IMPROVING FACE-TO-FACE SKILLS

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues, Former Students, and Friends:

When I originally accepted the invitation to give this talk, and when I casually said at the time that I would use this talk as an opportunity to summarize some of my thinking, and when I then procrastinated while traveling to Australia this summer and failed to send a title to Peter Gil in time for inclusion in the program, I did not consider what it would actually feel like to be standing here with the mandate, as the program says, of delivering "A Major Summary Presentation."

I had thought of summarizing my work on career development and career anchors, but then felt that would be going over old ground since no new research has been done since Career Dynamics was published two years ago. In any case, my major insight so far from trying to implement the career anchor idea was that the crux of how it would or would not work in organizations would depend upon the ability of the boss and subordinate to have a meaningful dialogue about career plans.

I had also thought of summarizing the research on mid-life, a hot topic these days since most of us are there, for better or worse, but it turns out that not quite enough is yet known to warrant a summary, and, anyway, most of the research seems to suggest that the way to survive the stresses and strains of mid-life is to learn to have a better dialogue with one's spouse and children.

My trip to Australia and several other countries this summer alerted me to the tremendous problems which other countries are having with labor

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relations. There is a lively debate going on in much of the world about industrial democracy and whether it is better to legislate participation to force managements to share more power with workers, or whether it is better to work on managerial attitudes to stimulate voluntary power sharing where appropriate. And here, too, it struck me how much the success or failure of industrial democracy experiments has to do with the quality of the day to day relationships between the particular managers and workers of a given enterprise.

I then reviewed my experiences as a consultant over the last twenty years or so and realized that most of what I did as a process consultant had to do with the building, maintenance or repair of relationships within organizations. So what I finally decided to do in this talk is, in a sense, another kind of summary — some summary thoughts about a "hot button" a preoccupation I cannot rid myself of — the topic of "face-to-face relationships." Having arrived at this topic I then thought of some additional reasons why it is so important.

The management challenges of the 1980's are fairly easy to determine, but we continue to have great difficulty in figuring out how to meet them. Our problems in this world are problems of implementation, of how to do things, or how to reach goals; goals that are often perfectly clear but seemingly impossible to attain.

We can explain these difficulties fairly readily "large systems have become too complex to understand," "bureaucracy makes it impossible to get anything done," "intergroup hostility paralyzes all constructive effort," "power politics undermine and subvert rational action," and "human resistance to change and irrationality defeats even the wisest programs." And all of these explanations would be true. But perhaps these explanations are
incomplete, and possibly they are sometimes even excuses. Because we have learned something in the last 40 years or so about implementation, and what we have learned takes us back to one fundamental. Insofar as societies, organizations, and families, are human groups, the face-to-face relationships among the members of those groups are a basic element of any social action. Whatever else we need in the way of systems, procedures, and mechanisms, the process of social action always starts with face-to-face relationships among human actors.

Face-to-face relationships can be thought of as the glue that holds organizations together, and face-to-face relationships are the links in the implementation chain. So it is time once more to look at these relationships and see if we can articulate some of the skills which will ultimately determine whether such relationships can become more constructive and move us forward toward solving some of the pressing problems of the 1980's.

The Elements of Face-to-Face Relationships

What does it take to build, maintain, improve, and, if need be repair face-to-face relationships? I would like to discuss nine different elements, all closely interrelated yet distinct in important ways. You will note that these elements reflect motives and values, perceptual skills, and behavioral skills.

1) Self-insight and a sense of one's own identity;

2) Cross-cultural sensitivity — the ability to decipher other people's values;

3) Cultural/moral humility — the ability to see one's own values as not necessarily any better or worse than another's values;

4) A pro-active problem solving orientation — the conviction that interpersonal and cross-cultural problems can be solved;
5) Personal flexibility — the ability to adopt different responses and different approaches as needed by the situational contingencies;

6) Negotiation skills — the ability to creatively explore differences locate some common ground and solve the problem;

7) Inter-personal and cross-cultural tact — the ability to solve problems with another person without insulting them, demeaning them, or destroying their face;

8) Repair strategies and skills — the ability to resurrect, and revitalize, and rebuild damaged or broken face-to-face relationships; and

9) Patience.

