



Organizations, People & Effective Communication

Most Good and Bad Consequences Come Down to People and Communication

Richard J. Anthony, Sr.

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ORGANIZATIONS, PEOPLE &
EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION
MOST GOOD AND BAD CONSEQUENCES
COME DOWN TO
PEOPLE AND COMMUNICATION



RICHARD J. ANTHONY, SR.



University Readers™

San Diego, CA

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Dedicated to Marlene and our brood of five and fifteen,
as well as the legion of colleagues and clients from
whom I have had the opportunity to learn.

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Prologue



To be sure, I've had my share of fantasies, but I never seriously considered producing a book. Throughout my career I've worked hard and pulled on every talent, real or imagined, I have been fortunate to have by virtue of lineage or learning. And having spent half of my life as a consultant, I have been amazed at how much of what I do comes down to dispensing good old fashioned common sense and unflinching sagacity to clients whose perspective is often too clouded by circumstance to see the problem clearly or imagine the solution.

Nonetheless, here I am, presuming that a few people beyond my immediate family might be interested in my musings about organizations and human nature and getting things done the right way the first time. I hope I'm right because, with as much humility as I am capable of, I think there are some things interspersed among these pages that are worth considering. Nothing too lofty. Just practical lessons gleaned from real life experiences with lots of different people across many industries, at every level, from border to border and off shore. Contrary to the opinions of some, I'm not so delusional to think I have all the answers. Far from it. But I do understand most of the questions. And, as

a wise man once said (it could have been a woman), that's the beginning of knowledge.

This book is a compilation of essays and presentations crafted over the past several years reflecting my beliefs, biases and experiences. I've tried to present the material in some logical sequence, but I'll leave it to the reader to decide whether one idea or concept rationally follows from another. It probably doesn't really matter. The events of real life are usually random. It's how we deal with uncertainty and the unexpected that ultimately defines success or failure, regardless of vocation or station in life, on the job or in our homes.

The book begins with an article titled "Anthony's Six Gs of Change" because understanding and managing the dynamics of change are fundamental to individual and organizational achievement. The subsequent articles are ornaments on the tree of change, most of them having to do with organizing for action and inspiring others to reach beyond their grasp through effective communication, the definition of which you'll want to share with others.

I like definitions that sum up complex notions succinctly without giving up any of the substance. Here's my definition of a high performing organization for example:

A culture in which people and processes are operating at peak performance and employees have a strong sense of purpose and affiliation, are motivated to make emotional and intellectual commitments to business goals, receive timely feedback on individual and group performance, are recognized and rewarded for achievement, have opportunities for continuous learning and job enrichment,

and are encouraged to balance personal and work-related commitments.

Doesn't that sum it up perfectly? You could write a book on each element of the definition. In fact, such books have been written. Tomes, most of them. That's why I chose to produce a little book that distills much of what's in many of the larger volumes.

As you will see, another of my biases is that effective communication is a prerequisite for effective leadership. I learned early on in my consulting career that it's the leader's job to answer the seven questions most employees have, regardless of position or station: **What's my job? Am I valued? How am I doing? Where are we going? How do I fit in? How can I help? What's in it for me?** To my dismay, I have watched employers spend millions of dollars trying to provide satisfactory answers and failing because they didn't understand another immutable truth: **People do what is valued, observed, measured and rewarded.**

The book concludes with an Organizational Health Checklist—15 items intended to evoke critical discussion about an organization's readiness for sustainable growth and expansion. None of the questions invites a simple yes or no response. Each begins with "what" or "how" to prompt introspective analysis and hopefully illuminating debate.

So please come with me through these pages of condensed learnings that stretch over my 35-year career as consultant and counselor to senior managers. I hope you will leave with a new insight or reaffirmation of a principle or two that guides your relationships with others and reinvigorates you as an effective leader and a responsible follower. Successful enterprises need both.

1. Anthony's Six Gs of Change



In all of recorded history, mankind has produced 14 original ideas. Truly original, timeless ideas that lifted us to higher levels of aspiration and achievement. I believe I know two of them.

How I came to this revelation is a subject for another time. For now, I want to single out one of the 14 originals as the basis for this chapter.

Since time immemorial, as surely as day follows night, the immutable fact is that **change happens**. Simple. Uncomplicated. As basic as the laws of nature and the cosmos that govern earth's life cycle and the path of the planets through space.

