Value Them

Provide Concrete Examples of How Bad News Has Led to Improvements, Savings, or Innovations

Ensure Some Type of Response to Every Employee Suggestion

Along these same lines, it is essential that when suggestions are made by employees, you follow up on them. Typically, these include three options:

- You decide that follow-up is not necessary or possible at this time.
- You intend to get personally involved.
- You delegate the follow-up to someone else.

Establish Response to Employee Ideas as a Priority for Your Subordinates

**REDUCE
AMBIGUOUS
BEHAVIOR**

Ambiguous behavior provokes fear because it does not provide needed, reliable information. The facts, issues, or intentions are absent, unclear, or contradictory. This lack of information triggers a chain of events that eventually leads to fear.

1. The employee sees the boss behaving in an ambiguous way.
2. The employee tries to interpret this unclear or insufficient information. This raises questions for the employee, such as the boss's intentions or the extent to which the employee is valued, trusted, or viewed as competent by the boss.
3. In the absence of additional information, the cycle of mistrust provides negative explanations for the ambiguous behavior.
4. The employee becomes anxious about what the ambiguous behaviors *might* mean, what is *really* expected by the boss, or what *could* happen.

The suggestions we offer to reduce ambiguous behavior are information oriented. They respond to the need of employees to know in clear terms what is meant by a particular communication, what is happening or likely to happen. They are organized around five simple principles of communication and involvement:

1. Invite people in and help them to feel welcome.
2. Give as much clear information as possible.
3. Listen to and respond to suggestions for action.
4. Involve people in decisions.
5. Do not put people into double-binds.

**INVITE PEOPLE IN AND HELP THEM TO FEEL
WELCOME**

Let People Know How You Feel

Make Time

Use a Process Check

Use Common Courtesy

**GIVE AS MUCH CLEAR INFORMATION
AS POSSIBLE**

There are two questions related to information flow that managers would be wise to consider:

- What information should I share and with whom?
- What methods are best to ensure a fast and consistent flow of information throughout the organization?

Make Sure the Mail Gets Through

Decode Confusing Systems

Answer People's Questions

Let People Know Where They Stand

DO NOT PUT PEOPLE INTO DOUBLE-BINDS

A double-bind asks people to do something that compromises their values and sets them up for confusion, disappointment, or failure. They demand that a person act in a certain way while simultaneously creating barriers to behaving in that way. There are two major kinds of double-bind: sending mixed messages and asking others to operate unethically.

13

**DISCUSS
THE
UNDISCUSSABLES**

One of the best and most powerful ways to begin overcoming fear's influence is to discuss the undiscussables. It is a rich technique for accessing the hidden issues and problems covered up in relationships, work groups, and the organization as a whole. As with all the strategies we present, discussing the undiscussables is not a one-time event. It is also a principle of disclosure that should become a part of everyday communication.

As you put our suggestions to work, remember that undiscussables should be treated with respect. Uncovering what people are not talking about and why they are not talking requires sensitivity. Such discussions frequently involve self-esteem, private work anxieties, and strong feelings such as anger or frustration. People take their undiscussables personally. yet given the right environment and the right manager, individuals can become remarkably open about issues which may have been hidden for a long time.

We generally suggest that groups or individuals adopt the following sequence when they begin to address undiscussables:

- Introduce the concept.
- Identify the undiscussables.
- Talk about them.
- Take appropriate follow-up action.

When Markay, Stephen and I visited the Shipping Dept. to begin work on the Win/Win agreement process, Rick Juber brought up what for them was an undiscussable. The perceived arrogance of the CSD. He identified it as a barrier to the work in his dept. He explained the paradigms that it created and the behaviors that stemmed from the paradigms. A real barrier to quality work.

The first thing to do is to decide how you would like to introduce others to the concept of undiscussable issues. There are many options. We present three that show different levels of involvement.

THE INFORMAL INTRODUCTION

One low-key method is simply to raise the idea of discussing undiscussables and see what happens. You will be modeling what it is like to bring up a sensitive topic.

DIRECTLY INTRODUCE THE CONCEPT

The next level of involvement requires you to use the concept of undiscussables in a more direct fashion.

Brief Your Group on Undiscussable Issues

Explain to the group that you want to create a more open environment where people talk freely about work-related problems. Tell them you are intrigued by some new ideas to help teams develop and are interested in getting their reactions.

