PUTTIN’ COLOGNE ON THE RICKSHAW
A GUIDE TO DYSFUNCTIONAL WORKPLACES

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Puttin’ Cologne on the Rickshaw

A Guide to Dysfunctional Management and the Evil Workplace Environments They Create

Teaches what’s not taught in business school…

“How the workplace really works”
Have you ever felt like this?

How is work, dilbert?
Well, mom...
I'm like a fly stuck in a thick tar of despair.
Incompetence hangs in the air like the cold stench of death.
I'm drowning, and monkeys dressed as lifeguards are throwing me anvils.

My job has convinced me that life is a stale joke with no punch line.
I long for the comfort of the grave.
Next time just say, "It's fine."
I enjoy our talks.
It's fine.
Organizational Life Can Be Tough

- Organizations evolve into dysfunction because of:
  - Human Nature
  - Bureaucracy
  - Politics
  - Games People Play
  - The Way Business is Conducted

- The higher you go on the org chart the more these factors intensify

- The modern workplace is basically a command and control hierarchy
  - It’s been that way since the dawn of the industrial age

- The key is it doesn’t have to be this way
The Red Queen Effect

– In 1973, evolutionary biologist, Leigh Van Valen of the University of Chicago, devised what he called the “Red Queen Effect” from Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking Glass*

– Based on a Red Queen comment to Alice

“In this place it takes all the running you can do to keep in the same place”

– What does that mean to the workplace?
  - To survive you have to actively play the games that we’ll learn about tonight
Do the Inmates Really Run the Asylum?

- Irving Goffman’s 1960s book, Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates, convinced me otherwise...

“In total institutions there is a basic split between a large managed group, conveniently called inmates, and a small supervisory staff. Each grouping tends to conceive of the other in terms of narrow hostile stereotypes, staff often seeing inmates as bitter, secretive, and untrustworthy, while inmates often see staff as condescending, highhanded, and mean. Staff tends to feel superior and righteous; inmates tend, in some ways at least, to feel inferior, weak, blameworthy, and guilty. Social mobility between the two strata is grossly restricted”

- Just make a few substitutions...
  - Worker for inmate
  - Management for supervisory staff

- You have the perfect description of the typical workplace
Kayfabe

“The facts are unimportant. It’s what they are perceived to be that determines the course of events”  

R. Earl Hadady

- Kayfabe is the term for the stagecraft of professional wrestling where the wrestlers assume different ring personas
  - It’s the practice of maintaining the illusion that wrestling is 100% genuine
- “The Rashomon Effect” derived from Rashomon, a 1950 Japanese crime mystery
  - Everyone witnesses the same crime but tells a different story
- Also called “The Tinkerbell Effect”
  - There are things that exist only because people believe in them
- The self-fulfilling prophecy = Impression Management
Animal Farm

– In Animal Farm, when the animals revolted and took over the farm, they developed seven commandments
  • The most important of all was: “All animals are equal”

– Animal Farm describes the evolution of organizational politics
  • Pigs in charge
  • Dogs where police force
  • All other animals were subordinate

– The farm started out altruistic but quickly disintegrated into chaos

– Ultimately the commandments are all were reduced to a single phrase:
  “All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others.”
Farce Majeure—Organizational Evolution

- “the mix of intricate plotting and sheer silliness combining to blissful comic effect”
- The beginning of the evolution of organization structures can best be depicted with the typical start-up organizational structure
- In the start-up everyone has equal standing—all are focused on the business interest
- Teamwork seems universal
- Communication appears unhindered
- Minimal interpersonal gamesmanship
The Vertical Organizational Structure

- The intent of the published organizational chart is to depict the way the organization functions
  - Nothing is further from the truth
- It primarily reflects the reporting structure—how blame is administered
- It identifies the responsibility chain for performance reviews
- It’s just a piece of paper but it begets dysfunction
- The real organization revolves around the “power” structure
An Organization at it’s Worst–The Kingdom

– The Kingdom Organization
  • The daily calling for the inhabitants of the kingdom is tied to the throne-room agenda

– Leadership is dictatorial

– Teamwork is nonexistent

– Communication is unilateral (only goes down the chain of command)

– Command and Control Management

– Micromanaging is the norm

– Everything becomes an 11th hour crises

– Firefighting runs rampant
Images of Organization—Culture Defined

– In *Images of Organization* Gareth Morgan sets the cultural framework;

“When we view organizations as cultures, we see them as mini-societies with their own distinctive values, rituals, ideologies, and beliefs. The fundamental nature of an organization rests as much in its corporate culture as in the more formal organization chart and codes of procedure.”