Books have been published, articles written, speeches made, algorithms developed, theologies postulated and corporate cults organized in pursuit of the truth about change. The result has been greater awareness of the phenomenon but not a commensurate comprehension of the nature, velocity, volume or predictable consequences of change.

Gs OF CHANGE

Over the years, I had read the books and articles and listened to the evangelists of contemporary management theory. It all

seemed so unnecessarily complicated. Until I read a few lines in a *Wall Street Journal* column. A man, whose identity I have long since forgotten, briefly described the Gs of change, an alliterative series that described the most common, successive reactions to change. Instead of grappling with the illusory questions of what change is, the Gs approach deals with the effects of change.

Since jotting the words down years ago, I have continued to develop and expand the Gs approach. With whatever attribution to another may be warranted, I present to you Anthony's Six Gs of Change. Simple. Uncomplicated. And easier to comprehend than the laws of nature or the cosmos.

The Six Gs of Change are: **Gasping, Groaning, Gripping, Groping, Grasping and Growing**. The first three describe the emotional response. The second three, the intellectual, rational steps to adapting and surviving.

Stop for a moment and think about your own situation, personally and organizationally. Chances are you can relate to each of the six words, and that each word evokes a response based on your experiences with traumatic changes in your life. Similarly, your work unit, department, division and company—all living organisms capable of emotional and rational responses—have also reacted to change in the same linear litany of the Six Gs. Indeed, the descriptions are applicable to even larger entities: the US electorate's reactions to proposed welfare reform, tax increases, alternative energy, immigration, foreign policy, natural disasters or the human tragedy of tyranny, for example.

Six Gs of Change	
Gasping	Early awareness of need to change (Never happen.)
Groaning	Early acceptance of need to change (Could happen.)
Gripping	Grudging acceptance of need to change (Going to happen.)
Groping	Search for viable alternatives (What now?)
Grasping	Selection of most viable alternatives (Now what?)
Growing	Development of solution, implementation, measurement and accountability for results (Not so bad.)

PROGRESSIVE RESPONSE

Change is an altered state, a reordering of contributory factors, a displacement of the familiar. It can be as subtle as the ambient disturbance in a room created by an opened door or window. It can be as acute as your body's sensory alert when you experience a severe cut, break or infection.

The intensity and duration of the responses described by the Six Gs is in direct proportion to the level of threat, discomfort or pain caused by change and whether the change was completely unexpected. Rumors of mass lay-offs, for example, represent a clear and present danger and are likely to evoke quick, strident emotional responses. However, because

most employees—regardless of collar color (blue, gray, pink or white)—have lost faith in the notion of job security, they progress quickly from initial Gasping through Griping to Groping.

On another scale, pick any community in the country whose economy is tied to one or more large employers. Chances are, they have gone through a great deal of communal Gasping, Groaning and Griping in response to the relentless wave of downsizing washing over virtually every industry. After a period of adjustment, the reaction becomes more rational through the Groping and Grasping stages, advancing to Growing, which is adapting to the altered state. It is in the gap between Grasping and Growing that individuals and organizations are capable of high levels of creativity and innovation. Forced by circumstance, they concentrate their energies on creative problem solving techniques that often result in breakthrough ideas and approaches.

The saga of the Philadelphia Navy Yard is a good example. Because the Philadelphia Navy Yard had succeeded in sidestepping previous congressional budget cuts, it was thought to have divine protection. Headlines about renewed efforts to close the yard barely got beyond Gasping.

In 1993, Philadelphia and environs moved quickly from Gasping to Griping as the ostensibly impossible was overcome by the inevitable. Despite the rhetoric and entreaties of the hometown politicians, and having exhausted every possible appeal process, Philadelphia would have to comply with the federal government's decision to close the yard.

Confronted with the irrefutable reality of a major economic setback, the city formed a coalition (Groping) to develop a plan (Grasping) to find new uses for the facility. Today, the

effort (Growing) is still underway and the Navy Yard has become prime real estate. A shining example of snatching victory out of the jaws of defeat.

DIAGNOSE FIRST

At the organizational level, I believe that the Six Gs of Change are as clearly discernible in the Fortune 100 companies as in the thousands of US companies employing 10 or fewer people. Consequently, in my consulting work, I have used the Six Gs principle to help clients understand the anatomy of change and how to manage the phenomenon. My counsel to management is that they must first know where the organization is in its response to change before formulating a strategy to manage change to an optimally satisfactory conclusion. Creating consensus is often the most difficult task.

