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**IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE  
IN A PUBLIC AGENCY**

by

**David E. Freed**

**A Dissertation  
Submitted to the  
Faculty of The Graduate College  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the  
Degree of Doctor of Public Administration  
School of Public Affairs and Administration**

**Western Michigan University  
Kalamazoo, Michigan  
December 1999**

## **IMPLEMENTING ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE IN A PUBLIC AGENCY**

**David E. Freed, D.P.A.**

**Western Michigan University, 1999**

**A major challenge that faces most institutions is that of adapting to and managing change. The leadership of an organization is a key focal point for analyzing how change is accomplished.**

**This study examines both a theoretical and practical approach to the study of organizational and cultural change. The focus is a public agency and the actions and decision processes of the top leadership relating to organizational and cultural change during the period 1992 to 1995.**

**From the theoretical perspective, Karl Weick's approach called *sensemaking* is examined and a model is created. Sensemaking is an activity that is an explanatory process and provides a method for comprehension of events, placement of items into frameworks, and constructing meaning. One of its key distinguishing characteristics is that it focuses on analyzing events retrospectively.**

**Interviews with 28 of the top leaders of the public agency provide a retrospective analysis by those individuals of the events surrounding the organizational and cultural change efforts undertaken. These interviews provide the basis for exploring the model of sensemaking. Additional explanatory framework for sensemaking is provided through the work of Alan Briskin and his concepts of the soul and its shadow side in individuals, and the impact this has in the workplace.**

**The interviewees were categorized into three groups, representing the top three layers of leadership within the public agency. The similarities and differences within and between these groups are explained relative to the sensemaking model, and conclusions drawn from these comparisons. The results highlight the importance of the interactions of top leadership in an organization and how those interactions impact organizational and cultural change efforts.**

**The importance of this research is that it creates a model from Weick's theory of sensemaking and then provides a practical exploration of the model through a study of a major public agency over a 4-year period.**

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## **Acknowledgments—Continued**

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**David E. Freed**

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## **CHAPTER I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

**One challenge facing individuals in leadership positions at public institutions at all levels of government is that of adapting to and managing change. This includes change in the political and social climate in which an organization operates, changes in available resources, and changes in the expectations of employees, stakeholder groups and citizens. The challenge is to become more effective, more efficient and to survive. Leaders need to gain as great an understanding as possible regarding the impacts of their decisions. This necessitates an understanding of how to energize organizations and shape their environments in order to achieve desired objectives.**

**Most organizations want to be flexible and able to adapt in an ever-changing environment. They want to be responsive to their key customers or stakeholders, and to the public. They want motivated employees who are performing their duties effectively and efficiently. Institutions have engaged in the implementation of new management philosophies, and have searched for ways of altering their culture. The constant that has emerged is that the status quo is neither acceptable nor possible. In an ever-changing environment, public institutions need to be flexible and adaptable. They must find new ways to improve the manner in which they accomplish their stated mission, goals and objectives, and to alter themselves in response to internally induced and/or externally imposed changes in these.**

**While a theoretical framework for analyzing organizational and cultural change is important, the practitioner and theoretician both need to utilize case studies**



to provide for a comparative analysis between organizations and to test the theories. As organizations will be continuously involved in change efforts at all levels over time, what will comprise the body of knowledge from which they can decide on appropriate courses of action? There need to be more real-life, documented examples of change efforts in the literature to provide the practitioner with concrete examples of success and failure, and to assist the academician in testing and developing the theories of organizational and cultural change.

Weick (1995) advances an approach called sensemaking, which he describes as a set of ideas which allow explanatory possibilities. Sensemaking is an activity which is an explanatory process different from others such as interpretation or attribution. There are seven distinguishing characteristics of the process. The process is: (1) grounded in identity construction, (2) retrospective, (3) enactive of sensible environments, (4) social, (5) ongoing, (6) focused on and by extracted cues, and (7) driven by plausibility rather than accuracy. Sensemaking is about comprehension, placement of items into frameworks, and constructing meaning.

Sensemaking provides a template for reviewing case studies and change efforts. While Weick (1995) refers to the sensemaking process as a “low paradigm,” and considers it to be part of the ongoing discussion for the field, it provides opportunities for more robust discussion of the case study. Prior research has not provided such a framework with its key emphasis focusing on analyzing events retrospectively.

How can practitioners in the field achieve a deeper understanding of the impacts their actions may have? How can researchers further advance the knowledge of organizational theory and change? Sensemaking provides a framework for more in-depth exploration of the art of organizational change and leadership.

The focus will be on the actions and decision processes of the top leadership of a major public agency. Extensive use of interviews of 28 key staff will be utilized, as well as written material and observations. The intent is to, through this case study, understand the events and compare and contrast them to the organizational and leadership theory in the literature.

Weick (1995) describes sensemaking as being composed of two major processes. These are belief-driven processes and action-driven processes. There are at least two forms of belief-driven processes: argument and expectations. Argument refers to reasoned discourse as well as the fact that any opinion is potentially controversial and subject to at least two conflicting sides. Weick says that meetings are the setting where most arguments occur. Expectations are more directive than are arguments. They filter inputs, and their formation and activation are critical for sensemaking.

There are at least two forms of action-driven processes: behavioral commitment and manipulation. Commitment is focused on a single action, and manipulation is focused on multiple simultaneous actions. Commitment is a state where an individual is bound by his actions, and through the actions to beliefs that support his involvement. Manipulation involves acting in ways that create an environment that allows individuals to comprehend and manage.

For purposes of this study, sensemaking will be modeled as shown in Figure 1:

BELIEF	Argument	Expectation
ACTION	Commitment	Manipulation

Figure 1. Model of Sensemaking.

### **Purpose of Research**

The purpose of the research is to explore the implementation of organizational and cultural change in a major public agency (referred to as the Agency) during the period 1992–1995. This case study will examine the major initiatives undertaken and examine them within the framework of sensemaking put forward by Weick (1995). Sensemaking will be defined as exploring events and actions in order to place them into frameworks, construct meaning, and develop comprehension. Interviews of 28 key leadership staff in the Agency will be the basis of this examination.

Additionally, as part of the sensemaking approach applied to this study, the work of Alan Briskin will be utilized. Mr. Briskin specializes in the areas of role analysis and systems thinking. In his book, *The Stirring of Soul in the Workplace* (Briskin, 1996), Mr. Briskin explores the soul and its shadow side in individuals, and identifies potential consequences in the workplace. He indicates that in the past the workforce has ignored the soul within individuals. Briskin's concepts and ideas will be explained and applied to the events and actions explored through the interviews conducted in this study. This will provide a further enhancement to the exploration of sensemaking and analysis of events.

### **Importance of the Research to Public Administration and Contributions to Knowledge**

This study will be a practical application of Weick's (1995) theory. First, a model of sensemaking has been created to guide this research and future research. It will provide a mechanism for testing the theory and model, and for potentially expanding or modifying the model based on the results. The approach of comparing

and contrasting the three categories of top management staff provides an increased level of comparison for such expansion or modification of the model. It presents viewpoints at three different levels in the organization. The concepts being explored are relatively new, and little direct research has been conducted to date to test the ideas and theory.

This research explores whether there is a directional component to the various elements of the model. Weick (1995) maintains that it is not necessary to address the components of sensemaking in any particular order.

This study will also provide contributions to knowledge based on several factors. First, it is a study of a public agency consisting of over 3,100 employees. Secondly, this agency has broad-based responsibilities. Third, the richness of detail from an in-depth analysis, over a 4-year period, is unique. Being able to outline the sequential steps that leadership took, the decisions made, the individuals involved, how the organization and key stakeholders reacted, and the ultimate outcomes will provide public administrators with a contribution to the body of knowledge that will assist them as they contemplate or implement similar efforts in their respective organizations. It will identify factors that were key in the success or failure of the actions taken.

### **Background Information**

In 1992, the Agency Director and the Leadership Team established a Committee to conduct a study of the Agency and identify areas for improvement. The Committee consisted of 10 individuals representing a cross-section of the Agency. This author was designated as the Chair of the Committee. The Committee was given nine charges to address, including: What alternative models of management should

top management consider? What methods of program coordination are now in place, and how can they be improved? Are structural changes called for? What obstacles to effective program decision making and coordination now exist, and how can these processes be improved and streamlined? The report of the Committee addressed these issues, and established a reference point for the future decisions made regarding restructuring in the Agency.

The position of this author as Chair of the Committee and as Chief of Staff to the Agency Director allows for a unique perspective relating to this research. Further, it provides for a continuing perspective as to how the results were utilized by the Agency Director and the top management team, and in analyzing the subsequent events. The Committee's report was the baseline from which decisions were made relating to implementation of change.

The next step is to explore the concept of sensemaking by creating a model and examining it through current interviews of the members of the top management in the Agency. This exploration focuses on a retrospective exploration of the events to gain an understanding of them and explain what happened and why.

### **Research Strategy**

The qualitative research design paradigm will be utilized. Some of the underlying assumptions or basic characteristics of this mode of inquiry are outlined below:

1. The ontological issue of the nature of reality is that the participants in a study construct it, and it is multiple and subjective.
2. The epistemological assumption is that the researcher is interacting with those being researched.

3. The axiological assumption is that the study is value-laden and biased.

4. The rhetorical assumption is that the language of the research is informal, that decisions are evolving, and that a personal voice is utilized.

5. The methodological assumption is that the research is an inductive process, that there is an emerging design, that it is context-bound, and that patterns and theories are developed for understanding (Creswell, 1994).

The research is well-suited to a qualitative design since it is exploratory. The variables and theory base are unknown and therefore there is a need to describe the phenomena, and the phenomena are not suited to quantitative measures.

### **The Type of Design**

The research will utilize the case study method, which is drawn from political science and many of the social sciences. In a case study the researcher is analyzing a single entity or phenomenon which is bounded by time and activity. Information is collected using a variety of data collection procedures.

In this instance organizational change in the public agency is being studied, for a period between 1992 and 1995. Use of interviews of key staff conducted during that time period will be utilized, as well as written material and observations. This information will be further augmented by conducting new interviews with the top management of the Agency during that time period. This will encompass the Agency Director, Assistant Directors, and Office Chiefs. The intent of the case study method is to explore the processes and events, understand them, and then compare them with the model of sensemaking that has been developed.

## **The Researcher's Role**

**In qualitative research the role of the researcher necessitates the identification of personal assumptions and biases at the start of the study. The focus of study was on the actions undertaken by the Director of the Agency and the Leadership Team to implement organizational change during the time period of the study. This author's role during this period was being Chief of Staff to the Agency Director, with whom I had previously worked for 10 years. Consequently, there was daily contact with the Agency Director and the members of the Leadership Team. This author was involved in all of the top-level activities relating to the change efforts, and worked closely with staff and key stakeholder groups.**

**Prior to this time this author worked for 14 years in the Agency, and had acquired a thorough understanding of the organization and its culture. This background and understanding enhanced this author's knowledge of challenges presented by the change efforts. Attention was focused on the role and actions of the Agency Director and the Leadership Team in implementing organizational change, the relationships between key staff, the decision making involved, and the reactions of the organization and stakeholders.**

**This author now works in a different Agency, as do some of the other key staff. Many still reside in the Agency. Some have subsequently retired.**

**This author brought certain biases to this study. First, this author was a key participant in many of the decisions that were made. This author did not always agree with the final decision, and in those cases argued for a different course of action. While this can help provide further insight, this author needed to protect against promoting personal views. This author also maintained the perspective that the**

agency is so varied in its programs and duties that any Agency Director would encounter difficulty in implementing organizational change.

Miles and Huberman (1984) have suggested parameters that researchers should consider. These include the *setting* in which the research will take place, the *actors* (those to be interviewed), and the *events* (what the actors will be interviewed about). These parameters are addressed below.

### Setting

The study was conducted in the public agency, with central office staff and field location. There were approximately 3,100 full-time employees during the 1992–1995 time period. The Agency administered many programs. Additionally, its responsibilities extended to economic and political terms in overseeing the allocation and distribution of these public resources.

The regulatory programs operated by the Agency conserve and manage the resources by controlling access or limiting their use and removal. A majority of these programs relied upon license or permit systems.

These programs were very controversial. Many created conflict because they restricted what people can do. Costs may be imposed for the use of resources. Public concerns and interests change over time.

The Agency operated under the direction of a Commission, a seven-member body appointed by the Governor. The Commission appointed the Agency Director, who carried out Agency policy and program development under the overall direction of the Commission.

Internally, the Agency was divided into three major program areas: Resource Management, Environmental Protection, and Administration, each headed by a



**Assistant Director. Under these Assistant Directors, 22 Offices carried out the Agency's activities. Additionally, there were three Regional Offices, each headed by a Regional Assistant Director. In October, 1995, an Executive Order of the Governor split the Agency.**

#### **Actors**

**The informants of the study were the Agency Director and the Leadership Team, consisting of the six Assistant Directors and the 20 Office Chiefs. In some instances, the individuals now work in the private sector or are retired.**

#### **Events**

**Utilizing a case study methodology and new interviews, the focus of this study was to analyze the components of the sensemaking model in relation to implementing organizational change in the Agency. This was done through identifying the culture of the organization, whether members of the Leadership Team were supportive of the proposed changes and whether they had the confidence and support of the employees and other stakeholders, as well as the processes used to communicate the proposed changes. Current interviews were conducted to explore a retrospective analysis of events in reference to the sensemaking model.**

#### **Processes**

**Particular attention was paid to the actions of the Agency Director and the Leadership Team in initiating change, building relationships, decision making and providing leadership in relation to sensemaking.**

### **Ethical Considerations**

**Consideration was given to protecting the participants and any sensitive information revealed. By the nature of the study, and the fact that it was being conducted in a public institution which is highly visible, the rights and desires of the participants had to be safeguarded.**

**To that end, the rights and desires of the informants were respected. The research objectives were presented both verbally and in writing to ensure understanding. The informants were made aware of how the data were to be used.**

**The consent of the informants (interviewees) was obtained. Transcripts were made available to the informants, as well as any decisions regarding anonymity.**

### **Data Collection Procedures**

**Several methods were utilized to collect the data. The nature of this research was more qualitative and exploratory, as opposed to quantitative. In that light there were no formal hypotheses to be tested. The central research questions were directed at ascertaining the interviewees' retrospective recollection of events related to restructuring, and to relate those responses to the model of sensemaking.**

**The research methodology was essentially twofold. Primarily, a series of interviews was conducted with knowledgeable individuals. These included the Agency Director, seven Assistant Directors, and 20 Office Chiefs.**

**Secondly, the results of those interviews, in addition to material gathered from Agency primary documents and other secondary sources, was qualitatively compared to the model of sensemaking. The purpose of these efforts was to relate**

the data and information to the model to determine explanations of the events, and to highlight similarities and differences.

Data collected in 1992 were used, including one-on-one interviews with the Agency Director, Assistant Directors, and Office Chiefs, as well as group interviews conducted with Agency employees and stakeholders. Public documents in the form of reports, letters, internal memoranda, and meeting minutes were utilized.

New interviews were conducted with the Agency Director and the Leadership Team to obtain their retrospective analyses of key events. Consequently, these interviewees were selected purposefully, not randomly. Appendix A is a copy of the approval letter from the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (HSIRB) at Western Michigan University.

#### **Data Recording Procedures**

Interviews were audiotaped. Notes were taken during the interviews using a protocol.

#### **Data Analysis Procedures**

In qualitative analysis collecting the information, sorting it into categories, formatting the information into a story or picture, and then writing the qualitative text take place simultaneously (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). The data that emerges from a qualitative study is descriptive, reported in words rather than in numbers (Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990).

Data analysis was conducted simultaneously with data collection. The analysis was based on data reduction and interpretation (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Taped interviews were transcribed verbatim. Notes and observations were regularly

reviewed. The information was presented, to the extent possible, in matrices and tables. The categories and codes were developed as the data was reviewed.

The goal was to explore the participants' interpretations of the organizational change efforts with the model of sensemaking. This was the basis for the process of segmenting the information (Tesch, 1990). For analysis purposes, the Leadership Team was divided into three categories: (1) the Agency Director, (2) Assistant Directors, and (3) Office Chiefs. Interviewees were asked questions to determine where they reside in the model, and to determine where they would place each of the three categories of staff in the model.

The model of sensemaking was used to compare and contrast where the three categories of interviewees reside. This is presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Sensemaking Grid for Comparisons of Interviewees

	Agency Director	Assistant Directors	Office Chiefs
Argument			
Expectation			
Commitment			
Manipulation			

Each of the four components of sensemaking (Argument, Expectation, Commitment, and Manipulation) were represented by a set of interview questions, with each question being rated by the interviewee on a 1–5 Likert scale.

By employing this detailed, retrospective analysis, conclusions may result from this research which more fully explain the interactions of the participants and lead to implications regarding the model.

Potential coding categories suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992) which will be utilized include (a) setting and context codes, (b) perspectives held by subjects, (c) subjects' way of thinking about people and objects, and (d) relationship and social structure codes.

One key method of data analysis in the case study method of research is "explanation building," where the researcher explores the information and attempts to build an explanation (Yin, 1989). This method was utilized in relating information to the sensemaking model.

#### Verification Steps

For internal validity, there was peer examination of the data. This individual was Dr. Donald Inman, who also served on the dissertation Committee. Dr. Inman's direct experience with this case study and its participants allowed for feedback on the categories, themes, and conclusions. His reality and meanings ensured the truth value of the data.

As for external validity, there will be limited generalizability of the findings. The intent of qualitative research is to form a unique interpretation of events (Merriam, 1988). By its nature, the case study of this Agency is unique. There will also be limitations in reliability or replication of the study due to its uniqueness. However, allowing for the uniqueness, there may be opportunities for replicating the approach utilized to study organizational change in other settings. A rich, thick, detailed description will be used to communicate the events and outcomes and

provide a clear and accurate picture of what was done and the methods used. This will provide opportunities for transferability. Additionally, the results will provide an in-depth analysis of events in relation to the sensemaking model.

### **The Qualitative Narrative**

This report is presented in a descriptive, narrative form. It will communicate a holistic picture of the experiences of the Agency Director and his top management team in implementing organizational change. This author then constructed his experiences and interpretations of events. This was categorized in relation to the sensemaking model and Weick's (1995) theory/approach.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL**

#### **The 1990s: Background Information**

**In January 1991, a new Governor was elected. This new Governor, a Republican, ran a campaign that promised to lower property taxes, to make state government smaller in size and more accountable, and to make the state more competitive in attracting new businesses to bolster what was then a sagging economy.**

**Shortly after the election, the Agency Director resigned. This Agency Director had been associated with the previous Democratic governor. Consequently, the position of Agency Director was vacant and a process to fill that position was undertaken.**

**The new Governor was interested in making basic changes in the way that state government functioned. He was not interested in the status quo, and believed that fundamental changes were necessary in order to make state government more responsive to the people it served. He had the opportunity during his first few months in office to appoint five of the seven members of the Commission.**

**The Commission is a seven-member body appointed by the Governor, with the consent of the Senate. The Commission is the policy-making body for the Agency. In addition to its policy-making role, the Commission is also responsible for hiring and firing the Agency Director.**

The process of choosing the new Agency Director occurred during the summer of 1991. There were several strong candidates for the position. One candidate was a 25-year veteran of the Agency. He was considered by most observers as a "long shot" candidate, and given little chance to be successful. Part of the reason for this was the fact that the responsibilities of his Office were administrative in nature, and were not considered as a major program area of the Agency. Those responsibilities included recordkeeping of all state-owned lands, leasing of mineral rights, and land acquisition for the various program areas. Some described him as the compromise candidate, to be chosen if none of the stronger contenders could be agreed upon by a majority of the Commission members.

One of the strengths of this compromise candidate was his strong endorsement of the concepts of total quality management in order to provide more creative management of the Agency and to improve, streamline and create greater efficiencies in the delivery of services provided by the Agency. Always interested in looking at ways to do things better, he had become acquainted with the concepts of total quality management through his personal and professional relationship with a staff member of the Federal Quality Institute. His endorsement of change within the system to create what he called a more "user-friendly" Agency, combined with the historical knowledge gained from his many years working within the organization, made him an attractive candidate. He was chosen for the job.

The Agency Director's contract, negotiated with the Commission, required him to provide an effective organization and management system. In order to achieve this objective, the Agency Director and his Leadership Team established the Management Review Committee (Committee) in February, 1992. The Committee consisted of ten individuals representing a cross-section of the Agency. This cross-



section included staff from each of the three Regions. It included staff from Regional, District and Area offices, as well as central office staff, and the members represented a variety of classification levels within the Agency. This author was designated as the Chair of the Committee.

