THE ORGANIZATION WORKSHOP

Supplemental Materials & Design Variations

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BACKGROUND

This section contains design items which have been part of previous versions of the Organization Workshop. Although not included in the current version these items are valuable inputs and exercises. You would do well to familiarize yourself with these and make them part of your training repertoire. Some trainers, for example, will not do even a one-day workshop without including the SYSTEM POWER.

- **EXPANDED SELF & OTHER INPUT.** This is a more interactive and detailed input on seeing and supporting others and allowing others to see and support you.

- **SYSTEM POWER.** This input explores the unique contributions Tops, Middles, Workers and Customers can make to system survival and development. Shapers, Integrators, Producers. Validators.

- **GROUP BARRIERS TO PARTNERSHIP.** This is the full version of "Partnership and Lateral Relationships". This is a long but powerful input exploring how Tops fall into Turf, Middles into Alienation, and Bottoms into Group Think, along with strategies for creating and maintaining partnership at all levels.

- **MIDDLE EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP.** These exercises focus on (A) the individual in the middle and (B) Middle group dynamics.

- **DIFFERENCES AND PARTNERSHIP**

- **THE SPACE OF SERVICE.** This paper explores the nature of the space of service and the people who occupy it (consultants, OD specialists, etc.).
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INPUT:

SELF AND OTHER PARTNERSHIP EXPANDED VERSION

I. AT A GLANCE

II. TRAINER NOTES

III. CHARTS

IV. ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPT
I. RELATIONSHIPS AND PARTNERSHIP: AT A GLANCE

1. Establish the importance of mastering relationships -- satisfaction and making projects happen.

2. When potential partnerships break down: others are seen as noxious, dangerous, or irrelevant.

3. How do we respond when we see others that way: escape, avoid, hurt/destroy, dominate, avoid domination, get even?

4. When we are in the middle of a relationship breakdown, what are you not getting from the other person?

5. What do you suppose the other person is not getting?

6. In order to master relationships, what is the most powerful thing you can do? -not what's easy, or what's natural, but what is powerful?

7. The stand: a commitment to seeing and support. Try it on. What possibilities does it open up? What issues does it raise?

8. Getting our eyes off our selves.

9. When we are in breakdown, all we see of the other person is the "stuff", the tip of the iceberg.

10. Play this stand out --in relationship to a subordinate, a peer, your boss, a partnership that broke down.
    what might we have to face if we operated from this stand? [that we've been wrong about this person.]

11. The stand: a commitment to being seen and supported. We want partnership, but what is it that we generally put out to others? Our "stuff", the tip of our iceberg.

12. What is partnership? A relationship in which we can be with one another.

SELF OTHER and SELF OTHER

0 100 100 0
II. TRAINER NOTES

Master this material by mastering partnership in your own life.

There are only two exercises for you to work on.

I. Work at setting yourself aside and seeing other people. Work at seeing them as the center of the world and seeing yourself as a satellite orbiting that world. Keep noticing what stands in the way of your doing that. Keep noticing until it diminishes in power and ultimately fades away.

II. Work at putting your projects out to others and enrolling others in support of your projects. Keep noticing what stands in the way of your doing that. Keep noticing until it diminishes in power and ultimately fades away.

***

This input sets the stage for the exercise that follows - Empowering One Another's Projects.

The input is both conceptual and experiential. It is intended to have people wrestle with their thoughts, feelings, assumptions and histories regarding relationships.

If there is no resistance, then we may be doing something wrong.
III. CHARTS

I(1)

- Escape
- Avoid
- Hurt/Destroy
- Avoid Domination
- Get Even

III

- Noxious
- Dangerous
- Irrelevant

V

Be a person who sees others who gets who they are and what is important to them, who gets behind them and helps move them ahead in their world.

I(2)

Be a person who puts your projects out to others – who lets them know who you are and what is important to you, who allows them to get behind you and move you ahead in your world.

Other drawings can be made as you go, indicating that all we see of others is their “stuff”, and all they see of us is our "stuff"
and that what we see of others and what they see of us are the tips of icebergs.

and partnership is about seeing and revealing more.
IV. ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPT

[THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MASTERING RELATIONSHIPS]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: You may want to print "RELATIONSHIPS & PARTNERSHIP" on the (3) easel.]

- Mastering relationships is the key to our success in organizations.
- It is central to our ability to make our projects happen.
- And it is central to our overall satisfaction in the organization. The more positive relationships we are able to develop, the less alone we feel, the less stress we experience, the more supported we are in our endeavors.
- Yet solid, powerful and productive relationships are difficult to come by. And sometimes we think we have them, and then they fall apart.
- We want to get into that process more deeply. What does it take to master our relationships with others?

...

[WHEN POTENTIAL PARTNERSHIPS BREAK DOWN]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Work with Chart (3)]

- Here we are, and here is another person -- a colleague, a spouse, a friend, a child, our boss ... or subordinate. We are potential partners. But something has happened that has knocked us out of partnership.

As I'm talking, think about this in terms of some relationship of your own, some partnership experience that didn't work out or isn't working out.

So, something has happened that has knocked us out of partnership

We now see the other person this way:

NOXIOUS
DANGEROUS
IRRELEVANT
• We see the other person as noxious -- we just don't like them. Maybe we once liked them; but then something happened. And now we see them as noxious.
• Or we see the other person as dangerous -- we're afraid of them. Maybe we weren't always afraid of them; but something happened. And now we see them as dangerous.
• Or we see the other person as irrelevant -- they have no important part to play. Maybe they never had an important part to play. Or maybe they once did; but something happened. And now we see them as irrelevant.

[HOW DO WE RESPOND TO PEOPLE WE SEE AS NOXIOUS, DANGEROUS, IRRELEVANT?]

[REFER TO I (1)]

ESCAPE
AVOID
HURT/DESTROY
AVOID DOMINATION
GET EVEN

• So how do we respond to people we see as noxious, dangerous, or irrelevant?

• One thing about us as human beings:
  We respond appropriately to the world we see.

So, if we see others as noxious or dangerous or irrelevant we

  escape -- we try to get out of the relationship -- divorce, break up the partnership, re-structure,

  or avoid the person;

  we hurt them -- or, in the extreme, destroy them;

  we try to control them
and keep from being controlled by them;
or we try to get our revenge.

- When we see others as noxious or dangerous or irrelevant, partnership is not a possibility for us.

[NOTE: Add PARTNERSHIP and cross it out.]

[WHEN THE RELATIONSHIP IS IN BREAKDOWN, WHAT ARE WE NOT GETTING FROM THE OTHER PERSON?]

- All right. So, say you're in the middle of a relationship breakdown.
  - You're having a fight with your spouse ... or a friend ... or a child.
  - There's tension between you and your boss ... or with a subordinate.
  - Or you're sitting across the table from a peer who seems totally irrelevant to your life.

- Get clear about what it's like for you when you're in the middle of such a breakdown.
  [Pause] Get clear about what it's like for you.

- What is it that you're not getting from this other person?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Take their responses – “understanding”, “caring”, “respect”, “support”, etc. Write their responses on Chart 3]

[Caution: Keep the question specific and focused: “What is it that you're not getting from the other person? What's not coming to you from the other person?”]

[AND WHAT DO YOU SUPPOSE THE OTHER PERSON'S NOT GETTING?]

- And what do you suppose the other person's not getting?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Take their responses. There's likely to be some laughter.]
[WHAT'S THE MOST POWERFUL THING YOU CAN DO?]

• So, what's the most powerful thing you can do at this point? I'm not asking what's natural...or what's easy. What we're talking about is not “how to do 'how it usually goes.’” We're talking about what it takes to master relationships.

So, what is the most powerful thing you can do at this point?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Take their reactions. In this conversation, look for the people who begin to talk about taking your eyes off yourself and thinking about this other person. Nurture that thought. Play with it. Be devil's advocate – “Here I am feeling misunderstood, unloved, unsupported, disrespected ... and I'm supposed to pay attention to what this other person wants? Come on. You're not serious!”]

[A COMMITMENT TO SEEING. A COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT]

[Refer to (5).]

BE A PERSON WHO SEES OTHERS – WHO GETS WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM, WHO GETS BEHIND THEM, AND HELPS MOVE THEM AHEAD IN THEIR WORLD.

• So, try this on. See what it feels like. See what possibilities it opens up, and what issues it raises.

In the moment of breakdown,

to be a person who sees others,

who gets who they are

and what is important to them,
who gets behind **them**

and helps move **them** ahead in **their** worlds.

- Let that in.

  What possibilities does it open up?

  What challenges does it raise?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Let a conversation develop around this, but keep it focused on those two questions. Don't let it stray into generalities about the world. The question is: What possibilities does that stand open up for you? What challenges does it raise for you? It's important for people to wrestle with the issues they have --

"What if the other person's values are at odds with mine?"

"The company won't allow it."

"You'll just get stepped on ... used ... abused."

"It takes too much time.” [We'll deal with that one later on.]

Your job is to help people to continue to explore the possibility of this stand in the face of objections. Of course, we don't want to support someone with truly destructive goals, but are you so sure that that's what they are about? Don't we jump too quickly -- react -- to the surface we see? Do we foreclose on the possibilities?

The challenge: **Can you stay open to the possibility that you have not seen beneath the surface?**

And, as a trainer, you need to be clear: Your job is to hold people to examining this stand carefully, to not let them duck away from it prematurely. But your job is not to force it down their throats. You are again ending innocence and opening choice. In the presence of breakdown, the DOOR A alternative is always available: ESCAPE, AVOID, HURT /DESTROY, DOMINATE, AVOID DOMINATION, GET EVEN.]

... 

Get clear with them that the one requirement for doing this is that we are solidly anchored in **ourselves**. We need to be clear about who we are and what we stand for in order not to lose ourselves in others. This is **not** about existing solely for and in others. The more firmly anchored we are in ourselves, the more readily we can take our eyes off ourselves and turn them toward others.
[GETTING OUR EYES OFF OUR SELVES]

• You see, the hardest thing for us to do is to set ourselves aside --our issues, our concerns, our wants, our feelings.

Each of us thinks that God created us and made us the star of the show. And all these other folks, they’re just the supporting cast.

And one day it hits us: All these other folks! They're the stars of their own shows! [Look at some person in the program.]

Who is (Mary)? She's the star of her show. What is she or he about? What's important to her? How do I get behind her and move her ahead in her world?

[Repeat this with someone else in the program.]

What about that subordinate I'm having trouble with. Who is that person? What is he about? [etc.] And my boss? And those peers who feel so irrelevant to me?

What are they about? What's important to them? How do I move them ahead in their worlds?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: It will help, somewhere in the conversation, to introduce the following:

WHEN WE ARE IN BREAKDOWN, ALL WE SEE OF THE OTHER PERSON IS THEIR "STUFF," THE TIP OF THE ICEBERG]

• When we are in a breakdown with another person, all we're seeing is the "stuff," [Draw this.]
We're not seeing behind the wall.
We're just seeing and reacting to the tip of the iceberg

and not the whole thing.

[PLAY THE STAND OUT IN YOUR MIND]

- We're talking about mastering relationships.
- So, play this stand out in your mind.
- 

[Repeat the stand. Chart 5.]

Be a person who sees others ... etc.

BE A PERSON WHO SEES OTHERS- WHO GETS WHO THEY ARE AND WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO THEM, WHO GETS BEHIND THEM, AND HELPS MOVE THEM AHEAD IN THEIR WORLD.

- Play it out in relationship to breakdowns you're experiencing ... with a subordinate ... a peer who you see as irrelevant...your boss ... some relationship that started in promise and ended in breakdown.

[PAUSE]
• What might we have to face if we looked at those relationships from this stand? Think about that for a minute.

[PAUSE.]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: See what they have to say.]

• The worst thing we'd have to face is that we've been wrong about this person.

[A COMMITMENT TO BEING SEEN AND SUPPORTED]

[Refer to 1 (2)]

• Now let's look at the second half of partnership.

BE A PERSON WHO PUTS YOUR PROJECTS OUT TO OTHERS- WHO LETS THEM KNOW WHO YOU ARE AND WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO YOU, WHO ALLOWS THEM TO GET BEHIND YOU AND MOVE YOU AHEAD IN YOUR WORLD.

• What do you see in that?
  What issues does it raise?
  Do you find that harder to do than supporting others?

[Have a brief conversation about this.]

We talk about wanting partnership with others, but how much of ourselves do we show to others? What is it they see? Our "stuff." The tip of our iceberg. *
[WHAT IS PARTNERSHIP?]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Refer to Chart 5. Write "Self" and "Other" on the chart. And write 0 under Self and 100 under Other.]

- Partnership is a relationship in which sometimes I'm zero and it's a hundred per cent you,

[Refer to Chart 1 (2). Write "Self" and "Other" on that chart and 100 under Self and 0 under Other.]

- and at other times, it's a hundred per cent me and zero you.
- Either I'm getting my project out, and your energies are focused on moving me ahead,
- or you're getting your project out, and all my energies are focused on moving you ahead.
- When we say there's not enough time for this, we might do well to look at how we use our time. How many of our interactions are 0/100 or 100/0? If they're not that, what are they?

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5% of our energy is devoted to moving my project ahead,

6% is devoted to moving your project ahead, and

**89% is wasted in irrelevancies.**

- Conversations like that eat up lots of time and don't move either party very far ahead.
INPUT:

SYSTEM POWER:

WHAT THE SYSTEM NEEDS FROM TOPS, MIDDLES, BOTTOMS AND CUSTOMERS

I. TRAINER NOTES

II. INPUT AT A GLANCE

III. CHARTS

IV. ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPT
I. TRAINER NOTES

• Here we introduce another vision for organizations -- powerful systems or empowered systems. What is an empowered system? What does the whole thing look like? And what are the special contributions Tops, Middles, Bottoms and Customers can make, by virtue of their positions, toward creating powerful systems?

Here we introduce the concept of system-centered power -- that is, power that enhances the capacity of the system as a whole to survive and develop in its environment.

And we introduce the concept of Tops as SHAPERS, Bottoms as PRODUCERS, Middles as INTEGRATORS, and Customers as VALIDATORS.

• Again, this is an overly simple model. Few organizations are so neatly delineated with the Tops, the Bottoms, the Middles and the Customers. Yet is it valuable model for looking at functions which may be missing from our systems. For example, we can look at any particular slice of the organization and at the Tops, Middles, Bottoms and Customers for that slice.

Are the Tops for that piece of the system doing an effective job of shaping? If not, why not? What are the costs to the system? What needs to happen in order for more effective shaping to happen?

Or what are the costs to the system as a result of Middles failing to integrate effectively with one another?

Or how can we encourage our customers to strengthen our system by becoming more effective Validators?

• In the input we look at the individual and group pitfalls standing in the way of system power.

The input looks backward to Day One -- and the individual challenges we face as Tops, Middles, Bottoms and Customers. [Tops who suck up responsibility have no time for Shaping; Bottoms who hold higher-ups responsible for the system have little zest for Producing; Middles who slide into the middle and get torn are too weak and uninformed to function as system integrators; and Customers who hold the delivery system responsible for delivery have little interest in serving as system validators.]

And the input also looks ahead. In the input that follows -- "A Systemic Look at Partnership" -- you will be looking at the relationship issues that develop among Tops, among Middles and among Bottoms and how these work against Shaping, Producing
and Integrating. [Alternately, this material is covered in the homework reading of SPACE WORK.]

• As usual, indicate that this is not "the truth" about systems. It is a way of looking at what else systems might be and what gets in the way of that. The question for participants is not whether this is exactly right or exactly wrong. The question is: What power possibilities open up for me if I look at systems this way?

**Be sure that they see this.** This holds true for all the inputs: To listen not for evaluation but for **empowerment**. "How can I use this?"
II. INPUT AT A GLANCE

1. WHAT IS AN EMPOWERED SYSTEM?

2. THE SYSTEM POWER OF

   WORKERS AS PRODUCERS
   TOPS AS SHAPERS
   MIDDLES AS THE INTEGRATING MECHANISM
   CUSTOMERS AS VALIDATORS

3. A VISION OF EMPOWERED SYSTEMS. HOW THE WHOLE THING FITS TOGETHER – EACH PART REINFORCING THE OTHERS

4. WHY DOESN’T IT HAPPEN
   A. PERSONAL ISSUES
      TOPS SUCK UP THE DAY TO DAY STUFF
      BOTTOMS HOLD “HIGHER UPS” RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SYSTEM
      MIDDLES GET TORN – WEAK, UNINFORMED
      CUSTOMERS DON’T THINK ITS THEIR BUSINESS TO SHAPE UP THE DELIVERY SYSTEM
   B. RELATIONSHIP ISSUES THAT DEVELOP
      AMONG TOPS
      AMONG BOTTOMS
      AMONG MIDDLES
III. CHARTS

(3)

EMPOWERED SYSTEM
A SYSTEM IN WHICH PEOPLE AT ALL LEVELS AND IN ALL POSITIONS ARE ABLE TO MAKE HAPPEN WHAT THEY WANT TO HAVE HAPPEN AND WHAT THE SYSTEM NEEDS TO HAVE HAPPEN

(2)

(Build this as you go.)

Diagram:

- Shapers
- Integrators
- Top
- Middle
- Worker
- Validators
- Customers
- Producers
IV. ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPT

- [Refer to Chart 3.] What we have been exploring is the possibility of an **empowered system** – [EMPOWERED SYSTEM]

  A system in which people at all levels and in all positions are able to make happen what they want to have happen and what the system needs to have happen.

  - So, the question now is:

    What does the system need in order to **survive** and **develop** in its environment? What does it need from Bottoms? From Tops? From Middles? From Customers?

  [NOTE TO TRAINER: Build this as you go on Chart (2) starting with Workers, then Tops, then Middles, then Customers.]

  [NOTE: You are now using "Worker" rather than "Bottom" because here you are referring specifically to those people who do the direct product or service work of the organization.]

  [WORKERS AS PRODUCERS]

  - So, what does the system need from Workers?
  - The system needs workers to function as **Producers**.
• It is through putting our creative energies into the processes of work that we enhance the capacity of the system as a whole to survive and develop.

• As Workers we **empower the system** by:
  o being central to work
  o being responsible for how work is done in the organization.
  o having an intimate knowledge of customers' (internal or external) needs.
  o applying our creative energies toward generating the highest quality **products** and **services** for them.
  o using our closeness to work and our expertise about work to determine how work can best be done in the organization.
  o making **suggestions** about better ways of making products, delivering services, and making suggestions about new products and services.

• **This is how Workers empower the system.**

[TOPS AS SHAPERS]

• So, what does the system need from Tops in order to survive and develop in its environment?
• The system needs Tops to function as **Shapers**.
• Shaping involves:
  o looking outward and exploring the system's environment -- what it is now and what it is becoming, what the dangers are and the opportunities.
  o working the form of the system so that it can meet those dangers and opportunities.

• As Tops we empower the system by working on:

  VISION -- Creating a vision for this system, beyond what it is to what it can be. A vision that captures the energies of others -- "This is a system I want to be a part of or contribute to."

  STRUCTURE -- Creating structures that mobilize human energy and enable the system to live out its vision. Structures that are capable of adapting to rapidly changing conditions.

  CULTURE -- Creating an organization culture that supports creative, productive and satisfying work. Atmosphere, norms and traditions, reward and acknowledgement systems, how we treat each other, and so forth.

  RESOURCES -- Seeing that the system has the resources -- human and material -to do its work.

• This is how Tops empower the system.

[MIDDLES AS THE INTEGRATING MECHANISM]

• What does the system need from Middles in order to survive and develop in its environment?
• The system needs Middles to function as The Integrating Mechanism of the system.
• As Middles, we function as the **integrating mechanism of the system** - coordinating system parts, seeing that parts feed and support one another, avoiding unnecessary duplications.