FOCUS ON THE UNDISCUSSABLES OF YOUR GROUP

The third approach goes much farther than either of the two previous formats. It is an open-ended exploration of the full range of undiscussables in a work team. Because of the way it is structured, a qualified process consultant or group facilitator is necessary to help carry it out. It is to be used *only* with groups experienced with team-building events, where all members voluntarily and collaboratively decide to pursue this avenue to team development. Everyone should be present at the event; it lasts one to two days and can be an excellent kickoff to a broad transformation of the organization.

HANDLE UNDISCUSSABLES WITH CARE

To get the best from discussing undiscussables:

1. Create a safe, blame-free environment. People will talk easily about undiscussables when they are asked in a sincere, natural way.
2. Accept the undiscussables, whatever they are. Take a nonjudgmental approach.
3. Remember that not every undiscussable raised by a group needs to be dealt with in a group setting.
4. Do not use the concept of undiscussables to deal with an issue you ought to be managing personally.

HANDLING THE "NOW WHATS?"

Once an undiscussable issue has been brought to the surface, the group--or you and the individual you are working with--then needs to investigate the topic and develop ideas about how the undiscussable will be addressed. Many groups spontaneously begin to generate ideas and suggestions, but others may need a little help. You might want to use a technique originated by Weyerhaeuser executive Fred Fosmier called *STP*, standing for *Situation, Target, Proposal*.

- Target ideas represent possible outcomes, ideals, values, hopes, and wishes.
- Situation observations tell about what is happening now, the current status of things, and opinions about what is causing the present dilemma.
- Proposals are means to get from the situation to the target. They are

methods, action steps, or techniques for achieving the goal.

ACTION PLANS AND FOLLOW-UP

Many undiscussables require some type of follow-up action. There are usually two varieties: changes in interpersonal behavior and changes in work systems. In either case it is a good idea for those involved to agree on the steps that need to take place and a time and location for the follow-up.

WORKING WITH HARD-CORE UNDISCUSSABLES

Dealing with undiscussables is like peeling an onion or examining the cross-section of a tree trunk. Work groups will find layers of issues. The ones farthest from the surface are typically the hardest--and sometimes the most important--to discuss.

A few layers down, you are likely to find a predictable set of undiscussables. These can include the presence of fear; actual, perceived, or imagined repercussions; a sense of powerlessness; your management style; personnel systems; organizational norms; and perceptions of top management. This familiar list, first presented in Chapter Six, sticks like glue, lingering in the organization and reinforcing a general climate of fear. As such, it represents the hard-core undiscussables. If you can openly deal with these items, you'll probably be able to talk about most other concerns.

Focus the Group

Have the group answer two key questions:

- Which of the undiscussables can we influence or control?
- Which of the undiscussables are outside our range of influence or control?

Answering these questions helps a group channel its energy to barriers that can be overcome, rather than issues over which it has no control.

THE ONGOING SEARCH

Carrying out the foregoing steps is likely to institutionalize the concept of undiscussables. The concept will surface from time to time in conversation as an introduction to a sensitive topic, a red flag on an issue that needs attention. This ongoing search for undiscussables becomes a means to ensure that trust is continually being built. It helps guarantee that new, better ways of doing things are not quashed under the weight of some possible repercussion or the conclusion that speaking up will do no good. You and your team will find yourselves talking about concerns as they come up, long before they become sensitive and frightening topics. In such cases you will not doubt observe the

delightful irony that the more you are able to talk about undiscussables, the fewer there will be to discuss.

14

COLLABORATE ON DECISIONS

In this chapter they offer an easy-to-use model for decision making and a variety of suggestions on how to increase collaboration in you work group. More specifically, we suggest ideas about

- Becoming aware of current decision-making patterns
- Seeking input on decisions
- Group process issues
- Moving from participation to collaboration
- Managing consensus
- Communicating about decisions that have been made
- The role of the leader in this process

There is increasing pressure on anyone in a leadership role today to involve people in decisions. Our work force is now composed of people who expect to participate. Management theory has evolved over the last forty years to encourage participative and delegated decisions. For many managers it is taken as an article of faith that

- Those who make the product or provide the service have essential information necessary for improving quality and making sound decisions.
- People who have some say in decisions that affect them are much more likely to carry out those decisions with enthusiasm and effectiveness.

