

Why Organizational Climate Surveys May Do More Harm Than Good

By Carol Sanford

**(Executive Summary in At Work Newsletter—
in the Performance At Work Column)**

Several divisions in both DuPont and Clorox commissioned annual climate surveys to give them guidance as leaders to improving the organization. Once they evaluated the effects they were producing with the survey, however they found far more effective means of achieving their intentions and getting more ‘bang for the buck’. In fact, one DuPont Senior Vice President ruefully acknowledges, “we have learned, the hard way, that climate surveys are not neutral means of getting information. They actually may have created more harm than good in some cases, and for reasons we did not understand. We better achieve our intentions through ‘deliberative group processes’; and in that way avoid the unintended consequences of surveys and similar instruments.”

A manager who is accountable for the “culture change process” in one DuPont sector explains why the concern developed regarding surveys.

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“What we are trying to develop are self-reliant individuals, who apply good judgment on behalf of the organization, who wisely apply resources and capabilities to improving the effectiveness of stakeholder such as customer’s, and who initiate and sustain effort to make the organization *work* to produce results. We want this to happen within the context of a business strategy and while considering the ever-changing dynamics in the marketplace. But if that is what you want, you have to question whether every action you take is moving you in that direction or away from it. Along with many other typical organizational initiatives, we found that climate surveys and other similar surveys were not supportive.”

The organizational aim that the DuPont manager stated is probably also an aim, perhaps unarticulated, for many organizations. Self-reliance as a way of working, i.e. working as if the business belonged to the individual making a judgment call, requires a very different kind of workforce, a different organizational approach and culture, and ultimately a different business philosophy. Some DuPont sectors now seriously questions whether each proposed initiative or program is “right” for their organization, given this aim of self-reliance. Unlike the DuPont sector, most organizations have not

reflected on the degree to which their actions arise from the very culture and philosophy they seek to change, and why each such action may therefore be a lost step or even a backward step.

“The difference is truly a matter of paradigm difference. We are working to create processes that cease to foster what we call ‘other-reliant prescriptions’ and instead have individuals and teams which are self-reliant and directed by the same values and motives as our best and most effective hierarchical leaders. We have been working to create a workforce that is 100% self-motivated and entrepreneurial in relations to each of our product offerings and all of our stakeholders,” explains the Senior Vice President of DuPont. “The type of organization we believe everyone is going to have to evolve to is one in which everyone is—not a suggestor, a recommender, nor even a participant, but a full partner in the business.” Climate surveys are not generated in order to achieve such a goal but rather are, as we shall see, based on a different set of expectations and philosophies about the working of people and organizations.

The Rationale for Climate Surveys: Climate surveys are very popular and are conducted by 52% of the Fortune 500 in any given year, according to the American Management Association. This fervor in regard to surveys, according to the sponsors of such efforts, is based on three points of rationale that seem quite logical on the surface. In spite of the good intentions of such surveys, when the rationale is viewed from a paradigm such as that chosen by DuPont, they are based on assumptions that result in partial truths or ideological myths.

Myths Regarding Climate Surveys
Myth One—Organizational climate surveys provide a baseline by giving us an objective picture of reality in our organization
Myth Two— Organizational climate surveys provide direction for improving the organization;
Myth Three—Organization climate surveys are a generator of motivation to improve, through telling us how we compare to others in our “class;” or ourselves from previous years.

Intentions and Unintended-Effects: All surveying is based on good intentions as is apparent in the above statements. What is not understood is that surveys are not the most effective way to achieve these intentions, and further that surveys produce some unexpected culture and human dynamics—unintended-effects—which are not so apparent, or desirable. There are a variety of different techniques and approaches for conducting climate surveys. The majorities of approaches are based on all the above myths and therefore have most if not all of the “unintended-effects” of surveys. Some surveyor’s have changed their approaches over the years and so are subject to a smaller number of the unintended-effects. However, there is one unintended-effect to which they are all subject by the very nature of a “survey”. Therefore if the desire of your organization is to be moving toward a paradigm such as those hinted at by the DuPont Senior Vice President, you will want to reflect carefully on the following experiences offered by the managers and front-line people quoted here regarding the value of what might be called “deliberative group process”.