I would like to discuss each of these skill or competence areas in turn, putting most of the attention on those which I believe have been insufficiently attended to in prior analyses, especially repair strategies.

1) Self-insight and a sense of knowing where one is going and what one's own values are

One can hardly work out common goals with others if one does not know where one's own values and goals lie. Leaders, especially, must know where they are going and be able to articulate their goals. Parents and spouses must make a valiant effort to lift to the surface what is often left implicit — their own life goals and targets, so that there can be genuine negotiation among family members in the different life stages. Self-insight is a competence — the ability to see oneself accurately and to evaluate oneself fairly.

2) Cross-cultural sensitivity — the ability to decipher other people's values

It goes without saying that we cannot offer leadership if we do not have perspective on ourselves and others, and we cannot gain such perspective if we
continue to be ethnocentric, that is, notice and appreciate only our own culture and values. When we discuss cross-cultural issues in the classroom we often get into extreme and esoteric examples based on how different countries operate. However, many harmful cases of cultural misunderstanding occur right under our noses with our spouses, our friends, our children, and with those subordinates whom we think we know very well.

Norms, values and behavioral codes vary widely within each country. For example, American managers often tell tales of woe of trying to transfer people from the deep south to Manhattan, or from an urban center into a rural located plant site. I remember a trivial but amusing story from working with the European subsidiary of a large U.S. company which had headquarters both in New York and in Houston, Texas. The managers as they were leaving Europe for a trip to the U.S. had to pack two complete wardrobes — a more formal one with white shirts for the New York visit and a less formal one with levis and colored shirts for the Texas visit. They had strong feelings that being inappropriately dressed in either place would lead to real embarrassment.

A costly misunderstanding occurred in the small town where we used to spend our summers. The local wood turning mill employed both men and women from the community, and the pay scales had developed historically around the status system in the town. A new manager with experience in a progressive urban mill noticed that some of the skilled women operators were grossly underpaid in relation to their male counterparts. He set about to rationalize the pay structure to reflect actual skill levels. This action led to wives bringing home bigger paychecks, which neither they nor their traditional husbands could accept in terms of the status system in the town. The dissatisfaction and turmoil that resulted from the upsetting of the social order was completely unanticipated by this manager.
Deciphering values, motives, aspiration, and basic assumptions across occupational and social class lines is particularly difficult. It is hard for the middle class son of a successful businessman to understand the values and career aspirations of the son of an immigrant or an unskilled worker. It is hard for the general manager to understand the values and career aspirations of the technically oriented person and vice versa. It is hard for people in the different functional areas of a business to decipher each others' values and aspirations.

When we go to countries where a different language is being spoken and the culture is more obviously different, we do wake up to the need to sharpen our deciphering skills. But even then we have a strong tendency to look for similarities and to rationalize that "people are people" and "business is business" no matter where it is conducted. The tendency to ignore differences was brought home to me during my visit to Australia which is superficially and historically somewhat similar to the U.S. For example, it took me quite a while to discover that Australians like Americans are achievement oriented, but they also have the "tall poppy syndrome". One must not stand out above the crowd, one must accomplish things without seeming to work too hard at them, and one must not take too much personal credit for one's accomplishments. A 20 year old son of a friend of mine told us how after waiting all day for the perfect wave, he had finally succeeded in having a brilliant ride on his surfboard. As he hit the beach he told his watching friends, as he knew he had to, "Boy that was a lucky one".