The Committee was given nine different charges to analyze and make recommendations for consideration by the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors. The Committee was given nine charges to address:

1. Analyze previous organizational studies of the Agency, and conduct a comparative analysis of other organizations.
2. Describe and evaluate current Agency relationships with the public and how they can be improved.
3. Evaluate current procedures for employees to determine if sufficient guidance exists for effective performance.
4. What alternative models of management should top management consider?
5. What methods of program coordination are now in place, and how can they be improved? Are structural changes called for?
6. What obstacles to effective program decision making and coordination now exist, and how can these processes be improved and streamlined?
7. Review administrative support practices in the Agency and identify options for improvement.
8. Explore the opportunities for providing public service through the "Service Center" concept.
9. Present other ideas, issues or opportunities which the Committee feels are priorities arising from the study.

Several means were utilized to obtain the information. First, a list of questions was developed that addressed each of the charges, and interviews were conducted with all Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs in the Agency. Second, a series of 28 meetings were conducted in Agency offices throughout the state, with an estimated 400 employees participating. Third, an electronic mail system was utilized by employees. Fourth, numerous one-on-one meetings were held. Fifth, surveys were conducted of other similar public agencies and Canada. Sixth, an independent facilitator conducted focus group sessions with 16 clientele groups in the following four categories: (1) Environmental/Conservation, (2) Governmental, (3) Media, and (4) Industry. Four separate sessions were conducted for each of these categories, with multiple representatives attending within each category. The information obtained through these various means provided the basis for the Committee's report, which was completed in August 1992.

One of the key recommendations in the report was that there should be no structural changes in the organization of the Agency. The most significant observations and recommendations were:

1. The Agency's best and most important resources are its human resources.
2. The Agency must empower employees and encourage teamwork.
3. Support to Field operations in Field offices should be increased.
4. Authority for making routine decisions should be delegated to the lowest possible level and unnecessary supervisory reviews should be eliminated.
5. All Offices should be directed to review their organizations to determine if further decentralization of staff and decision-making is feasible.
6. The Agency should implement a program incorporating the concepts of total quality management.

**7. Matrix management should be utilized to cut across different levels of management and different units.**

The report was submitted to the Agency Director and the Leadership Team, who then reviewed the report to make final decisions regarding what recommendations to implement, modify or reject. The Agency Director, who campaigned for the Directorship promising changes in the Agency's operations and improvement of its processes and performance, felt strongly that in addition to the seven items mentioned above there needed to be structural change in the Agency. He felt that structural change was a visible means of demonstrating that the organization was going to be flattened and that decision-making chains would be shortened. While the Management Review Committee (MRC) was asked to look at the organizational structure to see if it could be improved, there was never any mandate from the Agency Director that there would be such a change.

Specifically, the Agency Director's proposal was to eliminate a layer of management. That layer was the Regional Supervisor positions. This consisted of 45 mid-level management positions located in each of the three Regional Offices. These positions represented their respective Offices and were responsible for coordinating all Office activities within that respective Region. Each Office in the Agency had staff based in the central office, as well as in the three Regional Offices and various other District and Area offices throughout the state.

The goals of the Agency Director's proposal were to: (a) empower staff at the front lines to make decisions and promote further teamwork, (b) reduce management positions and reinvest the savings into more front-line workers at lower classification levels, (c) streamline communications by having field staff no further than two steps away from their Office Chief's office, and (d) flatten the supervisory

hierarchy of the organization by eliminating management positions. These goals were in concert with those of the Management Review Committee, but were more specific in terms of implementation of those concepts, and also went further by proposing the actual reduction of management positions.

The Agency Director, through this proposal, would accomplish the goal of overtly demonstrating a change in the Agency's structure to signify a change in its operation. This change could then be seen by the Governor and the Commission. He also would be in concert with the other major recommendations of the Committee.

The functions of the Regional Supervisors would be taken over by teams of District Supervisors, who were the next lower management level in the Field. This team concept would further promote the principles of total quality management, a concept endorsed by the Committee and heartily endorsed by the Agency Director.

Elimination of the Regional Supervisor layer of management did not receive total endorsement by the Leadership Team, specifically the Regional Assistant Directors. They argued that the Regional Supervisors performed valuable and key functions. Specifically, they felt that the Regional Supervisors, because they were a key link between the Field staff and the central office staff, would be in the best position to help implement the concepts of total quality management and ensure that decision-making was decentralized to the most appropriate level in the Field. The Regional Assistant Directors further argued that elimination of a layer of management should not focus exclusively on the Field structure, but should target centralized staff as well.

The Assistant Directors were split in terms of their support for the restructuring concept. Extensive discussion within the Agency occurred over a several month period of time. Meetings were held with Office Chiefs, both

individually and collectively, to explain the proposed change and to obtain their input as to how they would make this new concept and approach work within their Office. Most were not enthusiastic about the proposal, but did proceed to develop and present their plans for implementation. The Agency Director, even given the internal disagreement, remained firm in his resolve to eliminate the Regional Supervisor level of management.

As a result of these efforts to explain the proposal and obtain public input, the Agency Director now had to assess the situation and determine what to do. His Leadership Team, while trying to remain supportive, was divided in terms of wanting to proceed to implement the proposal. Assistant Directors with extensive experience and years in the Agency were not inclined to want to make these changes. Those Assistant Directors who were more recent arrivals in the Agency and did not have that historical perspective were supportive of the direction that the Agency Director wanted to pursue.

The Commission was, at this point in time, supportive of the concept. However, there had been no detailed discussion or presentation of the proposal to the Commission. There was growing criticism outside the Agency from various stakeholder groups, legislators and individuals that the proposal was being developed without adequate public participation and input. After an initial briefing to the Commission, the Leadership Team agreed to conduct three public meetings in each of the three Regions, and also met with legislators and key special interest groups. Agency employees were kept informed through electronic mail and in meetings with the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs. The major comments received were: (a) concerns expressed over rumors of office closures, layoffs, and disruptions in affected communities; (b) a strong belief that the Governor was behind the effort to

restructure, and a disbelief that the dollars saved would be allowed to be reinvested in the redeployment of more personnel into the front lines; (c) a concern that there was too much politics in the Agency; (d) statements that employee morale was low; (e) a belief that eliminating Regional Supervisors is eliminating the “decision-makers”; and (f) disbelief that the proposal decentralizes decision-making.

At this point in time, the Commission became split in terms of its support. It appeared that three members were very supportive, three were against, and the seventh member could go either way. The three members who were supportive held a strong belief that their roles as Commissioners was one of dealing with policy, and that the Agency Director should be able to make internal management decisions without interference from them. The three members opposed to the proposal had various reasons for their points of view. One Commissioner felt that the plan could result in fewer staff in the area he represented, even though this was not the case. Another Commissioner was not convinced that the organizational moves were beneficial overall, and was under constant pressure from constituent groups to not support the proposal. The third Commissioner wanted to implement the Management Review Committee report, and pointed out that the report recommended no structural changes in the organization. The seventh member of the Commission had initially been supportive of the proposal, but began to waver when the plan became controversial. It was impossible to predict exactly how he might vote for the plan.

The Agency Director had publicly stated that he would not proceed to implement the restructuring plan without the support of the Commission. He could see that his organizational proposal was becoming controversial among the Commissioners, and that it was becoming more divisive.

The Governor and his aides were supportive of the concepts of the restructuring plan. The Governor even signed a letter indicating that any savings achieved through the elimination of positions could be utilized by the Agency in creating additional positions to be redeployed to the front lines.

To summarize the situation, deep divisions were starting to surface within the Agency, at staff levels as well as at the Office Chief and Assistant Director levels. While there was vehement opposition from staff that would be directly impacted at the Regional level, there was support from other levels of management within the Agency. Externally, the media coverage was negative, and the interest groups and other stakeholders were nearly unanimously opposed to the restructuring proposal. The Commission was split, and the best estimate was that the Agency Director could probably obtain a 4-3 vote in favor of the restructuring proposal. The Governor's Office remained supportive of the Agency Director's proposed course of action.

The Agency Director decided that he did not want a split vote from the Commission, but instead wanted to strike a compromise which could gain the support of all seven members. He realized that the odds were that he could obtain a 4-3 vote in favor of his plan, but was concerned that the rift that this would cause on the Commission could jeopardize future efforts that he would want to undertake as Agency Director. The Commissioners who were against the plan had serious reservations about it being implemented. The level of frustration and concern inside and outside of the Agency could seriously affect his ability to lead. To this end, the Agency Director directed his Chief of Staff to work with all of the Commissioners and achieve a solution that could gain the support of each of them. In order to reach that goal, it was necessary to withdraw from immediately eliminating the Regional Supervisor layer of management, which was the major point of contention. One of

the major complaints was that the whole approach was a top-down mandate from upper management.

At its April 1993 meeting, the Commission passed a resolution regarding restructuring in the Agency. The main objectives and goals endorsed by the resolution were: (a) creating a more efficient and effective service delivery system, (b) making the Agency more responsive at the local level, (c) increasing staff and resources dedicated to the field, (d) streamlining the chain of command for decentralized decision making, and (e) empowering employees to make decisions at the first interface with the public.

The agreement was that the Offices would each be asked to develop their own individual plans for achieving the goals of the restructuring as stated earlier in this paper.

In a memorandum to the Office Chiefs, the Agency Director conveyed the Commission resolution and the guidelines for the preparation of the Office plans to achieve the objectives of the resolution. In addition, he included a "Commentary" at the end of the memorandum. He indicated that he remained firmly committed to the belief that elimination of unnecessary supervisory/managerial positions would streamline the chain of command. He said decentralizing decision-making would enable and empower field employees to make more routine decisions on the "front-lines," ultimately resulting in a more efficient and effective service delivery system. The result would be more Agency personnel helping the public at the initial point of contact.

The Agency Director said that the Civil Service system imposes tremendous constraints on management's ability to enact changes without adversely affecting employees. The negative impact on Agency employees, their families and various



communities was too great to undertake significant restructuring and redeployment initiatives immediately.

However, he indicated that the same “redeployment” goals that had become an issue of intense debate could be accomplished gradually, by normal attrition. Therefore, a “needs analysis” would be conducted, in coordination with Office Chiefs, as *every* position became vacant. The goal of getting more Agency employees to the “front-lines” would take longer, but improvement in employee morale would make the wait worthwhile.

The Agency Director further said that additional goals to be sought by gradually eliminating unnecessary management positions would result in: (a) holding potential Civil Service bumping and transfers resulting from restructuring to an absolute minimum, (b) special attention to protecting workforce diversity achievements, and (c) forming strong partnerships and cooperative efforts with all concerned groups to increase funding for the Agency and its programs.

Office Chiefs would be directed to develop plans to implement the goals and directives outlined, and implementation would be continually monitored, and Office Chiefs would be further directed to engage in an ongoing procedure to identify additional methods to improve services.

All Commissioners were in agreement that this was a better approach, and that it incorporated the use of total quality management principles in achieving those stated goals. The Commission was looking for a compromise position that would reduce the friction and animosity that had developed, both internally and externally, and would still allow the Agency Director to proceed on some aspects of the restructuring proposal.

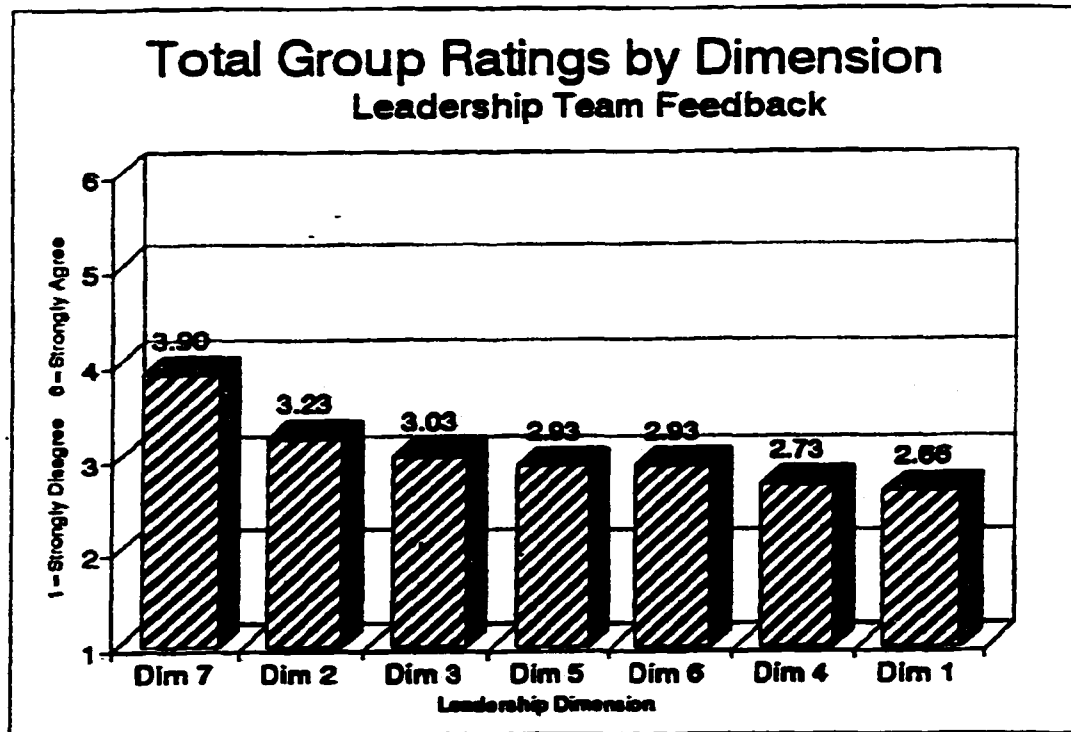
This was the blueprint under which the Agency proceeded from April 1993 until November 1994. At that time, the Agency Director, at the urging of key staff, decided to embark upon a strategic planning initiative at the Leadership Team level. An employee Quality Action Team (QAT) had been formed under the Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) program and had developed a strategic planning approach for the Agency. This was to be the first step in the process laid out by that QAT. Assistance in this effort was provided by university consultants.

One of the first steps taken was to have interviews conducted with individual members of the Leadership Team in order for each to identify strategic issues facing the Agency, pinpoint key barriers to effective operation and decision making, and to identify suggested courses of action.

Strategic issues which were identified included funding, information technology, establishing a common vision for the Agency, ecosystem/watershed management, privatization, improved stakeholder communication. These were compared with strategic issues identified in the MRC report which included improving the image of the Agency, considering alternative models of management, improving program coordination, reducing barriers to effective decision making, and exploring a "service center" concept.

Next, a pareto analysis was developed based on the interviewees' ratings on a 1 to 5 scale of written questions provided to them during the interviews. It analyzed seven leadership dimensions. These dimensions and the total Leadership Team rating for each on a 1 to 6 scale (1 = strongly disagree, 6 = strongly agree) are presented in Figure 2.

The interviews led to the identification by the consultants of Leadership Team barriers to effectiveness in the following areas.



**Leadership Dimensions**

**Dim 1 - Common Vision and Understanding**

**Dim 2 - Problem-Solving**

**Dim 3 - Decision-Making**

**Dim 7 - Communication**

**Dim 4 - Conflict Resolution**

**Dim 5 - Balanced Participation**

**Dim 6 - Effective Meetings**

**Figure 2. Pareto Analysis.**

**Common Vision**

1. Vision and values differ across people.
2. Differences can become a constructive force but has lead to distrust.
3. The Agency's mission is contradictory.
4. The Leadership Team is not operating under a common philosophy and thus the focus is more on fighting fires than dealing proactively with issues.
5. Different levels of understanding of the issues lead to inevitable conflict.

### **Problem Solving**

1. There is a need for more appreciation of the complexity of the issues.
2. The plate is full of unprioritized items that does not encourage a thorough analysis of problems/issues.
3. Short-term solutions are made without thorough consideration of long-term consequences.
4. Micro-managing leads to more shallow processing of issues that should have higher priority.

### **Decision Making**

1. Recommendations are not acted upon in a timely manner.
2. When decisions seem to be made, they may be reversed or rehashed.
3. Decisions are not seen as a team product but as individual products.
4. There is a lack of follow-through to make sure that decisions reached are implemented.
5. The ambiguity of the decision process allows for retaining control and flexibility.

### **Conflict Resolution**

1. Opposing viewpoints are not solicited and often are refuted rather than discussed.
2. A decision regarding the leadership role must be made in order to take advantage of the Team's diversity.

**3. Conflicts over micro-management issues are not worth the sacrifice of being able to competently address key policy issues to set direction and tone.**

**4. Empowerment and responsibility are limited, especially around controversial issues.**

**5. Instead of openly discussing concerns, the Team takes more of a “wait it out” or avoidance approach, and goes outside of the meeting to meet individual agendas.**

### **Effective Meetings**

**1. Agendas are not set in advance and are not very informative.**

**2. Meetings do not stick to the agenda and move off on tangents or personal agenda items.**

**3. There is no system to ensure a balance in the opportunity to share opinions.**

**4. There is no firm agreement on the next steps to take.**

**5. There are no minutes to structure what needs to occur at the next meeting.**

**6. There is a tendency for issues to come up again and again without resolution.**

### **Leadership Dilemmas**

**1. How much energy is there within the Leadership Team to address internal team issues?**

**2. How much energy is there within the Leadership Team to develop a strategic plan for the Agency?**

**3. What team issues must be addressed in order for the strategic planning process to be successful?**

**4. What team issues do not need to be addressed for the strategic planning process to be successful?**

The above is a snapshot of the consultants' summary of the state of the Leadership Team at the end of 1994. It served as a starting point for discussions at the first strategic planning session on January 19 and 20, 1995.

In order to address these issues, specific action steps were identified. They are summarized as follows:

**1. *Action items for effective decision making:*** (a) develop team ground rules for how the Leadership Team will operate as a team; (b) determine who is a part of the decision making body in the Leadership Team; (c) identify types of decisions that can be made unilaterally, after consultation, by majority rules or must be made by consensus; and (d) use more formal mechanisms for surfacing issues for decisions and for determining final status of the issue (e.g. formal motions, recorded decisions).

**2. *Action items for making meetings more productive:*** (a) develop useful agendas and minutes, (b) stay focused during meetings, (c) make decisions and set policy instead of micro-managing, (d) hold everyone accountable for actions taken after team meetings that do not support team decisions, and (e) increase time devoted to analyzing future directions and issues facing the Agency.

**3. *Action items relating to problem solving:*** (a) prioritize issues and make sure that efforts reflect priorities; (b) focus on short and long term consequences for employees and stakeholders; (c) for complex issues, develop position statements that provide both pros and cons to certain courses of action; (d) explore alternative perspectives and options; and (e) summarize positions/issues prior to decision making.

In addition to the above, that first strategic planning session reviewed the core principles, and the pros and cons, of doing strategic planning. An update and analysis of the progress made on implementing the MRC report, a review and discussion of draft mission and vision statements, and consensus building on the strategic planning process.

The next strategic planning session was conducted on May 25, 1995. The meeting began with an overview by the Agency Director of changes that are occurring in the Agency. The Agency Director highlighted the need to consolidate field office locations, reduce programs, and eliminate the regional layer of management. He indicated that this was necessary in order to achieve an anticipated \$3–5 million budget reduction, and that if the Agency did not develop such a plan, one would be developed for it and imposed on the Agency. The Agency Director indicated that he intended to eliminate the Regional structure and to reinvest the savings toward automation.

This decision by the Agency Director to once again attempt to eliminate the regional layer of management was a complete surprise to the Leadership Team. It had not been discussed with them prior to the meeting, and it brought back the unpleasant prospect of revisiting this issue which had been unsuccessfully attempted during the first effort at restructuring.

#### **Direction for Strategic Planning**

The direction that the Agency Director wanted to lead the Agency in consisted of several components. He saw that there were numerous signs that changes needed to occur within the Agency in order for it to remain effective given social, economic, and political realities. Numerous presentations at the strategic

planning meetings highlighted the need for such changes. Discussions focused on short-term plans to meet shortfalls in revenues, as well as demonstrating that the Agency was willing to change. Short-term issues included closing existing buildings and critically examining existing programs for possible reduction in effort.

Discussions also focused on longer term issues regarding what the Agency would look like in 5 to 10 years. The long-term vision focused on implementing an ecosystem approach to managing. Under this type of an approach, the Agency would be committed to the alignment, integration and removal of barriers so that organizational operations would better match the Agency responsibilities. It calls for an integrated approach to addressing issues and to develop innovative solutions. An ecosystem approach was also consistent with the ongoing Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) initiative which encouraged teamwork and empowerment while providing quality service to customers and stakeholders.

This movement towards an ecosystem approach utilizing the principles of CQI called for a move away from a regional structure with distinct offices to a district structure with project teams and matrix management. It also called for reevaluating the mix of field offices and locations to best accomplish the desired goals. This meant a greater presence in the field to meet the needs of the public and to better focus decision making at the level most appropriate for those decisions rather than decision making predominantly residing in the central office.