  We integrate the system by integrating with one another --i.e., by regularly **sharing information** with one another about **events** and **conditions** in our various parts of the system,

  and by **working** that information with one another (What is it telling us about the system, about what we need to watch out for, about what’s missing, about what needs to happen?)

• When Middles integrate with one another:

  o they’re better able to provide **high quality information** to those they service and manage, and to their bosses;
  o they’re better able to coordinate the system parts. • This is how Middles empower the system.

• **This is how Middles empower the system.**

  **[CUSTOMERS AS VALIDATORS]**

• What does the system need from Customers?
• The system needs Customers to function as **Validators**.
• When we are Customers, we validate the system by:
  o providing **feedback** -- positive and negative.
  o offering concrete **suggestions** as to how the system could better serve you.
  o seeing that our feedback and suggestions get to the **right people**. [Bottoms are often the recipients of our feedback about processes over which they have little control.]
  o **pushing in** on systems when they don't seem to be listening to us.
  o **organizing** with other customers.

• **This is how Customers empower systems.**
• **Just notice how all these system empowerment processes work together.** [Let people look at that for a minute.]
  o They are not contradictory. They reinforce one another.
  o The better the Tops are at **Shaping**, the better structure and climate there is for Worker to produce. -- The better Middles are at **Integrating**, the more freed up Tops are to shape, and the more supported Bottoms are in producing.
  o The more Customers Validate, the more everyone knows about how well the system is doing what it is supposed to be doing.

*[NOTE TO TRAINER: You can relate the above to **valuing differences** -- that it is important to understand and support the unique contributions each part of the system makes to the whole. We don't • need Tops to do Middle (or Worker) business; we need them to shape. And we don't need Middles to do Worker business; we need them to integrate. Each of us needs to understand these separate functions and to value them.]*
• And notice how these empowerment processes are not possible when:
  o Tops suck it up
  o Bottoms don’t feel responsible for the system (they hold “higher-ups” responsible)
  o Middles slide into the middle and get torn
  o Customers don’t feel responsible for delivery (they hold the system responsible)

  *

• That is half the story. The other half has to do with the relationship issues that develop among Tops, among Bottoms and among Middles. Which is what we will turn to next.
INPUT:

BARRIERS TO PARTNERSHIP THAT DEVELOP
AMONG TOPS, MIDDLES AND BOTTOMS

I. INPUT AT A GLANCE

II. CHARTS

III. ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPT
I. INPUT AT A GLANCE

PART ONE: HOW BREAKDOWNS OCCUR

1. SYSTEM ILLITERACY
   - Put us together in certain system spaces (top, middle, bottom) and predictable patterns of relationship breakdown develop among us ... not always, not every time, but with great regularity.
   - We don't see spaces, so when breakdowns occur we attribute them to personal factors, and our solutions are personal.
   - Relationships that could be satisfying and productive (shaping, integrating, producing) break down or fail to develop.

2. If we put four of us together into a top space, or a middle space, or a bottom space, we would become vulnerable to different relationship breakdowns in each of these spaces.

3. Four of us in a top space -- a space of complexity and responsibility. Top executives, plant management team, parent couple, business partnership.
   - Bottom space -- a space of vulnerability. Workers in organization, neighborhood threatened by gentrification, nation threatened by another nation, majority culture feeling threatened by growing minority culture.
   - Middle space -- a diffusing space. Peer supervisors, middle management staff, bottom staff specialist group.

4. We adapt to the space
   - In response to complexity and responsibility, we differentiate.
   - In response to vulnerability, we coalesce.
   - In response to diffusion, we disperse.

5. We harden in our adaptations, developing turf:
   - We (GroupThink), and I (Alienation) mentalities.

6. In these mentalities we are vulnerable to certain breakdowns.
   - Turf -- turf (parochial responsibility); relative significance; respect; support; trust; control.
   - GroupThink -- remaining a "we" while coping with internal differences (e.g., soft vs. hard, produce vs. protect) - coercion; mutual blocking; exile; splintering.
ALIENATION -- UNIQUE; LITTLE IN COMMON; COMPETITION; SURFACE; EVALUATION; DANGER; NO POWER.

7. WHEN WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE ISSUES, THEY FEEL SOLID, REAL AND PERSONAL (AS DISTINCT FROM SYSTEMIC).

8. AND WHEN WE ARE IN THE GRIPS OF THE SPACE,

   POTENTIALLY PRODUCTIVE AND SATISFYING RELATIONSHIPS BREAK DOWN OR FAIL TO DEVELOP

   SHAPING, PRODUCING AND INTEGRATING DON'T HAPPEN.
II. CHARTS

1(1)  (2)  (3)  (4)

PERSONS AND SPACES  SPACES  ADAPTIVE RESPONSES  RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWNS

1(2)  5(1)

FOUR PERSONS IN TOP, MIDDLE AND BOTTOM SPACES  SYSTEM LITERACY

5(2)

STRATEGIES FOR MASTERING THE SPACE
## Relationship Issues in Top, Middle, and Bottom Worlds

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<td>• Little in Common</td>
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<td>• Inconsistent Information Up and Down</td>
<td>• Increased Dependency on Top</td>
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Disperse and Integrate
III. ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPT

[SYSTEM ILLITERACY]

Let's look at relationship breakdowns from another angle.

What we have found is this:

If you put people together in certain system spaces [Draw the four persons inside the space] (Top, Bottom, Middle spaces), predictable patterns of relationship breakdown develop among us -- not always, not every time, but with great regularity.

But, spaces are invisible to us.

We don't see ourselves as being in a Top space together. All we see are people. [Scratch out the surrounding space.]

So, when the breakdown occurs, how do we explain it? [Take answers.]

We see it as personal -- something about your personal characteristics, or mine, or maybe we're a bad mix.

This is what we mean by system illiteracy.

Spaces shape our experiences of ourselves and others.
But we don't know that.
Which gives the space more power over us.

So, we work on fixing the people rather than working the space -- fix you, or fix me, or fix our relationship, or get rid of one or both of us.

Clearly, personal characteristics play a part in relationship breakdown, but certain patterns of breakdown occur with great regularity regardless of the personalities.
involved. So, something else must be going on. This "something else" is what we want to look into.

[PUT FOUR OF US TOGETHER INTO TOP, MIDDLE, BOTTOM SPACES]

1(2)

- We're going to look at what happens to four of us if you put us together into a Top Space ... a Bottom Space ... and a Middle Space.
- We'll look at how it usually goes in those spaces -- the relationship breakdowns we fall into, unawares ... not always ... not every time ... but with great regularity.

* 

[THE FOUR OF US TOGETHER IN TOP, BOTTOM AND MIDDLE SPACES]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Tape up the newsprint so that only the space you are talking to is revealed.]

(2)

SPACES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Complexity</th>
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<td>BOTTOM</td>
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</table>
• Here we are together in a TOP SPACE

This is a space of **complexity** and **responsibility**.

Whichever people enter this space together are collectively responsible for the whole system.

And this is a space in which there is much complexity -- difficult, complex, unpredictable issues coming at us from within the system and from outside the system.

• Examples of Top space
  o the top executives of an organization or institution,
  o the top management of some sub-unit within the larger system (plant, department, business),
  o partners in a business,
  o the parent couple in the family.

• These are all top spaces, and similar dynamics occur in all.

• Here we are together in a BOTTOM SPACE.
This is a space of **vulnerability**.

When we are in this space, we feel vulnerable to people in other parts of our system or to people in another system. We see them as threats to our livelihood, our culture, our way of life.

Examples:

- Workers in an organization often feel vulnerable to "Higher-Ups."
- People of one ethnic group feel that their way of life is being threatened by an influx of people from other ethnic groups.
- People in a minority culture feel vulnerable to the majority who control resources they value.
- Poor people in a neighborhood feel menaced by the gentrifiers.
- People in one country feel in danger of war from a neighboring country.
- **And here we are together in a MIDDLE SPACE.**

A middle space is a **diffusing** space.

A middle space pulls us apart from one another. We are pulled toward other individuals or groups or activities that are important to us.

Examples:

- A middle management staff exists in a middle space. Its members are pulled away from one another and toward the individuals or units they manage.
- The same is true for a group of supervisors.
- A peer group of staff specialists (Bottoms) exist in a middle space. They are drawn away from one another and toward those individuals or groups that they service.
- Many of our contacts with one another are in the middle space.
In response to complexity and responsibility, we **differentiate**.

Differentiation is our way of coping with complexity. If we didn't differentiate we would be overwhelmed by complexity.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Remind Tops of their experience in yesterday's exercise -- how complex life was, and how they began to develop differentiated responsibilities.]

- You do this, I do that. You handle external affairs, I'll take internal. You're production, I'm finance, she's sales.

- Similar processes develop within the parent couple -- this one has primary responsibility for the children, this one tends the garden, this one handles social relations with the neighbors, this one handles the checkbook.

- In response to vulnerability we **coalesce**.
• We experience ourselves as part of a "WE" which is separate from THEM. And this "WE" feels larger and stronger than my isolated “I”.

• Coalescing is not a decision we make ("Let’s coalesce.") It's something that happens to us in the condition of shared vulnerability.

• Coalescing is how we cope with vulnerability.

• We feel less vulnerable when we are part of this WE than we would as an isolated "I".

[Remind people how in yesterday's exercise the Bottoms quickly formed these close groups.]

• In response to diffusion we **disperse**

• We spend our time apart from one another, managing or servicing those groups for which we are responsible.
• Dispersion is how we cope with a diffusing environment.

[Note that during yesterday's exercises, the middle tables were usually empty. Middles were with their groups or with Tops, but rarely with one another. Even when they knew how important it was to get together, and possibly even promised that they would, it rarely if ever happened.]

[WE HARDEN IN OUR ADAPTATION]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Continue working with Chart 3 now drawing boundaries around the differentiations, the UJE Group, the I.]

• The next thing that happens is we harden in our adaptations.
• Our differentiations turn into rigid territories, and we develop a TURF mentality in relationship to one another.

• The boundary between the "WE" and the "THEM" hardens and we develop a WE mentality.
• And the boundary around our "I's" harden and we develop an I mentality.

![Diagram showing the boundary around "I's"]

**IN EACH OF THESE MENTALITIES WE BECOME SUSCEPTIBLE TO CERTAIN RELATIONSHIP BREAKDOWNS**

• In each of these mentalities we become susceptible to certain relationship breakdowns among us.
• And when these breakdowns occur, we see them not as problems coming out of our inability to manage the space, but as personal failures.

![Diagram of relationship breakdowns]

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• In the Top space, we become susceptible to Turf issues.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: It's important that you know all the following variations of Turf issues, but don't belabor them for the participants. It's enough that they get the general picture of how certain apparent personal breakdowns are really differentiation dysfunctions. (I couldn't have said it more simply, could I?) Encourage them to read SPRCE WORK for more detail.]

**TURF** -- Each of us feels increasingly responsible for our own areas and decreasingly responsible for others' areas.
This is my territory, and that's your territory, and I don't want you messing in my territory.

We become less knowledgeable about one another's territory and have less empathy for one another's issues and concerns.

We're upset if someone hasn't handled their piece well, or if we have to do what they were supposed to do, or if actions in their area cause problems for us in our area.

**RELATIVE SIGNIFICANCE** -- There may be issues around who is carrying their fair share of the load.

Burden bearers may resent (or take inordinate pride in) the fact that their areas are more important, complex, difficult. Others may be feeling guilty (or inadequate) because they are not holding up their end.

**RESPECT** -- There may be issues around respect -- people feeling that they get no acknowledgement or respect from the other(s) for their contributions to the system.

**SUPPORT** -- There may be issues around support -- people feeling that they are left out there hanging by themselves, that they get no support from the other(s).

**TRUST** -- There may be issues around trust. Each of us has our differentiated areas of responsibility. I depend on you to do yours competently, fairly, honestly. I need to trust you, but there are these walls between us, and I may not trust what's going on behind your wall.

**CONTROL** -- And there may be many issues around control, many struggles around which way the system as a whole should go.

- What's our growth policy -- no growth, slow growth, rapid growth? -- What's our fiscal policy -- save now/spend later or spend now and let later take care of itself?
- What's our policy with regard to the employees (or children)? Are we tough or easy? Autocratic, democratic or laissez-faire?
- Do we maintain the traditions or change them?

**POLARIZATION** -- And then we get polarized around these control issues -- locked into our position. It is usually around this process that Top partnerships founder.
• When these interpersonal issues arise in the Top Space, it often comes as a surprise to us.
  o We thought we constructed this Top Executive team out of a perfect blend of talent, experience and temperament. What synergy there will be ... and then BANG!
  o We are such great friends and have such good times together, wouldn't we make a great pair of business partners ... and then BANG!
  o We love one another, let's get married, buy a house, raise lots of little kids ... and then BANG! (I must have been blind. My mother was right about you.)
• When we don't see the space, we are at its mercy.

  (4) Relationship Breakdowns

  GroupThink

• In the Bottom space we become vulnerable to GROUPTHINK issues.
• There is, simultaneously, pressure to be a uniform WE and pressure to express our inevitable differences.
• This results in patterns of tension within the Bottom group.

  COERCION -- People trying to maintain a uniform WE -- bringing deviants into line, straightening out their thinking, coercing them through logic, love or threat. [In the extreme, in totalitarian systems, we send people to mental institutions for thinking too far "out of line."]

  EXILE -- Often a predominant pattern develops within the group. ("This is what WE think, believe, feel.") If others deviate from that predominant pattern, there are pressures on them to come into line (coercion). If you stray too far from the predominant pattern, and resist coercion, you are exiled from the group and subject to the same treatment you would give THEM, e.g., scabs.

  SUBMERSION -- Sometimes you may disagree with the predominant pattern but hide your disagreement from others. You want to remain within the WE and fear that your deviation would jeopardize your position.
MUTUAL BLOCKING -- Sometimes, rather than there being a dominant position, factions develop within the WE. These factions attempt to coerce one another and, failing that, they block one another's actions. [See HARD us SOFT, PRODUCE us PROTECT below.]

SPLINTERING -- Sometimes our differences are felt to be so great that the WE splinters; we become separate WE's and enemies of one another. (In the extreme, radical political groups splinter and are as intent on destroying one another as on destroying their common enemy.)

- In the Bottom group there usually (maybe always) develops a split between the HARDS and the SOFTS.
- The HARDS want to take a tougher stand in relationship to THEM, and the SOFTS want to take a softer, more reasonable stand.
- And then the HARDS and the SOFTS have trouble with one another -- feeling blocked by the other, threatened by the other.
- In many organization change efforts, this internal tension among Bottoms takes the form of the PRODUCERS vs. the PROTECTORS.

![Diagram: Produce vs. Protect]

- PRODUCERS feel that the best way to handle their vulnerability in the system is to put their energies into producing -- cooperating with Top Management, cooperating with the change program. That way they will reduce their vulnerability
  - by enhancing the ability of the system to survive and thrive, and
  - by demonstrating their value to Top Management.
- PROTECTORS feel that that is nonsense. They feel that Bottoms are invisible to Tops, and that no matter how well Bottoms produce, Tops can still shut the operation down or sell it or whatever.
- PROTECTORS feel that the best way to handle their vulnerability in the system is to protect themselves against arbitrary, unreasonable or incompetent Top action, through
  - hard bargaining for the best wage and working condition arrangements they can manage.
  - protecting themselves from being abused by Tops.
- PRODUCERS and PROTECTORS have trouble with one another.

How do PROTECTORS see PRODUCERS? What words do they use to describe them? [E.g., Suckers. Naive. Ass kissers, brown-nosers, goody-twoshoes.]

And how do PRODUCERS see PROTECTORS? What words do they use to describe them? How do they feel about them? [Shirkers. Trouble Makers. No trust.]
• And then the tension is among Bottoms -- coercion, exile, submersion, mutual blocking.
• And when those interpersonal issues develop, they feel solid and real and personal
  o you and me, this particular time and place.
• We have no sense that this is systemic
  o that this is what happens, with great regularity, when you put us together in a
    Bottom space.

(4)
Relationship
Breakdowns

Alienation

• And in the Middle space we become alienated from one another.
• In our hardened 1-ness, we tend to feel our separateness from one another. This
  separateness is experienced in many different forms.

  UNIQUE -- We feel special, different from other people.

  LITTLE IN COMMON -- We tend to feel that we have little in common with one
  another.

  COMPETITION -- We measure ourselves against others. Who am I better than,
  worse than, better off than, worse off than?

  EVALUATION -- We are full of evaluations of others. This one is too emotional,
  and this one too rational. This one is too aggressive. Too fat. Wears weird
  clothes. Does strange things with his hair. Etc., etc., etc.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: I often advise people, if they really want to experience this alienation
process, to go to their local mall, take a seat, watch the people go by, and watch themselves
watching the people. For most of us the result is an unending stream of evaluations. The mall,
airports, bus and train stations, are all good examples of diffusing spaces -- people who are
only here briefly and are being pulled toward other spaces.]
SURFACE -- Our interactions with one another tend to be surface.

DANGER -- We are not comfortable with one another. We are more likely to experience one another as dangers than as potential support.

NO POWER -- And we don't experience there being any power in this group. Power is above us or below us, but not here.

- When we experience one another this way, this reinforces our staying apart. (Why would we want to spend more time together?) And that reinforces our alienation.

* 

- WHEN WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THESE ISSUES THEY FEEL SOLID, REAL, PERSONAL.

* 

[AND WHEN WE ARE IN THE GRIPS OF THE SPACE ...]

- And when we are in the grips of the space
  
  o potentially productive and satisfying relationships break down or fail to develop,
  o powerful projects fail to materialize,
  o SHAPING, PRODUCING, and INTEGRATING don't happen.

* 

END PART ONE
PART TWO:
MASTERING PARTNERSHIP
BY
MASTERING TOP, MIDDLE AND BOTTOM SPACES
• There is another possibility for mastering partnership in the Top, Middle and Bottom spaces.

Instead of focusing on our interpersonal issues with one another, work on mastering the space in which we function.

*

[SYSTEM LITERACY 5(1)]

5(1)

System Literacy

• Don’t Fix People
• Help People Understand and Master the Space

- This demands a whole new way of thinking about relationship breakdowns and possibilities.
- There are two elements:

1. AWARENESS (UNDERSTANDING). When we are in the middle of Turf, GroupThink, and Alienation breakdowns, they seem so real, solid, and personal.

   We need to see that the current reality, as solid as it seems, is systemic - that these relationship issues are a function of the space we are in, that they occur regularly to other people occupying similar spaces, and that we would do well to focus on "beating the space" rather than on "beating up one another."

   Awareness gets created by system exercises that demonstrate the regularity of these processes regardless of who is involved

   and by demonstrations and presentations that demonstrate this systemic regularity.

2. MASTERING THE SPACE. We need to develop strategies for:

   a) managing the condition of the space -- complexity/responsibility, vulnerability, diffusion
   b) by mastering the process for managing that condition -- differentiation, coalescing, dispersion
   c) without falling into the hardened mentalities of Turf, GroupThink, or Alienation.
• Tops need to handle the complexity and responsibility of their space. (2)
  o To do this they need to master the differentiation process ("How do we handle all that needs to be handled?") (3)
  o without falling into a Turf mentality (3 & 4).
• Bottoms need to handle their vulnerability in the system. (2)
  o To do this they need to master the coalescing process (3) ("How do we develop a powerful WE?")
  o without falling into GroupThink (3 & 4).
• And Middles need to manage this diffusion of their space. (2) -- To do this they need to master the dispersion process (3) -- without falling into Alienation (3 & 4).

* 

• When we successfully master the space, two things happen:

  1. We are better able to exercise the system power of our position -- SHAPE, INTEGRATE and PRODUCE -- and
  2. The relationship issues either fail to develop or they disappear.