I kept hearing how complacent and security oriented the Australians were, even when I was dealing with what seemed like some pretty tough aggressive managers. What one's true motives are and what is culturally acceptable as a legitimate explanation of what one is motivated by are, or course, not
necessarily the same. In fact, in two cultures like the American and the Australian one sees a paradoxical reversal -- in Australia people assured me that they were mostly security oriented, though companies admitted they had many aggressive, ambitious, power seeking managers working for them. In the U.S. I get the assurance that most people are ambitious and want to climb right to the top of the organization, though I encounter a growing number of such allegedly "ambitious" managers who admit in private that they are not motivated to continue what they call the rat race, would like early retirement, or are considering going into another career altogether. Both public images reflect cultural norms, yet both are to some degree a misrepresentation of the actual state of affairs. But the public selves we wear, the way we are supposed to present ourselves to others is a strongly ingrained set of cultural values in its own right, and tact prevents us from puncturing the illusions which cultures teach us to project.

Erving Goffman has written very articulately about what he calls "face work" -- the behavior of people in social situations which is designed to help everyone to maintain the self which they choose to project in that particular life scene on the larger stage of life. Selves are forever constructed and the audience for any given performance is culturally bound to uphold as much as possible the identities which the actors claim. At the minimum we nod to each other and say "Uh huh" to each other when someone is talking to us, or we try hard to laugh politely at a joke that is not really funny, or we ignore embarrassing incidents. If our boss tells us through his actions or demeanor that he believes himself to be very competent in handling a given meeting, we rarely challenge this claim even though we may privately believe that he will totally mismanage it. The skill in this situation comes into play in our ability to compensate for his incompetence or to repair what damage may have been done. But we do not destroy his face.
One of the most interesting features of the cultural norms of face-to-face interaction is their symmetric, reciprocal, exchange nature. We sometimes get into difficulty because we do not know how to complete an interaction. When someone in a strange country offers you an object in his house because you have admired it, are you supposed to take it and reciprocate at some future time when the visitor is in your home, or is it appropriate "to refuse". The whole psychology of when and how to say "yes" and "no" is fraught with difficulty if we are talking across cultures or sub-cultures. And, as many businessmen have found out, how to interpret a yes or a no is even more difficult.

My assumptions about fair exchange were sharply challenged in a trivial but amusing encounter I had in obtaining my Australian visa in Hawaii. A young woman from the embassy studied my documents and noted that since I would be working in Australia a special visa would be needed, and that this would require at least a week. Would I please leave my passport and all correspondence with her and call back in about 10 days to see whether the visa was ready. Trying to be very smart about all this I asked whether I could have some kind of receipt for my passport, to which she replied sweetly but in dead earnest: "Well now, since we are going to have to trust you while you are in Australia later this month, you will just have to trust us now, wont you?"

The ability to detect the subtleties of how others perceive situations and what the values of others are requires both formal training and practical experience. Learning a new language would seem to be a prerequisite since so much of every culture is encoded into the language. Many people pride themselves on their extensive travel, even making lists of how many countries they have been in, without ever encountering or deciphering any of the
cultures of those countries because they do not learn the language and therefore miss the important nuances of what is going on. On the other hand, I have heard repeatedly from multi-national companies that one of the best prescriptions for success in an overseas assignment is to take time out to learn the local language.

3) Cultural/moral humility

Beyond the ability to understand others, we need something which one might call cultural/moral humility. Can we not only sense the values of other people but, more importantly, can we positively appreciate them? Can we see our own culture and values only as different, not necessarily as better. Our tendency to think of things as "funny" is a good diagnostic here. I have often been shown or told about "funny" things people do in other countries. Some American visitors to the mainland of China found it very amusing that some Chinese farmers were so proud of owning tractors which were, in fact, useless because they could not turn on the tight terraces and because they did not have attachable plows to pull. The fact that the Chinese farmer did not even know what the pin was to which the plow attaches struck this American as very funny and weird. It never occurred to this person that his own utilitarian, pragmatic values might not be the only relevant ones in this situation.

A few years ago a group of American students teased one of their German peers about his heel clicking, head nodding, hand-shaking formality. After some months of teasing he stopped them one day with the statement: "When I go to work in the morning I go to my boss' office, click my heels, bow my head, shake his hand, and then tell him the truth." The teasing stopped.