The Agency Director's vision also highlighted the need to be aggressive in harnessing the power of new technologies in order to assist staff in being better able to communicate with one another and the public. This called for a workforce more adaptive and flexible in meeting those needs. It also called for a greater commitment to training and development.



At the time of the May 1995 strategic planning meeting described above, the course of action was to develop a plan for consolidation of field offices and a reduction of programs in the central office. The strategic planning process was making good progress in the first step of identifying ways to consolidate resources to better meet the future challenges facing the Agency. Data had been gathered that generated knowledge and provided a basis for action. There seemed to be general agreement within the Leadership Team on the need for change.

However, the focus of the Leadership Team was on downsizing and cost reduction as a key business strategy. While these were important, they were the only visible aspects of the Agency change process involving ecosystems, empowerment, teamwork, and continuous improvement. These words were seen as hiding the “real” agenda of the Leadership Team, which was efficiency and cost reduction. This led to decreasing staff morale and a high level of cynicism. These endeavors were viewed as being done for political expediency rather than for the good of the Agency.

It was important to also look at the fact that the downsizing and cost reduction strategies could not be accomplished in a vacuum. Steps needed to be taken for the issues of ecosystem management, teamwork, and empowerment to take hold with the staff and stakeholders. The first step was to have a clear vision that could be articulated regarding the future look of the Agency. Pieces of such a vision were already in place to assist individuals in understanding the reasoning behind the moves for consolidating offices and downsizing as being parts of a larger strategy to reinvent the Agency.

The second step was to put as much, if not more energy into the issue of teamwork, team leaders, and empowerment as was put into the consolidation of resources and buildings. In order for staff and stakeholders to believe that changes

would take place, there had to be visible signs that the Agency was moving toward a more team-based approach to examining issues and developing solutions.

Dictating that the regional supervisory roles were to be immediately eliminated and replaced by a team leader without any planning or resolution as to what the roles and responsibilities of the team leader positions would be, or how a full service office should look like and operate within a team concept was a recipe for disaster. Many employees saw it as a heavy-handed approach which went against the CQI principles of empowerment, teamwork, and quality service. Similarly, mandating the consolidation of offices without the input of the office chiefs or other employees was an approach that resulted in resistance. While involving people in the process always takes time, it also has the potential of leading to innovative solutions to complex issues.

The Agency Director had made it clear at the beginning of the meeting that he did not want the issues discussed at the meeting to leave the room, and that he did not want to read about the discussions in the newspapers. So the Leadership Team came out of the meeting needing to develop plans to: (a) define the roles and responsibilities of the Regional Assistant Directors given the elimination of the regional level of supervision, as well as those of the team leader positions to be created; (b) determine program priorities and how the Agency would function without the Regional level of management; (c) define Service Centers and how they would function, be staffed, and the associated costs; (d) develop a mission and vision statement; and (e) construct a message for employees, stakeholders, and the news media.

The next meeting was July 19–20, 1995. Plans were developed by various members of the Leadership Team to address items (a) through (e) above and were

presented at the meeting. At this stage, there were significant concerns among some members of the Leadership Team as to whether it was possible for the Agency Director to lead the organization in this new direction. There was a lack of confidence in his leadership, as well as a lack of confidence between various members of the Leadership Team.

After this meeting, several items had become very clear. The planning process had led to a short-term, cost reduction and efficiency strategy developed to meet perceived external pressures and demands. This approach ignored the longer-term issues and strategies that would focus on improving the effectiveness of the agency. The approach taken was counter to the principles of CQI that focused on taking a systems approach to problems, involving key constituencies in the problem definition and problem solving activities, and where leaders help eliminate barriers to success for others.

A vision for where the Agency was going and how it was going to get there had still not been crafted due to the short term crisis orientation. In effect, the focus seemed to be on reactive planning and dealing with current issues.

The initial strategic planning meeting was largely successful in identifying key issues facing the agency and in examining issues around the concept of ecosystem management. Subsequent meetings did not build upon that momentum, but instead focused on how to consolidate buildings and meet budget shortfalls. After the first meeting, a new agenda was revealed at each subsequent meeting which changed the direction and scope of the planning sessions.

## Summary of Lessons Learned

Preplanning is a critical part of success in strategic planning. The Agency Director and his staff needed to be engaged in discussing and framing the issues off line to prepare for the next strategic planning session. There are many issues to work through and a careful planning of an agenda leads to greater confidence by a leadership team that a systematic approach is being taken. There were many compliments from the Leadership Team regarding how well organized and how well run the first strategic planning meeting was. That was no accident. There were numerous discussions completed prior to the session, an agenda was carefully crafted through meetings off site, and the Agency Director and other members were actively engaged and committed to the process. Between subsequent meetings, no off line sessions were scheduled and the Agency Director became disengaged from the process.

This situation is analagous to Goffman's contribution to dramaturgical theory in describing how one presents oneself in everyday life. Goffman, (1955, 1959) says that each person has a "face" that he or she presents to other members of a group. This "face" represents the person's self-image and how they wish to be perceived by others. Groups want to ensure that no one's self-image is damaged or embarrassed, and consequently establish norms to discourage that from occurring.

Dramaturgical analysis employs the concepts of backstage and stage. Backstage is where participants prepare for their roles. Stage is where the action takes place in front of the audience. In this case, the preplanning for the strategic planning meetings was the backstage work, while the meetings themselves represented the stage. After the initial meeting, there were attempts by the Leadership

Team members to encourage the backstage activities, but they did not occur to any significant extent.

Another issue was that an effective change effort can not occur when the Agency Director mandates change, such as the elimination of the regional supervisor layer of management, and then does not allow the Assistant Directors to work with their own staff in order to determine how to accomplish the objective. The Agency Director mandated that the Assistant Directors not involve others in the process of consolidating offices and the associated issues surrounding such consolidation. This was particularly difficult for the new Assistant Directors, who were in their first weeks on the job. The opportunity for quality input from the staff to review and refine such plans was lost, even though such input was essential for success. The employees viewed this as another example of how the leadership of the Agency was not following the principles of CQI. The lack of an attempt to build consensus led to resistance by staff.

Additionally, trying to make significant decisions in a vacuum and keeping discussions confidential was an invitation for rumors and backdoor politics to emerge. Messages from the Agency Director over a period of time could have laid the groundwork for the types of changes being proposed. The constancy of such a message could have led employees to be more accepting of the changes, even if they did not totally agree with them. Instead, the approach taken would cause much disruption in people's lives and did not convey why the change was needed and how it would better serve the Agency and the public. Employees felt strongly that the Agency Director was responding or acquiescing to external demands, and was not providing leadership for the Agency.

One of the university consultants working with the Agency on the strategic planning process observed that the strategic planning process was off the tracks. In order to put the train back on the tracks, it would take reflection on what had gone wrong, admission of mistakes, and a firm commitment to do strategic planning in a systematic, and comprehensive way. He further indicated that there was commitment to changing the Agency at the top, but little confidence that the current direction will lead to a more effective Agency.

After the July meeting, the Agency Director closed the circle of staff he confided in to two to three people. With this small group, he developed the Service Center concept, and again proposed the reduction and elimination of regional supervisors. Only at this late stage were the Office Chiefs able to convince the Agency Director to give some flexibility on the timing of the eliminations in order to mitigate the impacts of bumping, moves, and demotions on staff. At this point, a feeling permeated the Leadership Team that the Agency Director was getting desperate, and was going to be replaced. Shortly after this point in time, the announcement of the split of the Agency was made by the Governor.

## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Historical Roots

At a macro level, the field of public administration begins with contributions from a variety of fields and disciplines. These include sociology, psychology, political science, business administration, law and economics.

These various disciplines gave rise to the formative era of public administration, or the Orthodoxy era, which was characterized by practical applications, efficiency, and an emphasis on scientific management, human relations, and political reform. It lasted from the 1880s until the 1940s.

Criticism of the orthodox approach by authors such as Gulick, Appleby, Simon and Barnard began occurring in the late 1930s and into the 1940s and led to two more broad schools of thought. These were the political and behavioral schools. Within the behavioral school resides organizational theory and behavior. Two of the key organization theory books during this period of the late 1950s to the late 1960s were March and Simon's (1958) *Organizations* and Katz and Kahn's (1966) *Social Psychology of Organizations*.

It is the work of the early 1960s in organization theory that began to focus on decision making, conflict, change and leadership. And from this, organization development bridged the descriptive theory to actual application (McCurdy, 1986).

This brief history is summarized in Figure 3:

<b>Organization Development</b>					
<b>Behavioral School Organizational Theory and Behavior</b>					
<b>Human Relations</b>		<b>Orthodox School</b>		<b>Scientific Management</b>	
<b>Sociology</b>	<b>Psychology</b>	<b>Political Science</b>	<b>Law</b>	<b>Economics</b>	<b>Business Administration</b>

**Figure 3. Brief History of Public Administration Literature Relating to Organization Development.**

### **Organization Theory**

Scott (1987) has looked at the various theoretical models of organizations and has classified them. He suggests that the dominant model through the late 1930s was the closed rational system. This model is typified by Taylor's work on scientific management. Scientific management assumes that goals are known, tasks are repetitive, and that resources are uniformly available.

From an administrative theory standpoint, closed rational systems are typified by the work of Fayol, Urwick, and Gulick, who emphasized the merits of specialization and control. Weber's (1924/1947) model of bureaucracy imposed a similar system of logic, where the human component is divorced from an individual's private life through the use of rules, salary, and career.

The second model that Scott (1987) identifies is the closed natural system model. This model also concentrated its attention to the inside of the organization. It keyed in on the emergence of informal structures and their impact on formal systems. Key contributors from a human relations standpoint were Roy (1952) and Whyte (1959). Barnard (1938) and Parsons (1960) contributed through the exploration of



cooperative systems, and from a human relations standpoint the work of Mayo (1945) and Dalton (1959) was key. This theoretical model dominated from roughly 1930 to 1960.

These first two models were closed system models. The next two models fall under the open system framework, where outcomes are strongly influenced by the environment. The open system framework is found in the work of Katz and Kahn (1966).

The third type of model was the open rational system model. This model dominated from approximately 1960 to 1970. March and Simon (1958) provided a major contribution to this model through the concept of bounded rationality. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) contributed the concepts and ideas of contingency theory, which recognized that varying environments posed different challenges for an organization, and that organizations will adapt their structures to those environments. Utilizing a combination of open and rational system assumptions is a strong underlying theme in Thompson's (1967) work. These authors dealt with how an organization can function as a rational system, and yet still be open to the uncertainties of their environments. A significant amount of work was also done in comparative structural analysis, and authors such as Udy (1959), Woodward (1965), Pugh, Hickson, and Hinings (1969), and Blau (1970). Their work viewed the formal structure of the organization as the dependent variable and worked to measure and explain its characteristics.

In the mid-1970s Oliver Williamson (1975, 1981) contributes the concept of transactions costs analysis. This focused concentration on the governing structures of organizations, rather than on commodities or services. Under this concept the

structures of organizations are viewed as one important arrangement for establishing and safeguarding transactions.

The fourth type of model identified by Scott (1987) is the open natural system model. This model has existed from around 1970 to the present. While not replacing the open rational models, these new models do place a greater emphasis on the importance of the environment and its effects on organizations, and it strongly challenges the assumption that organizations are rational systems (Scott, 1987).

The open natural system models can be characterized by the work of Weick (1969) in relation to organizing, where he takes both an open and a natural view of open systems. The work of Strauss, Schatzman, Ehrlich, Bucher, and Sabshin (1963) on negotiated order emphasized that interactions in negotiations can transcend the boundaries of organizations. The work of March and Olsen (1976) regarding ambiguity and choice emphasized that the context in which decisions are made strongly influence the outcomes.

Miller and Rice (1967) looked at socio-technical systems in an effort to discover how the larger organization is shaped by its needs to optimize the needs of both the social and technical components of an organization. Hickson, Hinings, Lee, Schneck, and Pennings (1971) identified the strategic contingency approach, which basically put forth the concept that organizations are coalitions, and that organizational subunits may differ in their interests and act to reduce uncertainty within the organization. Pfeffer (1978) argued that the structure of an organization was the result of these various contests and struggles within the organization.

Weick (1995) indicates that organizations that are open systems should be most concerned with sensemaking. Since they have a greater input from their environment, there is more information to process. Open systems shift attention from

structure to processes, and maintaining the processes can be problematic (Scott, 1987). Those problems become the focus of sensemaking, of balancing and managing the internal and external processes.

Open systems have more ambiguity compared to rational or natural systems. Sensemaking deals with what an organization or individual must be in order to effectively deal with the internal and external environments. The distinctions made between these two environments are the inventions of the people involved. The results that occur become the focus for defining retrospectively what could have been plausible inputs and throughputs.

### **Organizational Change**

Lippitt (1993) discusses three models for organizational change. The first is the equilibrium model, whose major goal is described as that of keeping the organization free from conflict. The second model is the organic model, where the emphasis is on team management and system problem-solving in order to increase organization effectiveness. The third model is the development model which focuses on the development of relationships and interpersonal competence.

Lippitt (1993) describes the advantages and disadvantages of models, and summarizes by indicating that change results from the manifestation of power by key individuals or groups who then seek assistance, engage in shared problem-solving processes, support experimental attempts at change, and reward and reinforce adoption of the desired new behavior patterns.

Dunphy and Stace (1993) indicate that there are two critical dimensions of organizational change. The first is the scale or degree of change, and the second is the style of leadership required to implement that change.

In regards to the scale of change, the incrementalist viewpoint has been a dominant model in the literature (Dunphy, 1981; Golembiewski, 1979a, 1979b; Kanter, 1983; Quinn, 1977, 1980). This viewpoint argues against radical change and instead supports moving an organization in small, developmental steps. By doing so, the organization has time to adjust to the changes being made in a progressive manner. The case can also be made for radical change, which developed during the 1980s as a response to the major economic changes taking place on a global level.

The Agency's restructuring proposal was, looking at the broad picture, an incremental change. The number of positions being eliminated, which was 33, was insignificant in relation to a staff of over 3,000 employees. However, for many in the organization it was viewed as a radical change. In comparison, the implementation of the principles of total quality management was much less disruptive in the eyes of the employees.

The second critical dimension of organizational change identified by Dunphy and Stace (1993) is the style of leadership. They identify four styles of change leadership: collaborative, consultative, directive, and coercive.

The collaborative approach involves widespread participation by employees in decisions regarding the organization's future. The consultative style of leadership involves consulting with employees as to how to bring about organizational change. The directive style of leadership involves using managerial authority as the main form of decision making. And finally, the coercive style of leadership involves executives and managers forcing change on key groups within the organization.

What is interesting is that throughout the course of the Agency's restructuring efforts, the leadership used all four types of styles for change. The collaborative approach was used early in the process, and was seen mainly through

the use of the MRC and the input of hundreds of employees into the process of determining the future course of the Agency. The consultative approach was used by the Agency Director with the Leadership Team in terms of making decisions as to how to proceed with the recommendations from the MRC. The Agency Director rather rapidly evolved to using the directive approach, especially the decision to eliminate the Regional Supervisor level of management. This directive approach over time turned into a coercive approach with the Agency Director forcing the change, with or without the support of the Leadership Team or others in the organization. At this stage, he perceived his support as coming mainly from the Commission and the Governor's Office.

Resnick (1993) (CHT) identifies five conditions for change, while recognizing that achieving all five conditions is rare. These five conditions for change are: (1) A widespread need—the sense in the organization that a particular problem exists and should be solved; (2) Leadership—the presence of a top administrator who is motivated to work on a given change; (3) Trust—a climate of trust between and among organizational members; (4) Resources—funds and expertise; (5) Positive organizational history, especially with respect to change.

In looking at these five conditions, in the Agency there did not exist among the staff a widespread need for the elimination of the Regional Supervisor positions. As has been indicated, the leadership, mainly the Agency Director, was motivated to work on this given change. A climate of trust did not exist among organizational members, and the trust between the leadership of the organization and those affected by the restructuring proposal deteriorated over time. Under resources, while funds were not an issue, the expertise on the part of management to persuade and motivate the change process was missing. And finally, the Agency did not have a positive

organizational history with respect to change. As has been delineated, the Agency was disillusioned and exhausted from the history of change efforts previously undertaken. These previous efforts had resulted in a significant degree of cynicism regarding any structural change, and worked against securing support for this particular organizational change effort.

Nadler (1993) describes three major areas that have been identified as being critical to effectively managing organizational changes, along with an accompanying 12 action areas. The three major areas are: (1) shaping the political dynamics, (2) motivating constructive behavior, and (3) managing the transition. The action areas include such tasks as getting the support of key power groups, demonstrating leadership support of the change, rewarding desired behavior, communicating a clear vision of the desired state, and obtaining feedback.

Nadler (1993) stresses that the senior managers of an organization must devote the time, effort and attention needed for successful change, and not delegate those responsibilities or details. He indicates that this role is significant, and critical.

Resnick (1993) identifies three erroneous assumptions about organizational change. One is that workers resist change, secondly that the planning of change can be kept separate from the implementation of the change, and thirdly that change can be managed effectively regardless of the organizational context.

He then discusses the five ideal conditions for change, which are identified as (1) widespread need, (2) leadership, (3) trust, (4) resources, and (5) positive organizational history. While recognizing that organizations will probably not exhibit all five, each is still desirable.

Finally, Resnick (1993) lays out five principles for successful change:

1. To change a unit, the relevant aspects of that unit's environment must also be changed.
2. To change behavior at any level in the organization, the levels above and below must also exhibit complementary or reinforcing change.
3. Both the formal and informal organization must be considered in planning change.
4. The effectiveness of change is related to the degree in which members are involved.
5. Change should be implemented where there is widespread dissatisfaction among the workers.

Lewin (1951) wrote that successful change consists of three stages. These three stages are unfreezing, moving, and freezing.

The unfreezing stage consists of three steps. These are knowledge, persuasion, and decision making (Rogers, 1983). Knowledge is necessary to make one realize that there is a need for change and that change is possible. Persuasion is encouraging individuals to adopt the change. Finally, decision making is the point at which an individual decides whether to accept or reject the change. The decision to either accept or reject a change is the result of the readiness of an individual. Schein (1979) stresses the importance of readiness and indicates that no change will occur without it. One can be influenced by one's relationship with other individuals in an organization in terms of reacting to a readiness message. Those who are respected as opinion leaders can influence those needing to make the change. Therefore, these opinion leaders can be critical agents of change to persuade others. The perceived credibility and trustworthiness of these opinion leaders, if perceived positively, will result in a more effective readiness message (Gist, 1987).

In the Agency's restructuring proposal there were multiple attempts to promote the unfreezing of staff. The readiness message consisted of the MRC report and its recommendations, as well as numerous speeches and communications by the Agency Director as to how the Agency needed to become more user-friendly, have a more streamlined management structure, and taking an approach toward working with former adversaries to resolve problems and issues. These efforts were perceived more as a mandate from leadership rather than a co-opting approach to obtain buy-in from staff. However, there was not enough effort put into identifying the key opinion leaders in the Agency and convincing them of the need for these changes.

Instead, individuals were allowed to pay more attention to the negative outcomes of the restructuring proposal, namely the elimination of the Regional Supervisor positions. Many of the staff in the Agency, including the Regional Supervisors, naturally reacted negatively and defensively to a proposal that in their view would directly impact them in a negative way.

The second stage of change, after unfreezing, is the moving stage. If the unfreezing stage has not been successful, the most likely outcome is that the proposed change will be rejected, and those who the change is targeted toward may initiate negative reactions, such as sabotage. It appeared that the Agency, through the restructuring proposal, ended up with a modified moving stage. While there was a degree of openness and receptiveness to the implementation of the principles of total quality management, and a more moderate and creative approach in dealing with the Agency's stakeholders was preferable, there was a much lesser degree of support for the key structural changes proposed in the plan.

The third stage of change is the freezing stage, which consists of confirmation and institutionalization (Rogers, 1983). It is at this stage that it becomes apparent



that the change has been made. Rogers goes further to indicate that even if commitment has been developed and the change implemented there must be a continuing effort to ensure that the adopted changes are not reversed. "Individuals who are highly respected influence the willingness of individuals to change and to institutionalize the change" (Armenakis & Feild, 1993, p. 417). The staff of the Agency in the field who were the least convinced of the proposed structural changes were able to read the reactions of their Office Chiefs and some of the Assistant Directors, and realized that those individuals were not supportive of the changes. This carried a significant impact and weight with them in terms of their reactions. It also led some of them to think that perhaps the restructuring proposal would be changed or modified by upper management to lessen any impacts, and further left the impression that the Agency Director alone was promoting the changes.