Try this exercise. Describe the Six Gs of Change to 10 people in your firm and ask each to select the G that best describes your organization's current response to change. My experience suggests that you will not achieve unanimity. Your group of 10 will be divided in its perceptions of where the organization is on the change continuum.

The significance of the disparity is that until a reasonable consensus has been developed, it is exceedingly difficult to formulate a change management strategy. A Gripping organization is quite different from a Groping organization. Each state or condition has a corresponding, appropriate action phase, supported with a communication strategy.

SURVEYS

The most effective way to take the pulse of an organization's responses to significant change is to ask. Various called job satisfaction surveys, attitude surveys, culture surveys and environmental scans, the process of systematic inquiry can range from a series of individual interviews, to focus groups to a confidential questionnaire. In most cases, the process involves a combination of the three.

Although methodologies may differ somewhat, most survey specialists take a cascading approach, starting with executive interviews, then focus groups to identify and prioritize the issues that are subsequently converted to questions for a confidential questionnaire distributed electronically or conventional mail to all or a sample of employees.

To their regret, many well-meaning organizations have made a bad situation worse by ignoring one of the cardinal rules of employee sensing, namely: if senior management isn't prepared to accept and deal with the survey findings, it probably is best not to ask employees for their perceptions and opinions. The most valuable role an outside consultant can play is evaluating an organization's readiness to assume the potential risk of conducting a high-profile survey.

COMMUNICATION

I learned the importance of matching communication to the audience and to the environment as a young copywriter in an advertising agency. The copy chief, the most experienced and creative writer in the agency, set the standard for the rest of us who labored to fuse words and pictures into effective commercial messages. His "copy platform" or guideline was to craft copy

that was **helpful, friendly and authoritative**. I never forgot that lesson and have continued to apply it in the organizational communication consulting I have done since my ad agency days.

Think of helpful, friendly and authoritative as levers or valves that control the flow, tone and amount of information to your audience. Communication materials prepared for the management of Gripping companies, for example, should be more authoritative in tone to mitigate any misguided hope among employees that persistent griping will be rewarded. No matter how reluctantly, employees must accept change and the consequences of change.

Those few situations I know of where strong, negative employee reaction influenced management to reverse itself was only temporary. In each case, the plant was closed or moved, the medical benefits were deliberalized or eliminated, the work rules were changed. Change happens. It can be rescheduled. It can't be canceled.

Acceptance is usually followed by Griping for ways to cope. The organization is now more receptive to and eager for authoritative information, provided in a helpful and friendly way. The tone of the communication, therefore, shifts to what some may consider conciliatory. I prefer to think of it as moving toward an environment of partnership.

The role of effective communication in prodding an organization along the change continuum is critical. In fact, I do not believe enduring change can occur without effective communication, defined as:

Sharing of information, in an environment of mutual trust and respect, intended to reinforce or change attitudes, and ultimately behavior, in order to achieve specific, measurable outcomes.

This definition goes far beyond the two-way communication bromide in most prescriptive texts. It demands that management share power with employees, who in turn must share risk. It recognizes that attitudinal change precedes behavioral change. It implies that positive organizational cultures are built and sustained on the bedrock of collaboration in the cause of common goals. It defines what management is.

Bad news requires good communication. In the scores of employee focus groups I have conducted during my career, I have heard a recurring lament from those whose jobs and lives have been impacted by significant change: “Nobody explained why it had to be done this way. They just made the decision themselves without giving me a chance to think of another way.”

The better approach to communicating change, especially when it involves bad news, is to:

- take the time to establish the need for change by highlighting the consequences of maintaining the status quo
- present the available alternatives with commentary on which may be more appropriate to your circumstances
- select and communicate the optimal solution and explain the rationale for the selection
- outline the implementation plan and emphasize the need for cooperation
- provide periodic progress reports on the transition towards the desired change goal

The approach helps to build credibility and trust. It also helps to create an environment in which people spend less time Gripping and more time Growing.

SUMMARY

Any dislodging from what is familiar, comfortable and predictable is bound to cause some consternation. Confronted with significant change, individuals and organizations initially react in successive levels of emotionalism. Once the inevitability of change is accepted, responses become more rational in an attempt to cope and survive.

Experience indicates six responses to change: Gasping at the prospect; Groaning at the speculation; Gripping about the reality; Groping for ways to cope; Grasping at viable solutions, and Growing towards adaptive attitudes and behavior. The intensity and duration of each of the six responses correlates with the acuity of the change and how change is managed.