Many American managers lack cultural humility. If we are more pragmatic than other people and if we encounter someone less pragmatic, we view them as
"odd", rather than wondering about the oddity of why we are so pragmatic. We
don't consider our own culture as funny or odd, and in need of explanation, yet
it is our culture which is probably in a statistical sense the most different
from all other cultures. Let me give a couple of examples — 1) our
mercantile attitude, embodied in our marketing skills, the ability to sell
anything to anybody, strikes some people in other parts of the world as rather
crass and superficial. I have encountered managers in other countries who
have real reservations about making products which they consider to have no
intrinsic value, and even more reservations about using advertising skills to
create markets for such products. 2) Our efficiency attitude which attempts
to reduce all costs for the sake of higher profit margins, even if those costs
are people, is clearly out of line with some other value systems, yet we take
those efficiency values for granted. We do not think of people as capital
investments and we find it hard to comprehend systems of guaranteed lifetime
employment.

My point is not to dissect the value system of the U.S. but to identify a
strong tendency I have seen in managers all over the world, Americans and non-
-Americans alike, to be "ethno-centric", to assume that one's own values are
the best, and that one is excused from either having to know what others think
and value, or having to take what others think and value very seriously. Such
an absence of cultural humility can be a dangerous weakness if the person is
attempting face-to-face negotiations or problem solving. And again I remind
us that this point applies just as much within our own society when we deal
with people whose values and assumptions may differ from our own.

4) Pro-active problem solving orientation

Solving face-to-face problems, especially where difficult cross-cultural
understanding and humility is required, presupposes an active faith that
problems can be solved if one works at them, and an assumption that active problem solving will produce positive results. Communication and understanding are difficult to achieve, but if one does not try, there is no possibility of achievement. Of course, a pro-active orientation is itself to some degree a cultural characteristic, and how do we determine when we are coming on too strongly, when we are intruding into other's private life space in our eagerness to establish constructive face-to-face relationships. The anthropologist Edward Hall has given us many excellent examples of how conducting business in different cultural contexts must be delicately handled lest we invade people's territory and destroy the possibility of better relationships.

What I mean by a pro-active orientation is a motivation to work on problems, not necessarily a high level of overt activity. We must choose our course of action based on genuine cultural understanding, not simply on a desire to act. As in the case of international diplomacy, we should always be ready to negotiate. No matter how bad the situation between management and employee in a given company or industry, each party should always be ready to sit down and try again to talk face-to-face.

5) Personal flexibility

It does us little good to sense accurately if we cannot take advantage of what we have learned. I know people who can tell you exactly what is going on yet who cannot alter their own behavior to adjust to what they know to be the realities. One of the reasons why experiential learning methods such as sensitivity training or transactional analysis workshops have been so successful is that they permit experimentation on the part of participants, thus permitting them to enlarge their repertory of face-to-face behavior. Role playing is perhaps the prototype of such behavioral training and clearly a necessary component of face-to-face skill development.
6) Negotiation skills

Much has been written about the process of negotiation and the skills needed to be an effective negotiator. To a considerable degree what has been said reflects the themes that I am focusing on in this talk. To negotiate requires great sensitivity, humility, self-insight, motivation to solve the problem and behavioral flexibility. Part of the sensitivity is to be able to decipher others' values. Another part is to develop the ability to elicit information from others and to judge the validity of that information. Face-to-face relationships are not always benign, not always comfortable, not always safe, not always open yet always crucial to problem solution. Especially in situations where there is initially conflict, we need the ability to maintain the relationship so that negotiation can continue, the ability to decipher messages where deliberate concealment is attempted, the ability to convince and persuade, to bluff when necessary, and to figure out what the other will do in response to one's own moves.

As we know, negotiation can become so dangerous and threatening to one's face that we have to resort to neutral "third parties" as catalysts, go betweens, message carriers, and the like. Often what is most needed is to explain the values and goals of the principals to each other because these principals lack the skills to reveal themselves to each other without making themselves either too vulnerable or too threatening.