The Leadership Team did not take a systematic approach to evaluating where the Agency was at during each of these three phases of change in the proposed restructuring. While most, if not all, members of the Leadership Team were aware that there was not significant support for the course of action being pursued, the insistence of the Agency Director that the plan be adopted did not allow for the full expression of the concerns, nor the exploration of other alternatives to accomplish the goal.

### **Leadership**

The literature talks of modernist and postmodernist organizations. The modernist approach worked well when organizations focused primarily on mass manufacturing of goods. The principles of modernist organizations can be connected to the works of Max Weber and Fredrick Taylor (Kuhnert, 1993). Fundamental to

**modernist organizations are the notions that there exists an ideal structure, that success is based on simplified and efficient work, and that there is one best way to organize, plan, and perform work.**

**Weber contributed the concept of an “ideal bureaucracy” (Bendix, 1962). In such an organization there are strict procedures, decisions are based on knowledge and facts, authority is limited, and power derives from one’s position. The term *rational organizations* has been used to describe organizations with these kinds of traits.**

**Postmodernist thinking indicates that decision making is based predominantly on values, emotions, and preferences, and much less so on logical or empirical considerations (Etzioni, 1988). Further, it indicates that decision making does not take place in isolation, and that leaders are not the only ones responsible for successful goal attainment.**

**Fredrick Taylor introduced scientific management and believed that there was one best way to organize. He believed that the scientific method would identify the single best approach to production, organization, and management (Wren, 1987).**

**Postmodernist organizations tend to be less bureaucratic and more flexible in their structure. An excellent example of postmodernist thought within current organizations is the widespread use of total quality management (Garvin, 1988). TQM emphasizes horizontal structures over vertical ones, takes into account the total environment in which the organization operates, and focuses on interactions among customers.**

**The study of leadership among modernist organizations focused on the effects of leadership, rather than the process (Landy, 1989). In postmodernism there is a need for postmodern theories of leadership. Kuhnert (1993) maintains that the theory**

and research relating to leadership is in a state of stuckness, and attempts to develop a course for future organizational leadership research. He says that postmodernism implies that new problems require new solutions, and that the modernist paradigm of organizations, represented by the likes of Weber and Taylor, no longer is adequate and must be replaced. For example, instead of strict rationality in decision making, postmodern thought would allow for nonrational and nonauthoritative bases for making decisions. Postmodernist organizations tend to be less bureaucratic and more flexible in their structure.

Kuhnert (1993) identifies five propositions to guide the postmodern study of leadership:

1. Rational leadership models must be complemented with nonrational models. What this says is that leadership theory must go beyond the organizational chart, and leaders need to be studied regardless of what formal position they hold in the organization. Weber (1924/1947) recognized that there could be charismatic leadership, based on the personal qualities of the leader and not based simply on position. The distinction between rational and nonrational approaches to the study of leadership is now carried forward under the terms transactional versus transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Burns, 1978).

2. Leadership is fundamentally about human values. Some suggest that the postmodern study of leadership should pursue focusing on personal values and emotions of leaders, as opposed to their skills and task performance (Fisher & Torbert, 1991; Russell & Kuhnert, 1992).

3. Searching for a single cause, or a single model of leadership does more harm than good. Marshall Sashkin (1989) suggests that leadership theory should

focus on the leader's personal characteristics, behaviors, and situation simultaneously.

4. Research methods must rely on synthesis as opposed to analysis. Miller and Mintzberg (1983) propose three properties of synthesis when advancing postmodern leadership theory. The first is to study a large number of attributes simultaneously in order to gain a more detailed and integrated picture of the organization. The second is to have research techniques take account of both time and process. One benefit is the ability to reveal long-term impacts of leadership in organizations. The third property is to concentrate on synthesis which identifies larger patterns within the existing data.

5. The objects of study must include the observable, as well as the representational or symbolic.

This brief summary of the major components of postmodernist leadership theory provides a sound basis for the utilization of Weick's (1995) sensemaking in order to understand the attempts at organizational change and restructuring in the Agency.

Alan Bryman (1996) identifies four approaches to the study of leadership. The trait approach was the major focus of study until the late 1940s. The style approach predominated from then until the late 1960s. The contingency approach existed from the late 1960s until the early 1980s. Finally, the New Leadership approach has been the major influence since the early 1980s.

The emphasis of the trait approach was to identify the personal characteristics and qualities of leaders. The style approach focused on the behavior of leaders. The contingency approach focused on the situational factors facing leadership. And finally, the New Leadership approach encompasses a number of approaches to the

study of leadership. Authors utilize terms such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985; Tichy & Devanna, 1986), charismatic leadership (Conger, 1989), visionary leadership (Sashkin, 1988; Westley & Mintzberg, 1989), and leadership (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Kotter, 1990).

### **Organizational Culture and Leadership**

Schein discusses organizations and how leadership operates in those that are mature. He indicates that if the organization has not adapted to its environmental realities, that in order to change its culture it must be led by someone who can realize what changes are necessary and knows how to gain acceptance of those changes. Leaders of mature organizations must find many ways to be exposed to their external environment (Schein, 1992). Leaders who have the capability of managing such a change can come from inside the organization, but the ability to be objective is probably related to having a nonconventional career (Kotter & Heskett, 1992).

The Agency Director fit this description in terms of being a leader who had risen from within the ranks of the Agency. He also had, and cultivated, extensive exposure to the external environment of the Agency.

Schein (1992) also says that the design of the organization “elicits high degrees of passion but not too much clear logic.” He also states that the structure of an organization and its effectiveness can usually be interpreted in a number of different ways by employees. The Agency Director concentrated on changing the structure of the organization, and he felt very passionate about it. In contrast, a majority of the employees did not understand why that structure needed to change, and did not see the logic or the need for the change.

## **Sensemaking**

**The course which has been charted through the literature leads to the current literature regarding the subject of organizational change. One of the key areas is that of sensemaking, an approach currently being promoted by Weick (1995).**

**Sensemaking is defined as the act of placing stimuli into some kind of framework, a thinking process that uses retrospective accounts to explain surprises. There is no one definition. As we move from rational, to natural, to open systems, we also move from structures, processes, and environments which are less ambiguous to those that are more so. Sensemaking becomes more important as the ambiguity increases.**

**In the current environments in which public administrators function, the common element is that there is an ever increasing rate of change in terms of the way things are done, in the technology available, and in the expectations of the customers of the organization. Under such conditions, there is a need for approaches that are flexible in assisting to explain, or make sense, of what is happening. Sensemaking is a current method that might take organization and leadership theory to a new plateau and provide a mechanism for coping and adapting , both organizationally and personally.**

## **Culture**

**Organizational culture means different things to different people. The literature reflects a variety of assumptions about the topic, and it fails to clarify or promote understanding.**

**Organizational culture is a means of instilling social order within an organization. Organizational cultures are also susceptible to manipulation (Aldrich, 1992; Fineman, 1993; Pfeffer, 1982).**

**Managers who are skilled in the elicitation of emotion may be able to crystallize employee feelings through their actions and their words.**

**If the culture of an organization is strong enough, it leaves little room for those who don't believe in that culture or doubt it. The strong culture of the Agency had as one of its major tenets the collective desire of a majority of staff to protect the environment. This went beyond executing the normal job duties, and was a value that many held high from a personal standpoint as well. Many of the employees in the Agency were hired in the 1970s and early 1980s, when the environmental movement was a major force. From an environmental standpoint the traditional, and successful approach to environmental protection that was supported by the Agency and utilized by staff was to strongly react to individuals or companies that polluted the environment. In many cases the approach used was to impose fines, take legal action, or both, in order to ensure compliance with the law. This approach and its success became a central part of the culture of the Agency.**

**Some studies focus on the organization adapting to changing environmental pressures and conditions (Akin & Hopelain, 1987; Nichols, 1985; Roskin, 1986). This certainly was one aspect of what was happening to the Agency. The external pressures from the Legislature, the Governor's Office, and the Commission were telling the Agency that it needed to change its approach in dealing with the public and the business community.**

**Roskin (1986) refers to organizational culture as the organization's "autonomic nervous system." Schein (1984) refers to culture as a pattern of**

assumptions that a group develops in learning to cope externally and internally, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid and appropriate.

Culture is comprised of values, beliefs, ideologies, attitudes and artifacts. Shared values are important components of the culture of an organization (Alvesson, 1987). Each individual ranks values in his own hierarchy (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Over time, we become so used to our values that we are not consciously aware of their existence (Gagliardi, 1986).

One approach to culture is value engineering and its relation to the integration perspective. The argument was that an effective leader could create the culture and build it around those values that the leader espoused. This is what Peters and Waterman (1982) emphasized. Similar ideas were put forward in other publications (e.g., Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981). The integration perspective has been well described by Schein (1985), Barley (1983), Pettigrew (1979).

Another distinction that can be made is that between “espoused” values (Argyris, 1982) and “inferred” values (Siehl, Ledford, Sivermann, & Fay, 1988). The difference is that espoused values are what an individual overtly states. Inferred values are attributed to an individual to explain their behavior. In the Agency, what the Agency Director and Leadership Team espoused was that they valued participative management, total quality management principles, and that the employees were the Agency’s greatest asset. However, for many of the staff, the restructuring proposal led them to infer that since positions were being eliminated without what they thought was a good rationale, there were other values at play.

The differentiation approach showed that there could be subcultures within an organization. One argument is that cultural change when dealing with various



subcultures within an organization tends to be incremental and changes are brought about from the organization's environment (e.g., Meyerson & Martin, 1987).

Culture change in organizations occurs due to the exploration of different approaches to resolving problems (Gagliardi, 1986). Gagliardi identifies two types of culture change. First is cultural incrementalism, in which new values which do not challenge the current cultural elements are incorporated. The second is cultural revolution, which occurs when new cultural elements must replace existing ones.

Schein (1983) identifies what he calls "hybrid" managers, who are capable of observing the old culture while at the same time adding new elements that may be dictated by changing circumstances. The effectiveness of these managers comes from the fact that they are members of the culture undergoing the change and are sensitive to it.

In this study the Agency Director was positioned to have the opportunity to become a hybrid manager. His many years of experience working within the Agency made him be perceived as part of the existing culture. However, through the course of the MRC report and the subsequent restructuring proposals, he was unable to achieve being a hybrid manager, and was viewed by many as a threat to the existing culture.

Schein has written that an even essential function of leadership is the managing and guidance of the culture (Schein, 1985). Schein indicates that the founders of new organizations often leave a distinctive culture on those organizations. At later stages in the development of organizations those distinctive cultures may come to be viewed as liabilities.

Trice and Beyer (1990, 1993) write of innovation taking place when a new leader tries to replace an existing culture. In effect, this is what the Agency Director

was attempting to do through the restructuring proposal. He felt that the direction that the Governor and the Commission was promoting was a more pro-business approach. This approach was designed to take a more proactive stance on the part of the Agency to seek negotiation and consensus in resolving environmental matters, as opposed to using a command and control approach that has been previously described.

Martin (1992) elaborates different approaches to reading cultures within an organization. One of the perspectives that she talks about is called the differentiation perspective. In this perspective, culture is seen as being infused by a lack of consensus. Therefore, when one looks at leadership within this perspective, it leads to examining leadership being exercised by groups. Various groups within an organization utilize informal leadership to express or promote their cultural positions. These individual, group leaders are most likely instrumental in the leadership of the organization. This is a good description of the culture of the Agency. There were a number of informal leaders in the organization. In some cases these leaders occupied formal positions, such as Assistant Directors or Office Chiefs. In other instances, such as with the Regional Assistant Directors, a strong orientation had developed in the field which viewed the leadership of the field as distinct from that of the central office.

Martin (1992) also identifies what she terms the fragmentation perspective of organizational culture. This perspective almost eliminates the role of leadership in organizational culture, and says that the culture is unclear and confusing to members of the organization. In this fragmentation perspective, leaders can sometimes be viewed as a source of ambiguity. I believe this is what happened in the Agency. The Agency Director was attempting to forge a new direction and new approach for the

Agency in how it conducted its business. This new, more user-friendly approach to resolving issues ran up against an existing culture that did not necessarily value that approach. Therefore, the new approach and the existing culture collided.

It can be argued that staff in an organization are not passive in terms of how they perceive or react to cultural change, but are imaginative consumers of the culture (Hatch, 1993; Linstead & Grafton-Small, 1992).

Roskin (1986) discusses the key role of leadership in managing corporate culture. This key role is to allow cultural deviance to exist. Permitting this to exist, if managed correctly, assists in moving toward new components of the culture. In this study, it appears that the Agency Director did not convince enough members of the Leadership Team or staff that the new, more user-friendly approach to managing the Agency's programs, was appropriate.

Transformational leadership offers a means for managers to explain their visions and raise the expectations of staff (Bass, 1990). This type of leadership calls for a charismatic approach, mutual respect between the leader and staff, and a recognition of the needs of the staff. The Agency Director was not able to establish the basis for a transformational leadership approach to culture change.

Schein (1984) has identified three stages in the cultural life of an organization. In the third stage an organization is considered mature, and finds that its culture can prevent it from adapting to changing environmental conditions. Schein argues that under these circumstances cultural revolution, as opposed to cultural incrementalism, may be necessary. I believe that this is what the Agency Director was attempting to accomplish through the restructuring proposals. He believed that taking an incremental approach over time would not be effective in achieving the results he desired. Not being able to convince a majority of the Leadership Team that this was

the appropriate approach was a major factor in the lack of success for restructuring. This was further compounded by the Agency Director's impatience to proceed on this course as rapidly as possible. By not taking the time to bring staff along, to explain, and to engage in discussions and argument and provide rationale, the major elements necessary to change staff's opinions were missing.

The literature discusses how the concepts of organizational culture can be confused with that of the climate of an organization. The climate refers to how well employee expectations are being met, and is concerned with factors such as morale and motivation (Nave, 1986). The organizational climate, dealing with the perceptions and feelings of employees, is a more observable phenomenon. It was very apparent to most members of the Leadership Team that the organizational climate was negative, as a result of the actions of the Leadership Team and the restructuring proposal. What is interesting is that the organizational climate can be governed (Cullen, Victor, & Stephens, 1989; Golembiewski & Carrigan, 1970a, 1970b; Schein, 1986; Young & Smith, 1988). Yet the Agency Director elected not to meet with the Office Chiefs at critical points in the restructuring process, and seldom spoke directly with staff. One explanation as to why this occurred is because of his uncomfortableness in directly communicating with these individuals, and further that this uneasiness stemmed from his incomplete conviction in the course that he was taking.

Bibeault (1982) has written that most companies that manage successful turnarounds replace the individuals who are in key positions in the organization. This was an approach that the Agency Director used in the initial stages of his leadership. While not having the flexibility to hire or fire at will, he did utilize the flexibility that he did possess in order to move Assistant Directors into different Assistant Director

positions. Additionally, his clear indication of the direction in which he intended to take the Agency resulted in one Assistant Director deciding to retire.

The literature relating to culture also points out that there are differences in values and other components of culture between various hierarchical levels within an organization (Posner, Kouzes, & Schmidt, 1985). The assumptions and values held by employees at varying levels differ due to the differences in responsibilities. As an example, it is suggested that as people move up the corporate ladder, they shift from a more narrow focus to a broader perspective (Kovach, 1986).

Schein (1986) writes that conflicts between groups in an organization may assist each in building and maintaining their own cultures.

There certainly were two distinct cultures when looking at the Agency from a broad perspective. The environmental protection side of the Agency was very distinct from the resource management side of the Agency. As was explained in the earlier history of the Agency, the environmental protection responsibilities were transferred to the Agency in the early 1970s. The resource management responsibilities of the Agency had existed within it since its inception. This marriage of two distinct cultures into one Agency was never fully consummated in terms of merging the cultures. In spite of the intervening 20+ years, there never was a full integration of those two cultures into one. The idea that different parts of an organization can have different cultures is supported in the literature (Louis, 1983; Wilkins & Patterson, 1985).

Gagliardi (1986) discusses how an organization attempts to maintain its cultural identity through its prevailing values. But when the culture must change, Gagliardi says it does so in two basic ways: (1) Cultural incrementalism—incorporation of new values without challenging current cultural elements, and (2) Cultural revolution—change requiring the abandonment of current cultural

elements because they must be replaced by the new ones. The scope for effective leadership under these different circumstances was analyzed.

This article will be interesting to my study because it emphasizes the important role of the leadership in implementing cultural change, and provides the beginnings of a framework for analyzing the actions taken in the Agency.

Allen and Kraft (1984) have identified a model for changing an organization's culture. They call it the Normative Systems Approach, and it consists of four phases: discovery, involving people, bringing about change, and evaluating. Their first phase is discovery. I believe that a comparison can be made between this phase and the establishment of the Management Review Committee to study the nine charges presented by the Leadership Team.

The second phase of the Normative Systems Approach is the involvement of people. Again, an analogy can be drawn between this phase and the involvement of staff in providing input for the MRC report. Over 400 staff were directly involved in providing input on a variety of issues for that report.

The third phase is actually bringing about the desired change. This phase emphasizes four key elements: individual development; work team development; leadership development; and the development of policies, programs, and procedures. It is at this phase that the restructuring proposal encountered mixed results. While positive developments began to take place in the area of Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI), which addressed individual and work team and leadership development, these positive aspects were overshadowed by the effort to restructure the Agency and eliminate the Regional Supervisor level of management. One of the reasons that this overshadowing occurred was due to the fact that elimination of those positions was not grounded in the analysis and recommendations of the MRC

report, which employees were familiar with. In fact, that report specifically stated that no structural changes were needed.

Allen and Kraft (1984) identify key principles for successful cultural change. These key principles include: (a) involving staff in problems affecting them; (b) refraining from blaming people; (c) working from a sound data base; and (d) having clarity of goals, objectives, and purposes. Conversely, these principles are impeded by: (a) looking for simplistic solutions, (b) blaming others, (c) leaving it up to others, and (d) trying to do it by one's self without involving others (Allen & Kraft, 1984).

The restructuring proposal and the approach adopted by the Agency Director and the Leadership Team in implementing it, highlights some of these guidelines and principles and how they can be impeded. The concentration of effort on the Regional Supervisor positions and their elimination was a simplistic approach. There were not enough people at various levels in the organization involved in this decision in order to generate the necessary support for its implementation. Instead, this approach was mandated by the Agency Director, and did not have the full support of key members of the Leadership Team. This major gap was further exacerbated by the fact those very Assistant Directors who did not support the approach were being asked to take the lead role in its implementation.

Denhardt (1993) talks about the involvement of a manager in setting a new direction for an organization. He says:

**That intervention may be small and seemingly inconsequential, but to the surprise of all concerned, it may make an enormous difference in the organization. On the other hand, the action taken may be dramatic and appear to address great issues, yet do little to affect the course of the organization's development. (p. 25)**

The restructuring undertaken by the Agency Director and the Leadership Team fits into this latter category identified by Denhardt. While certainly significant in its scale, it did not have a lasting effect on the development of the organization.

Denhardt (1993) also discusses how major policy statements by a top manager may be perceived either positively or negatively, by whether it answers questions that the employees may have. He says:

The manager may be attempting to say something that will make a significant difference in the way people in the organization behave, but if he or she acts without consulting the employees and consequently fails to address issues members of the organization feel are most critical, if the manager fails to use the right language so that the policy statement makes sense to those in the organization, or if the manager fails to lead in a direction that seems both reasonable and appropriate, there will be little positive effect and often quite negative results. (p. 26)

The failure of the Agency Director and the Leadership Team to convince the majority of staff that the restructuring proposal was appropriate, and that it made sense, was a major problem in its implementation. It significantly contributed to the internal dissension, and subsequently led to the lack of support from key constituency and stakeholder groups.

Denhardt (1993) discusses how a manager must model the appropriate behavior desired in order for the organization to witness that behavior and, hopefully, model it. He indicates that this type of modeling applies to numerous areas of organizational life. The Agency Director's behavior regarding the utilization of the principles of total quality management was closely watched by staff. The general opinion developed by staff was that the Agency Director, and the Leadership Team, did not practice what they preached in this regard. As an example, while participative management was espoused, staff viewed the restructuring proposal and its details as a major decision that did not take their concerns into account. It is my belief that once



this opinion began to form, it then perpetuated itself. Staff then concentrated on decisions that fit those expectations, and put less emphasis on those decisions which supported participative management. Cooper (1990) further confirms this by stating that if a leader verbally encourages one type of behavior, but exhibits another, the staff will pay attention to the exceptions rather than what is being said.

Cohen and Brand (1993) indicate that the culture of an organization is important when considering the organization's capacity for adapting itself to TQM. They say, "In general, organizations and people resist change when they have some type of investment in particular work patterns or organizational arrangements, and this resistance is like to increase at a rate proportional to that investment" (p. 68).