[STRATEGIES FOR MASTERING THE TOP SPACE]

• As a Top team we need to be able to handle complexity and responsibility.
• How do we handle all that needs to be handled without falling into a turf mentality? Turf mentality means I'm responsible for this but not that. You're responsible for that but not this. Nobody feels responsible for the whole thing.
• How do we differentiate and still have each of us feel responsible for the whole thing?
• If that is our goal as a Top team then many different strategies may occur to us.
• Some possibilities are:

  5(2)

  Strategies
  • Powerful Shared Vision
  • Interchangeability
  • High Quality Information
  • Mutual Coaching
  • Re-differentiation
1. **POWERFUL SHARED VISION.** This is a key item in mastering the top space. If Tops are able to create among themselves a powerful shared vision for the system, then that can inoculate them against polarizations which might otherwise destroy their partnership.

Differences will arise among Tops, and these can involve painful negotiations; but having that powerful shared vision can help them to "stay on the same side of the table" even in the face of such differences.

Tops usually jump to the pressing business of the system without giving adequate attention to their vision.

2. **INTERCHANGEABILITY** -- Work on interchangeability so that, as much as possible, each of us understands, appreciates, and can perform all functions.

We see ourselves as temporary custodians of turfs. We don't own these.

3. Optimize the flow of **QUALITY INFORMATION** among us, such that each Top has quality information about developments in the arenas of other Tops.

4. **RE-DIFFERENTIATION** -- As new situations crop up we form new coalitions to deal with them.

5. **MUTUAL COACHING.** Tops become coaches for one another. Oust as we did in the morning project exercise.] As coaches, we become 100% responsible for others' arena. And when we are coached, we allow them to be 100% responsible for our arena.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Notice that these strategies make sense only in a context in which awareness has been created and there is some motivation to find a better way. Without such awareness -- when we are in the grips of a Turf mentality-- our tendency would be to resist such advice as threatening our turf power.]
In the Bottom space we need to be able to handle our vulnerability.

How do we coalesce -- that is, become a strong, less vulnerable "WE" -- without falling into GroupThink?

The "WE" is an easy place in which to hide -- to blend in, to not step forward, to not put ourselves at risk.

How do we become a powerful "WE" and still allow, encourage and support the expression of our individuality and differences?

In the Bottom place this means taking a good close look at our differences -- that feel (solidly) mutually exclusive -- and ask ourselves: "Are they really?"

What is the advantage of moving from "either/or" to "both/and"?

What is the advantage of moving from a motto of "In unity there is strength" to one of "In diversity (of ideas) there is strength"?

The PRODUCE versus PROTECT strategies seem to be diametrically opposed strategies for handling vulnerability.

When we are in the grip of GroupThink mentality they feel (solidly) antithetical. But are they?

What is the possibility of a PRODUCE AND PROTECT strategy? [5(2)]

That is, can we develop processes whereby both producing and protecting can be pursued simultaneously and with zest?

- putting our creative energies into generating high quality products and services which supports the system in surviving and developing, and
- negotiating the best arrangements for pay, working conditions, job security, and so forth.

Think about yesterday's exercises, when you were Bottoms. Think about points at which some of you wanted to get right into the work while others were concerned about shoes and money and working conditions.
• What tensions did that create among you?
• Were those two positions really antithetical?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Managers often have trouble with this Produce and Protect strategy. They would prefer, understandably, that Workers pursue a Produce Only strategy. Be clear: This is not a strategy for managers to deal with Bottom vulnerability; this is a strategy for Bottoms to deal with their own vulnerability.]

• Again, note that this strategy makes sense only when there is awareness and motivation to find a better way. Without such awareness -- when we are in the grip of a GroupThink mentality -- this strategy makes no sense to us.

• In the "unenlightened" Bottom space internal disagreement is experienced as dangerous. It feels like it threatens the solidity of the WE. This is a consciousness that goes with the space -- it is a consequence of the space.

Power in the Bottom space comes from shifting that perception. It comes from seeing (exploring) the contributions diversity can make to empowering the WE.

[STRATEGIES FOR MASTERING THE MIDDLE SPACE]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: You need to exercise your judgment as to how much time to devote to this Mastering the Middle Space material. If there are mostly Middles in the program, and if middle disempowerment issues are central, then this section can take on added significance. You are about to present an analysis and action strategy for converting a traditionally weak part of the system into a central and powerful one. You are also presenting a framework for empowering the total system -- Top and Bottom, as well as Middle-through Middle integration.]

• In the Middle space we need to handle diffusion -- the fact that we are pulled apart from one another.
• We need to master the dispersion process without falling into alienation.
• How do we become powerful in that dispersion process -- powerful, informed, effective, and valued managers and servicers? [Or, how do we become good at dispersion without becoming weak, uninformed, ineffective and disvalued?]
[NOTE TO TRAINER: Read In the Middle and relevant sections in Seeing Systems for a more detailed analysis of these middle group dynamics.]

- When Middles are in their usual configuration, what are the consequences?

Note the consequences this has

for Middles -- experiencing the stresses of the system alone, unsupported, no peer group, limited information, eminently surprisable, weak, confused, disvalued by above, below and self.

for Bottoms and the System -- lack of coordination, uneven treatment, the experience of being led by weak and incompetent leaders.

for Tops -- increased burden, issues that should be handled below rise to the Top, and the Top is not doing Top business (Shaping).

- Now what are the possibilities of this configuration in which Middles move back and forth between dispersing out to their various groups and coming back and integrating with one another -- sharing information, diagnosing system-wide issues, developing action strategies. [See materials on levels of integration in In the Middle.]
moving out -- managing or servicing, collecting information about that part of the system,

coming back in -- integrating with one another (without the boss), sharing information and
working that information (what is it telling us about what is happening and what needs to happen?)

moving back out...

- How does this pattern affect individual Middles? [Take their answers.]

  (Middles become informed -- note how this process has the capability of transforming a fractionated part of the system into the most fully informed part of the system. They feel less alone, part of a group, supported.)

- How does it affect Bottoms? [Take answers.]

  (They get stronger leadership -- better information, direction, support. The system is more rational, even, fair, coordinated. Bottoms are less likely to hear Middles badmouthing other Middles.)

- How does it affect Tops? [Take answers.]

  (The more Middles are able to work things out among themselves, the less floats up to Tops. Tops then are freer to do Top business.)

- What are some issues that need to be dealt with?

  [NOTE TO TRAINER: The following are some of the issues that arise around Middle integration. How much of this you get into depends on the centrality of Middle integration to your client system.]
1. **Awareness for Middles.** When Middles are in their usual configuration, they tend to be **competitive** with one another, evaluative of one another, see one another as **dangers** rather than as potential collaborators, and see **no potential power** in the Middle group.

Given that experienced reality, there is going to be little zest among Middles to integrate. “It's a good idea ... but not with this particular batch of people.”

Middles need to see that that reality is systemic, that it goes with the Middle space, that it is a **consequence** of diffusion, and that there is a good possibility that when Middles integrate that reality will change. [Our empirical experience in the field indicates that that is so.]

2. **Awareness for Tops.** Middle integration works best when it is actively supported by Tops, when Tops see Middle integration as being in their own best interest. A powerful Middle group takes over much of the detailed day to day functioning that normally falls to Tops. This frees Tops up to Shape.

   **BUT**, when Middles are disintegrated they are likely to look weak to Tops. And that is going to feel like reality. And Tops are not in a hurry to turn over important pieces of the business to weak Middles.

Tops need to see that this reality is systemic, that it goes with the Middle space, that it is a **consequence** of diffusion, and that there is a good possibility that when Middles integrate they are going to be stronger, more informed, smarter, more competent and they are going to **look** that way to Tops.

3. **Integration Meetings need to be Sacred Commitments.** There are always good reasons to miss Middle meetings -- important demands others have of you. That is the nature of the middle space. Also, when others learn when and where Middles are meeting that presents an opportunity to get all or some of them together for your business.

4. **We need to work at sharing information.** Just meeting together is not necessarily sharing information. The power of middle integration comes when people actively share with one another information gleaned from their parts of the system. In our alienation we may withhold information not out of competitiveness but out of our sense that it has no relevance for others. (“This is something I had to deal with; it never occurred to me to bring it up in the group.”)

5. **Ongoing support for Tops.** Even when Tops support Middle integration, they remain accountable for the system. What is the information they **need** in order to be comfortable with supporting Middle integration? [Tops with inordinate control needs will never be comfortable with Middle integration. BUT ... some Tops may **look like** they
have inordinate control needs until they are assured that they are going to get quality and timely information from the group.]

6. **Giving up.** Sometimes Middles may be too willing to pass difficult issues back up to the Top. Or Middles who can't get their way with their peers, may go to the Top. ("We need your leadership.") Tops need to be sensitive not to go for the hook too readily. Middles may be too quick to give the power back up, and Tops may be too eager to take it.

7. **Ongoing support for Middles.** Middles may need periodic support in developing skills for intelligence gathering, diagnosing, decision-making, etc. There is the danger of providing too central a consultant figure (a new leader). The strength of integration comes from developing powerful horizontal relationships.

These are some strategies by which Tops, Middles and Bottoms **empower their groups** (teams). They develop powerful partnerships by **mastering spaces** rather than fixing people.
MIDDLE EMPOWERMENT WORKSHOP:

EMPOWERING MIDDLE POSITIONS
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A. PURPOSE OF THIS MODULE

The purpose of this module is to deepen people's understanding of and empowerment in middle positions. Middle positions are positions in which the occupants are torn between the often-conflicting perspectives, priorities, needs and demands of two or more individuals or groups.

Individuals and groups in the middle often become weak and ineffective. Their individual and collective contributions to the organization are greatly diminished. They are disvalued by others and often by themselves.

This middle disempowerment happens because people don't see middleness. As a consequence, they misunderstand what is happening to themselves and others and they take inappropriate corrective action: they tolerate what could be greatly improved; or they fix, fire, or rotate individuals rather than helping individuals learn to manage the middle space.

The purpose of this module is to give people a deeper appreciation of their own middleness and the middleness of others, and to provide them with strategies for empowering themselves and others in middle positions.

B. USES OF THIS MODULE

The module as it stands takes about 4 1/2 hours. Some potential uses and variations are described below.

1. As it is. This module as it is provides a powerful, illuminating, and entertaining learning experience in middleness. People will have a deeper understanding of middleness -- a sense of relief ("It ain't me"), and valuable strategies for improving their effectiveness, contribution and satisfaction in middle positions.
   ***

2. Plus Action Planning. Another 20-30 minutes can be added on to allow people to meet in groups around such questions as:

   Just as Worker Groups are being asked to redefine how work is done, teams of middle peers could be asked to begin the process of redefining their middle role.

   "What functions can we serve?"

   "What commitments are we willing to make? To ourselves? To others?"

   "What specific support do we need to make this happen?"
   ***
3. **As an Impetus for Launching a Continuing Change Project.** The module can also be used as an impetus for launching a systems change process.

Many managers experience problems with their Middles -- they can't get their own initiatives through that group and out to others in the organization; there's not enough cooperation among Middles; there's too much inconsistency in the messages Middles send out; there are too many complaints about the Middles; too many items that could be handled by Middles don't get handled there and instead float up to the manager.

The module can be used both to diagnose the causes of middle ineffectiveness and to undertake a process of strengthening the total system through middle empowerment.

The possibility is to develop an ongoing, yet time-limited and structured change project - part consultation, part education. For example:

- **Conduct the Middle Module** with potentially integrating Middles and their Tops, [It would make sense to involve a number of clusters of such Middles and their managers.]

- **Follow up with managers who want to move ahead with some sort of system change project centering around middle integration.** Where there is commitment from both managers and Middles, develop a project with the following elements:
  
  - **An up-front commitment for a fixed period of time for the total Middle Empowerment project.** This is what it takes. (For example, 8 months or 1 year).
  - **A commitment from the Middles to a series of integration meetings without the manager and without the consultant.**
  - **A commitment to X number of days for periodic consultation with the Middle group** -- How are the integration meetings going? Are they going? What issues are they experiencing? How can we work through those?
  - **A commitment to X number of days for periodic consultation with the Top** -- How is this working for him/her? What issues is it raising? How can those be dealt with?
  - **--A commitment to X number of days for periodic educational support modules for the Middles** -- half-day educational events supporting the integration process, on such topics as "Team Building," "Managing Conflict," "Coaching," "Communication Skills," "Decision Making."

Now you've got a project.
C. OVERVIEW

There are two parts to the module. Part I focuses on the person in the middle. Part II deals with the group in the middle. Each part has the following components:

- **experience.** There is an activity which allows participants to experience directly certain aspects of middle dynamics.
- **concepts.** There is a presentation of conceptual material. The concepts provide a frame for making sense of one's experience and they illuminate strategies for more empowering action alternatives.
- **practice.** There is an opportunity to practice these more empowering strategies.
- **review.** There is an opportunity to review the practice experience -- how it went, what worked, what didn't, what possibilities it opened up, what issues it raised.

The flow is:

INTRODUCTION

PART I: PERSON IN THE MIDDLE

BREAK

PART II: GROUP IN THE MIDDLE

D. LOGISTICS

The logistics for this module are much lighter than they are for the Organization Workshop. The intention is to be able to conduct a brief and powerful learning event

- when the number of participants is unknown -- anywhere from 15 to 100 (we've done more!) might show up;
- when the facilities are simple -- you can work this design with almost any configuration of seating --a cafetera will do, as will a room with tables of any shape, as will theatre-style seating;
- with less than the usual number of program materials to prepare and distribute. [See Appendix; there are some.]

**General Set-Up for Parts I and II**

**Seating and Space Requirements**

In **PART I -- Person In The Middle** -- people will be working in trios (one quartet if necessary). No signs, badges or materials are required for this part. Members of each trio will need space to be able to sit side by side and have space between them and other trios. They also need to be able to see the projection screen at the front of the room.
In **PART II**, you'll be setting up an organization exercise with Tops, Middles (Managers), Worker Groups and Customer Representatives.

You'll need a **deck** of self-adhesive badges to assign people to their positions.

You'll need **locations** for the Tops, Managers, Worker Groups and Customer Representatives to meet, and signs for these locations.

The details regarding configuration, the deck, and location signs can be found in the Appendix.

With regard to space and locations, you generally can use the room as you find it. If the room is set up in rows of chairs, then the first row on one side can be for Tops, the first row on the other side can be for Customer Representatives, the second row for Middles, the next row for Worker Group 1, and so forth. (When the exercise begins, people can pull their chairs around in circles. If the chairs aren't moveable, they'll find a way to manage.) If the room is set up with tables, then assign certain tables for Tops, Managers, Worker Groups, and Customer Reps.

The **BREAK** between Parts I and II will allow you time to put up **location signs**, do whatever space rearrangements are required, and make final adjustments in the **deck**.

***
Materials

Items you will need are as follows (most of these are for Part II):

- **The deck.** Self-adhesive position badges for an organization exercise in Part II. (Details for preparing the deck are in the Appendix.)
- **Location signs.** Also, for use in the organization exercise. (Details for preparing Location signs are in the Appendix.)
- **Projector**
- **PowerPoint Slides**
- **Money.** We recommend play money. A specimen of "Middle Money" ($1 and $5 denominations) is included in the Appendix
- **Horn**
- **Timer**
- **6x9 envelopes**
- **9x12 envelopes**
- **Top Treasury.** A start-up fund for Tops. Envelope with $20 Middle Money
- **Customer Representative Packages** containing contracts, Customer Rep salaries, and budgets. (See Appendix)
- **Instructions for Customer Representatives.** (See Appendix)
- **Memorandum from Board of Directors.** (See Appendix)
- **Masking tape**
- **3 or 4 markers**
- **Extra self-adhesive badges** (to handle overflow crowd)
E. INTRODUCTION

[PURPOSES]

[SLIDE 1: IN THE MIDDLE]

THE PURPOSE OF THE SESSION IS TO DEEPEN OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THIS MIDDLE SPACE.
IT'S A SPACE IN WHICH PEOPLE FUNCTION BETWEEN TWO OR MORE INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS WITH CONFLICTING NEEDS, PERSPECTIVES, PRIORITIES AND DEMANDS.

[SLIDE 2]

FOR SOME PEOPLE, THE MIDDLE POSITION FEELS MORE LIKE THIS:
WHERE YOU’RE TORN BETWEEN ABOVE ... AND BELOW ... AND YOUR CUSTOMERS ...
AND YOUR SUPPLIERS ... AND YOUR PEERS.
EACH OF WHICH WANTS DIFFERENT THINGS FROM YOU.

[SLIDE 3]

MIDDLES ARE HAVING A HARD TIME OF IT.
THOSE ABOVE HAVE THEIR COMPLAINTS:

- THEY CAN’T GET THEIR INITIATIVES DOWN THROUGH THE MIDDLE
- THEY CAN’T GET CONSISTENT INFORMATION UP FROM THEIR MIDDLES
- THERE’S NO ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE MIDDLE.
- NO RISK TAKING

THOSE BELOW HAVE THEIR COMPLAINTS:

- THEY’RE NOT GETTING THE INFORMATION, DIRECTION AND SUPPORT THEY NEED.
- THEY DON’T SEE THE ADDED VALUE OF MIDDLES.
- MIDDLES CAN’T GET THEIR ACT TOGETHER.

AND WHEN THERE ARE ORGANIZATION CHANGE PROJECTS, MIDDLES ARE OFTEN SEEN AS THE STUMBLING BLOCK.

[SLIDE 4]
SO THAT'S WHAT WE'RE GOING TO GET INTO TODAY.

- WHAT IS THIS MIDDLE SPACE?
- WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR US IN THAT SPACE?
- WHAT HAPPENS TO INDIVIDUALS IN THAT SPACE? AND
- WHAT HAPPENS TO GROUPS?
- WHAT ARE THE POWER POSSIBILITIES IN THAT SPACE?

-- TO EMPOWER OURSELVES
-- TO EMPOWER OTHERS AND OUR SYSTEMS

- WHAT ARE THE DISEMPOWERING PITFALLS?
- AND WHAT STRATEGIES CAN WE USE FOR DEVELOPING STRENGTH UP THE MIDDLE?

***

IN PART I WE'LL LOOK AT INDIVIDUAL ISSUES IN THE MIDDLE

THEN WE'LL TAKE A BREAK,

IN PART II WE'LL LOOK AT THE ROLE MIDDLES AS A GROUP PLAY IN THE ORGANIZATION.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Before proceeding, be clear with participants:]

1. that the workshop has great possibilities for them for deepening their understanding of and empowerment in middle issues,

that the workshop has relevance not only for their organizational lives but also for the family, community, world affairs;

2. but for that to happen you need some things from them:
   - to be active learners, to engage fully in the exercises;
   - to be scientific, to be curious, to be open to new discoveries about themselves and systems;
   - and as they go through the exercises, to pay attention to their reactions (what happens to them) and be willing to share those reactions with others.
F. PART I: PERSON IN THE MIDDLE

[PURPOSE]

The purpose for this first part is to gain some clarity about the personal tearing that often goes with the middle position. To see if we can create some more powerful alternatives for ourselves.

***

[EXERCISE INSTRUCTIONS]

SET-UP

- Think about some situation in which you are torn between two people or two sides. Each person or side wants you to do something that is in conflict with what the other person or side wants. Take a couple of minutes to find such a situation and flesh it out in your mind. (Pause)

- As you're developing this situation, call one person or side A and the other B. If the situation is hierarchical, make the person above A and the person below B.

- Get very clear about what A's agenda is, what A wants. (Pause)

- Do the same for B. What is B's agenda? What does B want? (Pause)

[Give people about 1 minute to get their situations clear in their minds.]

- Form into trios. Pull chairs around to form face-to-face groups. [If there are one or two people left over have them form quartets.]

- Find one person in your group who has a clear example of this tearing. That person will be called "Middle." (Wait and be sure that each group has a Middle.)