One of my Australian manager friends speculated that a lack of verbal articulation skills seriously hampers negotiation in his country. He noticed that in many labor-management confrontations in Australia each side would blurt out bluntly (and with some pride at their own ability to be so open) exactly what their final demands were. When these proved to be incompatible, there was no place to go. The situation then deteriorated to name calling and
seeing the other side as stubborn and exploitative. This manager went so far as to speculate that the educational system was partly responsible for this situation in that written English is much more heavily emphasized in school, while spoken English is hardly attended to at all. He thought of Australians as being quite inarticulate, on the average, which, he felt, put them at a real disadvantage in face-to-face negotiations.

The important point from the perspective of this analysis is to recognize that openness is not an absolute value in face-to-face relationships. It may well be that for some purposes it is better not to reveal exactly where one stands. In fact, one of the ways that relationships can be said to develop is through successive minimal self-revelations which constitute interpersonal tests of acceptance. If you accept this much of me, then perhaps I can run the risk of revealing a bit more of myself. Total openness may be safe and charming when total acceptance is guaranteed, but can become highly dangerous when goals may not be compatible and acceptance is therefore not guaranteed at all.

7) Interpersonal and cross-cultural tact

To negotiate requires great tact. The tactfulness I refer to here is the behavioral manifestation of the cultural humility I referred to before. If we don't feel humble in the face of others' values, we will certainly offend; on the other hand, if we feel that there is genuinely room for different values in this world, then we have the basis for showing in our verbal and other behavior an adequate level of respect for others.

8) Repair strategies and skills

Repair strategies and repair skills to fix broken or spoiled relationships, careers, lives, negotiations, and other interpersonal or intergroup situations are probably the most important yet least understood of
the face-to-face skills. It is a reasonable assumption that as the world becomes more complex and inter-cultural, there will be more communication breakdowns, diplomatic disasters, losses of confidence and trust, hurt feelings between individuals and groups, actual hostilities, wars, and other forms of social pathology and disorder. It will not help us in such broken situations to resign ourselves, to lament our cruel fate or to explain away why something happened; the name of the game will be how to repair the situation.

The concept of "repair strategies" was brought to my attention by a former colleague of mine, Jacqueline Goodnow, a cognitive social psychologist who now teaches at MacQuarrie University in Sydney. She has been struck by the Australian tendency to "knock" things rather than solve the problem. I often heard the phrase in Australia "we are a nation of knockers", by which was meant that it is easier when things go wrong to blame the government, the unions, the managements, the multi-nationals, OPEC, and any other handy group than to figure out how to repair the situation.

Repair strategies presume and require not only constructive motivation, but the ability to see new elements in the situation which one may not have noticed before. The new elements which one may notice may be in oneself — one may discover that one had been unfair or selfish, or lacking in insight as to the consequences of one's own behavior, or what one's true motives in a situation really were. In that instance repair may begin with apology.

One may also discover new things in the other people in the situation — they may have changed in significant ways. One of the most damaging things we do in our face-to-face relationships is to freeze our assumptions about ourselves and others. Our stereotype of the other person can then become a straight-jacket and a self-fulfilling prophecy. McGregor gave us the best
example of this years ago in noting that if we assume someone to be lazy we will begin to treat them as if they were lazy which will eventually train them to be lazy. The energy and creativitiy which they might have had at one time then gets channeled either into other situations or into angry attempts to defeat the organization.

We want and need predictability in our relationships, but that very need may prevent us from repairing damaged relationships. It may be psychologically easier to see the worker as lazy and hostile because at least we can then predict his or her behavior and know exactly how to respond. To renegotiate the relationship, to permit some participation, to admit that we may have been wrong in our assessment is to make ourselves psychologically vulnerable and to enter a period in the relationship that may be less predictable for a time. And that is why, as in the case of negotiation, we may need the help of third parties, counselors, therapists, consultants, and other helpers to get through the period of vulnerability and instability.

Often the motivation to repair is there but the skill is not, in the sense that neither party has self-insight, the capacity to hear the values or goals of the other, the articulateness to negotiate without further destruction of face, and/or the emotional strength or the self-confidence to make concessions where needed in order to reach at least a common ground of understanding.