It is not uncommon for managers who see themselves as open and participative to be viewed by those who work for them as top-down managers who are inconsistent in the way they handle decisions. In such cases, unclear or misunderstood decision making causes mistrust, confusion, miscommunication, a sense of powerlessness, and alienation.

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

- Describing the various methods and the roles of people within each

approach

- Starting the process by deciding which method should be used to make the decision and communicating with the group about the method
- Initially framing the question to be decided
- In methods 1-3, clarifying or communicating the decision once it has been made and explaining the reasoning behind the decision to others affected by it

When people have become skilled at collaborative problem solving, the following traits are typical:

- The group works from an agenda.
- There are numerous "process" comments, such as "How do the rest of you feel about this?"
- People feel free to brainstorm informally, to throw new ideas or possibilities on the table rather than making formal pronouncements of opinion.
- There are high levels of interaction.
- Objections, differing perspectives, and disagreements are welcomed as a way to ensure quality outcomes.
- There is no sense that any one person's ideas dominate or that someone's private "agenda" has been forced on the group.

BECOMING AWARE OF CURRENT DECISION-MAKING PATTERNS

If you want to improve your decision making, you need to become aware of your current patterns before you can plan the changes you want and need to make.

SEEKING INPUT

Think Carefully About the Method of Decision Making That Best Suits the Issue at Hand

Before Seeking Input from Individuals or a Group, Evaluate Your Question Critically

Ask yourself how the question will look and feel from others' perspectives. Does it make sense? Will people truly understand the kind of input you want? Are the words or concepts clear? For example, returning to the budget issue, there are varying levels of clarity:

Unclear	"Tell me what you think about the budget priorities for next year."
Clearer	"We are still undecided on next year's capital improvement budget. What do you think we ought to do with it?"
Clearer still	"Give me you yea or nay vote on each of the following items that fall into the capital improvement budget: two new cars for the auto pool, PCs for the marketing department, or refurbishing the lobby and customer service counter."

Let People Know What Additional Information They Can Expect from You

It is important to inform people about follow-up, especially when they will hear about the final decision.

THE IMPACT OF THE LEADER

A tricky aspect of collaborative decision making is how to arrange things so the leader can be "just plain folks" during the decision-making process. We advise leaders to do what is necessary to develop their group facilitation skills. Tips include:

- Hold your comments until several others have spoken. If you jump in right away, you may unnecessarily sway the group.
- Use your listening skills. Paraphrase what you hear others say-- especially before you disagree with them.
- At the end of a decision-making session, ask the group for feedback: Did you dominate? If so, how did that happen? Did people have a sense that you were in the decision as an equal?

15

CHALLENGE WORST-CASE THINKING

Worst-case thinking is "catastrophizing." A direct descendent of the cycle of mistrust, worst-case thinking is a nasty mind-trap that darkens people's attitudes and buries their ability to solve problems. It leads people into black-and-white dichotomous thinking that limits their capacity to manage the future.

Some statements are more obvious than others:

"I would never dream of telling her that! She'd just blow up!"

"This whole program is going down the tubes. I'll probably get fired--and get my boss fired, as well."

"I wouldn't be surprised if all these delays around the budget mean that there will be another bunch of layoffs."

WORST-CASE THINKING IS TIED TO CHANGE

Throughout our research and consulting, we have repeatedly observed how easily people can become trapped by their negative assumptions. The worst case is a way of thinking that happens so naturally and usually so fast that people hardly notice. This is especially true during times of change.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE WORST-CASE THINKING

What People Experience with Worst-Case Thinking

Worst-case thinking is like unexpectedly breaking through the ice of a frozen pond. In an instant, fear-oriented thinking takes over. People recognize that they are at risk. But instead of figuring out what to do to correct the situation, they frequently become immobilized and panic, unable to think clearly in the frigid water.

Clues to Worst-Case Thinking

There are observable signs that often accompany worst-case thinking. Some are related to statements people make. Others are more nonverbal in nature. These are all relative, depending on the normal disposition, communication, and problem-solving style a person usually demonstrates.

IDENTIFYING THE WORST CASE AND THE MOST LIKELY CASE

When they are trapped by worst-case thinking, people frequently cannot even voice what they are worried about. It can be of great assistance to simply help them articulate the fate that might befall them. Exploring imagined worst-case scenarios enables people to let go of a significant amount of emotional tension.