- Middle, sit in the middle. Line your seats up so that the three of you are sitting side by side, looking straight ahead.
BRIEFING

• Middle, you are to brief the other members of your group on this situation. Make one person A and the other B. If your situation is hierarchical, then A is ABOVE and B is BELOW. If it's not hierarchical then either party can be A or B. [For quartets, have two people be A and one B.]

• Now turn to A and fill A in on what his or her agenda is. What is it that A wants of you? (Let that happen.)

• Now turn to B and fill B in on what his or her agenda is. What is it that B wants of you? (Let it happen.)

• A and B, be sure that you understand your agendas well enough to play them out. If you have any questions, ask. (Allow for any further clarification.)

FIRST RUN

• A and B, your job will be to influence Middle to do what you want to have done.

• Middle, you will just let all this in. Listen. But don't respond.

• So, A, tell Middle what you want. Use your best influence skills. (Let that happen.)

• B, now you tell Middle what you want. Use your best influence skills. (Let that happen.)

• A, it's your turn.

• B, it's your turn.

• Now the two of you, go at it simultaneously. Tell Middle what you want Middle to do. Do your best to influence Middle to your way of thinking. (Let this go for about 3 minutes.)

• Middle, just let this in. Don't respond. Just note your reactions.
FIRST DEBRIEF

Middle, talk about what that experience was like for you. Thoughts? Feelings? Physical symptoms? [Hear from the Middles.]

[If their reactions are slow in coming, repeat your point about needing their partnership, their willingness to notice their reactions and to share them with others.]

A and B, what were you feeling during this? And what were your feelings toward Middle? How were you experiencing Middle?
[NOTE TO TRAINER: In each INPUT section there are slides and notes for each one.]

[SLIDE 5]
FOR SOME TIME NOW I'VE BEEN INTERESTED IN THIS MIDDLE POSITION.
THERE IS A MIDDLE STORY THAT HAPPENS WITH GREAT REGULARITY IN ALL SORTS OF ORGANIZATIONS

HIGH TECH FIRMS
SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS
MANUFACTURING FIRMS
SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES
HOSPITALS

SO JUST LET THIS STORY IN AND SEE HOW IT CONNECTS WITH YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES.

THE STORY GOES SOMETHING LIKE THIS:
A PERFECTLY HEAL THY, HAPPY, SANE AND COMPETENT PERSON IS ABOUT TO ENTER A MIDDLE SPACE -
A SPACE BETWEEN ABOVE AND BELOW.
ABOVE HAS ITS PRIORITIES, PERSPECTIVES, WANTS AND NEEDS
AND BELOW HAS ITS PRIORITIES, PERSPECTIVES, WANTS AND NEEDS.
AND BOTH WOULD LIKE TO ENLIST MIDDLE IN THEIR EFFORTS.
MIDDLE ENTERS THE SPACE
AND IS PULLED TOWARD ABOVE
AND BEING RESPONSIVE TO WHAT ABOVE WANTS.
AND MIDDLE IS PULLED TOWARD BELOW
AND BEING RESPONSIVE TO WHAT BELOW WANTS.

SO, WHAT IS LIFE LIKE IN THIS MIDDLE SPACE?
MIDDLE IS S T R E T C H E D BETWEEN ABOVE AND BELOW.
MIDDLE WORKS HARD.
LIFE IS HECTIC. THERE IS ALWAYS MUCH TO DO.
MIDDLE IS NEEDED BY BOTH SIDES.
MIDDLE SPENDS MUCH TIME EXPLAINING ONE SIDE TO THE OTHER -
INTERPRETING (THIS IS WHAT THEY REALLY MEAN), JUSTIFYING ONE TO
THE OTHER.
THEY CARRY MESSAGES.
THEY WORK AT KEEPING THE SYSTEM TOGETHER.
THEY SPEND MUCH OF THEIR TIME WORKING IN OTHER PEOPLE'S
LOCATIONS
AND ON OTHER PEOPLE'S AGENDAS.

AND HOW DO OTHER PEOPLE SEE MIDDLES?
THEY SEE THEM AS
HARDWORKING
RESPONSIBLE
WELL-INTENTIONED

AND AS

WEAK

WISHY-WASHY

NO MIND OF THEIR OWN

CONFUSED

POWERLESS

DON'T DELIVER

UNINFORMED

INCOMPETENT

FRACTIONATED

[SLIDE 9]

AND HOW DOES MIDDLE FEEL?

MIDDLE IS CONFUSED.

If you're not confused, you're not paying attention. You listen to Above and Above makes sense; you listen to Below and Below makes sense too. You don't know what to believe.

MIDDLE FEELS WEAK.

When you're not sure what's right, it's hard to take firm action.

MIDDLE FEELS LIKE A TELEPHONE WIRE

- Important like a telephone wire is important and needed,
- Yet insignificant (The real action is on either end of the line.)

MIDDLE LOSES HIS/HER INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT AND ACTION.

The middle position is an easy place in which to lose your independence of thought and action.

It no longer matters what you think has to happen. What matters is what they want and what they will think and how they will feel.

MIDDLE FEELS INADEQUATE -- NEVER QUITE MEASURING UP TO THE JOB.

AND IN TIME MIDDLE BEGINS TO DOUBT HIS/HER COMPETENCE.
If you get enough negative feedback, you begin to think maybe there is something wrong with you. Maybe you're not as good as you thought you were.

**AND WHEN THAT HAPPENS, YOU HAVE BOUGHT THE MIDDLE SPACE DISEASE AND MADE IT YOUR OWN.**

THIS FEELS LIKE A PERSONAL DISORDER, BUT IT IS NOT.

AND THE SOLUTIONS ARE NOT PERSONAL (FIX, FIRE, OR ROTATE THE INDIVIDUALS).

THE CHALLENGE IS TO HELP PEOPLE UNDERSTAND AND NAVIGATE THEIR WAY THROUGH THE MIDDLE SPACE.

**SECOND RUN: MIDDLE OUT**

- Let's try something else.
- Middle, pull your chair back.
- A and B, pull your chairs together, facing one another.
- A and B, talk to one another. Don’t talk to Middle. **Just tell one another what you want. Do not try to resolve anything.**

  **[NOTE TO TRAINER: Emphasize that their job is not to resolve the issue.]**

  Just tell one another what you want.

- Middle, you just observe. And notice what your reactions are as A and B talk to one another.
- Go. (Let this happen for about 3 mins.)

**SECOND DEBRIEF**

- Middle, what was that experience like for you?

  **[NOTE TO TRAINER: There may be a range of reactions. Two common ones are: (1) Middle feels the pull to get back into the middle and resolve this, and (2) Middle experiences the relief of being outside and having A and B deal with one another.]**

- A and B, what was it like for you?

  **[NOTE TO TRAINER: Again, there may be a range of responses. Common responses are: (1) They notice it was easier pressing on Middle than on one another, (2) Although it's easier talking to Middle, A and B feel less confident that Middle can resolve the situation than when talking with one another, (3) A and B get more polarized, (4) A and B feel more confident that they will be able to work it out.]**
[NOTE TO TRAINER: Preface this input with the following tentative hypothesis:

"It is possible that the first step toward middle empowerment comes from getting out of the middle.”

Familiarize yourself with the Daniel story in In The Middle by Barry Oshry or have some similar story to tell. Daniel's first step toward empowerment came when, in the Power Lab, he was able to say to both Tops and Bottoms, "To hell with both of you; I'm outta here." He appears to drop out, but that is a temporary process. Somehow that dropping out of the middle freed him up to discover more powerful ways of being Middle.]

The elements of the story are summarized on the following page.

THE DANIEL STORY

1. It takes place in a learning environment designed to focus on these top/middle/bottom dynamics. People live in these positions for several days.
2. Daniel was a Middle living out of the familiar middle story – hard working, feeling responsible for keeping it together, getting flak from both above and below (never doing enough).
3. One day Daniel drops out. “As far as I’m concerned they can kill one another.”
4. Daniel resists all efforts to get him back in the middle.
5. The program ends. Daniel feels great but others wonder what the message is. Are you saying that “dropping out” is the answer?
6. Daniel calls two weeks later to relate the following story.
7. When he returned to work he found a note from his Bottoms complaining about their contract. They want to tell their complaints to Daniel who will then work it out with the Tops.
8. A light goes on in Daniel's head: THIS AIN'T MY PROBLEM. THEY HAVE A PROBLEM WITH ONE ANOTHER. MY JOB IS TO HELP THEM SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS WITH ONE ANOTHER.
9. Daniel proposes that he set up a meeting in which the Bottoms can bring their case directly to the Tops. He’ll coach them, but they’ll do it. The Bottoms resist and resist but eventually agree.
10. Daniel goes to the Tops and tells them they’ve got some problems below and they need to hear from Below. He proposes this direct meeting. The Tops resist and resist but eventually agree.
11. Daniel reports on the meeting: he had the driest palms in the room; the Bottoms faced up to the Big Guys; the Tops heard some things they needed to hear; they worked out a reasonable solution with one another.

SO, A KEY TO MIDDLE EMPOWERMENT MAY BE:

STAY OUT OF THE MIDDLE.

DON’T SLIDE INTO THE MIDDLE OF OTHER PEOPLE’S ISSUES AND PROBLEMS AND MAKE THEM YOUR OWN.

BE CLEAR: THEY ARE THEIR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS. YOU CAN HELP THEM RESOLVE THEIR ISSUES AND PROBLEMS.

***

[SLIDE 10]

HERE’S A MOMENT THAT DOESN’T EXIST FOR VERY LONG.

HERE ARE ABOVE AND BELOW WITH THEIR CONFLICTING PRIORITIES AND AGENDAS.

AND HERE’S MIDDLE, ON THE OUTSIDE, OBSERVING THIS.

“HEY, THIS IS INTERESTING. I WONDER HOW THEY ARE GOING TO RESOLVE THIS.”

OR

“I WONDER HOW I’M GOING TO HELP THEM RESOLVE THEIR ISSUES AND CONFLICTS WITH ONE ANOTHER.”

BUT THAT MOMENT DOESN’T LAST VERY LONG (MAYBE A NANOSECOND).

WHAT HAPPENS IS:

WE SLIDE INTO THE MIDDLE OF THEIR ISSUES AND CONFLICTS.

NOW THEIR ISSUES AND CONFLICTS ECOME OUR ISSUES AND CONFLICTS.

WE FEEL FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR RESOLVING THEIR ISSUES.

THEY COLLABORATE IN THAT – HOLDING US FULLY RESPONSIBLE FOR RESOLVING THEIR ISSUES.

OUR SELF-ESTEEM RESTS ON HOW WELL WE RESOLVE THEIR ISSUES.

SO, THE QUESTION IS:

WHAT IS THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING A MIDDLE WHO STAYS OUT OF THE MIDDLE.
LET'S LOOK AT A DIFFERENT ORIENTATION TO BEING MIDDLE.
THIS IS NOT HOW IT USUALLY GOES,
AND THIS IS NOT A NATURAL PROCESS.
BUT LET'S TRY IT ON AND SEE WHAT POSSIBILITIES OPENS UP AND WHAT ISSUES IT RAISES.

BE A MIDDLE WHO STAYS OUT OF THE MODdle.
WHO MAINTAINS YOUR INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT AND ACTION.

NOW, HOW CAN WE DO THAT?

BE THE LEADER.
BE THE TOP WHEN YOU CAN.
AND TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING TOP.
WE NEED TO NOTICE HOW OFTEN WE MAKE OURSELVES MIDDLE WHEN WE COULD BE TOP.
FOR EXAMPLE:
TWO MIDDLES COME AWAY FROM A MEETING WITH TOPS.
THE FIRST MIDDLE SAYS, "WE DIDN'T ASK THEM IF WE COULD DO SUCH AND SUCH. LET'S GO BACK AND ASK."
THE SECOND MIDDLE SAYS, "WE DIDN'T ASK THEM AND THEY DIDN'T TELL US. WHY DON'T WE DECIDE WHAT WE THINK NEEDS TO HAPPEN AND JUST DO IT?" (NOT AS A REBELLIOUS ACT, BUT BECAUSE WE ARE CLOSER TO IT. WE CAN EXERCISE OUR JUDGMENT.)
THE FIRST MIDDLE WANTS TO ASK FOR PERMISSION.
THE SECOND WANTS TO DECIDE, AND IF IT'S WRONG, ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.
BE TOP WHEN YOU CAN
AND TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING TOP.
BE THE LEADER.

[SLIDE 13]
SOME MIDDLES SAY THEY FEEL LIKE SEWER PIPES. "TOPS GIVE US GARBAGE TO PASS DOWN, AND WE JUST PASS IT DOWN. EVEN WHEN WE KNOW IT'S GARBAGE. AND THEN BOTTOM LOOKS TO US AND WONDERS WHAT'S WRONG WITH US. WHY ARE WE PASSING DOWN SUCH GARBAGE?"

TOP MAY NOT THINK THEY'RE PASSING DOWN GARBAGE. THEY MAY THINK IT'S GOLD.

BUT BECAUSE THEY MAY BE OUT OF TOUCH WITH BELOW, WHAT THEY THINK IS GOLD MAY IN FACT BE GARBAGE.

BUT MIDDLES, BECAUSE THEY ARE CLOSER TO THE SITUATION, MAY MORE EASILY RECOGNIZE GARBAGE FOR GARBAGE.

[SLIDE 14]
SO, BE THE BOTTOM WHEN YOU SHOULD AND TAKE THE CONSEQUENCES OF BEING BOTTOM.
BE THE REALITY CHECK.
DON'T JUST MINDLESSLY PASS THINGS DOWN.

IT'S A SERVICE YOU RENDER TO ABOVE -- KEEPING THEM FROM THE CONSEQUENCES OF SENDING DOWN GARBAGE.

AND IT'S A SERVICE YOU RENDER TO BELOW -- PROTECTING THEM FROM UNNECESSARY GARBAGE.

AND IT'S A SERVICE YOU RENDER TO YOURSELF -- PROTECTING YOURSELF AGAINST UNSIGHTLY BACK-UP.

THE BUCK STOPS AT THE TOP. THE GARBAGE STOPS IN THE MIDDLE.

NOTICE HOW IN BOTH OF THESE STRATEGIES THE CENTRAL ISSUE IS MAINTAINING YOUR INDEPENDENCE -- WHAT DO YOU THINK IS RIGHT? WHAT DO YOU THINK HAS TO HAPPEN?
[NOTE TO TRAINER: Ask the following questions but don't take answers. These are just questions to think about.]

WHAT POSSIBILITIES DOES THAT OPEN UP FOR YOU?
WHAT ISSUES DOES IT RAISE?

[SLIDE 15]
WHENEVER ABOVE OR BELOW TELLS US WHAT THEY WANT OR NEED
OUR TENDENCY IS TO SLIDE INTO THE MIDDLE AND DO WHAT THEY ASK -
THAT IS, WE_ASSUME THAT OUR DOING IS THE APPROPRIATE RESPONSE.
BEING A MIDDLE WHO STAYS OUT OF THE MIDDLE GIVES US OTHER
OPTIONS.

[SLIDE 16]
BE THE COACH.

INSTEAD OF DOING FOR OTHERS,

EMPOWER THEM (COACH THEM) TO DO FOR THEMSELVES.
[NOTICE THAT THIS WAS THE STRATEGY DANIEL USED.]
SOMETIMES YOU COACH RATHER THAN DO BECAUSE YOU DON'T HAVE WHAT OTHERS WANT,
SO YOU COACH THEM TO DEAL WITH THOSE WHO DO HAVE WHAT THEY WANT.
SOMETIMES YOU COACH RATHER THAN DO SIMPLY BECAUSE YOU FEEL THAT OTHERS NEED TO
HAVE THE EXPERIENCE OF DOING FOR THEMSELVES.
BE THE COACH.
EMPOWER OTHERS TO GET WHAT THEY NEED FROM ONE ANOTHER.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Ask the following questions rhetorically. Don't take answers.]

WHAT POSSIBILITIES DOES THAT OPEN UP FOR YOU?
WHAT ISSUES DOES IT RAISE?
BE A MIDDLE WHO MAINTAINS YOUR INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT AND ACTION.
[SLIDE 17]

HERE’S HOW IT OFTEN GOES.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: As you tell the story, trace the arrows going back and forth from the Customer to the Middle to the Producer to the Middle to the Customer to the Middle ....]

Middle goes to the Customer to determine what the Customer wants Which Middle then tells to the Producers
Who have questions to ask
Which Middle brings to the Customer
Who has answers
Which Middle brings back to the Producers
Who now have new questions
Which Middle brings to the Customer
Who by then has changed specifications
Which Middle now brings back to the Producers
And ever onward ...

ALL OF WHICH MAKES MIDDLE FEEL VERY NEEDED
AND SIGNIFICANTLY BURDENED.

[SLIDE 18]

INSTEAD,

WHAT’S THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING A MIDDLE WHO STAYS OUT OF THE MIDDLE?

BE THE FACILITATOR

WHO BRINGS TOGETHER THOSE PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE TOGETHER
AND WHO DOES WHAT IT TAKES TO MAKE THEIR INTERACTION PRODUCTIVE.
[SLIDE 19]

[SUMMARY SLIDE]

BE A MIDDLE WHO STAYS OUT OF THE MIDDLE -
WHO MAINTAINS YOUR INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT AND ACTION.
WHAT DO **YOU** THINK IS RIGHT?
WHAT DO **YOU** THINK HAS TO HAPPEN?
BE THE TOP WHEN YOU CAN - THE **LEADER**
BE BOTTOM WHEN YOU SHOULD -- THE **REALITY CHECK**
BE THE **COACH** -- WHO EMPOWERS OTHERS TO DO WHAT THEY NEED TO DO
BE THE **FACILITATOR** -- WHO BRINGS TOGETHER THE PEOPLE WHO NEED TO BE TOGETHER

***

THINK ABOUT THIS.
WHAT **PRODUCTIVE POSSIBILITIES** DOES THIS OPEN UP? [Take their answers]

***

WHAT **SPECIAL DEMANDS** DOES THIS PLACE ON US? [Take their answers]

***

WHAT DO WE HAVE TO **GIVE UP (LET GO OF)** IN ORDER TO DO THIS? [Take their answers] (Our responsiveness, nice guy, dancing to every tune anyone plays)

**THIRD RUN (BACK IN TRIOS): YOUR CHOICE**

- Middle, now you decide what strategy you want to use in this situation.
- Let in all that you've heard from A.
- And let in all that you've heard from B.
- Now take a minute to be alone with your thoughts. Get clear about what **you** think has to happen here. (Allow this to happen. About 2 mins)
- Review the strategies. [SLIDE SUMMARY]
- Choose one of those strategies for making it happen. (Pause)
- Do it. You've got three minutes. (Let it happen.)
THIRD DEBRIEF

- Middle, which strategy did you choose, and what was that like for you?
- A and B, what was that like for you?

REVIEW

Take some time to review this activity with the participants.

WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS OF "BEING A MIDDLE WHO STAYS OUT OF THE MIDDLE, WHO MAINTAINS YOUR INDEPENDENCE OF THOUGHT AND ACTION"?
G. PART II. GROUP IN THE MIDDLE

OVERVIEW

In Part II, you'll be creating an organization exercise with Tops, Middles (Managers), Workers and Customer Representatives. The purpose here is to focus primarily on the system consequences of middle dynamics. That is, what consequences do middle dynamics have for Tops, BOTTOMS, the total system, and Customers?

The organization will run for a total of 4 10-minute days.

At the beginning of Day 1 the Customer Reps bring the Tops one contract.

At the middle of Day 1 they have a second contract of greater value.

At the end of Day 2 the Tops receive a memorandum from their Board of Directors demanding a financial report.

At the beginning of Day 3 the Customer Reps have a third contract of considerably greater value than the first two.

[Contracts are delivered by the Staff to the Customer Reps. The memo from the Board is delivered by the Staff directly to the Tops.]