Sociologists taught us long ago that in childhood the very process of becoming social is a process of "learning to take the role of the other." We could not really understand each other at all, even within a single culture and speaking a single language without the ability to project ourselves into the other person's shoes. We could not develop judgements, standards and morals without the ability to see our own behavior from the standpoint of
others which gradually becomes abstracted into what sociologists call the "generalized other", or what we sometimes label our "reference group". Guilt and shame, the products of our internalized conscience, can be thought of as the accumulated empathy of a decade of growing up. As adults we do have the capacity to see ourselves from others' perspectives and this capacity should help us in developing repair strategies. Why is it, then, that so often we end up in complete disagreement, convinced that the only thing the other party really wants is to gain a selfish advantage at our expense?

One factor certainly is maintenance of position and pride. Having suffered an affront, a loss of face, or a loss of advantage sometime in the past, the only safe thing to do is to protect ourselves from any repetition of such an unpleasant event. We may, in addition, recognize that our own interest and that of the other party are genuinely in conflict. If we are in a zero-sum game we may not be able to afford to be too sympathetic to our opponent. In such an instance a repair strategy would call for the ability to locate some super-ordinate goals where goal conflict is not intrinsic, and to build a new set of interactions around such super-ordinate goals. Skillful diplomats, negotiators, and statesmen build their entire career around the development of such repair strategies, having to create one after another as the human actors in the drama destroy one relationship after another.

Ordinary day to day relations within the family, between manager and subordinate, and between groups in organizations are forever in danger of breaking down. We must be prepared to diagnose the situation when it occurs and have the skills to repair it, if repair is needed.

Let me give two examples of what is involved. Much of the research on mid-life is beginning to point to the presence of two very broad phases, each lasting a decade or more. In the first phase, lasting roughly from age 25 to
40, the family in a sense colludes with the primary career occupant to build a successful career. The primary career occupant, the spouse or partner, and the children all learn the cultural norms that, given the way in which our occupational structure operates, one must go to school and then put in an intensive decade or so building up one's career and one's organizational membership if the career is pursued within an organization. The collusion on the part of the family may be silent and stoic with children being kept out of the career builder's hair while he or she is busy, with spouse or partner suffering gladly or resentfully but keeping quiet about it and actively developing a viable ancillary support role as homemaker and mother/father combined.

But something else is going on during these years. The homemaker is in a somewhat terminal career and knows it — at some point the children are all off to school, the house has had all the attention it needs, and being the ancillary spouse doing the entertaining, etc. may not be a full enough life. The spouse builds up expectations that at some point it will be my turn. "I have helped you to build your career and now I want something in return — something for myself". As these feelings grow and become articulated, and as teenage children begin to say "why are you working so hard?" "What's it all about anyway?" and as the career occupant begins to re-examine his or her career, a new phase begins. And in this phase there may be a need for repair strategies, renegotiation of the family contract, re-assessment of who wants what and how it is best achieved. People now discover either that the relationships are already damaged and need to be repaired or that they will be damaged if no preventive maintenance is undertaken.

It should be noted that each family member has, in a sense, been living in a different sub-culture and that cross-cultural understanding and humility
will therefore become very important. The career occupant will have to understand and respect the serious requirements of the spouse and the young adult children. The spouse and children will have to understand and respect the serious requirement of the world of work and organizations with which the career occupant grapples. This will tax their self-insight, their commitment to each other, their sensitivity, and their perspective.

The moral humility issue is very central here because the cause of the damaged relationship is often a devaluing of each others' goals and aspirations. The career occupant looks down on what may be regarded as the trivial or downright threatening values of the next generation; he cannot really appreciate why the home-maker spouse should have an issue about self-identity, the need to feel important and worthwhile in a society in which worth is almost exclusively defined by paid work and career involvement. The spouse for her part (and most likely the children) find it easy to devalue organizational goals, to identify organizational careers with exploitation of the poor, marginal product quality, questionable business ethics, overworked people eventually cast off by cruel employers, and so on. If mid-life family relationships are damaged by such feelings how can they be repaired?