The perception by staff that there was not a good rationale for the restructuring proposal led them to resist that change. In their minds it further consolidated their feelings that the existing structure and approach did not need to change.

Cohen and Brand (1993) also say, "People in organizations also learn through social modeling—imitating the behavior of other people in the organization who are successful or hold high status. This concept can work to a manager's advantage when attempting to change behavior" (p. 69). In the case of the Agency, this did not work to the Agency Director's advantage. As indicated, many staff took their cues from other members of the Leadership Team who were not supporting the restructuring proposal.

Mitroff (1983) says that the concept of organization culture is a "sticky and elusive one" (p. 120). Weick (1995) discusses how it is difficult to achieve shared meaning within an organizational culture. He indicates that while people may not share the same meaning, they do share the same experience. In the Agency, many

staff had already experienced other restructuring efforts in prior years. It is my opinion that these previous efforts had caused staff to be somewhat immune from thinking that any major change or improvement could come from restructuring.

### **The Culture of the Public Agency**

In March, 1992, an analysis of the organizational culture of the Agency was summarized by Professor Ralph C. Chandler of Western Michigan University (Chandler, 1992). His conclusions were the result of individual sessions with approximately 400 mid-level managers as part of the agency's organizational development program, as well as his contact with an additional 300 employees in courses taught at the Masters and Doctoral level. Professor Chandler also was part of Agency-sponsored secretarial and leadership academies, and also worked closely with the Agency Director and the Leadership Team.

His organizational and personal analyses was based on the use of the various diagnostic instruments: (a) The Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation—Behavior (FIRO-B), (b) The Styles of Management Inventory (Managerial Grid), (c) The Personnel Relations Survey (Johari Window), (d) The Management Transactions Audit (Transactional Analysis Profile), (e) The Desert Survival Situation, and (f) The Subarctic Survival Situation.

#### **The Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation—Behavior**

The FIRO-B measures expressed and wanted behavior in the areas of inclusion, control, and affection. The scales used indicate degrees of personal sociability, privacy, power, independence, generosity, and stability. The six cells are

grouped as follows with numbers from 0 to 9 being assigned to each cell based on the respondents answers to 54 questions (see Table 2).

**Table 2**  
**Model of FIRO-B Measures**

	Inclusion	Control	Affection
Expressed Behavior	Sociability	Power	Generosity
Wanted Behavior	Privacy	Independence	Stability

Expressed inclusion, which looks at the sociability scale, indicates the degree to which we let others know that we want to be included in their activities. Wanted inclusion, which looks at the privacy scale, shows how much we really mean the degree of inclusion that we express. For example, our entire inclusion need may be met simply by being invited. Once others have indicated to us that we are okay, we prefer to be alone. Expressed control is our power scale, suggesting the degree to which we want to control others. Wanted control is our independence scale, or the degree to which we will allow others to control us. Expressed affection, which looks at the generosity scale, shows how much love, warmth, and acceptance we typically communicate to others. Wanted affection, which looks at the stability scale, indicates how much affection we want others to show us, and how manipulative we might be in getting what we want.

## The Styles of Management Inventory

The Managerial Grid locates individuals in reference to their relative concern for people and production. The model in Figure 4 summarizes the conceptual framework of the grid.

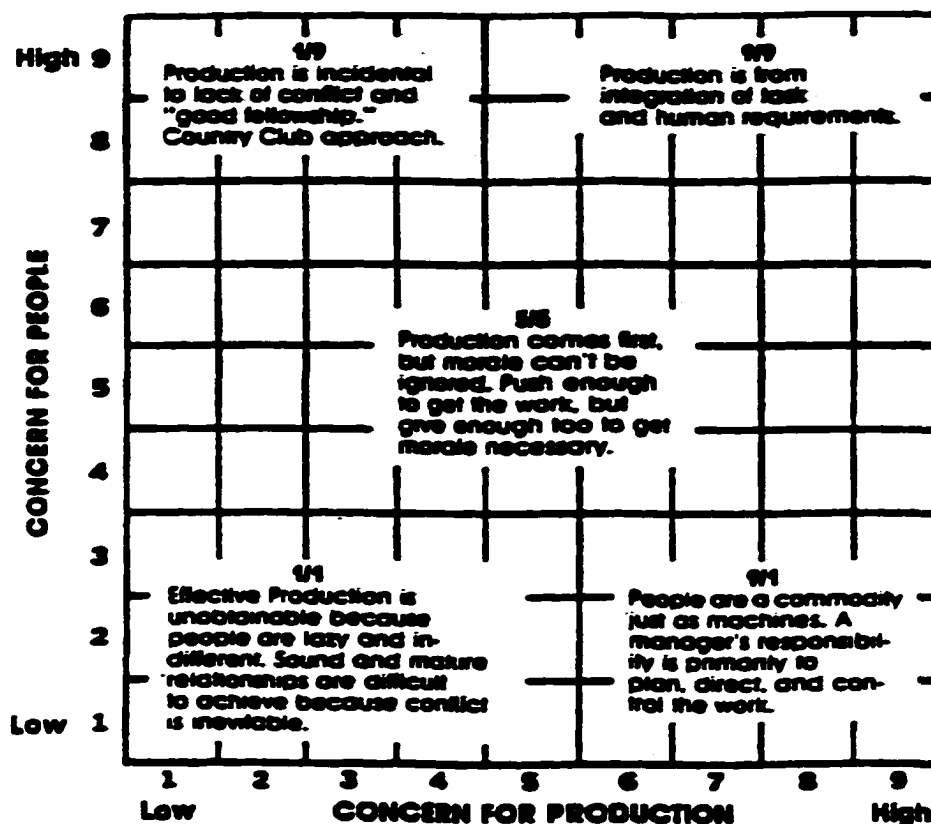


Figure 4. Model of the Managerial Grid.

Those who fall in the 1/1 quadrant show a low concern for people and a low concern for production. These managers are not necessarily bad managers since they may have developed a compensation system for their natural predisposition not to manage. However, a disproportionate amount of emotional energy would probably

be expended pursuing the compensation system. Managers falling into the 9/1 category, which is the authoritarian style, demonstrate a low concern for people and a high concern for production. Managers in the 1/9 region, the humanitarian style, display a high concern for people and a low concern for production. The preferred quadrant is the 9/9, which indicates an effective manager who integrates a high concern for people with a high concern for production. The 5/5 contingency manager borrows from each of the four quadrants of the grid and utilizes each of the other typologies as the situation demands. The strength of the 5/5 style is that it can tailor its management techniques to the personalities and time frame it is dealing with. Its weakness is that it is unpredictable, even to itself, and generates a degree of anxiety and some distrust among those being managed.

The Managerial Grid establishes a person's preferred management style, and it also rank orders one's backup styles with the degree of likelihood the manager will fall back to the backup styles if the preferred one is unsuccessful. The respondents also provide data that are broken down into component scores classifying them in terms of philosophy of management and attitudes toward planning and goal setting, implementation, and evaluation.

### The Personnel Relations Survey

The Johari Window assesses the understanding and behavior of managers in their control of the flow of information between themselves and others. It measures the extent to which they facilitate or hinder information flow between themselves and three categories of others: employees, colleagues, and supervisors. It is a group dynamics model employing a four-part figure (Figure 5).

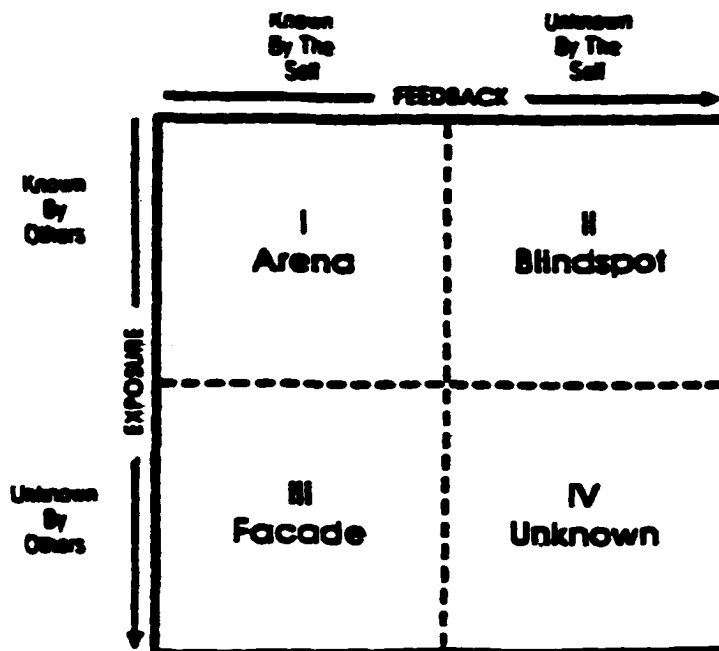


Figure 5. Model of the Personnel Relations Survey.

The square field represents interpersonal space partitioned into four regions with each region representing particular information-processing elements that have significance for the quality of relationships. The size and shape of each region, revealed by how the respondent answers carefully worded questions, indicate whether what is known by the self is also known by others (a large arena), whether what is known by others is unknown by the self (a large blind spot), whether what is known by the self is unknown by others (a large facade), or whether what is unknown by the self is also unknown by others (a large unknown). Corrective activities for dysfunctional informational flow are shown as feedback and exposure processes.

#### The Management Transactions Audit

The Transactional Analysis Profile provides data about the effects of a manager's feelings and subsequent practices in responding to the comments of others.

As in the Johari Window, the responses are divided into three categories: subordinates, colleagues, and superiors. The interpersonal transaction that occurs in any kind of contact, successful or unsuccessful, is “photographed” in the instrument. The model’s assumption is that each person is a total system operating from three components or subsystems: Parent, Adult, and Child. These three subsystems consist of a collection of characteristics and related feelings that are diagrammed and described in Figure 6.

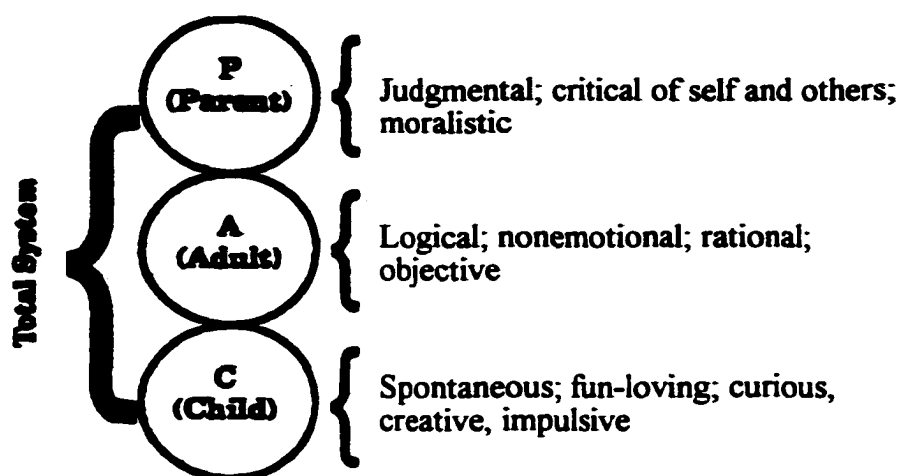


Figure 6. The Three Subsystems of the Management Transaction Audit.

Each person completing the instrument identifies the relative size of his or her Parent, Adult, and Child in each of the categories specified. The resulting profile produces a plot of one’s disruptive-constructive tension index to show the degree to which a crossed transaction is likely to occur in dealing with others because of one’s innate feelings.

### The Desert Survival Situation and the Subarctic Survival Situation

Each of these exercises explores the synergistic decision making capabilities of a group. The skills involved are illustrated in the algorithm presented in Figure 7.

The participants are given basic information about the reasons for a perilous situation in which they find themselves. In order to survive a plane crash, they must make decisions about the relative value of certain items they have been able to salvage. There are 15 items available in each situation. In the desert survival situation, they are such things as a cosmetic mirror, one top coat per survivor, and one quart of water per survivor. In the subarctic survival situation they are such things as 13 wooden matches, a hand ax, and a 20' x 20' piece of heavy duty canvas. A synergistic decision making process then begins, using the elements in the algorithm. Each participant first reasons and rank orders the 15 items according to personal preferences. Then teams are formed and the team talks through and rank orders the items again, as a group. The team may or may not have better judgment than any individual in it. Is group decision making better than individual decision making? The process tests the answer to that question by examining the kinds of transactions that take place within the group.

The several hundred Agency personnel who had completed these diagnostic instruments produced composite scores that reveal a great deal about the organizational culture of the Agency. On the FIRO-B, the Agency looks like the matrix in Table 3.

The organization is normative in expressed inclusion, expressed affection, and wanted affection. The 5 in wanted affection is reassuring because it demonstrates emotional stability. Whatever traumas the Agency periodically endures, it comes



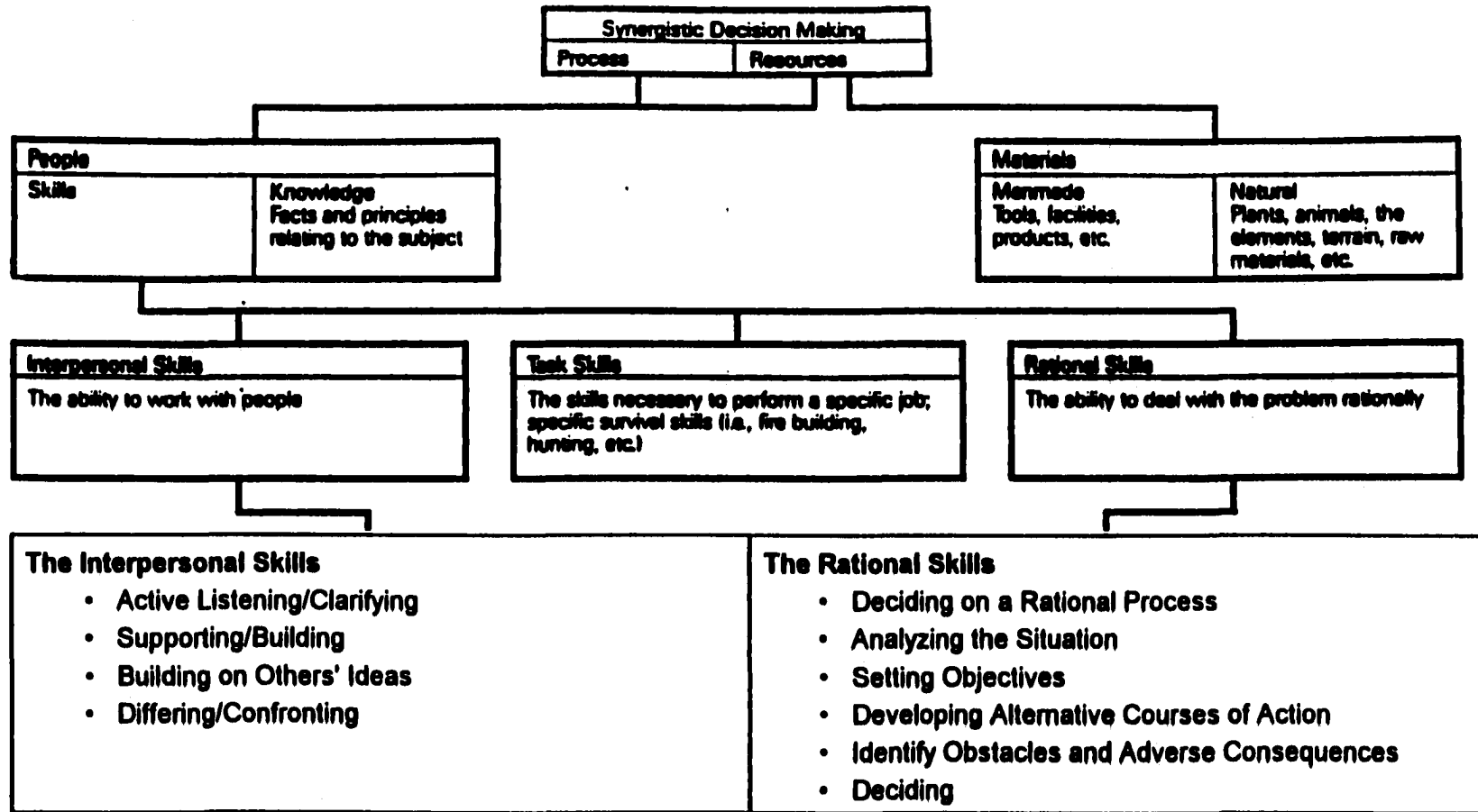


Figure 7. Diagram of the Skills Involved in Desert Survival and Subarctic Survival Situations.

down on its feet. It is emotionally mature. The organization departs from the norm in expressed control, indicating it likes to tell people what to do. It also departs in wanted inclusion, indicating a strong preference for privacy, and in wanted control, indicating a strong sense of independence.

**Table 3**  
**Composite of FIRO-B for the Public Agency**

	I	C	A
E	5	7	5
W	1	2	5

Such a pronounced need for privacy identifies a workforce that has to exert so much energy in meeting everyday professional requirements that it must take advantage of every opportunity for privacy in order to regroup and recharge its batteries to meet tomorrow's responsibilities. Such a characteristic of organizational culture also identifies scientifically and/or technically trained personnel who are more comfortable working alone than in groups, and who tend naturally to be introspective and reflective. These same people typically are also independent to the point of being *unmanageable unless a cooptation process takes place*. They do not automatically obey anyone, and they will filter instructions through their own sense of what is appropriate. They will often do what they are told but in their own way. *This pronounced predisposition on the part of Agency managers at all levels creates an equally pronounced need for mature leadership in the executive offices of the Agency.* The high 7 on expressed control is yet another indication of the willfulness and self-directedness on the part of the average Agency manager.

The composite picture of the Managerial Grid (Figure 8) shows the following distribution in percentages across the four quadrants of the grid, along with the size of the centered 5/5 contingency management style.

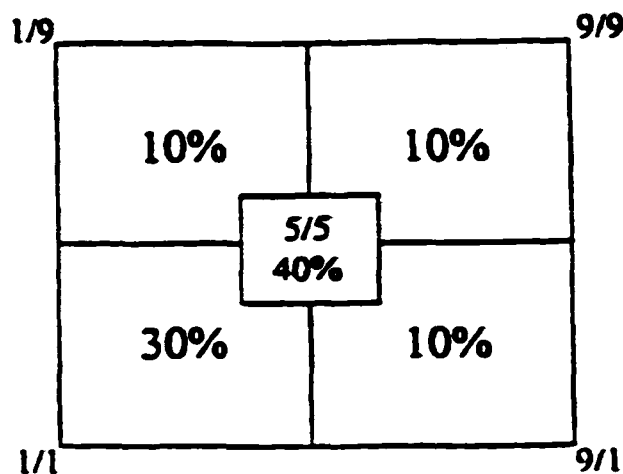


Figure 8. Composite of Managerial Grid for the Public Agency.

The Agency is disproportionately high in the incidence of 5/5 and 1/1 managers. The language the designers of the grid use to describe these respective styles is that the 5/5 manager “understands the need to push for production but tries to yield enough to maintain some kind of balance” (Chandler, 1992, p. 12) between the contrary forces of people and work. “He or she recognizes the incompatibility of people and production, but, as a realist, is aware of the need for both by the organization” (Chandler, 1992, p. 12). The 1/1 manager behaves in a fashion that “seeks neither to attain any real production nor to establish sound relationships. The major goal is to stay out of trouble by avoiding risk and to meet only minimum requirements for both production and relationships” (Chandler, 1992, p. 12).

It is obvious that a major flaw exists in an organizational culture that allows such a high percentage of 1/1 managers to be promoted. The reason is not hard to

find. Because one is a good forester or biologist or geologist does not necessarily mean that one would also be a good manager of foresters or biologists or geologists. The very qualities that make one a good scientist, for example, might militate against one being a good manager of accountability mechanisms, personal relationships, and budgets. Yet one must become some sort of manager to advance organizationally in the Agency beyond a certain point.

The dominant Agency type in the Johari Window exercise is the Unknown, or Type A in the Johari classification system.

The Type A personality is described as follows:

This interpersonal style reflects minimal use of both the Exposure and Feedback processes and amounts to an impersonal approach to interpersonal relationships. The Unknown is the largest region under this type and unrealized potential and untapped creativity are the dominant influences. Such a style often indicates withdrawal and an aversion to risk-taking on the part of its user. Interpersonal anxiety and safety seeking are likely to be the prime sources of personal motivation.