After Day 2, there is a Time Out Of Time. The TOOT will examine the experiences of Middles; and it will examine the experiences of others primarily as these relate to their relationships with the Middles.

Then there will be an Input (with slides) on how it usually goes in the middle group and the consequences this pattern has for Tops, BOTTOMS, Middles and the total system.

Then there will be a public Coaching for Middles focusing on integration.

The organization will then run for two more "days".

Then there is a Review of the experience focusing on the issues and possibilities of middle integration.
SCHEDULE

Introduction and set-up 15
  Day one 10
  R 1
  Day two 10
  TOOT 30+
Input: Groups in the middle 15
Public Coaching of Middles 5
  Day three 10
  R 1
  Day four 10
Review: What the experience 20
  was for TMBC's. Issues and
  possibilities of middle integration

Total = Approx. 2 1/2 hrs.
SETTING UP THE EXERCISE

• In the break between Parts I and II
  -- make whatever adjustments you need to make in the room set-up,
  -- post the organization signs around the room, and
  -- make any last-minute adjustments in the deck.

• When people return from the break, distribute badges from the deck.

INTRODUCTION

I. WHAT'S THE PURPOSE OF THIS NEXT PIECE?

• To examine what life is like for middle peer groups in organizations -- that is, peer groups of supervisors, managers, or staff specialists.
• What is the potential power of such groups -- that is, the potential they have for contributing to organization effectiveness?
• What are the disempowering pitfalls facing such middle groups?
• What are strategies for creating empowered middle groups?

II. HOW ARE WE GOING TO GET AT THIS?

• Creating an organization here to examine total system dynamics -- issues faced by those at the top, on the bottom, and in the middle.
• We'll be looking at all of these dynamics, but our focus will be on the middle group.
• This is not a simulation of your organization, but it will create familiar dynamics.
• The point is not to get it right. The exercise is not designed for success. It is designed to illuminate issues people face throughout the system -- and the implications for middle peer groups.

III. WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO TO MAKE THIS WORK FOR US?

• Get into whatever role you're in -- as if that's just the place you need to be.
• Get curious. Pay attention to your reactions -- your thoughts and feelings - in whatever role you are in.
• Partnership with me. Be willing to share your reactions. That’s the only way we’ll learn.
• Don’t role play. Just be yourself handling the situations that come up the way you normally handle situations.

IV. THEN PROCEED TO DESCRIBE OWL INC.

[SLIDE 20]

OWL, INC.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Encourage people to ask questions anywhere along the way, particularly if this a tight group, a group not prone to sharing, a group unfamiliar with simulations. Go slow. It’s important that people understand the instructions. Keep checking in with them.]

THE NAME OF THIS ORGANIZATION IS OWL INC.

OWL INC. SPECIALIZES IN WISDOM ABOUT ORGANIZATION LIFE.

IT GENERATES AND MARKETS IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE IN ORGANIZATIONS.

[SLIDE 21]

STRUCTURE OF OWL, INC.

THE STRUCTURE OF OWL INC. IS THIS:

THESE ARE THE TOPS. [HAVE THEM RISE.]

THE TOPS HAVE OVERALL RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE ORGANIZATION. THEY ALSO CONTROL THE COMPANY’S TREASURY. AT THIS POINT IN TIME THE COMPANY IS NOT IN VERY GOOD FINANCIAL SHAPE. THE TREASURY IS FAIRLY THIN.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Explain the money. Show money to people. Explain that there will be this kind of money in the organization, that the money is used to pay people, that the bulk of the money will be with the customers, that whether they see money depends on the effectiveness of the organization in meeting customer needs and on the decisions Tops and Middles make about distributing money.]
[GIVE THE TREASURY TO THE TOPS.]

THESE ARE THE MIDDLES, THE MANAGERS. EACH MANAGER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING HIS/HER WORKER GROUP. [M1 THROUGH Mn FOR W1 THROUGH Wn]

[match up the middles with the worker groups so everyone knows which Manager goes with which Worker Group.]

THE WORKER GROUPS ARE THE WISDOM SPECIALISTS. THEY GENERATE THE IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE AND THEY PREPARE PRESENTATIONS OF THEIR IDEAS TO OWL’S CLIENTS. [Be sure that this is understood.]

[If Workers are sitting classroom style, have each group pull around in a circle.]

AND THESE FOLKS ARE CUSTOMER REPRESENTATIVES. THEY WORK FOR ORGANIZATIONS WHICH ARE POTENTIAL CUSTOMERS OF OWL INC.

THE CUSTOMER REPS HAVE PROJECTS FOR OWL INC. TO WORK ON. AND THEY HAVE FUNDS TO PAY FOR THAT WORK. THEY HAVE THE MONEY THAT OWL INC. NEEDS IN ORDER TO MEET PAYROLL AND FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT.

AT THIS POINT THE CUSTOMER REPS HAVE ONE PROJECT FOR OWL INC. OTHER PROJECTS MAY BE COMING IN SHORTLY.

[Give the Customer Reps their envelope containing their general instructions and their first contract. Have the Customer Reps review their instructions while you continue with the orientation. Be sure the general instructions are understood.]

[Be sure that the whole structure is clear to everyone.]

[SLIDE 22]

SCHEDULE

THIS ORGANIZATION WILL EXIST FOR FOUR DAYS. IN THIS SETTING A DAY IS TEN MINUTES LONG. [HORN]

THERE WILL BE A TIME FOR REFLECTION BETWEEN DAYS.

AT THE END OF DAY 2, THERE WILL BE A TIME OUT OF TIME WHEN WE’LL TAKE A LOOK AT WHAT LIFE IS LIKE FOR ALL OF US IN THIS SYSTEM.

THIS WILL ALSO BE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO LOOK AT THE ROLE OF THE MIDDLE GROUP IN THIS ORGANIZATION.
TRADITIONAL PAY

- NOW WE'RE GOING TO TALK ABOUT THE TRADITIONAL SALARY STRUCTURE IN OWL, INC. THIS IS HOW PEOPLE HAVE USUALLY BEEN PAID. BUT HOW MUCH PEOPLE ARE ACTUALLY PAID WILL DEPEND ON HOW MUCH MONEY COMES INTO THE ORGANIZATION AND ON DECISIONS TOPS AND MANAGERS MAKE.

- THE TRADITIONAL SALARY STRUCTURE FOR OWL INC. IS THIS:

  TRADITIONALLY, WORKERS ARE PAID $3 PER GROUP PER DAY PLUS INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BONUSES AS DETERMINED BY TOPS AND MANAGERS. [REPEAT] ($12 FOR THE GROUP FOR FOUR DAYS.) WORKERS ARE USUALLY PAID AT THE END OF EACH DAY.

  TRADITIONALLY, MANAGERS ARE PAID $10 EACH FOR EACH FOUR DAY WEEK -- PLUS INDIVIDUAL OR GROUP BONUSES AS DETERMINED BY TOPS. [REPEAT] MANAGERS ARE USUALLY PAID AT THE END OF DAY 2 AND AT THE END OF DAY 4.

  AND TRADITIONALLY TOPS' SALARIES ARE $15 EACH PLUS WHATEVER BONUSES THEY SET FOR THEMSELVES. TOPS ARE USUALLY PAID AT THE END OF DAY 2 AND AT THE END OF DAY 4.

***

- THERE ARE SOME TRADITIONAL WORK RULES. TRADITIONALLY, WORKERS DO NOT LEAVE THEIR WORK AREAS WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THEIR MANAGER.

  TRADITIONALLY, WORKERS DO NOT COMMUNICATE WITH WORKERS IN OTHER WORKER GROUPS OR WITH TOPS WITHOUT THE PERMISSION OF THEIR MANAGER.

***

- AT THIS POINT THE CUSTOMER REPS HAVE ONE CONTRACT FOR OWL INC. OTHER CONTRACTS MAY BE COMING IN SHORTLY. [BE SURE THIS IS HEARD.]

***
ORGANIZATION WISDOM MANUAL

THE CONTRACT THEY HAVE NOW IS FROM (YOUR CLIENT'S NAME).

(THE CLIENT) WANTS OWL INC. TO DEVELOP AN ORGANIZATION WISDOM
MANUAL FOR DISTRIBUTION TO ITS (STAFF. MEMBERS, EMPLOYEES).

(THE CLIENT) WANTS THE MANUAL TO HAVE IDEAS FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF
WORKING LIFE IN THE ORGANIZATION IN EACH OF THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

SURVIVING IN THE FACE OF CHANGE
EMPOWERING WORKERS
SERVICING CUSTOMERS
UTILIZING MIDDLE MANAGERS

[Leave this slide up during days 1 & 2.]

THE CUSTOMER WANTS AT LEAST 60 (100) HIGH-QUALITY IDEAS OR
CONCEPTS, 15 (25) IN EACH OF THE ABOVE AREAS.
THE CUSTOMER HAS A MAXIMUM OF $35 (OR ___ ) TO SPEND ON THIS
PROJECT.

ANY QUESTIONS?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: With tight or naive groups take your time with this. Encourage people to
ask questions if they're not clear about anything. Be sure that the Customer Reps are clear.]

IT IS NOW DAY ONE, THE FIRST OF FOUR TEN-MINUTE DAYS. [HORN.]
[NOTE TO TRAINER: Before beginning the reflection, use this break as an opportunity to see if people have any questions about the exercise. If things have been going crazy during day one because of misunderstandings of the instructions, this is an opportunity to clear things up.]

[REFLECTIONS]
(One-minute following Days 1 and 3)

[INSTRUCTIONS]
THAT'S THE END OF DAY ONE.
STOP WHAT YOU'RE DOING.
JUST TAKE A MINUTE TO REFLECT ON YOUR EXPERIENCE IN THE ORGANIZATION. NO WORK. JUST BE ALONE WITH YOUR THOUGHTS.
FIRST FOCUS JUST ON YOURSELF. WHAT IS LIFE LIKE FOR YOU IN THE ORGANIZATION -- AS A TOP... A WORKER... A MANAGER... A CUSTOMER REP?
WHAT IS YOUR WORLD LIKE? WHAT FEELINGS DO YOU HAVE?
HOW DO YOU SEE OTHER PARTS OF THE SYSTEM?
[PAUSE]
NEXT FOCUS ON YOUR PEER GROUP -- THAT IS, THE TOP GROUP... YOUR WORKER GROUP... THE MIDDLE MANAGER GROUP... THE CUSTOMER REP GROUP.
HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THAT GROUP?

***
TOOT
(Following Day Two)

[NOTE TO TRAINER: This TOOT is intended to be briefer than that for the Organization Workshop. Have people begin by focusing on single words or phrases or images to capture their experiences of themselves and others. You can then ask for elaborations. But keep it crisp.

You want to keep the focus on the system consequences of middle dynamics, and you don't want people in other parts of the system to feel that their experiences are inconsequential. This can be tricky. So, for each part of the system, you first want to get what their experience was and then to get what their relationship with Middles was. So, the sequence is:

PART I. WHAT WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE?
PART II. HOW DID YOU EXPERIENCE THE MIDDLES?
PART III. WHAT WAS YOUR PEER GROUP LIKE?]

PART I

• Take a minute to reflect on your experience as a TOP/MIDDLE/WORKER/ CUSTOMER REP.

What single word or phrase or image captures what life was like for you in that part of the system? [Give them a moment to think silently about this. Then take their responses.]

Tops
Bottoms
Middles
Customer Reps

About 2-3 mins. per part.

***
PART II

[NOTE TO TRAINER: For tight or non-responsive groups, before beginning Part II, you may want to re-iterate the point that we are particularly interested in middle dynamics.]

- What word or phrase or image would you use to describe the Middles (the Middle or Middles you dealt with, or the Middles as a whole)? We want to get at how you experienced them, what it was like dealing with them.

[Give them a moment to think silently about this. Then take their responses.]

as seen by Tops
Bottoms
Customers
and Middles

About 2-3 minutes per part.

***

PART III

- How would you describe your group? Again, what is the word or phrase or image that best describes your group.

[Give them a moment to think about this, then take their responses.]

The Customer Reps (just for courtesy)
The Top Group
The Worker Groups
The Middle Group

About 2-3 minutes per part.
[NOTE TO TRAINER: Use these last "interviews" to focus on the differences in the group experiences, particularly the WE-ness of the Worker Groups as contrasted with the non-groupness of the Middles. Notice if in fact when the Middles think of their group their first thought is for the group they supervise and not for their peer group. All of this builds toward the input you are about to deliver.]

INPUT AND COACHING: GROUPS IN THE MIDDLE

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Preface the input as follows:]

I WANT TO MAKE AN ASSERTION ABOUT MIDDLE EMPOWERMENT.

THE KEY TO MIDDLE EMPOWERMENT LIES IN THE ABILITY OF MIDDLES TO DEVELOP STRONG PEER GROUP RELATIONSHIPS -- THAT IS, STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS AMONG SUPERVISORS, AMONG MIDDLE MANAGERS, AMONG STAFF SPECIALISTS.

BUT THOSE POWERFUL SUPPORTIVE MIDDLE TEAMS SELDOM DEVELOP.

NOW WE ARE GOING TO LOOK AT:

- WHY THAT IS SO
- THE CONSEQUENCES THIS NON-GROUPNESS HAS FOR MIDDLES AND FOR THE ORGANIZATION
- WHAT IT TAKES TO DEVELOP POWERFUL MIDDLE TEAMS
- AND THE CONSEQUENCES SUCH TEAMS HAVE FOR MIDDLES AND FOR THE ORGANIZATION.

[SLIDE 26]

LET'S LOOK AT WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE PUT A GROUP OF PEOPLE TOGETHER IN THE MIDDLE SPACE.

THE MIDDLE SPACE IS A DIFFUSING SPACE -

IT PULLS PEOPLE AWAY FROM ONE ANOTHER
AND TOWARD THE INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS THEY MANAGE OR SERVICE.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Be sure that people understand that this is a lateral diffusion you are talking about here -- peers being pulled away from one another.]

[SLIDE 27]
AS A CONSEQUENCE
MIDDLES SPEND THE BULK OF THEIR TIME OUT THERE
AWAY FROM ONE ANOTHER
SERVICING OR MANAGING THOSE INDIVIDUALS OR GROUPS.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Use the observation, if true, how in the exercise the Middle table is usually empty.]

[SLIDE 28]
IN THIS CONFIGURATION,
MIDDLES TEND TO HARDEN INTO AN "I" MENTALITY -
IN WHICH THEIR INDIVIDUALITY, SEPARATENESS, AND UNIQUENESS ARE HIGHLIGHTED.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Compare this with the “WE” mentality that has developed within Worker Groups.]

MIDDLES FEEL UNIQUE -- EACH FEELS SPECIAL, DIFFERENT FROM THE OTHERS.
THEY FEEL THEY HAVE LITTLE IN COMMON WITH ONE ANOTHER.
THEY TEND TO FEEL COMPETITIVE WITH ONE ANOTHER -- I'M DOING BETTER THAN THIS ONE, WORSE THAN THAT ONE, I'M BETTER OFF THAN THIS ONE, WORSE OFF THAN THAT ONE.
THEY TEND TO BE EVALUATIVE OF ONE ANOTHER -- SEEING THE SURFACE OF OTHERS AND BEING CRITICAL OF WHAT THEY SEE. THIS ONE IS TOO EMOTIONAL, AND THIS ONE IS TOO RATIONAL, THIS ONE IS TOO DOMINEERING AND THIS ONE TOO WEAK, THIS ONE DRESSES WEIRDLY ...
THEY TEND TO SEE ONE ANOTHER AS DANGERS. YOU NEVER KNOW HOW PEOPLE WILL REACT. YOU NEED TO BE CAUTIOUS ABOUT WHAT YOU SAY.
[NOTE TO TRAINER: In a difficult group this may be precisely what is going on now - a hesitancy to speak one's feelings not knowing how others will react.]

THERE IS A SENSE THAT THERE IS NO POWER IN THIS GROUP, AND NO POTENTIAL FOR POWER. AND THERE IS A SENSE THAT THIS GROUP AS A GROUP IS IRRELEVANT. MY GROUP IS NOT THIS GROUP. MY GROUP IS THE GROUP I SERVICE OR MANAGE.

[SLIDE 29 is a duplicate of SLIDE 27]

ALL OF WHICH REINFORCES OUR STAYING APART.

WHAT POINT IS THERE IN OUR GETTING TOGETHER

WHEN THIS IS HOW WE EXPERIENCE ONE ANOTHER AND THE GROUP?

THIS CREATES A VICIOUS CYCLE:

WE STAY APART

WHICH HEIGHTENS OUR ALIENATION FROM ONE ANOTHER,

WHICH REINFORCES OUR STAYING APART

AND ON AND ON.

THIS MIDDLE ALIENATION HAS PREDICTABLE CONSEQUENCES.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: While this slide remains on the screen, tell the "Exercise Bike" story or some similar story of your own that makes similar points. The "Exercise Bike" story is outlined on the following page.]
THE EXERCISE BIKES

1. It takes place in a chemicals plant.
2. One group of workers approach their Middle with a request: Can we ride exercise bikes while taking our readings? It won't interfere with work, and it supports our wellness initiative.
3. The Middle considers it, it sounds reasonable, he agrees.
4. Now what's happening with workers in other groups? "What about exercise bikes for us?"
5. Where do the other Middles learn about exercise bikes? Not from one another, but from their workers. Surprise!
6. Now how are the other Middles feeling about the first Middle? "Great! Who needs this? Thanks a lot!"
7. Another Middle considers the request. "Sorry, it won't work with us."
8. Now how are the workers feeling about the Middles? "Why can't they get their act together?"
9. How are the workers feeling about the organization? "No consistent treatment. No justice."
10. Where does the issue of exercise bikes get resolved? The next level up, who is removed from the situation, who has no real need to work on this issue, and who has a whole bunch of other things to work on.
11. Meanwhile, at the still next level up, the Top is frustrated. "Why all this energy on exercise bikes! I've got critical things I want you to be dealing with!"

***

[NOTE TO TRAINER: In what follows you will be summarizing the consequences of this middle alienation that have been revealed in the Exercise Bike (or other) story.]

SO, THESE ARE SOME OF THE CONSEQUENCES THIS MIDDLE ALIENATION HAS FOR MIDDLES AND FOR THE ORGANIZATION:

[SLIDE 30]

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR MIDDLES ARE:

MIDDLE ARE ALONE. THEY ARE ISOLATED IN THE SYSTEM. THEY ARE NOT PART OF TOPS OR BOTTOMS. AND THEY ARE NOT REALLY CONNECTED WITH ONE ANOTHER.

THEY HAVE NO SUPPORT GROUP.

THEY ARE UNINFORMED ABOUT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE SYSTEM.
THEY ARE **SURPRISEABLE**. OFTEN THEIR BOTTOMS KNOW ABOUT THINGS BEFORE THEY DO.

**NOTE TO TRAINER:** If you have one, use an example in which one Middle had some difficulty because of something that happened in another Middle's group -- some differential treatment or pay arrangement.

ALL OF WHICH TENDS TO HEIGHTEN THE **COMPETITION, EVALUATION** AND SENSE OF MUTUAL **DANGER** AMONG MIDDLES.

**[SLIDE 31]**

AND THE CONSEQUENCES THIS HAS FOR TOPS:

WHEN MIDDLES DON'T HANDLE ISSUES THEMSELVES, THE ISSUES FLOAT UP TO THE TOP TO HANDLE.

TOPS, WHO ARE ONE STEP REMOVED, HAVE TO HANDLE SITUATIONS MIDDLES COULD HAVE HANDLED.

THIS INCREASES THE **BURDEN** ON TOPS WHO ARE ALREADY OVERWHELMED BY COMPLEXITY.

AND TOPS END UP NOT DOING THE TOP WORK THEY SHOULD BE DOING.

AND, IN THIS PATTERN,

TOPS ARE GETTING MIXED, INCONSISTENT INFORMATION FROM THEIR MIDDLES.