Myth One: Surveys provide an objective view of reality

False Assumptions Underlying the Myth:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • generalized summaries reflect reality • cross-sections of perspectives reflect the whole • people are more open and honest with ‘outsiders’

Unintended-Effects —What is More Likely to Result:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oversimplification becomes valued over real-life complexity • A “compartmentalized mind” is elicited through the nature of questions and requirements of an anonymous process • We intensify already held attachments and perspectives

Generalizability or Oversimplification: The Public Broadcasting System (PBS) engaged in an interesting experiment earlier this year that demonstrates what surveys have fostered in our nation. They concluded that opinion polls (not dissimilar to an organizational survey) have created a troubling dynamic for our democracy. Voters are expected to respond too quickly and without thought to issues of enormous complexity and then in turn expect politicians to reactively take care of the issues. We have as a

nation begun to, as a result of constant reporting of survey results, to expect the “right answers” to emerge from such snap judgments which repeatedly prove to be too simply when exposed to discussion. We have come to see this as a way to find “the truth”.

The PBS experiment created a forum whereby people could be more deliberative in their thinking. It demonstrated what differences in opinions emerge when people are in a deliberative process, rather than responding only instantaneously. The participants even reported a significantly improved sense of personal responsibility for the concerns they expressed. “Just like the multiple-choice tests you had to take in school that had forced choices, a comprehensive and thoughtful answer cannot be limited to such divisions. We try to avoid thinking this way because it actually fosters an oversimplified view of reality,” reports the DuPont “culture change manager”.

People’s reality before deliberation is not the same as their reality after deliberation, so what is it we are really after? It is important to differentiate between the sampling techniques that are used for market analysis for

consumer products that hold up fairly well and the development of ideas and solutions for complex dynamics. “We can visualize a more dynamic and complete view of our organization by actually working to increase the amount and nature of complexity with which people are asked to deal everyday and to use in their decision-making. The survey responses were *no match* for the quality of thinking that is produced in an organization that is developing the capacity of people to work with complexity and dynamics—which is more the way the real world works anyway,” argues the Senior Vice President from DuPont. “We rely on people to consider the dynamics that exist in the marketplace and to behave purposefully in regard to them.”

Cross-Sections or Compartmentalizing: “Well there is reality and then there is REALITY”, says one Marketing manager from a DuPont sector. “You really want everyone in your organization to be able to see the working of the organization from their own part of the value-adding process, but also from the *reality* in which the company is relating to its customer’s and competitors, as well as from the changing dynamics that say what the future is requiring us to prepare ourselves for *now*. Surveys, by their nature do not connect people with the whole and the relationships we need to consider—so

we said ‘why do surveys of partial reality’. We then found a better way to go after it.” Surveys came out of the cultures that compartmentalized thinking which can be seen in the nature of the process in which you think about one question at a time, about one element of the issues, and usually is conceived of from only an internal view of the company—no ties to the marketplace and other stakeholders.

Open and Honest or Increasingly Habituated to Our Own Thoughts: Psychological research (American Psychological Association) has given another very good reason for avoiding such surveys in terms of their “reality producing qualities.” It turns out that when we receive input in the form of a statement or a question, the brain goes to work automatically to find a *familiar pathway* to which to connect the subject matter. Even with new ideas the person does not, without a very unique intervention, form a new connection or see something in a new way, but automatically goes to an already known routing based on past experience, not one necessary related to current circumstances. The unconscious mind actually taints our perceptions and moves any new input or observed change into our familiar judgment patterns. Every time the same or similar subject matter is

introduced, the mind goes through the same routing and finds the same response. This is one of the reasons changing people’s minds is difficult—but not impossible, as you will see.

Even more important, every time that route in the brain is traveled, it becomes more deeply imprinted, in the same way as a rut in the road becomes deeper as each tire rolls through it. Surveys in which people respond to what “they think” invite their minds to become less flexible and less able to make new connections. An operator in a DuPont system acknowledges his own discovery over the last few years. “We see what we believe, not the other way around. After changing my way of working I realized I had been reinforcing my own limited views by constantly accepting my first thought about something as ‘the way it was’. Our current processes have made me more demanding of others and myself about what we say is ‘true’. It has improved my mental flexibility as a result. It shows up at home also.” This can only be achieved with deliberative thinking processes evoked through group interaction.