Myriad examples of individuals, companies and governments substantiate the universality of the six responses on the change continuum. In organizations experiencing dramatic change, management must first determine where the firm is on the continuum in order to develop the appropriate strategy. For example, the type and amount of information shared with employees, as well as how it is shared should take into account whether the organization is in an emotional response mode or a rational response mode. That assessment should determine the tone of communication to employees; that is, the degree to which it is helpful, friendly and authoritative.

Effective communication is critical to any change strategy. The complexity of change requires the creation of a new partnership between management and employees, based on mutual trust and respect. The need for partnership is critical to the organization's ability to make the transition from emotional responses to rational responses.

Gasping, Groaning, Griping, Groping, Grasping and Growing. The Six Gs of Change is one way of understanding and dealing with the effects of change. It is an approach that provides some predictability to an otherwise erratic process. The fact that change happens is one of the 14 immutable original ideas in the world. In no particular order.

7. Bridging the Great Divide among Four Generations



A few years ago, an employment attorney I know predicted that age discrimination and the resulting intergenerational tug of war would emerge as the number one issue in corporate America. How prophetic he was!

For the first time in US history, we have four (some argue five) diverse generations in the nation's workforce of 138.5 million people. The breakdown into peer groups varies depending upon the source. However, most would agree with the date-of-birth approach taken by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics in compiling data. Additionally, generational advocates assign personality traits to each group.

- Born 1925–1945: Silent Generation — Traditional, Respectful, Hard Working
- Born 1946–1962: Baby Boomers — Idealistic, Driven, Crusader
- Born 1963–1980: Generation X — Egalitarian, Self-Reliant, Work/Life Balance
- Born 1981–2000: Generation Y — Impatient, Technophile, Collaborative

Each generation brings to the workplace different perceptions, values, aspirations, attitudes, habits, demands, needs, expectations and lexicons. Often the same words have slightly different meanings. Upward mobility, for example, once a desirable and attainable aspiration for many, is today for most workers a delusion because organizations have flattened their hierarchical pyramids to remain competitive. Consequently, competition for the comparatively few remaining higher level positions is contributing to an increase in intergenerational conflict, particularly between late-stage Boomers and Gen X workers. A simple matter of supply and demand. For the Gen X and Y cohorts, however, upward mobility is less important. Flexibility and work-life balance are high on their value scale, words that don't have the same meaning or weight for those in the Silent Generation.

BRIDGING THE GAP

Trying to bridge the differences that separate two and three generations was difficult enough. Figuring out how to effectively manage four very divergent generational cohorts without giving way to a management-by-exception modus is putting a strain on traditional management theory and philosophy. And because generational conflict in the workplace is based on fundamental differences in psyche, experience and background, each generation responds differently to messages management uses to attract, retain and motivate. More about that later.

My friend and colleague, Dr. David Bush, is Director of Graduate Programs in Human Resource Development at Villanova University. Like me, he has had an interest in the aging of the workforce and the intramural conflict among generations.

He observes that the root of the problem may be that “each cohort may perceive the older cohorts in ways that constitute a barrier to expression, to conducting themselves ‘our way’, as was expressed quite clearly in the sixties hit ‘My Generation’ by The Who. That same sentiment was rendered, if somewhat differently, in the Paul Anka composition made famous by Sinatra, ‘I Did It My Way.’ While both examples of popular culture appeared within a two-year period in the 1960s, they appealed to different generations and both express a justification of their generational subcultures. If the younger generation perceives the older one as blocking it from full expression to which it feels entitled, then, the older cohort is likely to resent the challenge to its view of the social order.”

CONTRARIAN BOOMERS

Most employers seem to be oblivious to the generational differences bubbling up among their workers, or they choose to believe that time and patience will restore harmony—that is, the conflict will be resolved once the older employees have retired or been furloughed. Problem is, the Boomers, the largest of the four generations, are not likely to follow the conventional script. They aren’t moving out to make room for their successors. The first wave of Boomers turned 62 in 2008 and can expect to enjoy relatively good health and live an additional 25 to 30 years. The “third stage” of life some people are calling it.

Because of personal preference or financial need, more than 65% of Boomers say they intend to continue working beyond “normal retirement,” according to AARP. Yet, in spite of the fact that this unprecedented phenomenon has been heralded by futurists and demographers for decades, little has been done to

prepare for its impact on the workforce and virtually every aspect of our society. As a nation, we seem destined to ignore even seismic transformational change until it is menacingly upon us.