AND TOPS ARE UNABLE TO GET THEIR INITIATIVES CONSISTENTLY DOWN THROUGH THEIR MIDDLES.

**[SLIDE 32]**

THE CONSEQUENCES FOR BOTTOMS AND FOR THE TOTAL SYSTEM:

THERE IS A **LACK OF COORDINATION** AMONG SYSTEM PARTS.

BOTTOMS MAY EXPERIENCE AN **UNEVENNESS** OF TREATMENT AND CONDITIONS FROM ONE PART TO ANOTHER

WHICH CAUSES BAD FEELINGS AMONG BOTTOMS.

AND BECAUSE MIDDLES ARE SO UNINFORMED AND WEAK

THEY PROVIDE **WEAK LEADERSHIP** TO BOTTOMS

AND DON'T GIVE THEM THE SUPPORT THEY NEED IN THEIR WORK.
[SLIDE 33]
SO, THIS IS THE CONDITION:
TORN MIDDLES FEEL WEAK
AND THEY LOOK WEAK TO TOPS AND BOTTOMS.
AND ALL OF THIS FEELS SOLID -
LIKE REALITY
LIKE THE WAYS THINGS **REALLY** ARE.

[SLIDE 34]
SO, WHAT ABOUT THIS MIDDLE WEAKNESS?
WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?
DO YOU SUPPOSE IT'S A GENETIC DEFECT THAT ONLY AFFLICTS MIDDLES?
OR IS IT COMPANY POLICY TO HIRE WEAK MIDDLES? ("WE NEED A NEW BATCH OF MIDDLES,
SO FIND ME SOME HARD-WORKING, WELL-INTENTIONED, WEAK, WASHY-WASHY,
COMPETITIVE, UNCOOPERATIVE, UNINFORMED ...)
OR IS THERE SOME FORM OF **SOCIAL DARWINISM** OPERATING HERE? (NICE BUT INCOMPETENT
PEOPLE ONLY RISE SO HIGH IN THE ORGANIZATION.)
BUT SOMETHING ELSE MUST BE OPERATING HERE.
WE RECREATE THIS PATTERN EVERY TIME WE SET UP AN EXERCISE LIKE THIS ... **REGARDLESS OF
WHO THE PLAYERS ARE.**
THE ALTERNATIVE EXPLANATION IS THAT **THIS IS SYSTEMIC** –

[SLIDE 35]
THERE IS A KIND OF **SYSTEM ILLITERACY** OPERATING HERE.

- PUT PEOPLE INTO CERTAIN SYSTEM SPACES -- TOP SPACES, BOTTOM SPACES OR
  MIDDLE SPACES
- AND THERE ARE PREDICTABLE DISEMPOWERING CONSEQUENCES THAT OCCUR -- NOT
  ALWAYS, NOT EVERY TIME, BUT WITH GREAT REGULARITY.
- WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT SPACES-- WE DON'T SEE THEM -- SO WHEN THESE THINGS
  HAPPEN WE THINK IT'S **THESE PARTICULAR PEOPLE OR THIS PARTICULAR
  ORGANIZATION**.
• AND OUR SOLUTIONS ARE TO FIX, FIRE, ROTATE OR REPLACE PEOPLE.
• BUT THE PATTERNS CONTINUE.

***

[SLIDE 36]

BUT IF THERE IS SYSTEM ILLITERACY
THIS ALSO RAISES THE POSSIBILITY OF SYSTEM LITERACY.
THERE ARE TWO ELEMENTS TO SYSTEM LITERACY.

(1) UNDERSTANDING THE SPACE.

SIMPLY KNOWING THAT IF YOU CREATE MIDDLE CONDITIONS, THESE KINDS OF THINGS ARE GOING TO HAPPEN ... NOT ALWAYS, NOT EVERY TIME, BUT WITH GREAT REGULARITY.

BEING WILLING TO QUESTION CURRENT "REALITY" -- IT FEELS SOLID, BUT MAYBE IT'S SYSTEMIC.

RECOGNIZING THAT THERE MAY BE MORE POWERFUL POSSIBILITIES.

AND

(2) MASTERING THE SPACE.

LEARNING HOW TO MASTER THE SPACE RATHER THAN FIX PEOPLE.

***

[SLIDE 37]

THAT'S THE CHALLENGE:

HOW CAN WE MASTER THAT MIDDLE SPACE IN A WAY THAT EMPOWERS US AND OTHERS AND THE TOTAL SYSTEM?
WE NEED TO DISPERSE.
THAT'S OUR JOB -
TO BE OUT THERE MANAGING AND SERVICING THOSE INDIVIDUALS AND GROUPS.
SO, THE QUESTION IS:
HOW DO WE BECOME REALLY GOOD AT DISPERSING
SO THAT WHEN WE'RE OUT THERE MANAGING AND SERVICING
WE ARE ABLE TO PROVIDE OTHERS WITH THE INFORMATION, DIRECTION AND
SUPPORT THEY NEED?

LET'S LOOK AT THIS.
WHAT POSSIBILITIES DOES THIS OPEN UP?

WE DISPERSE. WE MOVE OUT TO OUR GROUPS -- MANAGING AND SERVICING. AND WHILE
WE'RE OUT THERE WE'RE ALSO COLLECTING INFORMATION (WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHAT
ISSUES ARE COMING UP? WHAT NEW DEVELOPMENTS? WHAT PROBLEMS OR COMPLAINTS?)
WE COME TOGETHER. JUST US MIDDLES. NO BOSS, NO CONSULTANT.
WE SHARE INFORMATION WITH ONE ANOTHER-- TECHNICAL AND NONTECHNICAL
INFORMATION. WE POOL OUR INFORMATION SO THAT EACH OF US HAS A SENSE OF WHAT'S
HAPPENING EVERYWHERE.
WE WORK THAT INFORMATION. WHAT IS IT TELLING US ABOUT THE SYSTEM AND WHAT NEEDS
TO HAPPEN?
WE MOVE OUT -- MANAGING, SERVICING AND COLLECTING INFORMATION.
WE COME TOGETHER -- SHARING INFORMATION, WORKING INFORMATION.
WE MOVE OUT.
WE COME TOGETHER.

***
JUST LET THIS IN.

HOW DO YOU SEE THIS PATTERN CHANGING THE EXPERIENCE OF MIDDLES? [Have them work this. See what they come up with.]

HOW DO YOU SEE IT AFFECTING WORKERS? [See what they come up with.]

WHAT POSITIVE POSSIBILITIES DOES THIS OPEN UP FOR TOPS? [See what they come up with.]

[SLIDE 40]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: The following slides summarize (or add to) the points you have just made regarding the effects of integration. So, to avoid slanderous charges of repetition, present these briskly as a REVIEW.]

EFFECTS ON MIDDLES

WHEN MIDDLES INTEGRATE REGULARLY WITH ONE ANOTHER,

- EACH MIDDLE IS MORE SOLIDLY INFORMED.
- MIDDLES FEEL STRONGER BECAUSE THEIR ACTIONS ARE MORE SOLIDLY BASED.
- MIDDLES FEEL LESS ALONE, MORE SUPPORTED.
- EACH MIDDLE IS IN A BETTER POSITION TO PROVIDE INFORMED LEADERSHIP.

[SLIDE 41]

EFFECTS ON BOTTOMS

WHEN MIDDLES INTEGRATE REGULARLY WITH ONE ANOTHER,

- MIDDLES ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO PROVIDE BOTTOMS WITH THE INFORMATION, DIRECTION, SUPPORT THEY NEED TO DO THEIR WORK.
- MIDDLES ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO GIVE BOTTOMS A BETTER PICTURE OF THE TOTAL SYSTEM AND THEIR PART IN IT.
- MIDDLES ARE IN A BETTER POSITION TO CREATE AN EVENNESS AND FAIRNESS OF TREATMENT ACROSS SYSTEM PARTS.
EFFECTS ON THE SYSTEM

WHEN MIDDLES INTEGRATE

- They are able to provide a smoother coordination among system parts.
- There are possibilities for synergy -- where the interaction among middles produces results greater than the sum of the parts.
- Needed initiatives -- middles are in a better position to identify what's missing in the system and to undertake needed initiatives.

EFFECTS ON TOPS

AND WHEN MIDDLES INTEGRATE,

- Tops get consistent information about what's happening in the system.
- Tops move their initiatives down uniformly to the system through their middles.
- And, when middles, among themselves, take care of day to day issues, this frees tops up to do top business, that is, the things tops are unable to do because they are tied up in issues that can be better handled by others.

SO, WHEN MIDDLES UNDERSTAND AND MASTER THE MIDDLE SPACE,

THAT BECOMES THE KEY TO THEIR EMPOWERING:

- Themselves
- Those they service and manage
- Their bosses
- The total system

END OF INPUT
COACHING

• So just let that set for a minute.

• We’re about to go back into OWL, INC.

• I'm going to give the Middles some coaching for the next two days, but I want everyone to hear this coaching, so you'll know what's going on.

• Middles:

  Have a 1-minute integration meeting at the beginning of Day 3. Just one minute. Use this time to put in whatever relevant information you have from your part of the system.

  Then have a 1-minute integration meeting at the 5-minute point of each day (Days 3 and 4). Again, just one minute. Use the time well. Share information.

  Do whatever it takes to be at all of these meetings. There will always be pressures on you to be somewhere else. Resist.

• And remember, at the end of Day 3, there will be another 1-minute REFLECTION.

REVIEW AND SUMMARY

[NOTE TO TRAINER: The Middles' integration experience does not have to be successful for you to have a productive review.

(1) If there have been positive results for Middles and others, highlight those.

(2) If there have been difficulties, explore those to see what light they shed on what needs to happen for Middle integration to be successful.]

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Again, people will have had lots of experiences as Tops, Workers and Customers that they want to talk about and that may have little apparent connection with middle issues. You need to create some space for these experiences to be aired and then to direct their attention to middle issues.]
PART I

OWL, INC. IS LIKE AN ORGANIZATIONAL THEME PARK.

EACH OF YOU CAME TO THE PARK AS A VISITOR.

SOME OF YOU VISITED THE TOP SPACE ... SOME THE BOTTOM SPACE ... SOME THE MIDDLE SPACE ... AND SOME THE CUSTOMER SPACE.

NOW YOU HAVE RETURNED FROM THAT SPACE. YOU'RE NOT A TOP, MIDDLE, BOTTOM OR CUSTOMER ANY MORE. [Have them remove their badges.]

NOW I WANT YOU TO LOOK BACK AND REFLECT ON WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE FOR YOU AS A VISITOR TO THAT SPACE.

WHAT STANDS OUT FOR YOU ABOUT WHAT LIFE WAS LIKE FOR YOU AS A VISITOR TO THE [TOP SPACE ... BOTTOM SPACE... MIDDLE SPACE ... CUSTOMER SPACE?]

[Take people's responses. Be sure you hear from all parts of the system. Most responses you won't have to handle. Sometimes, when people are complaining about how badly they were treated by others, it is useful for them to use that negative experience to question how they might be treating others. ("Is it possible that you do the same thing to others?")

PART II

NOW WE WANT TO FOCUS ON THE MIDDLE EXPERIENCE.

EX-MIDDLES, TAKE A MOMENT TO REFLECT ON YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH MIDDLE INTEGRATION DURING THESE PAST TWO DAYS -
WHAT DID YOU FIND?
WHAT WORKED FOR YOU?
WHAT DIFFICULTIES DID YOU ENCOUNTER?

***

[ASK TOPS AND BOTTOMS:] WHAT CONSEQUENCES DID MIDDLE INTEGRATION (OR LACK OF IT) HAVE FOR YOU?

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Use these interviews to highlight some of the possibilities and issues that come up regularly around middle integration:

-- The space successful integration gives to Tops to do top work

-- The danger of Middles disempowering themselves by pulling Tops in on issues that Middles could be working out themselves. And the danger of Tops colluding in this. ("They need my leadership.")

-- The need to recognize that Tops are always accountable. And the need to feed them timely and high-quality information.

-- The need for Tops to get clear about what issues they reserve for themselves.

-- The need to treat Middle Integration meetings as sacred commitments. Otherwise they won't happen.

-- The need to sell Middle Integration to Tops not as something nice to do for Middles, but as something that empowers Tops. ("What are you not doing now that you might be doing if Middles were taking care of day to day operations?")

[NOTE TO TRAINER: If people say "We're already doing this (integration)" listen but be skeptical. Be clear that what you are talking about is Middles creating powerful support teams -- not weekly staff meetings or quarterly get-togethers or things like that. Integrating teams are self-regulating teams -- the management equivalent of high involvement self-managing worker teams. It's possible you've run across such an item, but not likely.]

CLOSING

[NOTE TO TRAINER: What you do here depends on your intentions for the module. (See Section B: Uses of this Module.)]
1. If you’re using it as a stand-alone learning event, then there’s not much more to do than distribute and review the HANDOUTS and say good-bye.

2. Or you can add another 20-30 minutes to the design to allow people to meet in groups reviewing and discussing the GUIDELINES FOR INTEGRATING TEAMS AND FOR MANAGERS OF INTEGRATING TEAMS.

   What possibilities do you see?
   What issues would need to be dealt with?
   How would you get started?

3. Or, if your intention was to sow the seeds for continuing middle integration projects, then you could open up a conversation around what would be next steps for managers who are thinking about undertaking such a project.
APPENDIX

A. PREPARING THE DECK AND WALL SIGNS

B. MATERIALS FOR DUPLICATION

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CUSTOMER REPRESENTATIVES
CONTRACT #1 (YOUR CLIENT)
CONTRACT #2 OFFBEAT PUBLISHING
CONTRACT #3 HAIL-MATE
URGENT MEMORANDUM FROM THE BOARD
.prototype FOR "MIDDLE MONEY"

C. SCHEDULE: WHEN CONTRACTS AND MEMOS COME INTO THE ORGANIZATION

D. INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSEMBLING CUSTOMER ENVELOPES

E. ACCOUNTING SUMMARY SHEET

F. FINDING AND USING A MANAGER'S POWER ...
A. PREPARING THE DECK AND WALL SIGNS

THE DECK

The organization exercise in Part II will have Tops, Managers (Middles), Workers and Customer Representatives. [Customer Reps are people who bring contracts to the organization from customers. One Customer Rep may handle several customers. Having the Customer Rep enables us, with relatively few people in that role, to create considerable complexity: new contracts can be brought in, existing contracts can be cancelled, and so forth.]

There is no switching of roles, so the deck requirements are relatively simple.

Two Customer Reps should be all you need for any size group.

The Top group should be between 3 and 5 people.

Large variations in number can be handled by changing the number of managers and the number of workers within each group. For example:

If your total group was as small as 14, you might use the following configuration for your deck:

- Customer Reps: 2
- Tops: 3
- Managers: 3
- Workers (3 groups of 2 each): 6

Total: 14
If your total group was as large as 100, you might use the following configuration for your deck:

- Customer Reps: 2
- Tops: 5
- Managers: 10
- Workers (10 groups of 8 and 9 \( W_1 \ldots W_{10} \)): \( 83 \)

100

The deck of self-adhesive badges:

- TOP (3, 4 or 5)
- \( M_1 \)
- \( M_2 \)
- \( M_3 \)
- to \( M_n \) as needed
- \( W_1 \) ( )
- \( W_2 \) ( )
- \( W_3 \) ( )
- to \( W_n \) as needed

CUSTOMER REPRESENTATIVES (2)

When you are uncertain as to what the total number of participants will be, be sure to put the Top, Middle and Customer Rep badges near the top of the Deck with a few Worker badges sprinkled in. Then alternate the Worker badges (\( W_1, W_2, \ldots W_n, W_1, W_2, \ldots W_n, \ldots \), \( W_n, W_1, \ldots \), and so forth to the maximum possible number.)

***
MEETING AREAS AND WALL SIGNS

You will need the following meeting areas for the exercise and a wall (or table) sign for each area. Meeting areas are whatever you can make out of the space you are using. A meeting area can be a row of chairs in a theatre-style arrangement, or it could be a table in the cafeteria.

TOPS MANAGERS

W₁
W₂
W₃
to Wₙ as needed

CUSTOMER REPRESENTATIVES

B. MATERIALS FOR DUPLICATION

TWO NOTES REGARDING THE CONTRACTS THAT FOLLOW:

1. Notice that beside the budget figure on each contract there are three figures. (For example, the budget for the first contract is $35 or $50 or $70.)

   You need to choose which figure you'll use for your exercise.

   The basic principle is to have budgets large enough to pay salaries should OWL, INC. handle the contracts satisfactorily.

   If you used the lowest figures, the most money OWL INC. could accumulate would be:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Treasury</td>
<td>$20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract #1</td>
<td>$35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract #2</td>
<td>$60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract #3</td>
<td>$80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>$195</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you had an organization with the following configuration, your minimum salary needs would be:

- 4 Tops @ $15 ea.  
  $60
- 4 Middles @ $10 ea.  
  $40
- 4 Bottom groups x $3 x 6 days  
  $72

TOTAL  
$172

So, the lowest figure would be adequate.

***

However, if you had a 100-person organization, and you used the configuration below, your minimum salary needs would be:

- 5 Tops@ $15  
  $75
- 10 Middles@ $10  
  100
- 10 Bottoms groups x $3 x 6 days  
  180

TOTAL  
$355

In this case, the highest budget figure (yielding a possible maximum of $370) would work best.

Once you have at least a general sense of the size of your group and the configuration you will use, simply **circle the budget figures you are using**.

Use the ACCOUNTING SUMMARY SHEET (Appendix E) to determine what size budget makes most sense for your group.

2. Your client is the customer for this first project. Redo the following page using your client's name. You might also choose to modify the contract to approximate more closely some issue your client is working on.
INSTRUCTIONS TO CUSTOMER REPRESENTATIVES

You work for organizations which are potential customers of OWL Inc.

These organizations pay you to get high quality products and services from OWL Inc.

In your envelope is information and money:

**THE CUSTOMER:** The organization you are representing.

**YOUR SALARY:** How much money this customer is paying you to represent them.

**BUDGET:** The figure circled is the maximum amount of money you can pay OWL Inc. for work on this project.

**CONTRACT:** The project the customer wants OWL Inc. to work on.

**THE BUDGET IS THE MAXIMUM YOU CAN SPEND FOR THE PROJECT.**

**SPEND THE CUSTOMER’S MONEY WISELY.**

**HOLD OWL INC. TO HIGH STANDARDS. DO NOT SETTLE FOR SHODDY WORK.**

**WORK CLOSELY WITH OWL INC. -- AT ALL LEVELS. THE CUSTOMERS WANT YOU TO BE ON TOP OF THINGS AT ALL TIMES -- TO KNOW WHO IS WORKING ON THE PROJECT AND HOW THEY ARE DOING. DO NOT ADOPT A HANDS-OFF ATTITUDE. AND DO NOT LET OWL INC. KEEP YOU AWAY FROM THE OPERATIONS.**
CUSTOMER: (Your Client)

SALARIES: $4 EACH

BUDGET: $35 $50 $70

CONTRACT: (Your Client) wants OWL INC. to develop an Organization Wisdom Manual for distribution to its (members, employees, staff).

Specifically, (Your Client) wants the manual to have ideas for:

SURVIVING IN THE FACE OF CHANGE
EMPOWERING WORKERS
SERVICING CUSTOMERS
UTILIZING MIDDLE MANAGERS

(Your Client) wants at least 60 (you could make this 100 or 200 depending on the group size) high-quality ideas or concepts, 15 (or 25 or 50) in each of the above areas.
CUSTOMER: OFFBEAT PUBLISHING

SALARIES: $5 EACH

BUDGET: $60 $90 $120

CONTRACT: OFFBEAT PUBLISHING wants OWL INC. to develop a concept for a book on middle management -- tentative title: "Survival Manual for Middle Managers".