Each party in the relationship must first achieve some self-insight, some sense of one's own commitments so that defensiveness and denial can be reduced. We cannot hear others if we cannot accept ourselves. Next we need the kind of cross-cultural sensitivity I have been talking about, the relaxed open ability to hear other values with empathy and perspective. Once we can hear each other, we can begin to seek the common ground, the goals or aspirations around which some common activities can be designed. Once we can hear each other we can begin to renegotiate the relationships to make it possible for the desirable activities to happen. Or, if in hearing each other
we find a genuine lack of common ground, we can negotiate a reduced level of the relationship and mutual acceptance of what each cares about which can lead to non-destructive separations and/or more limited interactions with children.

My second example has to do with face-to-face skills and repair strategies in labor management situations. I am struck by the degree to which these situations seem to turn into inter-group struggles -- struggles between unions, managements, and government bodies or political parties. Once the conflicts have been escalated to the inter-group level it is easy to give up one's pro-active problem solving orientation and to resign oneself to the fact that the problem is essentially unsolvable. Yet when one looks at successful enterprises, those which have managed to maintain harmony between management and employees, one is struck that the key to this harmony is a degree of mutual trust, active listening, appropriate levels of participation and consistently constructive face-to-face communications. An Australian example will highlight what I mean. A plant manager told me that he had spent many years developing a constructive relationship with his employees in spite of the fact that they belong to a strong national union which periodically calls for national strikes. One year his plant refused to strike and was told by the national union that they would get all the suppliers of the plant to refuse to deliver, thus, in effect, shutting the plant down. Under these conditions management and the employees got together and agreed that the employees should go out on strike, but everyone knew that it was not over local issues, and no manager held it against his own subordinates that they had gone out on strike.

The face-to-face trust, reinforced by open communications on relevant issues was strong enough to keep this plant functioning well even in a larger context that made work stoppages periodically inevitable. What we can learn
from this is that face-to-face constructive relationship are a basic necessity even though they may not be enough. And, conversely, solving the problem at a national level while there continue to be destructive low trust relationships within the enterprise will probably be useless.

To achieve face-to-face trust in a labor management situation that may have developed into a hostile inter-group conflict over a period of decades seems like a tall repair order. One pre-requisite to working out the problem at the group level will be, as I have argued, the re-establishment of constructive face-to-face relationships, and that will only be possible if both managers and workers find a way to see each other in less stereotypic ways. There is a need here to invent in the inter-personal arena what the zen, gestalt training, encounter groups, and other training programs have emphasized — relaxing the active critical mind enough to let our eyes and ears see and hear what is really out there rather than what we expect to see and hear. Just as the person learning to draw must suspend what he or she knows intellectually about what things should look like, and, instead, learns to see what is really out there, so the person concerned about repairing human relationships must first see not what he or she expects or knows should be there, but what is actually there.

I don't think it is accidental that Americans are so interested in and pre-occupied with sensitivity training, Zen meditation, inner tennis, and, most recently right side brain functions. What all of these programs and approaches have in common is a focus on learning how to perceive oneself, others, and the environment realistically, which, apparently requires a certain relaxation of our active critical functions and a more deliberate disengaging of our analytical self. We cannot improve face-to-face relationships if we cannot see accurately, and such accurate seeing and
hearing is for many of us a lost skill that we must somehow regain. And the place to begin to practice is in our families and in our immediate superior/subordinate and peer relationships.

If we cannot see ourselves and others in this relaxed uncritical way we cannot develop perspective, humility, or tact, and we will run the danger of acting on incorrect data. On the other hand, if we can learn to see each other, and if we can combine more accurate perception with the ninth element in my list -- patience -- we have some chance of improving and repairing face-to-face relationships and thereby improving our chances of reaching the important goals of the 1980's.

You have been very patient. Thank you.
Bibliography