– Morgan looks at organizations through eight metaphors

• *Psychic Prisons*—one that has gotten trapped in its own thoughts and actions. It involves both conscious and unconscious processes of repression, ego, denial, coping and defense mechanisms, pain, pleasure, dysfunctionality, workaholism, and micromanagement

• *Instruments of Domination*—alienation, repression, imposing values, compliance, charisma, maintenance of power, force, exploitation, divide and rule, discrimination, and corporate interest
True Organizational Hierarchy

- In Medieval times you had the humble beginnings of the three levels of today’s organizational hierarchy
  - The Lords = top management
  - The Barons = middle-management
  - The peasants = everyone else
- Resembles the Animal Farm Structure
  - Pigs, Dogs and Everyone else
- We also see this structure in Orwell’s 1949 novel 1984
  - Inner Party, Outer Party, and the Proles
Man Bites Dog

- *Man Bites Dog*—a Belgian film about a film crew who follows the escapades of a serial killer named Ben on his sadistic adventures
  - The camera crew begins to get involved and even take an active part in the murders
- Offers an inside look at our culture and how we make heroes of people who don't deserve it
- The typical workplace sociopath is just like the Wizard of Oz
  - To the organization as a whole, they are the giant head
  - To the loyal sycophants they are like a beautiful woman
  - To those being bullied they’re a horrible monster
  - To all others who get in their way they are a ball of fire
Bullying is Epidemic

- Bullying comes in many different forms:
  - Physical
  - Verbal
  - Emotional
  - Cyber
  - Micromanaging
  - Workaholism
  - Gaslighting

- Bullying is at epidemic levels…

- 34.5% of Americans report personally being bullied

- It’s a game of “cat and mouse”

“The higher you go the more your problems are behavioral.” Marshal Goldsmith
Are You Being Bullied?

Do you suffer any of these symptoms?

– You feel like throwing up the night before the start of your work week
– You can’t sleep because you’re worrying about what you’ll face at work the next day
– Your frustrated family wonders why you act so depressed all the time
– You try to deny the reality and rationalize your situation
– You have skyrocketing blood pressure
– You feel ashamed because you’re being controlled by another person and you don’t know how to stop it
– You can’t enjoy your time off, and days off are spent exhausted and lifeless; your desire to do anything is gone
– You begin to believe that you actually are inferior and have lost your self-respect
– You constantly feel agitated and anxious, and experience a sense of impending doom
Eddie Haskell

- Sycophant—“one who approaches greatness on his belly so that he may not be commanded to turn and be kicked”
  - Ambrose Bierce

- Baldassare Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier*, published in 1528, perfectly describes the sycophants that surround the top levels of management in modern organizations

- Courtier—A person who fawns and flatters in order to gain favor or advantage

- Selfish Herd Theory
  - Proposed by British evolutionary biologist W. D. Hamilton

- Plausible deniability in action
The Oath of Fealty – The Fiefdom Syndrome

During the Middle-Ages, feudalism (fiefdoms) was the law of the land, the basis by which the upper nobility class maintained control over the lower classes.

This method of governance was the foundation of the overall society and defined the culture at the time.

• The promise of faithful service to the king was called the “oath of fealty”

In business *The Fiefdom Syndrome* was first identified by Robert Herbold.

Types of organizational fiefdoms:

• Personal – organizational head, executive management
• Peer group—e.g., engineering
• Group or departmental
• Protected
The Protected Fiefdom

- A protected fiefdom is probably the most sinister of all and the one that can have a profoundly negative impact on the overall organization
  - This fiefdom operates as it wishes with full acknowledgment and blessing of the top management
- Collective Narcissism
  - A condition in which one group has an inflated image of itself
- Validated by the Top Management Team
- Leads to “Second-Class Citizenship” for the rest of the organization
The Fiefdom Syndrome at it’s Worst

- When The Fiefdom Syndrome infects the entire organization we have what’s called “group fiefdom syndrome”
- The organization is splintered along departmental lines straight from the organization chart
- Each sycophantic middle manager rules his/her department
- The power structure and pecking order within a group fiefdom often mirrors the power structure of the overall organization
- Management sets the tone of the organization
Does your Organization Suffer the Fiefdom Syndrome?

Do any of the following sound like your organization?

– Senior management reviews and approves nearly all actions and decisions
– Management micromanages the day-to-day activities to minute detail
– Meetings are at epidemic frequency and are needed for even the most inconsequential action to be taken or problem to be solved
– There’s very little, if any, focus on customer satisfaction
– People who do try to make changes or innovate are chastised or removed from the organization
– Each group executes on their own objectives with little teamwork or coordination between groups or thought of whether it supports the overall organizational goals
– Organization-wide goals (like mission or vision) that requires coordination between groups suffer
– Alienation and suspicion exist between people and departments
Nattering Nabobs of Negativity

“In the United States today, we have more than our share of the nattering nabobs of negativism.”

-Spiro T. Agnew

- The Games People Play
  - Divide & Conquer
  - Stump the Dummy
  - Thrown under the Bus
  - Gaslighting

- Included are the games played to sabotage an employee’s career
  - Withholding resources
Waiting for Rigor Mortis

- In his book, *Games People Play*, Dr. Eric Berne postulated that in everyday interactions, people will demonstrate one of two basic unconscious predilections, or life plans, that he calls “scripts”
  - Constructive
  - Destructive

- He calls the destructive script “Waiting for Rigor Mortis”
  - It is the most prevalent in the workplace
  - One who is destructively driven will play the more disagreeable games

- The Constructive script he called “Waiting for Santa Claus”
  - One who is constructively driven will be pleasant to deal with
  - I’ll bet that’s only a handful of people you work with?
Together Everyone Annoys Me

“There are no more a team than people staying at the same hotel are a team”

-Dwight Schrute, The Office

– Why is teamwork so tough to realize?