People who use this style often appear rigid and aloof and may be found in bureaucratic organizations where it is possible, and perhaps profitable, to avoid personal involvement. Other people are likely to react to persons using this style with more than average hostility. They will tend to interpret the lack of exposure and feedback solicitation in terms of their own needs and how this style fails to fulfill those needs. (Chandler, 1992, pp. 13–14)

The correlations between and among the several diagnostics, and the bases for the statements about the organizational culture of the Agency, begin to be seen when this third instrument is introduced. Those who are private and independent on the FIRO-B, for example, would also make minimal use of both the Exposure and Feedback processes on the Johari Window. Those who withdraw and have an aversion to risk-taking on the Johari Window would also find their natural home as 5/5 and 1/1 managers on the Managerial Grid. Those who are high on expressed control on the FIRO-B would also appear rigid and aloof, and engender more than

average hostility, on the Johari Window. The correlations are striking in their consistency, especially when the fourth diagnostic is added, as follows.

In the Management Transaction Audit the Agency is characterized by dominant Parent and Child subsystems (see Figure 9).

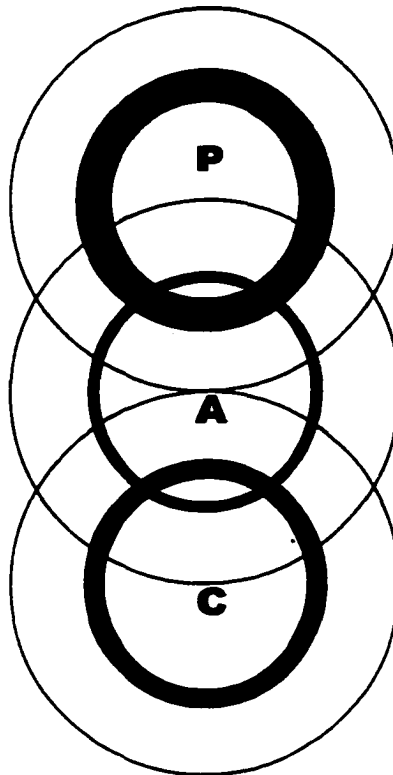


Figure 9. Composite of Management Transaction Audit for the Public Agency.

Both the Parent and Child contaminate the Adult, although the Parent contaminates it more. The Adult subsystem is severely handicapped, and, as a result, it is not able easily to express its feelings, attitudes, and opinions. It has trouble verbalizing. In such cases the Parent-oriented person who enters into transactions with others will come across as inflexible, prejudiced, unreasonable, and controlling on the one hand, and, when the Child enters into the transaction from the other end

of the emotional spectrum, hypersensitive as well. Because the Adult subsystem is so limited by the size of the Parent subsystem, the manager does not have the capacity for updating information easily or objectively, and thus gives the impression of being stubborn and persistent. From the Child subsystem comes the tendency for such a manager to see the world as his or her playground, or, in the world of the Agency, as the place where the manager invests his or her ideals and idealism. This is the world of true believers.

In terms of its disruptive-constructive tension index, the Agency organizational culture plots like this in the Transaction Audit (see Figure 10):

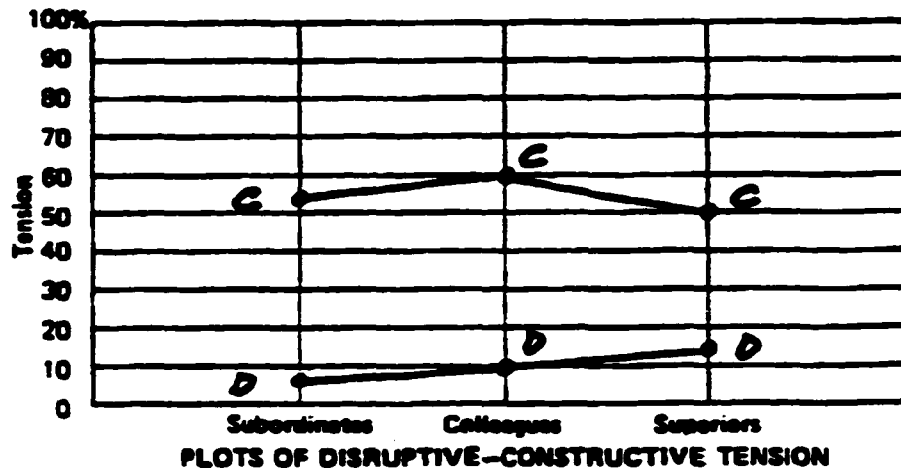


Figure 10. Disruptive-Constructive Tension Index for the Public Agency.

The average Agency manager has between a 50% and 60% chance of a constructive communication, and only an 8% to 15% chance of a disruptive communication, depending on the category of transaction, i.e., subordinate, colleague, or superior. The chances of constructive communication are highest between colleagues (50%) and lowest between a manager and his or her supervisor (35%). These data display a fairly high degree of tension at work in the Agency.

Both the Desert Survival Situation and the Subarctic Survival Situation show high synergistic decision making capabilities among managers in the Agency as well as individual reasoning capacities well above the national average. In the Desert Survival Situation the average individual score of 4,116 national participants was 63.2. In the Agency it was 53.1 (the lower the score the better the performance). The average national team score was 39.7.

In the Subarctic Survival Situation the average individual score of 1,228 national participants was 47.3. In the Agency it was 43.0. The average national team score was 29.8. The average Agency team score was 21.6.

These scores clearly indicate the superior ability of Agency managers to employ linear logic as individuals, and the ability to use interpersonal communication skills in problem solving when given the opportunity. The second major organizational defect which presents itself at this point is the Balkanization of the Agency into highly decentralized and independent task centers which militate against synergistic decision making. The formation of functional cross-divisional task groups would begin to utilize the Agency's demonstrated capacity to problem solve in small groups. Such small group tasking should begin in the executive staff itself, with periodic meetings designed to confront specific problems (Chandler, 1992).

The summary phrases used below to describe the organizational culture of the Agency have been inductively, not deductively, arrived at. They come not from general perceptions about what the Agency should be in terms of general principles, but from data gleaned from within the Agency about what it actually is. The conclusions are drawn from the most sacrosanct recesses of the mind and spirit, from the personal psychologies, of the people who do the agency's work. The summary phrases are self-explanatory. The Agency is characterized by an organizational

culture which is: (a) professionally competent, (b) technically expert, (c) geographically dispersed, (d) legally powerful, (e) politically controversial, (f) historically resilient, (g) organizationally unmanageable, (h) personally independent, (i) emotionally private, and (j) morally correct.

The foundational strength of the Agency is its human resources. The men and women who work there are not perfect, but their expertise and their commitment to professional excellence ranks them among the top five such public agencies in the nation. The fact that they have not been afraid to look deeply into their own personal and organizational selves to provide the evidence for this discussion shows the greatest strength of all.

Points (f) and (g) above deserve a concluding comment. The Agency is historically resilient because it has survived a remarkable series of internal reorganizations and external political wars over its soul. It keeps absorbing its critics and coming back to fight another day. It is organizationally unmanageable because it is really several agencies operating under one umbrella. Some of these agencies-within-the-agency are actually empires with their own clients and constituencies, and not infrequently they work at cross-purposes to one another. The Agency is so far-flung geographically and so decentralized in its decision making authority that it reminds one of an army post commander out west in 1836. He had to trust his own judgment.

So how can the people within such an organization be managed? Dr. Chandler says, "They can be guided, instructed, corrected, and evaluated, but they can hardly be managed in the traditional sense of that term, especially when they are so independent anyway" (Chandler, 1992, p. 20).



## **CHAPTER IV**

### **INTERVIEWS WITH TOP MANAGEMENT TEAM**

#### **Overall Summary of Leadership Team Interview Responses in Relation to Weick's Sensemaking Model**

**Weick (1995) describes sensemaking as being composed of two major processes. These are belief-driven processes and action-driven processes. There are at least two forms of belief-driven processes: argument and expectations. Argument refers to reasoned discourse as well as the fact that any opinion is potentially controversial and subject to at least two conflicting sides. Weick says that meetings are the setting where most arguments occur. Expectations are more directive than are arguments. They filter inputs, and their formation and activation are critical for sensemaking.**

**There are at least two forms of action-driven processes: behavioral commitment and manipulation. Commitment is focused on a single action, and manipulation is focused on multiple simultaneous actions. Commitment is a state where an individual is bound by his actions, and through the actions to beliefs that support his involvement. Manipulation involves acting in ways that create an environment that allows individuals to comprehend and manage.**

**Sensemaking can be modeled as shown in Figure 11. This model of sensemaking will be used to compare and contrast where the three categories of interviewees reside. Each interviewee was asked 29 questions. Each question was developed to specifically address the four major components of the sensemaking**

<b>BELIEF</b>	<b>Argument</b>	<b>Expectation</b>
<b>ACTION</b>	<b>Commitment</b>	<b>Manipulation</b>

**Figure 11. Model of Sensemaking.**

model: **Argument, Expectation, Commitment, and Manipulation.** The questions were developed by applying Weick's discussion of those four components and relating them to the proposed restructuring events in the Agency. Fourteen of the questions involved a ranking on a Likert scale of 1–5, while the remainder were open-ended questions.

The tables presented below show a summary of results for the Agency Director, the Assistant Directors, and the Office Chiefs. Where applicable, an average score for the 1–5 scale is used. For all categories, there is a rating of low (1 to 2.5), medium (2.5 to 3.5), or high (3.5 to 5). The purpose of these tables is to present a summary of the answers that each of the three groups (Agency Director, Assistant Directors, and Office Chiefs) gave in relation to how they perceived those three groups residing in the four components of sensemaking.

Table 4, representing the Agency Director's responses, contains the Agency Director's self-rating in the Agency Director column, and the Agency Director's impressions of the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs in the second and third columns, respectively. In Table 5, the Assistant Directors provide their self-rating in the second column, and their impressions of the Agency Director and the Office Chiefs in the first and third columns, respectively. In Table 6, the Office Chiefs provide their self-rating in the third column, and their impressions of the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors in the first and second columns, respectively.

Table 4

## Sensemaking Grid Summarizing the Agency Director's Interview Responses

	Agency Director		Assistant Directors		Office Chiefs	
Argument	High	5	Low	2	Medium	3
Expectation	High	5	Medium	3	High	4
Commitment	High	5	High	4	Medium	3
Manipulation	Medium		Medium		Medium	

Table 5

## Sensemaking Grid Summarizing the Assistant Directors' Interview Responses

	Agency Director		Assistant Directors		Office Chiefs	
Argument	Low	1.71	Low	2.28	Low	2.5
Expectation	High	4.14	High	4	High	3.57
Commitment	High	4.7	Low	1.86	Low	2.5
Manipulation	Low		Low		Low	

Table 6

## Sensemaking Grid Summarizing the Office Chiefs' Interview Responses

	Agency Director		Assistant Directors		Office Chiefs	
Argument	Low	1.65	Low	1.6	Low	1.82
Expectation	Low	2.17	Low	2.13	Low	2.46
Commitment	High	4.35	Low	1.75	Low	2.25
Manipulation	Low		Low		Low	

The examination of the tables highlights where there was convergence or divergence between the three tables in each of the columns, as well as between the corresponding rows in each of the three tables. As an example, in the first column of Table 4, the Agency Director rated himself high (5) in terms of Argument, but the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs rated him low in the Tables 5 and 6 (1.71 and 1.65, respectively). At the same time, moving across the first row of Table 4, the Agency Director perceived the Assistant Directors as low in terms of Argument (as did the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs).

The following Overall Summaries for each of the four components in the sensemaking model provide the reader with the critical results of the interviews. Details of the results by question are presented after the summaries.

#### Overall Summary for Argument

1. The Agency Director felt he made a persuasive argument for the restructuring proposal. However, a tremendous dichotomy existed between his views and those of the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs. The latter two groups felt that the arguments made by the Agency Director were not persuasive, or they did not understand the rationale.

2. The support of the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs for the restructuring proposal was viewed as consistently low by those groups as well as the Agency Director.

### **Overall Summary for Commitment**

**The Agency Director was consistently viewed as strongly committed to the restructuring. The impact of his commitment on the organization was rated high, and negative, by the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs.**

**The Assistant Directors were viewed by themselves and the Office Chiefs as not being committed to the restructuring plan, and rated the impact on the organization as highly negative. The Agency Director rated the Assistant Directors' impact as more neutral.**

**The Office Chiefs were viewed almost uniformly as having medium to low commitment to the restructuring plan, with their impact on the organization being highly negative.**

### **Overall Summary for Expectations**

**The Agency Director and Assistant Directors rated high in terms of their expectations that the Agency Director would restructure the Agency. However, the Office Chiefs differed significantly in their expectations. A majority of the Office Chiefs did not expect any restructuring to take place.**

**The Office Chiefs also expected that the Assistant Directors would do little regarding restructuring, and that they as Office Chiefs would do little regarding restructuring. The expectations of the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors regarding the Office Chiefs were higher.**

## Overall Summary for Manipulation

The Agency Director was making some attempts at creating a supportive environment for the restructuring plan. However, the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs were doing little to create a conducive environment. There was not a lot of effort by any of the parties in this area. The Agency Director's efforts seemed largely directed at the external environment. The Office Chiefs' efforts were centered on mitigating the impacts to their staff once implementation became necessary.

### Summary of Interview Questions and Responses

#### Argument: Questions 1-6

*Question #1: In your opinion, how persuasive an argument was made for the restructuring of the Department by the Director?*

A distinct difference exists between the perceptions of the Agency Director compared to those of the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs. The Agency Director rated himself at a 5 on the 5-point scale in terms of the persuasiveness of his argument for restructuring the Agency, meaning that he felt his argument was very persuasive. He stated that he was persuasive with the Governor, the Commission, and the Legislature. The Agency Director felt that the Assistant Directors went along with the restructuring but were dragging their heels, and that the Office Chiefs followed the lead of their respective Assistant Director as to their level of support.

The Assistant Directors rated the Agency Director's persuasiveness very low, giving scores of 1 and 2 on the 5-point scale. Their combined average score was 1.71. An exception to this was one Assistant Director who thought that upper management was strongly persuaded (a score of 5) by the Agency Director's

arguments, but that the Agency Director was not persuasive (a score of 2) with the rest of the Agency, which he said was evidence of a “disconnect” between the top management level and the rest of the Agency. Another Assistant Director was “totally opposed” to the Agency Director’s proposal, and said that the Field structure was being singled out when there needed to be streamlining within the offices in the central office. One Assistant Director said it was difficult to determine why the Agency Director wanted to eliminate the Regions, and speculated that it might be for personal reasons. Another said that the “Director wanted to please people” and that the Agency Director felt that the Governor or the Commission wanted him to make some changes. However, this same Assistant Director said that the Agency Director “never got his own ownership of it.” One Assistant Director said that the Agency Director developed his plan in a “vacuum” and then attempted to implement it. And finally, another Assistant Director said “I don’t recall hearing a lot of rationale. I just recall hearing that this is what was going to be done.”

The Office Chiefs had an average of 1.66, almost identical to the Assistant Directors. Their comments had several common themes, including (a) a suspicion of the Agency Director and his motives; (b) a belief that the Agency Director was engaging in retribution toward certain employees; (c) a belief that the Agency Director had a lack of knowledge about the program areas of the Agency; and (d) a belief that there was a lack of involvement, participation, and, therefore, ownership by the Office Chiefs in the restructuring efforts.

The Office Chiefs did not feel that they were communicated with, and strongly felt that there was not a group or team effort in determining the direction of the restructuring proposal. Some felt that the Agency Director intentionally did not communicate the real reason for the restructuring. Some felt that the Agency

Director was trying to force compliance because he was the Agency Director, but that he lacked the personal credibility to persuade staff to follow him. In addition to feeling that the arguments for restructuring were not communicated well, many felt that the issue that needed to be addressed was not structural in nature.

*Question #2: From your perspective, what were the two main components of the restructuring?*

The Agency Director, the Assistant Directors, and the Office Chiefs responded similarly to this question. The Agency Director identified balancing the budget, and eliminating the Regional Supervisor layer of management as the two main components. Almost all of the other respondents identified eliminating a layer of management, or flattening the organization, as one of the main components. A majority identified balancing the budget as the other component. Other items mentioned were streamlining decision making, endorsing total quality management, consolidation of offices, and reducing the number of Districts. One Office Chief said a major component was for the Agency Director to gain a higher status with the Governor's Office.

Essentially, there was unanimous agreement among the respondents.

*Question #3: What do you think was behind the movement to restructure the Department?*

The Agency Director said that the restructuring took place because the Governor was downsizing government and cutting the budget.

All of the Assistant Directors mentioned pressure to cut the budget and eliminate layers of management or flatten the organization as reasons for the restructuring. So there was a great degree of agreement on these points. However, five of the seven Assistant Directors interviewed also said that within this context the



**Agency Director was acting out of vindictiveness, with ulterior motives, and for personal reasons when he singled out the Regional Supervisors layer of management for elimination.**

**The Office Chiefs' responses were similar to the Assistant Directors' responses, and fell into three major categories. One was that the Governor's Office was looking for the Agency to reduce employees and eliminate layers of management. A second was that budget constraints and downsizing were forcing the Agency to look at changes. And the third was that the Agency Director wanted to get rid of the Regional structure due to his personal feelings for individuals at that level in the organization.**

**In summary, there was a great degree of similarity between the three groups as to the reasons behind the restructuring. There was also a very strong feeling or belief on the part of many respondents that the Agency Director was also acting out of vindictiveness and for personal reasons by deciding that the Regional Supervisors should be eliminated. The perceived lack of input by the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs into the decision to eliminate the Regional Supervisors lent further credence to this observation.**

***Question #4: In your opinion, did you think that restructuring the Department in this way was a good idea?***

**The Agency Director rated this a 4 out of 5. He felt that the Agency had too many managers at too high of a level within the Agency.**

**The Assistant Directors had an average of 3.43 out of 5, relatively close to the Agency Director's rating. However, the responses ranged from a 1 to a 5. Three of the Assistant Directors felt that the idea of restructuring and reducing mid-level management was a good one, and strongly supported the proposal at the 5 level. One**

Assistant Director strongly felt that the Agency Director was simply being vindictive against the Field structure, and rated the idea at a 1 level. The remaining three Assistant Directors indicated that they did not feel there was a good explanation of the proposal, did not understand the reasons behind it, and felt that there was poor communication and little or no attempt to get buy-in from staff. They rated the proposal at 2 and 3 on the scale.

The Office Chiefs rated much lower than the Agency Director or the Assistant Directors, with an average of 2.25 out of 5. Many made a distinction between the concept that restructuring should take place, as opposed to the specific restructuring proposal put forth by the Agency Director. Their comments included having suspicions regarding the Agency Director's motives since he appeared to be targeting individuals for personal reasons, feeling that there was no opportunity or attempt to gain staff support, not understanding the rationale for the proposed changes, and the fact that elements of the proposal kept changing over time. One Office Chief stated, "The process was workable but fatal." Another said, "Anybody can make changes. The trick is to make changes that improve things rather than make them worse."

Overall, there was confusion and a feeling of alienation from the decision making process for the restructuring proposal.

This question points out a deep division between the Agency Director, the Assistant Directors, and the Office Chiefs. There was a significant difference of opinion within the Assistant Directors regarding the proposal, ranging from strong support to strong disagreement. There was an even more significant level of disagreement among the Office Chiefs, who felt further alienated from the process and given little or no opportunity to provide input into decisions significantly affecting them and their staff.

*Question #5: How much support for restructuring came from the Deputy Directors?*

In general, there is a fair amount of agreement by the Agency Director, Assistant Directors, and Office Chiefs that there was not much support from the Assistant Directors for the restructuring proposal. The Agency Director rated their support a 2 out of 5, indicating that the Assistant Directors in the central office may have understood the proposal better than the Regional Assistant Directors, but that did not mean that they supported the proposal.

The Assistant Directors rated themselves at a combined average of 2.28 out of 5. They felt that there was one, maybe two Assistant Directors who supported the proposal. They were unanimous in that they didn't feel there was support from the Regional Assistant Directors. It was indicated that some Assistant Directors actively opposed the proposal. Another made the distinction that the Assistant Directors were willing to support the objectives of the restructuring, but not the specific restructuring proposal put forth by the Agency Director.

The Office Chiefs rated the Assistant Directors' support at a combined average of 1.6 out of 5. Many indicated that behind the scenes, several of the Assistant Directors resisted the proposal openly and vigorously. It was clear to the Office Chiefs that there was not uniform support among the Assistant Directors and that many were simply giving lip service support for the proposal. The perception was that the Assistant Directors did not work well together, and that there was no cohesion among the Agency Director's leadership team.

*Question #6: How much support for restructuring came from the Division/Office Chiefs?*

The Agency Director rated the Office Chiefs at a 3 out of 5, feeling that they were a little more supportive than the Assistant Directors because they could see that some of the people above them were being reduced through the restructuring proposal, namely a Regional Assistant Director. Also, he felt that elimination of the Regional Supervisors would be viewed by the Office Chiefs as giving them more authority for decisions in the field, and therefore they were more supportive of the restructuring proposal.