I have known Dr. Ken Dychtwald, psychologist and gerontologist, for more than 20 years. Ken and his wife, Maddy, founded Age Wave, based in Emeryville, CA to study the aging process and to advance a better understanding of the impact of aging on the market place and the workplace. For years, Ken's was a voice in the wilderness as he traveled the country heralding the coming of the Baby Boom tsunami. He was a charismatic advocate with a compelling message. But it wasn't until increases in health care costs broke out of the single digits in the early 80s that employers, marketers and government officials started listening to Ken and others who foresaw the profound changes Boomers would have on health care, the economy and retirement. I still have copies of Ken's signature videotape presentation on aging. It was a spellbinder. The consulting firm I was with at the time had agreed to sponsor Ken. Part of the deal was that I would tape an opening for Ken's videotaped presentation.

The underlying trend lines that will ensure intergenerational conflict for at least the next 20 to 25 years have finally captured the attention of researchers, social scientists, government and corporate policy makers. Most seem to agree that simply tweaking existing policies won't be enough. We need new approaches to managing divergent generations and to supporting 78 million Boomers who will be transitioning to the third stage of their lives over the next 30 years. We need a new vocabulary to re-define words like work, career, success, retirement and quality of life. Words like "senior" and "mature adult" are resented and irrelevant because they have been code for "old." Although late in coming, awareness of the need for change in the way different

stages of life are perceived is becoming a daily topic of discussion and debate. Solutions, however, will be hard to come by.

COMMUNICATING WITH DIVERGENT GENERATIONS

In the meantime, I'd like to focus on one aspect of this new reality: how to communicate with a changing, divergent workforce. In other parts of this book I offer a definition of effective communication:

Sharing of information, in an environment of mutual trust and respect, intended to change or reinforce attitudes, and ultimately behavior, to achieve specific, measurable outcomes.

Please read that definition again, this time very slowly. It defines a sharing of power among people who trust and respect one another, are of a common mind on the issues, leading to unified action to achieve worthwhile goals. It's a definition I started devising with some of my consulting colleagues well over 20 years ago, at about the time Ken Dytchwald was launching his crusade on aging. I believe it is as applicable to today's divergent workforce as it was back then. But it has to be applied differently.

Imagine that the CEO of a mid-size manufacturer decides to convene a meeting of employees to come up with recommendations to improve productivity. The CEO encourages the employees to think out of the box and gives them one day to meet offsite, on their own, without management interference. Each was selected by his/her supervisor. The group is made up of workers from each of the four generations we've been

describing. Frank is 66, been with the company 30 years and is highly regarded by his coworkers for his skill and experience. Steve is 55, been with the company only six years and was hired because of his industry expertise and ability to get things done quickly. Betty is 34, been with the company 11 years and has been making steady progress through the ranks because of her ability to organize effective teams. Enrico is 27, been with the company four years and seems to have great potential for development. The CEO, a Boomer himself, is placing a bet on a Traditionalist who believes he's seen it all, a Boomer who wants to impress to get ahead, an overly self-confident Gen X who is skeptical of management's motives, and a Gen Y who sees the meeting as a chance to pick up some knowledge he can use elsewhere.

The first thing the group has to do is select a facilitator from among them who can stimulate open discussion without imposing personal bias or thwarting dissenting opinions. The exchange among the four might go like this:

Frank: "I've been involved in these kinds of meetings before and I think I know how we can come up with what they want if we stick with a tight agenda that doesn't take us off into talking about stuff that will never happen. You know, stay out of the weeds. It's a waste of time."

Steve: "But they said they expect us to be innovative. Sounds like you're against spending time trying to come up with some new ideas. I think we should really work at developing some off the wall ideas, then decide whether we have something that can work."

Spending some time in the weeds, as you put it, could be worthwhile.”

Betty: “Frankly, I think they made a mistake putting this group together. If they really want new ideas, they should have picked people who have demonstrated that they’re willing to take risks. I can think of several bright, young people in the company who aren’t limited in their thinking by the old ways of doing things. The company needs some really progressive, even radical thinking.”

Enrico: “Seems to me that anything we do is better than doing nothing. Why don’t we go on the Internet to see what other companies have done, pick the best ones and put our own spin on something we think will work here? From what I’ve seen around here, whatever we come up with will be a tough sell if they think it’s too far out.”