A Comprehensive View of Reality: Working from a Developmental Paradigm

- Develop Reflective and Deliberative Thinking Across the Whole
- Work from the Perspective of Larger Wholes as the Foundation
- Disrupt Mechanical Thinking by the Process Used to View The Work:

Disrupt Mechanicalness and Develop Deliberative Thinking: “After we understood more about how changing of our *thinking* works, we began to focus on processes that involved people in efforts to disrupt the normal (e.g. mechanical) processing of concerns—this takes some explaining—and got everyone working in ways less likely to trigger pre-formed thoughts emerging. For example, when people can reflect upon and analyze what is going on in their minds, they generate the will to change themselves. So we *reflect* a lot as teams—everyone together—on how our *thinking* is causing us to behave in particular ways with predictable outcomes on our products and markets. Reflection works well once people are connected with meaningful work, through which this intentionality can be engaged and fostered.” This from a Weyerhaeuser General Manager, who says repeatedly that the social and thinking side of life at work are too often ignored in the attempt to bring about change. “Corporations tend to be in too big a hurry to take the time to work with human nature and the complexity that exists in our businesses. So

we keep trying out different programs, each one taking more energy and gaining less return for the effort; and people take us less seriously each time.”

The whole of human nature includes a higher self that wants to make a contribution and to be a part of something meaningful. This requires a capability to be reflective and to be deliberative in our thinking, least we fall into the trap of having the “automatic mind” lead our lives and guide our work. The reality that is reported by the “automatic mind” is a narrow and limited view. A published summary, from a survey of limited perspectives developed without deliberative interaction, does not constitute objective reality, does nothing to enable new thought or perspective, and worse tends to block the emergence of new thought.

Perspective of Larger Whole: “We try to avoid any programs or initiatives that are not clearly and directly linked to improving the effectiveness of our value-adding processes from Earth to Earth—e.g. Raw Materials through to Recycle. We want a whole picture of this cycle in every one’s mind along with a clear understanding of how they fit individually and how they

contribute. For example, if you know what it takes to make a customer effective, you can visualize, with a little effort, in what parts of our manufacturing or service process that is *happening or not happening*. Every action you take in the processes leading to that customer is increasing or reducing the customer's effectiveness. It's not really that hard to see. But too many organizations focus on smaller compartments of the operations and do not look at it in this whole way. The people in the organization will do the right thing, when the mental capacity to visualize the whole is developed.”

Comprehensive Reality Process: The sectors of DuPont cited here have designed as part of their way of working a similar deliberation process to that of PBS, but one more internalized in daily life. As in the PBS example, it requires an interactive process with others. Deliberation for DuPont is a process of coming to see all sides of a subject as is common to say a discussion. But in a deliberation process, it also includes understanding all *dimensions* of a subject and the relationship among and between different dynamics. The nature of energy required to achieve this integration is virtually impossible to achieve working independently. Deliberation for them also includes the holding of an aim to achieve a particular set of results

for a set of stakeholders, such as customers, shareholders, communities and the environment. Without this aim in mind as the interaction proceeds that is nothing to give the dialogue direction and purpose. Again the dynamics of a dedicated group process is imperative to such an achievement. Finally, they believe that without the development of the person to be able to see how their own way of thinking in influencing what they can conceive of and consider as valid, they cannot really “wrestle with” the complexity that is necessary to produce high quality thinking.

Myth Two: Surveys Provide a Direction To Pursue

False Assumptions Underlying the Myth:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wholistic Reality is obtained through responses to the surveys (see myth one)• Questions Can Be Sufficiently Comprehensive and Produce an Integrated Cohesive Picture• Organizational Issues Can Be Dealt With Separately from Marketplace Issues

Unintended-Effects —What is More Likely to Result:
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- Surveys overlook the dynamics and evolving relationships in the infrastructure which results in focusing on partial, maybe less leveragable, hazards and opportunities
- Personality and ego override consideration of greater questions, leaving the organization focused on internal dynamics, without the context of the external world which is impacting the organization;
- “Prescriptive direction setting” as a result of insufficient understanding of what is behind responses to the survey.

Dealing with dynamics: A survey does not lend itself to the dynamics present in the real world or the relationship that must be considered. It is not possible to apprehend reality when what we view is only a snapshot in time with views from people separated from one another in the organization, as they respond to questions. It is also most always the case that the thinking of the respondent does not include the larger whole systems and stakeholders to the company and its products and the dynamics of these relationships.