This is to be a humor book, light rather than academic. The audience would be managers or supervisors or people aspiring to such positions.

Specifically, OFFBEAT wants the following from OWL INC:

1. An extensive list of the categories of dilemmas middle managers find themselves in. (These might eventually be chapter headings.)

2. One or two brief anecdotes or examples to illustrate each category.

3. Practical tips (what to do, what not to do) that would help middle managers survive in their organizations.

4. Any additional suggestions regarding title, format, content, illustrations, etc.
CUSTOMER: HAIL-MATE CARDS

YOUR SALARIES: $6 EACH

BUDGET: $80 $120 $160

CONTRACT:  HAIL-MATE is in the greeting card business. It wants to develop a new line of products for people who work in organizations.

The purpose of this new line is to improve productive communications between people in organizations.

Some possibilities of product lines include:

- greeting cards with organizational significance, or notepaper with sayings that one sends to a co-worker, boss or subordinate.

HAIL-MATE wants these to be humorous products that serve a productive purpose.

Specifically, HAIL-MATE wants OWL Inc. to come up with:

- six new product lines, and

one or more sample prototypes for each new line.
URGENT MEMORANDUM!!

TO: TOP EXECUTIVES, OWL INC.
FROM: THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS, OWL INC.
SUBJECT: FINANCIAL REPORT

The Board of Directors expresses its profound concern with the apparent financial disarray in OWL Inc. No one seems to have a clear picture of where the organization stands financially.

This confusion undermines employee morale, and it drastically curtails our ability to plan for OWL Inc.'s future.

By the close of business on Day 3, please submit to the Board of Directors:

1. An accounting of all funds received from customers as of the close of business on Day 3. Indicate how much money is in hand and which funds have come from which customers.

2. An accounting of all funds that have gone out in salaries and bonuses as of the close of business on Day 3 to: Workers, Managers and Executives. (Please break this down by level.)

3. An accounting of how much money exists in the Reserve Fund. (The Board insists that a minimum of 10% of all income be kept in the Reserve Fund for development purposes.)
PROTOTYPE FOR "MIDDLE MONEY"

1. You can use these (see following page) or your own prototypes. We at Power & Systems are especially attracted to the distinguished gentleman on our $1 and $5 bills. However... to each according to his/her taste.

2. To distinguish between $1 and $5 bills, we suggest you print them on different colored papers.
C. SCHEDULE OF WHEN CONTRACTS AND MEMOS COME INTO THE ORGANIZATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHEN</th>
<th>WHOM</th>
<th>WHAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During Introduction</td>
<td>Customer Reps</td>
<td>General Instructions and First Contract (Your Client)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5-minute Point of Day One</td>
<td>Customer Reps</td>
<td>Offbeat Contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just Before the End of Day Two</td>
<td>Tops</td>
<td>Financ. Memorandum (URGENT MEMO!!)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beginning of Day Three</td>
<td>Customer Reps</td>
<td>Hail-Mate Contract</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

D. INSTRUCTIONS FOR ASSEMBLING ENVELOPES

You will need the following envelopes:

1. **Tops Treasury**. Write "Tops' Start-Up" on a 6x9 envelope and insert $20 Middle Money. And Write "Introduction" on the corner of that envelope.

2. **First Customer Rep Envelope**. Write "Introduction" on the Corner of a 9x12 envelope. Insert in this envelope:
   - 2 copies of "Instructions for Customer Representatives"
   - 2 copies of the first contract ("Your Client")
   - 1 6x9 envelope marked ("Your Client") Budget in which there is whatever budget amount you have decided on ($35, $50, or $70) in Middle Money.
   - 1 6x9 envelope marked Customer Reps' Salaries in which there is $8 ($4 for each Customer Rep.)

3. **Second Customer Envelope**. Write "Middle of Day 111 on the corner of a 9x12 envelope. Insert in this envelope:
   - 2 copies of the Offbeat contract
   - 1 6x9 envelope marked Offbeat Budget in which there is the budget ($60, $90, or $120).
   - 1 6x9 envelope marked Customer Reps' Salaries in which there is $10 ($5 for each Customer Rep.)
4. **Memorandum for Tops.** Write "Close of Day 211 on the corner of a 6x9 envelope. And write **boldly** across the face of the envelope "URGENT MEMORANDUM FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS."

Insert in this envelope 3-5 copies of the Urgent Memorandum!!

5. **Third Customer Envelope.** Write "Beginning of Day 311 on the corner of a 9x12 envelope. Insert in this envelope:

- 2 copies of the Hail-Mate contract
- 1 6x9 envelope marked Hail-Mate Budget in which there is the budget ($80, $120, or $160.)
- 1 6x9 envelope marked Customer Reps' Salaries in which there is $12 ($6 for each Customer Rep.)

E. **ACCOUNTING SUMMARY SHEET**

1) **HOW MUCH MONEY WOULD BE NEEDED IF ALL SALARIES WERE PAID?**

   ____ TOPS @ $15
   ____ MIDDLES @ $10
   ____ WORKER GROUPS x 6 DAYS x $3
   TOTAL

2) **WHAT IS MAXIMUM INTAKE FOR OWL, INC. USING THE VARIOUS CONFIGURATIONS?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>START-UP</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$20</td>
<td>$20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OWN CO. CONTRACT</td>
<td>$35</td>
<td>$50</td>
<td>$70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFF BEAT</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$90</td>
<td>$120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HAIL-MATE</td>
<td>$80</td>
<td>$120</td>
<td>$160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$195</strong></td>
<td><strong>$280</strong></td>
<td><strong>$370</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
F. FINDING AND USING A MANAGER'S POWER TO IMPROVE PRODUCTIVITY
Finding and Using a Manager’s Power to Improve Productivity

Barry Oshry

According to the Plant Manager in a highly sensitive chemical plant, a group of people at midorganizational level (Middles) run the day-to-day business of the plant and do it better than he ever did. These Middies like, respect, and support one another. They have their own summer and winter uniforms; they are respected by those organizationally above and below them as a strong and informed leadership team; they do their own hiring into the group; they are rewarded (50 percent) for how well they individually manage their units and (50 percent) for how well they collectively integrate the system as a whole. Their Plant Manager is liberated by this process — rather than being mired in the details of the day-to-day operations, he spends his time on “Top business” — exploration of where the industry is heading and how to prepare for the future, community relations, interactions with headquarters, integration with his peers, and so forth. Not the way it usually goes with Middles, but this group has done it for seven years now.

In another setting is the Middle in a software company who has been having difficulty selling top management on a project idea. The Middle brought the project to a group of her peers. Without the knowledge or permission of senior management, this Middle group took on the project. All the necessary expertise was in that group — marketing, sales, production, finance, and human resources. They did their own research meticulously, they put together a package top management could not and did not refuse. Great pride, great teamwork, great effectiveness, and significant contribution to profitability. Again, not the way it usually goes with the Middles.

This article directs attention to the Middle Space of organization. A Middle Space is a space that pulls one between others. Whoever enters a Middle Space is caught between the conflicting agendas, perspectives, priorities, needs, and demands of two or more individual groups. Some Middle spaces exist between contending vertical pressures (for example, supervisors between their managers and their work groups); others exist between lateral pressures (for example, a liaison between customers and producers); and many Middle Spaces have multiple contending forces, vertically and laterally. Supervisors in plants and offices exist in Middle Spaces, as do department chairpersons and deans in universities, middle managers, heads of medical departments, union stewards, and people occupying many hundreds of other positions in the widest spectrum of organizations and institutions. (In our analyses we will for the most part
limit our discussion to the relatively simple Middle Space between Above and Below.)

All of these are Middle Spaces. Some spaces are more middle than others – the greater the differences between Above and Below in perspective, priorities and needs, the more powerful the middleness of the space.

Put people into a Middle Space and there is a story that develops with great regularity. The story varies from situation to situation, but the basic pattern is the same. It is a story of gradual disempowerment in which reasonably healthy, confident, and competent people become transformed into anxious, tense, ineffective and self-doubting wrecks. And when this happens others resent being stuck weak and ineffective Middles; their managers tend to fire them or fix them or rotate them or let swing slowly in the wind.

What strikes me the most about organizations is their regularity – the same scenarios keep happening again and again in the widest variety of settings. In manufacturing, high technology, religious institutions, schools, community groups, government agencies, universities, the same patterns keep showing up. But rarely do people feel that they are living out a pattern. Each event seems very specific to their unique organization, circumstances, and people. It matters little of organizations are having the very same experience.

Proust suggests that “the voyage of discovery rests not in seeking new lands but in seeing with new eyes.” This is precisely what is needed – a new set of lenses for looking at organizational behavior. The missing lens is a systemic one that shows systems, not just people – system spaces, not only the effects these spaces have on people.

The question is: If we look at these many different Middle stories through a systemic lens, what new understanding and what new strategies for empowerment open up for us?
THE MIDDLE STORY

“Middles live in a tearing world.
It is a world in which people are pulling in different directions;
Tops have their priorities and they expect your support;
Bottoms have their priorities – which are generally different from Tops’ – and they expect your support;
Tops want you to get production out of the Bottoms
But you can’t do that without the cooperation of Bottoms;
Bottoms want you to deliver on their needs and wants
But you can’t do that without the cooperation of Tops.
When Tops and Bottoms are in conflict, one or the other or both try to draw you in on their side.
You please one,
You displease the other;
You try to please both
You end up pleasing neither.”

Life in the Middle Space is hectic. You are always on the go. So much to do – for everyone – so little time. You spend your time working in other people’s spaces and on other people’s agendas. You feel squeezed. Tops are distant and remote; they are on another, less tangible wave length, talking about strategy and planning and organization. Meanwhile Bottoms are looking to you for concrete direction and support, but you do not have the direction and support to give them. You see the attitudes of Bottoms deteriorating and cannot do anything about it.

You feel useless, like a conduit simply carrying information back and forth. You spend your time going back and forth between Top and Bottom, explaining one to the other, justifying one to the other. There are lots of opportunities to let people down, and few opportunities to succeed. Tops do not seem to move your world ahead; they just give you more work and more uncertainty.

You feel like a ping pong ball and Tops and Bottoms are the paddles. You are confused (In the Middle Space, if you are not confused it means you are not paying attention. You talk to Tops and they make sense; you talk to Bottoms and they make sense too. It is hard to figure out what you believe.) Your actions are weak, compromises, never quite strong enough to satisfy Tops or Bottoms.

Sometimes you feel important yet insignificant – as a telephone wire is important, but the real action is not with you, it is on the either end of
the line. You take a lot of flak from Bottoms, and never feel you can give it back (it would not be managerial). For some reason you feel as though it is your responsibility to keep this system from flying apart. Yet much of the time you feel invisible – when Tops and Bottoms are together they talk as if you are not even there. You feel inadequate, never doing quite enough for Tops or Bottoms, never quite measuring up to the job.

In time, you begin to doubt yourself – maybe there is something wrong with you, maybe you are not smart enough or strong enough, maybe you are not as competent as you thought. As others in the organization mirror this impression.

They see you as a nice person, trying hard, acting responsibly, maybe even well-intentioned. It is just too bad you are so weak and ineffective. Well, maybe with a little more training or meditation or aerobic exercise or therapy or a better diet....

As the opening anecdotes of this article suggest, however, it does not have to be this way. This is not a personal story; it is a space story. The solution lies not in fixing people but in seeing and mastering the Middle Space.

A SYSTEMIC LOOK AT SELF-DISEMPOWERMENT IN MIDDLE POSITIONS

Most methods of preparing people for Middle positions are primitive. They are promoted on the basis of dimensions which may be totally irrelevant to their ability to master the middleness. They are trained on the technical aspects of the job. At best, they are offered leadership or supervisory training – which is Top’s way of telling Middle how to handle Top’s agenda, but which leaves Middle totally unprepared for the fact that Bottom has its own agenda for Middle in relation to Top.

No dean, no supervisor, no department chair, no section head should enter such a position without first understanding the dynamic of middle positions and learning how to master the Middle Space.

There is a process that happens with great regularity when one enters the Middle Space, and this process lies at the heart of the disempowerment of Middles.
Simply put, the process is this: People slide into the middle of other people’s issues and conflicts and make these issues and conflicts their own. Once they slide into the middle, they are torn.

Objectively, even in middle positions, people are not torn until they put themselves into the position to be torn. Objectively, Above has its agenda for Below, and Below has its agenda for Above. In that nanosecond before sliding in, Middle could be relaxedly observing, “isn’t it interesting the conflicts they are having with one another? What’s it got to do with me?”

That moment never happens or, if it does, it is too brief. People slide into the middle position and become torn between Above and Below. In that torn condition they feel that it is their responsibility, and their responsibility alone, to resolve others’ evaluations of how well they satisfy them. This “sliding in” process is not a conscious choice. It is more like a reflex. Middles do not do it, it happens to them. They see a conflict between others, and they feel the full weight of that conflict resting on their shoulders:

Charlie complains to me, his supervisor, that the shower is not working. In a flash, I’m feeling that it’s my fault that the shower is not working and that it’s my responsibility to get it working. When I don’t get it working fast enough because I can’t get the approval from upstairs or because maintenance has this huge backlog, Charlie gets on my case, and I’m feeling weak and foolish and ineffective.

***

Louise has been called in to manage a meeting between Above and Below. This is an important meeting; Above and Below have a number of issues between them. Louise is very nervous; she feels that her success or failure rests on how well this meeting turns out.
If Charlie’s supervisor or Louise had their systemic lenses on, they might see something else – a flashing sign: “Middleness – Beware of Sliding into the Middle!” And they might pause to consider if there might not be some more powerful way to handle this situation.

### COACHING FOR MIDDLENESS: TWO STRATEGIES AND FIVE TACTICS FOR EMPOWERING YOURSELF IN THE MIDDLE

...pause to consider if there might not be some more powerful way to handle this situation.

In the absence of a systemic lens, we see only specific events, specific circumstances, specific people – and we react. With a systemic lens, we see *middleness*, and that seeing opens up for us new strategies and tactics for mastering the middle space.

**We slide into the middle of other people’s issues and processes and make them our own.**

1. A and B have different priorities, they want different things from one another
2. M slides into the middle of their issues and conflicts and makes them M’s issues and conflicts
3. And M becomes torn

### STRATEGY I: DO NOT SLIDE INTO THE MIDDLE OF THEIR ISSUES AND CONFLICTS AND MAKE THEM YOUR OWN

That is, at all times, be clear that this is not your problem. *They* are having issues with one another. Do what you can to empower *them* to resolve *their* issues. Resist all efforts on their part to pull you into the middle; the pressures can be quite strong. Understand that Above and Below do not mind at all having you feel responsible for resolving their problems.
STRATEGY II: DO NOT LOSE YOUR MIND

The Middle place is an easy place to lose your mind – your view, your thoughts, your perspective on what needs to happen. When we are torn, our attention is on Above and Below – what they think, what they want, what will satisfy them. In that Middle Space, however, we are in a unique position to formulate our own vision of what needs to happen. Generally, it is the conflicting information that comes at us from Above and Below that confuses us and causes us great stress. That conflicting information, however, can also be the source of our unique strength. We need to seek that information out – rather than run from it. We need to allow it in and use it to formulate our unique Middle perspective.

With these two general strategies in mind, we can explore specific tactics by which we empower ourselves and others from the Middle position.

TACTIC I: BE TOP WHEN YOU CAN, AND TAKE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF BEING TOP

Sometimes we beg for trouble, and then complain when we get it. In certain situations, we make ourselves Middle when we could be top. Two Middles walk away from a meeting with Tops. One Middle says to the other, “Say, we didn’t ask them if we could do (such and such). Let’s go back and ask.” The second Middle says, “We didn’t ask, and they didn’t tell us. So why don’t we decide what needs to happen. If they don’t like it, they’ll tell us.” The first Middle is uncomfortable with this; he wants to go back, to be in the middle, to find out what they want, to ask permission. The second middle is uncomfortable with going back; she wants to go ahead, she wants to be top, to figure out what she thinks needs to happen, to do it, and, if it turns out poorly, to ask forgiveness.

TACTIC II: BE BOTTOM WHEN YOU SHOULD

Middles sometimes describe themselves as “sewer pipes” – “Any garbage that Tops send us we simply pass along to Bottoms... without question.” Middle passes the garbage along to the Bottom; Bottom complains about the garbage; Middle justifies the garbage, explaining that this is really good stuff; Bottom still sees it as garbage and continues to complain; Middle passes these complaints...
along to the tops; Tops explain to the Middle how the garbage really is good stuff and chastise Middle for not doing a good enough job convincing Bottoms; and on and on it goes. Middles, if they have not lost their minds, are often in a better position than Tops to recognize garbage as garbage. Do not just be a mindless funnel. Be Bottom. Work it out with Tops. The buck stops at the Top; the garbage stops in the Middle.

**TACTIC III: BE COACH**

When others bring their complaints to Middles, Middles assume that it is their job to handle these complaints – which is precisely what it means to slide into the middle. Middles feel ashamed if they still have not fixed some lingering complaint; they feel embarrassed to admit that all their efforts to date have failed; they feel guilty about not having got around to it; they feel weak and inadequate for not being a more powerful, more effective, more competent Middle.

Why all the shame, guilt and self-doubt, Middles? *It is not your problem.* They are the ones with the complaints. This does not mean that you are to be callous, unsympathetic, unfeeling; nor does it mean that you have no important role to play. People have problems. Let them know that you understand their situation, that you empathize with their condition, and that you are not going to solve their problems for them.
That is not your job. Your job is to empower others to solve their own problems. Offer to be their coach – to work with them, to empower them so that they can do what they need to do to solve their problem.
Understand their situation, that you empathize with their condition, and that you are not going to solve their problem for them. That it is not your job. Your job is to empower others to solve their own problems. Offer to be their coach – to work with them, to empower them so that they can do what they need to do to solve their problem.

**TACTIC 4: FACILITATE**

In the Middle we often find ourselves running back and forth between people, carrying messages from one to the other, explaining one to the other. We learn from the Customer what the Customer’s needs are; we carry this information to the Producers; the Producers have questions which we then bring back to the Customer; and then we carry the Customer’s answers – along with a modified set of requirements – back to the Producers; and on and on it goes, sliding in the Middle. When we are in the Middle of such a process, we are harried but with a sense of the importance of our role – we are needed by both sides. When we are caught up in this process, it may never occur to us to ask; why am I doing all this running? Why not step out of the middle, bring together those people who need to be together, and do whatever it takes to make their interaction with one another as productive as possible?

New options open up for us when we see situations systematically. Our interactions in organizations are not simply people interacting with people – isolated events in unique circumstances. People always interact with one another in systematic spaces. When we are blind to the effects of these system forces, we invite the space to disempower us. When we see systematically, we understand the space, we know what it can do to us, and we know what challenges we face in mastering the space.

**TACTIC 5: INTEGRATE WITH ONE ANOTHER**

There is another factor that relates to the power and contribution of Middles, and that has to do with the nature of Middles’ relationships with one another. Middles strengthen themselves and enhance their contributions to their organizations by developing strong peer group relationships – among supervisors, among deans, among section heads, among plant manager, among department heads. Yet such relationships rarely develop. For most people the term Middle Group is an oxymoron – if it is a group then it cannot be Middles, and if there are Middles then it cannot be a group. Middles, left to their own devices, do not become teams, they do not develop powerful and supportive relationships with one another. They generally resist all efforts at team development. This alienation from one another is a major contributor to their effectiveness in systems. So where does this dysfunctional alienation come from? Middles have their explanations:
I have little in common with the others... There are a number of them I don’t particularly like... There’s no potential power in this group... We bore one another... I’m not particularly interested in their areas... They are my competitors, so why collaborate?... This one talks too much, that one’s too emotional...