The Assistant Directors rated the Office Chiefs' support at an average of 2.5 out of 5, slightly below the Agency Director's ranking. However, in their view the Office Chiefs were not involved, consulted, or made part of the development of the restructuring proposal. They felt that the Office Chiefs were operating fairly independent of the Agency Director and Assistant Directors, and certainly did not like the idea of being told how to restructure.

The Office Chiefs rated themselves at an average of 1.82 out of 5 in terms of support. They viewed themselves as left out of the process, and for the most part were not supportive of the plan. They felt that the Agency Director did not fully understand their programs and how they functioned, and that the Regional Assistant Directors certainly did not understand the environmental programs administered by the Agency. The exception seemed to be the Administrative side of the Agency, which was somewhat supportive of the restructuring proposal while acknowledging that it had little impact on their operations.

#### Overall Summary for Argument

1. The Agency Director felt he made a persuasive argument for the restructuring proposal. However, a tremendous dichotomy existed between his views

and those of the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs. The latter two groups felt that the arguments made by the Agency Director were not persuasive, or they didn't understand the rationale.

2. The support of the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs for the restructuring proposal was viewed as consistently low by those groups as well as the Agency Director.

Commitment: Questions 7-17

*Question 7: In your opinion, how committed was the Director toward restructuring the Department?*

The Agency Director indicated that he was committed at the 5 level. He said that he put his career, integrity and reputation on the line in attempting the restructuring.

The Assistant Directors averaged a 4.7 out of 5 in terms of how they viewed the Agency Director's commitment. One Assistant Director said, "He was hell-bent on election to reorganize." Another indicated, "I don't know why he was doing it specifically, but he was 100% in favor. I never could figure out, was it span of control, was it saving money? I just don't know what it was. I really don't." Another Assistant Director said that the Agency Director miscalculated the power and political acumen of the staff, while another indicated that the Agency Director had good instincts, but didn't seem to have the strength to carry it off.

The Office Chiefs averaged 4.35 out of 5 on the scale, and viewed the Agency Director as very committed to seeing the restructuring implemented.

So on this question, there is a near-uniform view by the Agency Director, Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs that the Agency Director was very committed to restructuring the Agency.

*Question #8: How did he show this commitment?*

The Agency Director said that he talked to the media, Legislature, and that he explained the plan and stood behind it.

The Assistant Directors pointed out that he issued direct orders, kept restructuring maps visible in his office, brought in speakers from the Governor's Office and the Management and Budget Office, and continued to press the issue forward with the Commission. One of the Assistant Directors also pointed out that the Agency Director's explanations left room for misinterpretation as to what he was trying to achieve, and another said that the Agency Director did not show resolve "when it came down to crunch time." This was described as intellectual ascension to restructuring but lack of managerial follow-through and commitment.

The Office Chiefs described the Agency Director as persistent and tenacious, strongly committed to making a change, and not willing to entertain any alternatives to the plan. They thought he showed commitment by talking about the plan, although several indicated that the Agency Director talked about commitment, but didn't demonstrate it through his actions.

In summary, there was a fairly uniform perspective as to how the Agency Director showed his commitment, but an underlying doubt about the wisdom of his commitment to a plan that had little overall support.

*Question #9: What impact do you think the Director's commitment had on the organization?*

The Agency Director felt that he had a great impact, whether it was good, bad, or otherwise. He rated his commitment at a 5.

The Assistant Directors averaged 4.43 out of 5 on the scale. To a person, they felt that the impact of the Agency Director's commitment was negative. Two of the Assistant Directors used the term "devastating" to describe the impact. One said the Agency Director's commitment resulted in "total disarray" in the Agency for 6 months, and described the restructuring process as an "unanticipated, improperly managed impact." Another indicated that since the Agency Director was the most committed and there was only moderate support from those around him, that he needed to move fast in implementing his decision but he didn't.

The Office Chiefs averaged 3.94 out of 5 in terms of the impact of the Agency Director's commitment, and they felt that the impact was negative. Again, several of them used the term "devastating" to describe the impact. Several described this as a negative, divisive, and unproductive period. They felt it was made clear to them that the Agency Director did not value their input, and this resulted in a widening gulf between the Agency Director's Office and the Office Chiefs. It also further verified the views of some that the Agency Director was not an effective manager, and that there was not a good rationale being put forth for restructuring. Distrust of the Agency Director increased.

In summary, there was general agreement that the Agency Director's commitment to the restructuring had a great impact on the organization. It is also clear that the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs viewed that impact as negative.

*Question 10: In your opinion, how committed were the Deputy Directors to achieving the proposed restructuring goal?*

The Agency Director felt that they were initially against it, but that when the budget cuts became necessary that they knew something had to be done. He felt that the commitment was mixed, but that support was as high as a five on the items where there was agreement.

The Assistant Directors averaged a 1.86 out of 5 in terms of their view of their own commitment. There was general agreement that the Regional Assistant Directors and at least one of the central office Assistant Directors did not support the restructuring, and at best there were two Assistant Directors in support. The Assistant Directors viewed their commitment as a whole as limited, and neutral. One Assistant Director described their support as "going through the motions."

The Office Chiefs averaged 1.75 out of 5 on the scale in terms of the Assistant Directors' commitment to the restructuring. They felt that the Assistant Directors were not committed to the plan, with possibly one or two exceptions. Many Office Chiefs felt that some of the Assistant Directors actively opposed the plan and took actions to overtly undermine the proposal. The Office Chiefs felt that the Assistant Directors did not sell the proposal because they didn't have a good understanding of it, that leadership was not being exercised appropriately, and that the proposal kept changing over time for reasons that were not understood.

In summary, there was a significant difference between the Agency Director compared to the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs in terms of their perceptions of the commitment of the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs. Both the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs rated the level of commitment very low, while the Agency Director viewed it as a mixed bag, but in a more positive light.

*Question #11: How did they show this commitment?*



The Agency Director felt that the Assistant Directors showed their commitment by their attendance at the many meetings that were held, and by his perception that they were professional. He indicated that “you had to keep hammering them until you finally got them to agree to what it is you were trying to do.”

The Assistant Directors felt that they had a very limited commitment to the restructuring proposal, and that they showed this by their neutrality, by going through the motions of commitment, and by their silence. Many did not actively work for the change because they didn't see where it would result in organizational improvements. Some mentioned that there seemed to be a never-ending decision loop, where decisions would constantly be revisited. Part of the lack of commitment on the Regional Assistant Directors' part was the fact that they had close ties and in many cases socialized with the people whose jobs would be adversely impacted by the restructuring proposal.

The Office Chiefs felt that the Assistant Directors showed their lack of commitment through their body language, by giving lip service to the proposal but making negative comments in confidence, and by their silence. They were viewed as not actively supporting the proposal, and in many cases were viewed as undercutting the proposal by the conversations they had with both internal and external groups. It was also stated that some of the Assistant Directors did end runs and talked with members of the Commission and the Legislature.

*Question #12: What impact did their commitment have on the organization?*

The Agency Director felt that the impact was a mixed bag, and rated it a 3 out of 5 on the scale.

The Assistant Directors rated their impact at 4.57 out of 5 on the scale, and the impact was negative in terms of commitment to the plan. They felt that they substantially delayed the plan, and viewed their actions as attempting to keep the Agency stabilized and under control. They were trying to justify the Agency Director's commitment, but felt that their own credibility was on the line. This lack of commitment on the part of the Assistant Directors also encouraged Office Chiefs who were not supportive. As one Assistant Director said, "The leaders had a cold, the organization had the flu."

The Office Chiefs rated the impact of the Assistant Directors' commitment at an average of 4.37 out of 5 on the scale, and again viewed it as a negative impact. They felt that this lack of commitment set in motion the eventual resignation of the Agency Director, and that the employees of the Agency mirrored the lack of commitment that the Assistant Directors displayed. The Assistant Directors left the impression that the decision was the Agency Director's, not theirs, and they felt that this lack of commitment resulted in instability and turmoil.

In summary, there was a significant negative impact perceived by both the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs in terms of the lack of commitment of the Assistant Directors to the proposed restructuring proposal.

*Question 13: In your opinion, how committed were the Division/Office Chiefs toward achieving the proposed restructuring?*

There was general agreement between the Agency Director, Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs, with ratings of 3, 2.6, and 2.25, respectively, on the 5-point scale.

The Agency Director rated the commitment at a 3 because he felt that the Office Chiefs had been through many budget cuts over the years and that they thought that this plan may or may not be implemented.

The Assistant Directors ranked the Office Chiefs at a 2.6 because they felt that there was not agreement with the plan, that the Office Chiefs were not involved or co-opted, and that there was no clear articulation of what would replace the Regional Supervisors in the Field. One Assistant Director thought the Office Chiefs were more committed than the Agency Director or the Assistant Directors even though they didn't necessarily agree with the plan.

The Office Chiefs rated themselves at a 2.25 out of 5. They felt that they were skeptical, were not free to express dissenting opinions, and were not involved in the development of the plan. A majority were opposed, but many indicated that once the decision was final there was a strong commitment to implement the plan in the best manner possible.

*Question 14: How did they show this commitment?*

The Agency Director thought the Office Chiefs showed their commitment by coming to the meetings with organization charts and budget and employee numbers, and by attempting to justify how they would function without the Regional Supervisor layer of management.

The Assistant Directors thought the Office Chiefs weren't committed for a variety of reasons, a major one being that they were not involved in the decision making process. Other reasons included an unwillingness to give up power, control and discretion in the Field, and delays in getting requested information.

The Office Chiefs felt they showed their lack of commitment throughout the process by speaking up and expressing concerns at leadership meetings, by letting

their staff know that they weren't committed, by being reluctant to change. However, some pointed out that this reluctance was due to the fact that they didn't understand the specific plan and its rationale. One individual said, "I am not sure that they were really given a chance to commit to it and show their commitment because they really weren't involved in the development of it."

*Question 15: What impact did their commitment have on the organization?*

The Agency Director rated the Office Chiefs at a 3 out of 5. He indicated that some were supportive, and some were not.

The Assistant Directors felt that the Office Chiefs had a more negative impact on the organization than the Agency Director thought, rating the impact at 3.7 out of 5. One of the reasons for this was that the Office Chiefs were not involved, never bought in to the restructuring plan, and therefore their support was minimal. Several of the Assistant Directors felt that this resulted in staff becoming unfocused due to their confusion, an impact which they feel was long-lasting.

The Office Chiefs, similar to the Assistant Directors, believed that their commitment, or lack thereof, had a more negative effect than was perceived by the Agency Director. They rated themselves at an average of 4 out of 5 on the scale, with the impact being negative. They felt that their lack of commitment lead to a lack of commitment by the staff in the Agency, thereby undermining the proposal. So most of the support for the proposal appeared to them to be coming from the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors, with that support decreasing significantly as one moved downward into the Agency.

*Question 16: How committed were you to the proposed restructuring?*

*Question 17: Why?*

The Agency Director had indicated that he was completely committed to the restructuring, at a level of five on the scale.

The Assistant Directors, in their responses, revealed a significant split amongst themselves and with the Agency Director, in terms of their commitment. Several also pointed out the difference between their personal and professional commitment. Three of the Assistant Directors rated themselves at a 2 or lower out of 5 on the scale. One of them said, "I was always a good soldier and supported the boss, but I reluctantly supported any restructuring." This individual felt that the restructuring proposal did not help to serve the public better or to manage the resources better. The second Assistant Director said that he was personally against the restructuring, but that he reluctantly supported the plan because of his location in the structure of the organization. The third Assistant Director in this category didn't like the plan and was not convinced whether it was right or wrong. This person said, "And I truly never felt I knew the real reason for restructuring. And so I never had personal commitment for the restructuring." This individual also indicated that the plan was not flattening the agency but simply changing the field structure, and that the MRC report was being used as a reason to restructure. Another Assistant Director rated at a 3 out of 5 for personal commitment, pointing out that restructuring was not supportive of the MRC report, and that the commitment was not there because an "honest approach" as to why we were restructuring was not being used.

At the other end of the spectrum, there were three Assistant Directors who felt that they were committed at a 5-level. One of them said, "I think it was the right thing to do for the agency. Now having said that, I think we went about it in entirely the wrong way." This person felt that there would have been a major difference if

time had been spent involving the Office Chiefs. Another of these Assistant Directors felt that changes in the Agency were necessary, that the talents of staff were not being fully utilized, and that there were too many people in the Agency who felt that they were the Agency Director.

In summary, the Assistant Directors were very split in terms of their commitment to the restructuring, with a clear distinction being made for support for the principles of restructuring, as opposed to less support for the specific restructuring plan being forwarded. Another major dichotomy was the distinction that several made between their personal feelings of nonsupport versus their duty as a member of the Leadership Team to support the Agency Director.

The Office Chiefs were similar to the Assistant Directors in terms of varying levels of their commitment. Again the distinction was made between the merits and principles of restructuring, to which many voiced their support, as opposed to the specific proposed restructuring plan, which many opposed or did not support. A fairly common response from the Office Chiefs was that they became very committed to making the restructuring plan work once it was clear that the decision was final to proceed. This manifested itself in a determination to make the best of the situation. One Office Chief pointed out that they did not know or did not understand the reasoning behind the plan, and were never asked to support or help to sell the plan. One individual stated that he viewed his assignment as helping the Agency Director, but that "there weren't very good reasons behind it." Another said that an inability to accept flexibility was a major problem. Several Office Chiefs felt that the Agency Director did not have a good understanding of the Field and how it functioned, and therefore that the plan was flawed.

### Overall Summary for Commitment

The Agency Director was consistently viewed as strongly committed to the restructuring. The impact of his commitment on the organization was rated high, and negative, by the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs.

The Assistant Directors were viewed by themselves and the Office Chiefs as not being committed to the restructuring plan, and rated the impact on the organization as highly negative. The Agency Director rated the Assistant Directors' impact as more neutral.

The Office Chiefs were viewed almost uniformly as having medium to low commitment to the restructuring plan, with their impact on the organization being highly negative.

### Expectation: Questions 18–22

*Question 18: In what direction did you hope the Director would take the Department?*

The Agency Director wanted more decision making on the front lines. He wanted staff to be more accountable, and for the organization to be customer-oriented and user-friendly.

The Assistant Directors mentioned a variety of issues. One of them wanted the "status quo." Another was hoping the Agency Director could provide a greater degree of independence from the Governor's Office, while still another wanted the Agency Director to develop a better rapport with the Governor's Office. One of the Assistant Directors was hoping the Agency Director would provide clear direction and gain the political and popular commitment from interest groups to implement the

restructuring. One Assistant Director wanted there to be more trust in the workforce, more inclusiveness in decision making, and more public articulation of the Agency's needs.

Many of the Office Chiefs mentioned that they hoped the Agency Director would concentrate on the vision and mission of the Agency to improve delivery of services, and that he would involve employees in the decision making processes, using teams where appropriate. Several thought that the best they could hope for was that the Agency Director would maintain the status quo, and felt that the Agency Director did not have the program experience to lead the Agency. Most felt that the proposed restructuring did not address their concerns, nor did it address the real issues facing the Agency. Several described it as not recognizing the varying needs of the different Offices in the Agency, and trying to fit a square peg into a round hole.

*Question 19: What new initiatives were you looking for the Director to pursue? Did any of them occur? Why do you think they did? For those that did not occur, why do you think they did not?*

The Agency Director indicated that he wanted to pursue initiatives relating to Customer Service, Total Quality Management, improving communications with the public, and reducing permit backlogs.

The Assistant Directors identified initiatives such as Land Use Planning, privatization of services, an Urban Initiative, and providing technical assistance to landowners. While one of the Assistant Directors acknowledged progress in the area of total quality management, the others said that the initiatives they hoped to see did not occur because the Agency Director became enmeshed in the restructuring of the Agency. Many felt that the Agency Director was too controlling, and did not show leadership in these areas.



A majority of the Office Chiefs had no expectations for the Agency Director to pursue new initiatives. Those who did have expectations found that they were not met. Areas that were identified included stabilization and growth in the budget, strong support of environmental programs and enforcement, supporting the Great Lakes Initiative, and fostering better working relationships between staff in the central office versus staff in the field. One Office Chief said, "I never saw any real initiative that I could identify." Still another said, "I felt the Director had very little influence on the major policy issues."

In summary, the Office Chiefs had very little that they expected from the Agency Director in terms of new initiatives, and those who did found that there was little demonstration of support for what they felt was important.

*Question 20: What did you expect that the Director would do regarding restructuring the Department?*

The Agency Director rated himself at a 5 in terms of expecting to restructure the Agency. He indicated that his thought was to try to re-energize people to do better in the areas of the Agency where he felt things were not going well.

The Assistant Directors also expected that the Agency Director would restructure, combining for an average of 4.14 out of 5 on the scale. One of the Assistant Directors pointed out that he didn't feel the Agency Director had a clear vision for how things would function after the Regional Supervisors were eliminated. Another said that while he expected the Agency Director to restructure, the vision as to why was never forthcoming. A third said that the restructuring was expected because the Agency Director thought that was what the Governor, Commission, and external interests wanted. Only one Assistant Director initially thought there would

be no restructuring, and indicated, "I could never figure out why he was doing it. I never thought it was going to get done."

The Office Chiefs revealed a marked difference between the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors in terms of their expectations. They averaged a score of 2.17 out of 5 on the scale, indicating that their expectations of the Agency Director restructuring were much lower. A majority of the Office Chiefs expected the Agency Director to do nothing regarding restructuring. Of those who did expect restructuring, the reasons indicated varied from the view that he had made commitments prior to becoming Agency Director, to expecting that any change would be based on the MRC report and the data and recommendations it contained. One individual stated, "I didn't expect him to do a lot simply because it was obvious that controversy bothered him."

*Question 21: What did you expect the Deputy Directors would do regarding restructuring?*

The Agency Director expected a 5, but rated the Assistant Directors at a 3 out of 5 on the scale. He thought they would embrace the restructuring more than they did. He felt that they needed to "step to the plate." He stated that the Agency was not going to stay the same, and that if it did not change the Governor, Commission, or the Legislature would change it.

The Assistant Directors rated themselves slightly lower in terms of their expectations as to what they would do regarding restructuring, averaging a 4 out of 5 on the scale. However, they acknowledged that they would have expected to support the Agency Director more than they did, that their job was to assist him, but that some of the Assistant Directors were not engaged or were outright opposed to the restructuring.

The Office Chiefs expected that the Assistant Directors would do little regarding restructuring, rating them at an average of 2.13 out of 5 on the scale. One of the Office Chiefs said that a reason for this was that the Assistant Directors were not a party to the development of the restructuring plan. Another said that the plan was almost exclusively the Agency Director's, and therefore the Assistant Directors did not feel that they were a part of developing it. Some expected more support, some expected the status quo, while others expected the Assistant Directors to fight the restructuring every step of the way.

*Question 22: What did you expect the Division/Office Chiefs would do regarding restructuring?*

The Agency Director expected the Office Chiefs to be a 4 out of 5 on the scale in terms of restructuring. He felt that communication with them could have been better, and that he did not meet with them near enough.

The Assistant Directors, similar to the Agency Director, rated the Office Chiefs at an average of 3.57 out of 5 on the scale. Those who rated the Office Chiefs higher on the scale said that their expectations were that there would be proper guidance from the Assistant Directors, and that they would be brought into the development of the restructuring plan, neither of which occurred in their opinion. Others thought they would resist unless they were consulted and brought on board with the plan.

The Office Chiefs rated themselves at an average of 2.46 out of 5 on the scale, lower than the Agency Director or the Assistant Directors. Their reasoning was that the Office Chiefs wanted the status quo, were resistant to change, or weren't involved in developing the restructuring plan. Even those who rated their expectations of the Office Chiefs high recognized that in reality there wasn't a

commitment. As one individual said, "I think only the Director had in mind what he wanted to do, and he didn't have a very definitive plan of what he wanted to do except respond to what he perceived he was being told to do."

### Overall Summary for Expectations

The Agency Director and Assistant Directors rated high in terms of their expectations that the Agency Director would restructure the Agency. However, the Office Chiefs differed significantly in their expectations. A majority of the Office Chiefs did not expect any restructuring to take place.

The Office Chiefs also expected that the Assistant Directors would do little regarding restructuring, and that they as Office Chiefs would do little regarding restructuring. The expectations of the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors regarding the Office Chiefs were higher.

### Manipulation: Questions 23–28

*Question 23: How did the Director try to create an environment conducive to restructuring?*

The Agency Director indicated that he tried to express what he thought the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Commission wanted for the Agency. He said he tried to lay out the facts and the budget.