DuPont managers found surveys produce static pictures that were not sufficient to the new demands. “The old rule was for us to achieve optimum

variance management—we wanted to have an absolutely steady state; no errors, no problems. Well that doesn't seem to be good enough any more. We've got techniques up the kazoo to work on that and our people are very well trained and very good at their jobs. But that wasn't enough. We said we need to add something to that. One of the things we need to do is to create “open systems”. By open systems we mean entities that are linked to the environment in a way that they immediately understand changes in the environment and continually adapt to a continually changing environment. We need to create higher order capacities in ourselves, in order to create product offerings more appropriate to this dynamic world. So we need to both maintain a steady state and to develop the organization.”

Internal Focus with Ego and Personality as Drivers: When a survey is used, neither the questions nor answers tend to correlate the need for overall business improvements to the internal organizational or company issues and needs. Surveys rarely have a link to marketplace parameters and therefore tend to evoke responses that are personality or ego based—based on each person’s evaluation of the organization—which by its nature is not linked to the overall context. Even if marketplace questions were ask, the quality of

the thinking that can be developed without a group to think with, tend to have too narrow a focus—one person’s idea. This is partly because surveys and survey responders tend to think that functions of the organization are more separate and more isolated from one another than they are in actuality. One DuPont unit manager, points out, “there was a tendency to divide up the issues that emerge in and from the survey by determining to which department the response most relates. As a result of the recommendations that emerged, we had so many initiatives and teams going that we could hardly do our jobs and the work on them was fragmented, unintegrated and redundant. Now that we work off a core strategy, one in which everyone is focused on integrated strategic directives that tie each person to the success of the whole. Egos seem to be handled naturally with this context, as does overload.” One example of this was the removal of all comparisons of any part of the company to any other part. “Now all reporting is based on what are thought of as ‘integrative measures’ for which each person is held accountable—such as the customer’s margin improvement.”

When ask what percentage of your time do you spend on leading your organization into the future and what percentage solving problems to recover

from yesterday's actions, the answer is not surprising. Most organizations spend 90-95% of their improvement efforts focusing on managing disorder and trying to return things back to the starting point. "We use disciplinary reviews to prod employees to return to procedures and policy compliance, problem solving to return products to standards, and review teams to coerce compliance with regulations. We have no time left to work on the needs of the future. Surveys gave us more of this "disorder management" work to do, because the questions and our natural thinking tends to look at what we can see, not what we can't yet see (i.e. the future)," a mid-level manager offers. A survey tends to focus the leadership, and the operations on the good news or bad news about what we *are* and *are doing*—not what we *could be* or *could do*. Even when ask about the future and what the organization could do differently, the answers, without deliberative interaction process, will be drawn from what people see as the current short-comings of the organization. "Entropy, that which is running down and needs problem solving, is very seductive. We reward people who are very good at it and it is very addictive to work on, but it is not the stuff that creates excellent companies," offers a DuPont Business Manager.

Prescriptive Direction Setting: Since the answers are anonymous and confidential, the participants in the survey, do not develop the question, analyze the findings, or develop recommendations. A separate group, usually some part of management is usually set up to follow up. The interpretation goes through not only the surveyor's mind, but later through the mind of the task force or managers that follows up on the survey. "People were frequently totally surprised by what changes were initiated after surveys, and with what determination and conviction the implementation proceeded. It did not really feel any different than the experience of not having been surveyed in terms of the 'prescriptive' nature of the decisions. I do not miss surveys, and besides, I feel I am in charge of my own destiny now and can contribute to the company's destiny," reports one mechanic who says he returned survey forms on four occasions.

A Dynamic and Systemic Direction: Working from a Developmental Paradigm

- Externally focused stakeholder valued parameters that enable independent direction setting in the process of working toward new opportunities
- Teams that have continuity between internal and external business dynamics and between short and long term view.
- Highly developed capability to understand the whole context of the business, with accountability to be continuously regenerative thus subordinating ego needs.

Creating a Better Future for our Stakeholders: DuPont managers report that working from stakeholder's needs as a source of direction evokes creativity in everyone. Their business' bottom line supports the appropriateness of this choice. Surveys are not the appropriate mechanism for determining stakeholder needs. That must done organically through an interactive discover process as team members engage daily, mentally and actually, with the world outside their doors. A DuPont site manager explains, "Until we redesigned what we called *work*, we were eaten up everyday by alligators. We now put effort into looking at the opportunities we could pursue. We no longer stay stuck in managing what needs to be put "back on track". Now a

part of every person's job has built into it the time and direction to bring everything to a higher state than its original design. So, for example, no mechanic works on a machine simply to bring it back to an efficient working state. The question the mechanic is asking is, 'What will be required of this machine, based on the new pursuits the market teams are undertaking?'—and they can know the answer first hand because they are connected to the direction-setting decisions.”