Through the systemic lens, we see a different story – the impact different system spaces have on us. As Tops we regularly fall into territorial struggles with one another; As Bottoms we regularly experience great pressures to conform to whatever the group opinion is; as Middles we regularly become isolated and alienated from one another.

The Middle Space is a diffusing space; it pulls us apart from one another and toward other individuals and groups we service or manage. We disperse.

We spend our time away from one another. In that configuration our specialness becomes highlighted – our uniqueness, our separateness from one another, our differences. In the Top group we become territorial – a collection of “MINE”s; in the Bottom group we become a “WE”; and in the Middle group we become a collection of “I”s. Whatever real differences exist among us become magnified. Each of us feels unique, special, different. We feel we have little in common with one another, we feel competitive with one another, we are critical of one another, we deal at the surface with one another, we are wary of one another, and we see little potential power in us as a collectivity.
There is a vicious cycle that happens to us in the Middle space. The space pulls us apart from one another; that apartness heightens our separateness, our alienation from one another; and our alienation reinforces our staying apart – why would we want to spend time together when we have so little in common, we do not like one another, there is no potential for power in the collective, we are competitors, and so forth. So, we stay apart, which reinforces the alienation, and on and on it goes. All of which is unfortunate because that Middle space is a potentially powerful space. There are productive relationships to be had and powerful contributions to be made.

![The vicious cycle of Middle alienation.]

1. Four individuals who under other circumstances might get along perfectly well with one another...

2. Enter a Middle Space

3. The space pulls them apart from one another and toward the groups they service or manage.

4. In there separateness they harden into an “I-ness” mentality which reinforces their staying apart.
Middle peer groups are, potentially, the integrating mechanisms for their systems. They are in the best position to tie these systems together, to provide strong and informed leadership to their Bottoms or to the groups they service, and to create consistency, evenness, and fairness throughout the system.

Middles integrate the system by integrating with one another. Each Middle moves out, manages or services his/her part of the system and collects intelligence about what is happening there; Middles come together and share their intelligence; they move back out, and then come together – moving back and forth between diffusing and integrating. Goodbye, uninformed, weak, fractionated, surpriseable, uncoordinated Middles. Through this process, the Middle Space becomes the most solidly informed part of the system. Individual Middles are more knowledgeable about the total system, they are able to provide guidance and direction, there is less unproductive duplication among units, there is more evenness of treatment.

Middles who integrate are a potent force in their system. They develop a powerful support network for themselves; they provide informed leadership for others; and they lighten the burden of their Tops, making it possible for Tops to do the Top work they should be doing. This is the possibility of Middle integration. When Middles are in the grips of the Middle Space, however, they do not see integration as a possibility for them – “Maybe it’s a good idea for some people in some circumstances but not in our organization, given the situation we’re facing, and certainly not with this particular cast of characters; we have no reason to integrate,
our responsibilities are diverse, we have so little in common, we don’t get along, we are too competitive...” and so forth.

In the absence of a systemic lens, Middles feel that they do not integrate because of how they feel about one another. When viewed systemically, the truth is seen to be just the other way around: Middles feel the way they do as a consequence of not integrating; were they to integrate they would feel quite differently toward one another.

Group empowerment supports individual empowerment. Without integration, Middles face the tearing pressures of the Middle Space alone. With integration, they create an informational and emotional base that strengthens each individual Middle.

**YOU DO NOT KNOW WHAT YOU DO NOT KNOW UNTIL YOU KNOW IT**

Middle integration creates a whole new level of possibility for Middles.

When Middles do not integrate, there is no basis for comprehending the possibilities of empowered middleness. Middles may think that the range of possibility is from A to E, and since they are at D, that is not so bad. Only when they integrate successfully do Middles realize that the range of possibility was from A to Z, and D was not so hot after all.

Middle integration creates a whole new level of possibility for Middles. From facing system pressures alone and unsupported, they become part of a powerful and supportive peer group. From being uninformed and surpriseable, they become part of the most well-informed part of the system. Balls batted back and forth in other people’s games they become central players in creating and managing their own games.

---

**The range of Middle possibilities**

- **A** → **B** → **C** → **D** → **E**
  - Worst of all Middle Worlds
  - Best of all Middle Worlds

- **A** → **D** → **Z**
  - Worst of all Middle Worlds
  - Best of all Middle Worlds
WHAT ARE THE MIDDLES GOOD FOR?

Do we really need Middles? I am asked that question regularly. The truth is: we do not need weak, uninformed, torn, confused, wishy-washy, and fractioned Middles. That is, however, not the only available Middle option. Middles do have a unique perspective in organizations and special contributions to make. These can be developed only as Middles learn to see their condition systemically and learn to master the Middle space. That mastery does not come easily. To be “a Middle who stays out of the Middle” makes special demands on Middles. Middles may complain about their current “no-win” situation; yet when they discover what it takes to empower themselves, they may decide they want no part of it.

There is a great need for empowered Middles – Middles who act responsibly toward others, who are committed to their success, and who can deliver the information, direction, and support others need. The challenge for Middles is to do this while maintaining their own independence of thought and action. And that requires a different kind of fortitude, one that keeps Middles from being torn apart individually and collectively – preserving their boundaries rather than allowing them to be overridden, shaping situations rather than being shaped by them, standing up to both Above and Below, sometimes saying “no” or “not now” or “not this way” rather than dancing to every tune others play for them.

No longer weak, confused, wishy-washy, fractionated, or powerless, these Middles are not sent off for therapy, they are not replaced or fixed or fired. Rather they learn to see and master the Middle Space.

Middles who stay out of the middle, who empower themselves and others, who are Top when they can be, who are bottom when they should be, who coach and who facilitate, and, above all else, who integrate with one another – these are a different order of Middle. They value themselves and they bring value to their systems.

Notes

DIFFERENCES AND PARTNERSHIP
I. OVERVIEW FOR TRAINER

We bring our differences to the organization --differences in personal style, differences in experiences, differences in perspectives, differences in functional expertise.

Our differences can knock us out of partnership, or they can be used to strengthen and deepen our partnership.

In this exercise people are divided according to certain categories of difference. We begin with value differences. In round two, we go to functional differences-e.g., marketing, R&D, Finance, etc.

The idea is to use differences that are real in the system and that have both negative components (can knock us out of partnership) and positive components (can contribute to our partnership).

As groups are divided, each sub-group examines:

1. What is the special contribution their difference brings to the system.
2. Which other categories of difference cause them difficulty, and
3. How they can derive value from those that are different from them (the same ones that cause them difficulty).

II. ILLUSTRATIVE SCRIPT

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Write on a blank easel the words II PARTNERSHIP AND DIFFERENCES II.]

- We bring a great variety of differences to our lives in organizations.
- There are differences in values, thinking styles, skills, organizational levels, experiences, and so forth.
- Our differences can knock us out of partnership or they can enrich and strengthen our partnership.
- We’re going to explore some of this now.
Part I:
DIFFERENCE ONE: VALUES

[These values are based on the ALLPORT-VERNON SCALE OF VALUES.]

- I am going to describe six basic types which depict unifying philosophies of life. None of these may fit you perfectly. Still, for the purposes of this exercise, choose the one which you feel comes closest to describing your basic orientation.

  Keep in mind that we are more similar than different.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Write the values on a chart: Theoretical, Practical, Aesthetic, Social, Political, Spiritual. Read the following descriptions twice. Have people choose the description that comes closest to them. Most people can do this. For those who can't, let them handle it however they choose.]

**Theoretical**
- Dominant interest is the discovery of truth.
- Seeks to observe and reason.
- Chief aim is to order and systematize knowledge.
- Leanings toward being a scientist or philosopher.

**Economic/Practical**
- Primarily interested in what is useful.
- Practical.
- Wants education to be practical. Sees unapplied knowledge as a waste.

**Aesthetic**
- Oriented to what is beautiful.
- Values grace, symmetry, fitness.
- Tends toward individualism, self-sufficiency.
- Regarding religion, more attracted to the beauty than to the experience.
Social

- Highest value is love of people.
- Prizes people as ends in themselves.
- Finds the other types as cold.
- In contrast to Political, sees love as the only suitable form of power.

Political

- Values power and influence.
- Oriented toward leadership positions.
- Competition plays a large part in life.

Spiritual

- Seeks to comprehend the cosmos as a whole.
- Spiritual, mystical.
- Uniting self with a higher reality.

[NOTE TO TRAINER: Identify six spaces in room -- one for each style -and have people move to the location that fits their choice. Give each group an easel pad and markers. Have them select a scribe.]
INSTRUCTIONS: ROUND ONE

• See who else is here with you in your group and who is elsewhere in the room.
• Keep in mind that we are more similar than we are different. Still, what's the special contribution this orientation brings to the system?

What is the special contribution this orientation brings to the system?

[Have group members first discuss among themselves, then report out in about 10 minutes. In the report out, instead of having one member read the group's list, have each group turn its chart toward itself, and then encourage all group members to speak. The idea is to make this more conversational rather than list-reading.]

• Keep in mind that we are more similar than different. Here we are exploring the difference.

[Go around and hear from all the groups.]
INSTRUCTIONS: ROUND TWO

[Group members discuss the following questions, then report out.]

1. As you listen to others, which orientation causes the most difficulty for you?
2. What is it about that orientation that knocks you out of partnership?
3. How can you gain value from who they are and what they do?
   And
4. What do I need to do to stay in partnership with them?

| 1. Which orientation causes the most difficulty for you? |
| 2. What is it about them? |
| 3. How can you gain value from them? |
| 4. What do I need to do to stay in partnership with them? |

Have a conversation. Ask: What are you getting from this exercise? What would our organizations be if we had just one orientation?

[Additional questions to explore are:]

1. What value orientation is missing or are we light on? What are the implications of that for our organization?
2. How will this help you in creating or enriching partnership?
Part II:

[Repeat the exercise using organizational function groupings.]

Round One:  What is the special contribution this function brings to the organization? Report outs.

Round Two:  The Four Questions:

1. Which orientation causes the most difficulty for you?
2. What is it about them?
3. How can you gain value from them?
4. What do I need to do to stay in partnership with them?

Discussion: What are you getting from this exercise?

Round Three:  Meet in cross-functional teams. Make and record agreements:

1. What are our guiding principles for working together?
2. What actions will we take if we see ourselves falling away from these principles?
ONE-DAY VARIATION
Strategy Underlying This Variation

- PRIMARY. To build a powerful case for middle integration.
- To work within a limited time frame-9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., for example.
- To have people experience the benefits of the powerful Project Exercise.

ACTIVITIES

- MORNING. Exercise-four days, one TOOT, being certain to clarify the group issues, with "Center Ring/Side Show" and "How Come It Goes" in their usual places.
- AFTERNOON. "What else is possible with Strategies."

The Project Exercise (prefaced by the Self and Other input). Making sure to hear from folks how they feel about their groups. What words would they use to describe them?

The Middle Integration Input (The full version as in "Partnership in Lateral Relationships").
The Case for Middle Integration Strategy

People will get all the usual learning from the day, but the power of Middle Integration will come from the following:

- **Morning TOOT.**
  This will reveal the difference particularly between the Bottom and Middle group experiences with the consequences for Middles, their groups, and the system. Was there differential treatment-pay, slippers, shoes? What consequences did this have for Middles? For the System? For Tops?

- **Project Exercise.**
  This will demonstrate the power of integration *(without calling it that at this time)*-how much people value one another, and how much benefit they derive in a very short period of time.

- **Middle Integration Input.**
  Here we will be laying out the basic theory. The punch line comes: "We think we don't integrate because of how we feel about one another, and if we felt differently, then we'd integrate. The truth is: It's just the other way around: **We feel the way we feel about one another because we don't integrate, and if we did integrate we would feel very differently about one another.**"

  And, you see, we will just have proved that point with the Project Exercise. Strangers coming together, who under other conditions would likely be alienated from one another, form these powerful and constructive bonds simply by integrating. **BANG!!**
Schedule

Morning

- Introduction
- Transition
  - Day 1 Reflection
  - Day 2 Reflection
- TOOT (paying special attention to the Bottom and Middle group experience)
- “Center Ring/Side Show”
  - Day 3 Reflection
  - Day 4
- Transition Out (Simple Stuff)
- Final Reflection
- “How Come it Goes the Way it Usually Goes”

LUNCH

Afternoon

- “What else is possible” with Door B strategies
- Pass out 2nd deck of name tags to change roles. Change seats in the TOOT space. Starting with the ex-Tops ask “What’s different for you now?”
- “Self and Other” input
- “Project Manual” (alone then trios). Pass out the manual and indicate that this is an APPLICATION activity, an opportunity to apply today’s work to an issue each is currently facing. Give them 10 minutes alone with it, letting them know there will be more time later, just to give some thought to and makes notes to themselves regarding the project, their vision, the enrolling presentation and the Door B stand. Then proceed with the Round One (FORM GROUPS).
- “Partnership in Lateral Relationship – Middle Peers”
- Application work in trios
THE SPACE OF SERVICE
NOTE

For some time now we have been aware of a significant omission in our framework of Top, Middle, Bottom, and Customer spaces. There are people whose primary work fits into none of these categories; these are the consultants, internal and external, the specialists in such fields as organization development, information systems, work redesign, product engineering and so forth; these are people who occupy the Space of Service.

The purpose of this paper is to begin to fill in the blanks regarding the Space of Service – what is the nature of that space? What are the resulting disempowering scenarios? And what is Door B service?

Background

Recently I was conducting a basic Organization Workshop with a group of field service people. Late in the program, the observation was made: "I don't seem to fit easily into any of these categories; what I do is something else." The something else, of course, was service. So, I asked the group if they would work with me to see what, together, we could discover about the space of service.

We followed the basic format of attempting to make clear distinctions among the following, each of which was posted as a heading on a blank sheet of newsprint:

- THE NATURE OF THE SPACE (Predictable Conditions),
- THE REFLEXIVE DISEMPOWERING RESPONSES WE MAKE TO THAT SPACE (Predictable Responses—not all of us, not every time, but with great regularity),
- THE RESULTING DISEMPOWERING EXPERIENCES (Familiar Disempowering Scenarios),
- DOOR B BEST PRACTICES (When you're feeling most powerful and effective, what are you doing?)

We groped around, developing our lists, sometimes confusing spaces with responses with experiences; it wasn't clear where we were going or whether we would get anywhere; but there was energy in the quest. And then some clarity emerged which seemed to click with all of us. The following is the result. It feels like a very good beginning.
The Predictable Condition

IGNORANCE (Lack of information/knowledge) & MULTIPLE EXPECTATIONS

I enter the space of service with little knowledge or information about the specifics of this situation; at the same time there are many and varied expectations as to what I can or should do. There may be political minefields to be crossed: Whose agendas are being served or ignored? Some people may be looking to me for instant painless solutions. Some may be skeptical, others hopeful, others hopeless. But all are looking to me.

The Reflex Response

TO BE OF IMMEDIATE VALUE

It is crystal clear that I ought to be of immediate value to this situation and to be responsive to the various expectations others have of me. This being of immediate value takes me in two directions:

BEING THE EXPERT: I have the solution to your problems—the system, the process, the theory, and so forth.

BEING THE SERVANT: Whatever you ask, I do.

The Disempowered Experience

ABUSED and MISUSED

I feel that I haven't been of value; my real expertise hasn't been tapped; I haven't addressed the real needs of the situation; I've created dependency; I've either taken the system where I wanted to go or where others wanted to go, but, in either case, it was not in the service of the system; I feel that I'm faking it; I rationalize (feeling that I've done the best I could in a difficult situation); I do for others rather than strengthening others to do for themselves; I feel buffeted by conflicting expectations.

The Effects Of Turbulence

The greater the turbulence—change, business as usual not working anymore—the more ignorant I am likely to be and the more multiple expectations I am likely to find in the space of service.
The Vicious Cycle

Notice that BEING THE EXPERT or THE SERVANT does nothing to reduce the conditions of the service space. I may be confusing the current situation rather than illuminating it; and by being responsive to specific immediate surface requests, I may be ignoring the underlying developmental, long-term needs of the system.

DOOR B

CO-LEARNERS

In the presence of ignorance and multiple expectations, I need to say NO to the reflex response of being of immediate value as either expert or servant; my stand is to be of real and lasting value to the system, such that it is a more empowered system after I am gone.

I need to establish a contractual relationship in which I and the client are co-learners-together we will learn about this system, about how it functions, what its possibilities are, what stands in the way of those possibilities, and what can be done to move it ahead...

My contribution is to bring my special expertise to this co-learning relationship such that ignorance about the system disappears and the system becomes its own expert.

POST NOTE:

We all seemed to feel pretty good about where we had come out; these patterns-both DOOR A and DOOR B-seem to fit pretty well people's experiences, and they provide simple but concrete handles to work with; we see the traps and we see what needs to be done to avoid them. What I appreciated most was one woman's comment at the end that, in this inquiry, I had engaged in that same open-ended co-learning process with them. And it worked. That was special.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Space Of Service</th>
<th>Door B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Familiar Disempowering Experience</td>
<td>Say NO to being of immediate value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABUSE</td>
<td>Develop a co-learning relationship with the Customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MISUSED</td>
<td>(using your separate areas of expertise.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictable Response (Door A)</th>
<th>To be of immediate value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ignorance</td>
<td>“Expert” (I am the solution to your problems, the answer to your prayers.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(There is much about this system that I do not understand.)</td>
<td>Or</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Expectations</td>
<td>“Servant” (You ask, I do.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(There are likely to be lots of different people with lots of different agendas.)</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
My Integration Scorecard

Developed by Joan Ballantine, Robyn Merchant & Kevin Purcell based on Barry Oshry’s “In the Middle”

Instructions:

1. Identify a challenge that you are currently working on
2. Either:
   a. Write the names of the people in the room around the outside of the spider (next to person A, B etc), OR
   b. Write the names of key people that you need to work with on this issue / challenge around the edge of the spider
   c. NOTE: At the end of this document (page 4) there is a spider with 30 spokes if you need a larger web
3. For each individual on the spider web, identify what your current level of integration on this issue is (refer to ‘Levels Of Integration’ by Barry Oshry on page 2 of this document) – Mark with an ‘X’

4. For each individual on the spider web, identify what the target level of integration needs to be in order for them to effectively manage / resolve the issue / challenge - mark with 'O'

5. Complete ‘My Integration Strategies’ (page 3 of this document):
   a. Identify where the largest gaps are on your integration spider web – these are your priorities
   b. Identify strategies for you to develop the level of integration needed to manage / resolve this particular challenge / issue.
## Levels of Integration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 0</th>
<th>No Integration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middles may choose to function as individual operators and not to integrate with one another at all. The personal and system power of such Middles are low, and individual freedom is high in that each Middle is free to act as he or she chooses with no input or constraint from other Middles.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>Information Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middles do nothing more than share information. Each simply puts into the common pool the intelligence gathered from his or her contacts with the system; no analysis is done, no decisions are reached, and each Middle is free to use that intelligence as he or she chooses.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>Assimilating Information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using the pooled intelligence as a basis for system diagnosis. (What trends do we see? What system-wide problems are developing?) Middle commitment to one another is still minimal: they jointly work on system diagnosis but no consensual decisions are made, and each Middle is free to use these diagnoses as he or she chooses.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>Mutual Consultation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using one another as resources to consult on problems individual Middles are facing in their servicing or managing functions.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
<th>Joint Planning and Strategizing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Identifying problems which cut across all Middles’ areas of responsibilities and developing agreement among Middles as to how these will be handled. Middles agree to support one another and follow through on their commitments.</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 5</th>
<th>Power Bloc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middles organize themselves as a power bloc within the system, identifying common grievances, needs, and conditions they want changed; they develop bargaining positions and pursue tactics aimed at bringing about the desired conditions.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## My Integration Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Current Issue/ Challenge</th>
<th>Who do I need to integrate with?</th>
<th>How do I increase my level of integration with this person</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
My Integration Scorecard

(30 Spokes)