Ask If a Person is Getting Caught Up into Worst-Case Thinking

Ask people What Could Go Wrong

PART FOUR:

CONCLUSION: CREATING A QUALITY ORGANIZATION

16

PEOPLE ARE READY FOR A WORKPLACE WITHOUT FEAR

ADDITIONAL STEPS WITH TOUR WORK TEAM

Given that a manager and his or her work team are a relatively small part of the whole, there is a real necessity to move the awareness of fear and the commitment to operating in new ways down the organization. This can best be accomplished if the team of people who report to you trust one another. The team can then act in concert to reduce fear within the organization.

Team C has been a model for other teams and other departments in the area of trusting relationships. The authors continue by explaining the importance of modeling behavior as a means to influence the rest of the organization.

Use a Variety of Team-Building Techniques to Improve relations Among Your Subordinates:

Many of the recommendations in this section include what would fall into the following categories: Be Proactive, Begin with the End in Mind, Put First Things First, Win/Win Agreements and Stakeholder Feedback.

Help team members "discuss the undiscussables" with one another

Teams that cannot talk about their undiscussables are almost certainly doomed to a static world of mediocre communication and sub-optimal performance. They will ultimately be dependent on their leader for direction and inspiration.

Collaboratively make plans as a team to move fear-reduction strategies lower in the organization

REDUCING FEAR WITH PEERS

Extending the effort to reduce fear among your peers is important work because lateral mistrust - particularly at the middle and upper layers of the hierarchy - can have a devastating impact on the way the rest of the organization operates.

Initiate Improvements in Relations with Your Peers

Don't wait for improvements. Too frequently, people are unwilling to take the first steps toward understanding and managing their conflicts.

REDUCING FEAR WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR

We have resisted addressing this topic at length in this book because of our firm belief that the primary responsibility of managers is to reduce fear with those lower in the hierarchy. Working in the opposite direction, no matter how tempting, is a secondary consideration. However, we also know that many managers will feel that fear generated higher in the organization can only undermine their own efforts. And, frankly, it can be personally very stressful if you believe you are working for a Darth Vader. Some of the steps we suggest will depend a great deal on the level of interpersonal risk you are willing to absorb. Know what the stakes are before proceeding.

Hmmm. What do you think?

CHALLENGES OF THE PATH

Those of us who are committed to the work of reducing fear often feel caught between the vision of the quality organization and reality. To use the phrase of one manager who believes in these ideals, we operate somewhere in the "gray spaces between what ought to be and what can be." The challenge of this work is felt constantly in the tension between our values and the nature of the organizations in which we operate.

W. Edwards Deming tells those who attend his seminars, "we are here to make another kind of world."

This challenge requires the leadership of managers and executives who are willing to do things differently, making both personal and organizational changes. It demands men and women who are willing to admit and learn from their mistakes, to seek involvement from people throughout their organizations, and to work hard in order to eliminate the technical and human barriers which prevent good ideas from happening.

PEOPLE ARE READY

From Paul, a CEO of a large service organization: "...the hopes, dreams, and desires of the employee on the front line are the same as those of the people at

the top. The problem is leadership, not people. People are ready." What the workplace is ready for, he continues, is leadership that truly supports people, "the kind of leadership described by Peters and Waterman and Bennis and Weisbord. It feels right, it sounds right, and in their hearts, people know it is right."

A CHANGING VIEW OF PEOPLE

Leaders like Paul are excited about the future and what it will mean for organizations. These leaders are people who possess a vision, have courage, and operate from the belief that successful organizations develop people, not intimidate them. The bright future they see depends on their ability to meet the challenges and hard times head on, working as partners with their bosses, peers, and employees. They understand this basic criterion for success with their brains and their hearts and know that the results are more than long term financial gains. They feel the pride that flows from empowering good people to do good work.

A TALK WITH THE AUTHOR

In closing, I spoke with one of the authors, Kathleen Ryan, to get her additional perspectives on the book. She said that all of the material is best when applied directly to your own work team or unit. She also mentioned that the dynamics that we see in our clients would serve as a good case study for applying the material as well.

She also mentioned that there were three specific leverage points for understanding this material and using it to create a quality culture. They are:

1. *Symptoms of Fear*
2. *Undiscussable Issues*

She mentioned that no matter what the trust level, it is very rare to have no undiscussable issues. Often times in high trust environments, the reason undiscussable issues are not talked about is because people want to preserve the current culture. People will not bring things up because they do not want to hurt feelings or alter the high trust environment.

3. *Cycle of Mistrust*

Gary Judd