Teams who link Internal & External, and Long and Short Term Dynamics:

“We have teams that are established long-term—not issue focused task forces— that focus on the world of our stakeholders. That is the world outside our insulated walls, in which there is a need for continuously improving our effectiveness in relations to our customers, shareholders, society, and the earth. For example, we learned about a Procter & Gamble team, that had focused evolving their raw materials for many years. They were concerned about improving the effectiveness of raw materials for all stakeholders. As a result they have created all of the product substitutions made in the industry, frequently replace existing products completely, are consistently ahead of regulation requiring changes in manufacturing, and

innovation prior to any expression of customer's need. We now have several teaming operations whose focuses are relevant to our businesses and stakeholders. This promotes a deliberative and systemic way to work, and it fosters self-reliance in people who improve the business. Everyone is a part of a team: operators, supervisors, and so on. They are also in a on-going personal and professional development process in which they work on improving the work and themselves in relation to the dynamics of the business.”

Develop capability to understand the whole context: A DuPont organizational change agent describes how this works. “To use good judgment on the spot everyday, they have to be able to think systemically about all the systems that depend on us and us on them for effectiveness. This means developing a kind of capability that is not typically developed in schools or work settings. What we're trying to do is to depict the whole of a value adding process for a business, all the essential elements of the business process and how they need to be interrelated. Every person must be able to do this mentally when weighing a decision if you are going to continually

develop the business, and continually discover new potential and bring it forward.”

Myth Three: Survey Results Generate Motivation

False Assumptions Underlying the Myths:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Competition and Fear are the best Motivators• Motivation is primarily environmentally determined• Motivation improves when management deal with problems expressed

Unintentional Effects—What is More Likely to Result:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tap into the lowest level of motivation, insufficiently recognizing the higher and more self-sustaining levels• People experience being manipulated and become more disenchanted with each new initiative.• People externalize problems and thereby reduce self-accountability

Levels of Motivation: Competition and fear can be a source of motivation,

but they cannot be sustained without continual external reinforcement. When

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the fear or challenge goes away, the motivation tends to wane. A DuPont union leader offers this perspective. “I believe that people have different levels of motivation, such as self-preservation or satisfaction on up to the desire to make a contribution or a difference to something. I know it is true of me. Our company has had a tendency to keep people moving by giving the most grim data and competitive comparisons they could find. It would work for a while and then people settled back into their ordinary way of working, and usually with a lower motivation toward making *that difference* at work and frequently more focused toward their personal needs.”

Some businesses have however discovered a more complex set of motivations and are having incredible results by giving up this mode of “stimulation motivation”. Again a DuPont Senior Vice President. “Development is the most fundamental way for people to become what they were born to be. And all of us were born to be something more but in our education process and upbringing processes, what we get to be is what others wanted us to be or what ever we could create space to be. Our motivation comes alive when we can bring out what is in each of us and add it to what needs to be created. That gives us the incentive to put ourselves

into situations that require us to step across boundaries and into places in which we have to discover something we did not know was in us. We have worked to have capability developed in all of us in order to bring about a higher order of motivation, one that is sustained by the individual. Being thrown into the unknown without the capability, is like being thrown into a swimming pool and hoping you can learn to swim.”

If you think about motivation in the way that was just described, it would be absurd to use surveys to ask people to tell the managers how we are doing or what we should change. It breaks the “motives-to-motivation” cycle. The *motives* are out there in the marketplace and society. The *motivation* is inside each individual. Structure the organization to keep them linked and the business will prosper”, says a DuPont site manager. He should know. His facilities are always sold-out, sought as the preferred supplier. The people also brag that they look forward to coming to work. A good match.