– In his book, The Five Dysfunctions of a Team, Patrick Lencioni details the reason that teamwork is such a difficult concept for many organizations:
  “There’s a natural absence of trust between workers”

– In his book The Power of Stupidity, Giancarlo Livraghi asserts:
  • Teamwork often fails due to the inability to meld the collective intelligence into one consciousness that can accomplish the team’s goal—this is because in a group environment stupidity takes over
Chicken Little Syndrome

- “Chicken Little” is a story for teaching courage—don’t be a chicken little—don’t be afraid, the sky is not falling
- No one wants to work for a “sky is falling” sort of leader
- This is the “fear of surprise” mentality

- In his 2007 article, “Are You a Pyromaniac?” Michael Watkins explains,
  - “These are the organizational pyromaniacs; leaders with impulse-control issues who start the fires that waste so much precious time and energy in their organizations”

- Nathan Bennett, a Georgia Tech management Professor, coined what he called “Munchausen at Work”
  - “A similar pathology in work when employees create fictitious organizational problems, only to solve them”
Zemblanity

“Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”

-Albert Einstein

“The four most expensive words in the English language are: this time is different”

-Sir John Templeton

- Organizational Amnesia is a big problem in most organizations
- Organizational amnesia exists in today’s workplace simply because individuals refuse to share their knowledge
- The typical blame culture that exists in modern organizations is the prime contributor
- Lessons learned sessions don’t work
- Does your organization seem to constantly rehash the same old problems?
All Hat and No Cattle

“If you had to identify in one word the reason why the human race has not achieved, and never will achieve, its full potential, that word would be ‘meetings’”

-Dave Barry

- Most meetings are held for basically the same reason that Arbor Day is observed, namely, tradition

- Most meetings are rodeos taken over by the organizational cowboys

- Most don’t have an agenda

- $P_d = 1/2^n$

- Worst are staff meetings off-site meetings and project status meetings
What Me Worry?

- MAD editor Harvey Kurtzman described Neuman as “a face that didn’t have a care in the world, except mischief.”
- Neuman's famous motto is “What, Me Worry?”
  “I don't have to worry about anything”
- That’s what plausible deniability is all about
- Relates back to The Selfish Herd Theory
- Also called “Blamestorming”
- Results in:
  - People hiding mistakes
  - Lack of Truth
  - Culture of fear
Drinkin’ the Kool Aid

– In Lewis Carroll’s Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland
  • Alice asks, “Cheshire puss, would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”
  • “That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,” said the cat.
  • “I don’t much care where,” said Alice.
  • “Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the cat.”

– A Vision statement that the organization hasn’t bought into

– Values not followed
  • Most illusive
  • Leadership by lamination

– Do they TTT or WTW
Lake Wobegon

- Todd: Rajiv, Jerry wants us to do employee evaluations.
- Rajiv: Wonderful, sir. I’ll bring the tissues for the tears that will follow our reviews.
- Todd: No one will be crying.
- Rajiv: Well, not if you do it right.
- Todd: You know, I think I’m just going to do it myself.
- Rajiv: Just remember, sir, fear is the best motivator. Sometimes I think shame, but mostly fear.
- Todd: If they ever build another death star, there’s a captain’s chair with your name on it.
- Rajiv: Is that a management position?
Lake Wobegon Effect

Lake Wobegon is a fictional location where “all the women are strong, all the men are good looking, and all the children are above average”

- The Prairie Home Companion, Garrison Keillor

The performance review process does not accomplish its stated goal – why?

- The Halo Effect—the propensity to want to forget everything negative about yourself
- The Reverse Halo Effect—for individuals judged to have a single undesirable trait to be subsequently judged to have many poor traits

Other factors;
- Subjective Measurements
- Myth of Pay-for-Performance
- 20/70/10 policies
Jumpin’ on the Bandwagon

- Means to figuratively jump on whatever the latest fad may be, or to succumb to the herd mentality
  - Should an organization remain focused on doing things just like everybody else?
    - Or, do something original, “do something remarkable.”

- Metrics

- Buzzword mentality:
  - Think outside the box
  - Low-hanging fruit
  - Multi-tasking
  - Accountability

- Includes resume buzzwords (creative, effective, problem solver, etc.)
Is Your Organization Dysfunctional?

- Leadership by lamination
- Quality and quantity are both job one
- Lessons learned sessions…but they never change future events or actions
- People keep Pearl Harbor files
- Internal competition is encouraged and rewarded
- The word “teamwork” is batted around like a softball at a company picnic
- Fiefdoms and favoritism run rampant
- Blamestorming, Firefighting, 11th hour crises
- Decisions made at the highest levels
- Delegation without the power to do it
- The Goal, Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, Good to Great and Who Moved My Cheese are bantered about to create the illusion that they reflect the leadership’s abilities
- Resources are tightly controlled
- You’re told you’re lucky to have a job
- The overused threat of accountability
- No sense of humor
- Workaholism & micromanaging
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