Four people. Four different perspectives. Four different agendas. What made the CEO think these four people could be put in a room for eight hours and expect them to agree on much of anything? Which one of the four is likely to prevail and assume the role of facilitator? Finally, what could have been done to prepare them to work together as a team?

Here are a few tips:

1. A skilled facilitator should have been assigned to the session to create an environment of mutual trust and respect among

the four participants. How? By taking them through one or more exercises designed to help them see themselves as others see them.

To Frank, the facilitator might respond: “After 30 years, you’ve seen lots of programs and projects this company has tried to grow and prosper. Better than anyone else, you should see the need for some fresh thinking.”

To Steve: “Your approach may have merit. It deserves the group’s consideration. Perhaps you could explain in more detail what you have in mind.”

To Betty: “Each of you brings experience and enthusiasm to this meeting. You might want to consider using a small group of bright, young workers as a sounding board for the ideas you come up with to see if they can be improved upon.”

To Enrico: “Using the Internet as a research tool is a fine idea. You could use your laptop once the group decides the subjects it wants to look into.”

2. Once the facilitator has taken steps to create an environment of inclusiveness and relative equality, he/she should engage the group in a non-threatening discussion of obstacles to change and prompt the participants to agree on techniques to help avoid premature, judgmental conclusions.

To the participants: “In our day-to-day jobs, we’re expected to make decisions quickly, sometimes based on incomplete information. But in this session, I encourage each of you to take your time, to consider rather than to judge, to imagine rather than limit the options. I’m confident that together you can work your way through a process that you will all feel very good about.”

3. The facilitator also has an opportunity to turn the diversity of the group into a strength.

To the participants: “This is the ideal group to tackle the issue of productivity in this company because the four of you represent the entire workforce here. Chances are that your ideas and opinions are shared by others who have backgrounds similar to yours. It’s the diversity of the group, and the workforce, that gives the company its vitality. Developing consensus may not be easy, but this meeting gives you the chance to demonstrate how to put aside differences in order to achieve a common goal. Let’s begin by coming up with a definition of ‘productivity’ you can all agree on.”

The role of the facilitator is to channel the energy of the individual and the group, not to try to harness it. Harnessing results in resistance. Channeling must be done with finesse, which can have the equivalent power of force in terms of achieving desired outcomes.

APPLYING THE PRINCIPLES

The scenario I have presented here illustrates some of the other communication principles and techniques described throughout this book. They take on special significance because of the sharp contrasts that often divide intergenerational audiences. For example:

- Matching the principle of “Helpful, Friendly and Authoritative” to an intergenerational workforce requires knowing how to play each of the three elements with each generation to get a positive response. Reread the facilitator’s comments above to each of the four meeting participants to see how the facilitator matched the elements to each generation.
- The purpose of communication is to “inform, instruct, educate, motivate and move to action.” How did the facilitator manage to apply one or more of these goals in addressing the issues raised by the four participants?

The experts argue about whether the US will actually experience a serious labor shortage and whether the inherent differences among generations will indeed contribute to the worst possible consequence, including violence in the workplace. Let them argue. The facts are that the US workforce is undeniably segregated into at least four generational brackets, each with distinct characteristics. Being aware of these differences is essential in order to connect and engage all segments of the workforce and of our increasingly pluralistic society. Effective intergenerational communication cannot occur without generous doses of empathy and tolerance of dissent. What a wonderful opportunity to turn a perceived weakness into a competitive advantage.

Epilogue



I believe it was Lincoln who, in writing to a friend, opined that his letter would have been shorter if he had had more time. Perhaps the same can be said about this book. On the other hand, following the advice of my copy chief from my days in advertising, the book is as long as it had to be to get the message across: organizations are living things, complex and confounding, magnificent in what can be achieved when they are operating at peak performance, dysfunctional when the parts are seriously out of alignment. In the final analysis, overriding all of the technology and high finance that drive organizations from conception to full maturity and prominence, people make the difference between success and failure. To be effective, people need timely, accurate, complete information that meets their basic needs of engagement and inspires them to share a vision and reach for a common goal. Effective leaders understand the linkage. Outstanding leaders derive their power from it.

Incidentally, go back and count the number of times the definition of effective communication is interspersed throughout these pages. Reason? My hope was that if you remember nothing else you've read here, that definition would leave a lasting impression. It's a powerful definition. And it works.