Manipulation and Disenchantment: Are humans subject only to external manipulation or can they override environmental factors and be directed toward a purpose or aim? The environmental determination school on this

question is very strong in the behavior sciences. This influence has been increasingly pervasive as a result of the behaviorist promising to supply the “fundamental laws governing all human activity”, irrespective of the context, and the fundamental science of human affairs by which to *ensure the control of people*. . With such a promise, this approach became the primary and in fact only school or philosophy of human psychological research in the United States until very recent years. While other nations proceeded with a broader look at human beings, American business was provided the singular philosophy of behavior modification that is now even being embedded in the newest generation of work design and improvement program design. A DuPont perspective on this offers a different philosophy in regard to human motivation. “We blame teenagers for submitting to peer pressure, when we all do it to some degree. But the difference between rats and us they study to come up with their conclusions and us as human beings is we can also override that conditioning. The strength of our way of working is that we have lined up our motivation with what we want to be influenced by—our stakeholders’ effectiveness. When each individual has a clear contribution to make in regard to that, they can set aside other influences and chose what to respond to. It is what makes us uniquely

human” It is possible to design business structures and work systems that enable people to be purposeful and to choose the environmental factors to which they respond and to learn to manage so that one’s ego or one’s fears are not in the driver’s seat.

But to create purposeful individuals, the uniqueness of each individual must be valued and developed. Surveys are unable to nurture this by their nature. Generalizations that come out of surveys obliterate individual input. The obliteration of the individual in the race for efficiency, through team design, participation processes, and many high-performance programs, is epidemic in our country as is the resultant loss of will to care about the business of the organization. More and more people are cynical about their employers’ intentions.

In fact many surveys are now seen as weapons, since they are often used to rationalize the leadership’s behavior. This is easy to do since understanding about what was behind a particular response to the questions in the survey cannot be probed, at least in a way that produces deliberative thinking.

Summary information does not create understanding, and generalized responses do not lead to personal connections to the responses.

Externalizes Problem and Opportunity Ownership: One side effect that is innate to the process of surveying and therefore to all surveys is the fostering of problems and opportunities being seen as belonging to someone else. “We only pose questions in a context in which people can take action to follow up on concerns and ideas they surface. We have done away with suggestion boxes in addition to surveys for the same reason. If someone else is to evaluate the priority or the course of action independent of the generator of the concern, you have implied it is ‘someone else’s problem’.” The fostering of externalization of accountability for problems is increasingly a universal concern in businesses as well as societies. Some of managers in these companies represented here felt this has been heightened and intensified by all the organizational techniques in the last few years that have emerged in the name of increased participation. What these organizations are after is more self-directed accountability and less ‘other directed’ accountability. “We used to have people who waited for others to tell them what to do. Even after our first try at involvement programs, only

some people contributed ideas. What we want is every person feeling they own every problem and every person generating and carrying out improvements. We had to go beyond *involvement* to *development of people* to get to that”

Self-Generated Motivation: Working from a Developmental Paradigm
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wholistic Understanding of the Value-Adding Process as foundation for initiation and creation, with accountability to be continuously regenerative thus transforming ego needs.• Generation through Implementation Phases in Same Hands and Minds• Individual uniqueness developed and linked to self-accountable and differentiated contribution, which also transforms the ego needs. |
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Wholistic Understanding of the Value-adding process: “An organization can be thought of as separate functions and departments or as one continuous flow of adding continuous value to material. If one can see the aliveness of the *making* through to the *marketing* of products, there is a different set of possibilities present than when “I do my job and you do

yours.” Some DuPont sectors have learned this and cannot imagine doing it any other way. “For example, at one of our plants, we developed an overall direction, and then we got clear on what was the core purpose, core process and core value of our product offering. When they understand the *core*, people begin to spontaneously organize their work toward that core, because they can see all sorts of things that can be done to better realize those essential properties. When that happens, work becomes a means for people's personal development as well as professional. People find they are continually being able to bring more of themselves into the world through work. You almost have to hold people back at that stage,” reports a DuPont site manager.

“Our people are able to work at a number of levels concurrently. So if I am operating a machine or service desk, I can also work at maintaining the effectiveness of the machine or customer relationship, and also at improvement the overall value of the process or interaction, and also at regenerating the process and its underlying processes, so new value is created that has not existed before. Beyond the physical work, it is all mental. So you can do a number of levels of mental work at the same time

you are doing the physical work. It is developing a true understanding of what is really going on, not just following procedures or seeking to achieve standards or specifications and definitely not waiting to be told what to do.”

Generation Through Implementation: “What really keeps me going is knowing that I can work on creating improvements and be involved in carrying them to fruition. I was discouraged by the surveys and suggestion boxes because nothing really changed. In our current way of working we can work on meaningful changes and can see the results that we helped create, not having had someone else do it to me or for me.” Heads nod around the room as the Weyerhaeuser machine operator offers her reflection.

The nature of third party interventions, such as surveys, is such that will of the individual is separated from the effect that is sought—a resolution. When people can and do act directly on what they see needs doing, motivation is high and the whole person becomes involved. Some explanation from a DuPont team leader may help here: “We no longer separate the problem-defining phase from the problem-solution phase, or the idea-generation group from the idea-implementation group. For example, every team in our

organization is connected to a business effectiveness parameter and to real stakeholders, such as customers' and environmental needs, in a direct way, and the teams have on-going responsibility for the effectiveness of this integrated set of stakeholders.

Also DuPont's integrated approach to work enables people to take action for the whole of the operation. "An integrated organization causes you to shift your role. It's not that you (management) specifically redesign the roles, but the people begin to redesign them because it makes sense. One example: Our technology people have had to be partners with management in the effort to change and regenerate people, product lines, and the manufacturing processes. So their role got substantially expanded. That immediately puts extra demand on all the technical functions. The need becomes apparent, not as a dictate from management but as a business rationale. Not as result of suggestions, but directly."

Individual Uniqueness and Self-accountable Contribution: People tend to leave the ball in the court of the sponsors of the survey with a "wait and see" attitude in regard to the response. A research and development scientist in

DuPont adds to this point. “In a developmental organization, there is no ‘other’ to whom we submit our concerns, and no survey to unconsciously suggest that this is appropriate. We are structured to take action in a self-reliant way for our opinions, and to move the organization into the work of tomorrow, not always cleaning up the problems of yesterday. It is a fundamentally different mindset, and it creates a very different sense of responsibility. I wish we could awaken our politicians to see how it would change the national framework”

One plant manager describes what structuring the organization to provide freedom to act directly provides over asking people what should be done, in terms of the impact on motivations. “One of the ways we do that is by tying our operators directly to customers as *customer champions*. Our customers call their champions at home. The champions don’t have to ask for permission to fly out to the other side of the country. For example, once we shipped some contaminated material by mistake. We discovered it before the customers, and all the ‘customer champions’ went to the customer plants immediately to make sure that none of the contaminated product got as far as their process. Then they made sure that everything that had possibly been

contaminated was decontaminated. We got calls back from our customers saying, ‘you've got to get somebody in here to relieve Fred; he hasn't left the plant since he got here, he's been here more than 36 hours and he's too important to us; you can't work the guy this hard.’ That is because they really own the business. Its an exciting place to work!”

A Developmental Approach to Achieve Intentions

In organizational change, leaders tend to be relativistic. That is, they try various approaches without questioning sufficiently whether these attempts are consistent with their aims. It is important in *change* to be concordant in our action with an overall direction or the organization’s ability to change is systematically weakened. For example, what is needed in today’s rapid-fire world is an organization that can pursue change continuously and be in an on-going process of reviewing and upgrading all the organizational processes and practices from the overview of the business as a whole. When we conduct surveys, we receive snapshots in time at best and trade-off more important aims. A rigorously disciplined leader in DuPont, who questions every initiative in terms of its effect on the philosophy the company is pursuing, shouts at me when I ask him why a little diversion makes so much

difference. “We need our people to see the relationships of their work to the business, so why would we ask questions that cause them to look at only themselves and how they feel without that larger context. We want to foster systems thinking—seeing how everything relates to everything else—not compartmental thinking. We need people who are deliberators, so why ask questions in a way that expects an immediate, unchallenged response. We want people who initiate action on concerns they have, not people who make suggestions to others to correct problems. We want a self-accountable culture with thoughtful people; surveys do not foster that. Surveys reinforce the idea that ‘it is someone else’s problem to fix and I have done my part by making suggestions and telling my feelings and ideas’.”

The DuPont manager speaking is not only clear about what he will not do, but is equally clear about the path he created that gives the organization a better handle on a systems view of reality, one that fosters everyone seeing their impact on customers, shareholders, the environment, and the community in which they work. And one that places a demand on individuals to develop and bring forth more of him or her self, both personally and professionally. There is no survey that can produce the nature

of deliberative thinking for the above results or even to achieve all the intentions surveys purport to provide. Only a deliberative group process can bring about the full potential behind the intentions, increase self-reliant and purposeful accountability, and avoid the unintentionally consequences and effects.

Carol Sanford is a resource working with organizations around the world to introduce regenerative capability into organizations. For a list of papers with a more detailed treatment of the subjects here, send a request for a publications list to: InterOctave Development Group, Inc. or www.interoctave.com.