The Assistant Directors indicated that the Agency Director tried in several ways to create a conducive environment, including having brainstorming sessions with the Leadership Team, having strategic planning sessions, trying to communicate the rationale for the restructuring, and eventually involving the Office Chiefs. Yet at the same time the Assistant Directors said that the Agency Director did not

communicate well, and that the message and rationale were not clear. They felt that a better explanation of the restructuring would have created a better environment. They felt that he brought the Office Chiefs into the process too late, which created the sense that he really didn't want their input. Some of the Assistant Directors thought the Agency Director feared the Office Chiefs. It was felt that he was trying to sell the restructuring to the public before doing so internally within the Agency. One Assistant Director said, "It was all very vague."

A majority of the Office Chiefs felt that the Agency Director did not try to create an atmosphere conducive to restructuring, or did very little. Many questioned the Agency Director's motives and were skeptical of him. They felt he had already made up his mind, and that there was little or no room for negotiations as to what would be done. Others said that he attempted to communicate via E-mail and at some meetings, but that the communications were not well done. The general sense was that the decisions were being dictated by the Agency Director, that the logic of those decisions was faulty, and that he was not managing and controlling the process.

*Question # 24: How did the Deputy Directors try to create an environment conducive to restructuring?*

The Agency Director said that the Assistant Directors tried to create a conducive environment by participating in the Leadership Team meetings, and also went back and presented the information to their respective Offices. He said, "I think they honestly tried to do that . . ."

A majority of the Assistant Directors felt that they did not create a conducive environment, even those who were in favor of the restructuring. One of the Assistant Directors felt that it was difficult to create a conducive environment, and felt that he was walking a tightrope of trying to maintain his credibility with staff, and at the

same time be supportive of the plan. He summed it up by saying, "It was pretty touchy." Another pointed out that the Assistant Directors argued with each other, and conveyed those negative feelings when they discussed the restructuring with staff. Still another Assistant Director indicated that there was a lot of disharmony on the Leadership Team, and that the Leadership Team was a "house divided." And finally, one Assistant Director said, "We weren't given the chance to create the environment." He said that they were ordered to take actions but not talk to anyone outside of the Leadership Team.

A majority of the Office Chiefs felt that the Assistant Directors did nothing to create a conducive environment because they were not supportive of the plan. Another Office Chief said that at best, the Assistant Directors did not oppose the plan publicly, either externally or internally. A few more felt that the Assistant Directors tried to make the best of the situation, and supported the Office Chiefs in looking at alternatives to the restructuring plan and involving staff.

*Question #25: How did that compare with the Director's actions?*

The Agency Director stated, "I thought we were on the same page." However, he acknowledged that some of the Assistant Directors were not, due to their body language, and what they did not say. He indicated that there were some aspects of the plan that no one really wanted to do, but that had to be done due to budget constraints, as well as the expectations and the goals that he had set as Director of the Agency. Finally, the Agency Director stated that he trusted everyone, but he felt that there was some undermining taking place.

The Assistant Directors felt that they played a much more active role than the Agency Director did in terms of involving staff in the process of implementing the restructuring plan, and in looking at alternative ways of achieving the goals of the

plan. They felt that the Agency Director did not take many overt actions to create a conducive environment. Several felt that they were not in synch with the Agency Director, and at times worked "at counter-purposes." One Assistant Director stated that the Agency Director did not want to create a conducive environment because he had his own agenda and was going to implement it.

The Office Chiefs, almost to a person, felt that the Assistant Directors did not support the restructuring plan, and that the actions of the Assistant Directors were "diametrically opposed" to the Agency Director's actions. They described their view of a very sharp contrast between the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors. Some felt that the Assistant Directors were undercutting and subverting the Agency Director. At the same time, they felt that the Assistant Directors did a better job than the Agency Director of obtaining their input and of being more open-minded and asking questions of the Office Chiefs. In general, they felt that the Assistant Directors were pulling in a different direction than was the Agency Director.

*Question #26: How did the Division Chiefs try to create an environment conducive to restructuring?*

The Agency Director thought that the actions of the Office Chiefs was a "mixed bag." He felt that some tried to create a conducive environment, some didn't say anything, and others worked against creating a conducive environment.

The Assistant Directors felt that the Office Chiefs either did nothing to create a conducive environment, were not engaged in the discussions, or actively worked to create a negative environment. One Assistant Director felt that you could not trust or rely on them. Still another described their actions as "passive-aggressive." Finally, one Assistant Director said that the Office Chiefs had nothing to gain by creating a conducive environment.

The Office Chiefs described their efforts not in terms of creating a conducive atmosphere for implementation of the restructuring plan, but rather as trying to create an environment where they could support their staff and mitigate the negative impacts that the plan would have on their respective staff. They felt they were trying to make the best of a bad situation, and were engaged in creating alternative strategies that would hopefully meet the Agency Director's objectives and minimize the impacts on employees. One Office Chief said that they were trying to create a good rationale for the proposed changes, but they weren't necessarily recommending the same change that the Agency Director was advocating.

*Question #27: How did that compare with the Director's and the Deputy Directors' actions?*

The Agency Director felt that the Leadership Team listened to the Office Chiefs. He stated that the feedback from the Office Chiefs worked its way up to the Leadership Team.

The Assistant Directors had differing opinions. Two of the Assistant Directors described the Office Chiefs as cynical and not doing anything to create a conducive environment. Two other Assistant Directors felt that the Office Chiefs were working harder and doing more to make the restructuring work than were the Assistant Directors. Two of the Assistant Directors felt that the Assistant Directors were a problem, with one Assistant Director saying, "The [Assistant Directors], I think, were the biggest problem to making it work."

The majority of the Office Chiefs felt that they were the most pro-active group in terms of trying to make the restructuring work, and in terms of being concerned for the welfare of the employees who would be affected by the restructuring. Several viewed the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors as



utilizing a top-down, more autocratic approach. One Office Chief described the Agency Director's attitude as "[Office] Chiefs be damned, we are moving ahead with this anyway." And several others viewed the Office Chiefs and the Assistant Directors as being similar in that they were looking for ways to stop or alter the restructuring plan, and therefore diametrically opposed to the Agency Director. One Office Chief said, "I think we just thought we were right. We were never convinced otherwise."

*Question #28: What actions did you pursue personally to create an environment conducive to the change?*

The Agency Director previously had stated that he tried to express his interpretation of what the Governor's Office, the Legislature, and the Commission wanted for the Agency.

None of the Assistant Directors said that they felt that the specific restructuring plan was a good idea that they fully supported. At best, the majority appeared to be neutral, and one Assistant Director admitted to being an opponent of the plan and said, "I did not create a positive environment." Another Assistant Director said that he "was not enthusiastic" about the abolishment of the Regions. Another said that he tried to get the Assistant Directors involved in helping the Agency Director to find an alternative solution.

The Office Chiefs, like the Assistant Directors, did not voice support for the restructuring plan. They described their actions as making the best of the orders that they had been presented with, and attempting to mitigate what they saw as the negative impacts that the restructuring plan entailed. They felt that they did their best to work with staff, keep them informed, and try to put as positive a spin on events as they could.

### **Overall Summary for Manipulation**

The Agency Director was making some attempts at creating a supportive environment for the restructuring plan. However, the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs were doing little to create a conducive environment. There was not a lot of effort by any of the parties in this area. The Agency Director's efforts seemed largely directed at the external environment. The Office Chiefs' efforts were centered on mitigating the impacts to their staff once implementation became necessary.

*Question #29: What do you feel could have or should have been done differently? By whom?*

The Agency Director said that he would have communicated more directly with the Governor, as well as more often and directly with the Office Chiefs.

Four of the Assistant Directors said that there should have been no restructuring and that the MRC report should have been followed in that regard. One Assistant Director said that once the Agency Director decided to go against the MRC report, that he was "doomed," and that the Leadership Team shifted gears too many times by making so many adjustments to the restructuring plan. Three of the Assistant Directors specifically mentioned that the process should have been more open, and that the Office Chiefs should have been more involved in the process instead of using a top-down approach. One Assistant Director said the Agency Director did not communicate his decisions and rationale, and that as a Assistant Director, ". . . if I don't know that, there's trouble." While one Assistant Director said that the Agency Director needed the full support of the Commission and the Governor, another said that the Commission should have called some closed-door meetings because they did not understand the restructuring plan and its goals.

Another item mentioned was that the timeframe for implementation of the plan was too fast. One Assistant Director said that the Assistant Directors as a whole should have united and said that the restructuring plan was not good for the agency. Another said that the Agency ended up being split into two agencies, and summed up the whole process by saying, "It was a disaster."

The Office Chiefs felt that the Agency Director needed to more precisely identify what the problem was, and how the restructuring plan would benefit the Agency and solve the identified problem. They strongly felt that the Agency Director should have involved them early on in the process and obtained their input and commitment. Also, that he should have done much more communicating with them, and that there needed to be a longer timeframe for implementing the plan. One Office Chief said that nothing the Assistant Directors or Office Chiefs did could have changed the Agency Director's mind regarding restructuring, that only the Governor's Office or the Commission could have dissuaded him from the restructuring proposal.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The model of sensemaking developed for this study, coupled with the interviews conducted, resulted in several conclusions. The four major areas of the model are Argument, Expectation, Commitment, and Manipulation.

First, the results from the interviews relating to Argument showed great variation. The Agency Director felt that he made a persuasive argument for the restructuring. The Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs did not, and viewed their support as being low. The Agency Director also viewed their support as low.

The results regarding Commitment showed that the Agency Director was viewed as strongly committed to the restructuring. Its impact on the organization was rated by the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs as high, and negative. The Assistant Directors were viewed by themselves, and the Office Chiefs, as not being committed, and this impact on the organization was rated highly negative. The Office Chiefs were viewed as having medium to low commitment, with a high, negative impact on the organization.

As for Expectation, the Agency Director and the Assistant Directors had high expectations that the Agency Director would restructure the Agency. The Office Chiefs differed significantly in that they did not expect restructuring to take place. The Office Chiefs also expected that the Assistant Directors would do little regarding restructuring.

In terms of Manipulation, the results showed that the Agency Director did make attempts to create a supportive environment for the restructuring plan, but the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs did little.

In summary, there was a significant disconnect between the three groups at the level of Argument and Expectation, which Weick identified as the key components in the arena of Belief. In general, the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs were not convinced and did not believe that restructuring was appropriate for the Agency.

Similarly, on the Action spectrum there was a tremendous dichotomy between the Agency Director on the one hand, and the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs on the other. The Agency Director was in an Action mode, and the others were not.

It is my contention that these results reflect a prescription for failure. They show that the Agency Director, Assistant Directors, and Office Chiefs did not display consistent strength in any of the four quadrants of the model of sensemaking.

As was mentioned in Chapter I, Weick (1995) maintains that there is no directional order to sensemaking, that it is not necessary to address the components of the model in any particular order. The results of this study suggest that it is important, if not imperative, that the area of Belief, comprised of Argument and Expectation, be consistent at the leadership level in order for there to be an effective Action, which is comprised of Commitment and Manipulation. If key members of leadership are not in concert on the former, there is weakness in the latter. This study shows that such a weakness continuously eroded and eventually brought failure to the restructuring proposal.

Weick's (1995) concept of sensemaking provides an interesting framework for further analyzing the interactions of the Leadership Team. Alan Briskin (1996)

provides an additional framework for continuing that discussion and further analyzing the Leadership Team.

Briskin (1996) indicates that the soul as an ancient hypothesis has at least four core themes. The first is that soul is connected with the underworld, a place of depth and shadowy realities that connect us to the unconscious facets of ourselves. The second core theme is that soul is associated with our vitality and renewal. The third is that soul is a place of union among opposites, the light and dark aspects of the whole individual. And the fourth is that the soul is a bridge to the cosmic aspect of consciousness. He says that approaching the soul means going deeper into a place in which the past and the future mesh, where what we strive for and what drives and motivates us can be glimpsed.

Briskin (1996) purports that multiplicity is an aspect of soul. This is in contrast to modern organizations that have developed since the Industrial Revolution, in which the concept is that there is an individual personality shaped by the requirements of work and the internal control that individuals are supposed to have over themselves. He indicates that this often puts individuals at cross-purposes with themselves.

Briskin (1996) discusses it being essential that we see through and beyond, that we use a “third eye” (p. 8) to assist us in seeing with a heightened awareness. He indicates that in order to see with the soul one must engage in a certain stillness and attentiveness. The stillness creates an opening in the surface of the world we exist in, while attentiveness guides one out of the thoughts and beliefs that may ensnare us. So he says that “The challenge of finding soul in organizations, as in life, is to embrace not only what we see, hear, and understand but also to attend to what we don’t

know, what we cannot see at first glance or hear on first listening” (Briskin, 1996, p. 9). This concept is complementary with sensemaking.

Soul is a concept that is increasingly used in the world of management and the workplace. However, it is an ancient idea in both the East and West. The soul stands for the multiplicity of selves within each of us. The interactions and struggles of each of these selves are the threads that weave the entire self together. As with all of us, the Agency Director also had a multiplicity of selves. Even though he was the Agency Director, he felt that he didn’t know enough and wasn’t as smart as others on his Leadership Team. This fear manifested itself in defensive behavior as well as reliance on his formal authority as Director of the organization. This fear was brought to the forefront early in his administration. At a 2-day retreat for the Leadership Team, all members engaged in a series of psychological, diagnostic tests. The Agency Director was consistently the last person to complete these tests, having difficulty completing the exams, in my opinion, because of his desire to ensure that he was giving the correct response.

At times we must consult parts of ourselves that are difficult to hold onto. “The dread and resistance which every natural human being experiences, when it comes to delving too deeply into himself is, at bottom, the fear of the journey to Hades” (Jung, 1953, p. 336). However, the cost of refusing to go there can be severe.

The Leadership Team engaged in such a journey shortly after the Agency Director came on board. Working as a group through the series of diagnostic tests and personality profiles mentioned earlier allowed each member of the Leadership Team to take a hard look at themselves, and to glimpse insights into the personality makeup of other individuals of the Leadership Team. In one instance a member of the

Leadership Team determined that a different career path outside of the organization was most appropriate for him.

When observing a meeting where something significant is left unsaid, there is always a moment when we notice a deadening in the conversation, which can also be described as a point where a meeting becomes “empty or even soulless.” Briskin (1996) says, “At these moments, we fear the journey to Hades, far below the surface of the situation, where danger lurks in the form of a spontaneous eruption of the truth or the expression of strong emotion” (p. 14). Many such moments existed within the Leadership Team meetings as discussions regarding reorganization and restructuring were pursued. Quite often there was little said in opposition to the Agency Director’s stated desire to restructure, simply because over time the other members of the Leadership Team learned that such comments were not welcome, were not invited, and in fact caused greater stress within the meeting between those individuals who were in disagreement with each other. As time went on, there were more of those situations and they became more significant in terms of their impact on the individuals of the Leadership Team as well as the organization.

The Swiss physician and analytic psychologist Carl Jung also believed that there was a struggle of opposites within each of us. He said that each of us have a conscious intention to be good and live up to our ethical aspirations, but we also have an unconscious aspect. This unconscious aspect he called the shadow. Jung felt that the manner in which we deal with our shadow is an indication of our capacity for self-knowledge. In order to recognize the shadow and acknowledge it and deal with its contradictions requires considerable reflection and effort by the individual.

One finds that Briskin (1996) talks about the “dark side,” or shadow, that must be accounted for in ourselves and in others. He takes this position because



normally one would ignore or repress the dark side of the soul. Briskin indicates that in organizations both the leadership and staff have something to gain from paying attention to the shadow. Even though leaders may have good intentions, when they go astray it results in decreased credibility. While recognizing the shadow may not solve this problem, it does give an opportunity for leaders and staff to at least acknowledge and assess responsibility for unaddressed factors of their own personality.

To an extent, it appeared that the Agency Director operated from a position of fear. On several occasions he stated that he probably did not have the same level of innate intelligence as the people he was surrounded with on the Leadership Team. A further explanation is that he also had a fear that he did not have the capacity and the ability to fully carry out the responsibilities of the job of Agency Director. These fears and anxieties manifested themselves in his reliance upon the formal power of his position as Agency Director. It was easier to rely upon this type of power, than to engage in the much more complex approach of persuasion and of leading his Leadership Team and the organization into a new and different future. This was a major gap, and I believe a major contribution, to the failure of the restructuring plan. The inability to persuade the majority of the Leadership Team and the staff and to give rationale for the changes being pursued resulted in people not being able to see the new direction as a positive approach. Rather, it was viewed as a personal threat to them and to the organization.

Another conclusion is that the Agency Director did not internally believe in the course that he was charting. Rather, the restructuring was his interpretation of what he thought the Governor and the Commission wanted him to do. As a result, this left him with a deep personal conflict. This deep personal conflict led him to

exhibit the anger and brought out the shadow side of his personality. With this shadow side of his personality in the forefront on many occasions, it became extremely difficult for him to lead the organization and persuade even a majority of his Leadership Team to support his course of action.

According to Alan Briskin (1996), "The shadow offers us access to the unresolved issues of our past, the dispossessed feelings, attitudes, and emotions that can offer new vitality and a more comprehensive humanity, if recognized" (p. 58). One possible explanation is that the Agency Director did not get in touch with his shadow, and therefore maintained these unresolved issues in his own personal makeup. Again, this was manifested by his feelings of insecurity in his position. These unresolved issues led to his uncompromising approach to the restructuring of the Agency and the anger that he displayed toward those he felt were not supportive of him.

The message that lies at the heart of all spiritual teachings is: you cannot be someone else. Briskin (1996) indicates that each of us struggles with the question of being more fully who we are, as opposed to becoming someone else's idea. He says, "In organizations we are constantly distracted from this essential question because the pull to live up to someone else's expectation is so profound" (p. 87). This was a central struggle that the Agency Director experienced. His interpretation of the desires and expectations of the Governor's Office and staff, as well as the Commission, were to a large extent in conflict with his own personal desires. Compounding this dilemma was the Agency Director's lack of confidence that the course he was taking was in fact what was expected of him. He often relied upon indirect messages and trying to read between the lines of comments made by staff from the Governor's Office as to what was expected of him by the Governor.

However, he only rarely spoke directly with the Governor regarding his actions and policies.

**“The employee who clings too tightly to behaviors that were once accepted and rewarded as good may be limiting his capacity to change in beneficial ways” (Briskin, 1996, p. 37). I believe that this was one of the factors that affected some members of the Leadership Team and their interactions with other members of the Leadership Team. The Agency Director was attempting to make significant changes not only in the structure of the organization, but in its thought processes and its approach to accomplishing the mission of the Agency. Some of the Assistant Directors did not really want to embrace that kind of change. While they provided lip service and acknowledged that the organization needed to change, in their hearts they really did not believe it.**

Briskin (1996) also states that **“The senior manager who too fully embraces new management ideologies may be missing crucial information about the reality of her organization, as opposed to the vision” (p. 37). This may explain the Agency Director’s immediate embracing of total quality management. Even though he embraced the TQM concepts, he didn’t take time to fully understand them, and he did not practice those concepts on a consistent basis.**

There is also a collective shadow which can relate to members of a group. In regards to the restructuring proposal, there certainly was a collective shadow in terms of field staff and their views of the Agency Director and leadership in the central office. Conversely, the Agency Director and some members of the Leadership Team had a similar collective shadow in terms of their regard for the field staff affected by the restructuring, namely, the Regional Supervisors.

Briskin (1996) says that when individuals in organizations are confronted with realities that are at odds with their ideals, they cast off the parts that they reject and project them onto others. This occurred between the Agency Director and some members of the Leadership Team. Some of the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs disagreed strongly with the direction that the Agency Director was taking in terms of restructuring. They utilized methods at their disposal short of a direct, personal confrontation with the Agency Director, to undermine the direction that he was taking. This same dynamic was taking place between staff people in the field who were to be directly affected by the restructuring proposal and their management. Over time, the informal grapevine allowed staff to make their own determinations as to which Office Chiefs and/or Assistant Directors were supportive of the Agency Director and which ones were not. Of course they allied themselves with those managers who shared their viewpoint.

The Agency Director also employed this behavior by determining which of the Assistant Directors and Office Chiefs he felt were not supportive of his restructuring proposal, and therefore, not supportive of him. These continuing tensions and dichotomies over a period of months, and in some cases years, lead to a paralysis of action within the Agency.

Another thought of Briskin's is that relying on one's self can amount to both productive independence and a dangerous withdrawal from the group. Ignoring issues that make people angry or frightened can be appropriate in the short term and yet dangerous if never addressed. This delicate balancing act was taking place on an almost daily basis, between the Agency Director and members of the Leadership Team. On the whole, over time, the pendulum shifted more toward the Agency Director withdrawing from the group on the major issues being discussed, and being

reluctant to engage in discussions on the restructuring issues which he knew there was little support for from the majority of the Leadership Team.

Briskin (1996) says, "The needs of the workplace and those of the individual are not necessarily contradictory, but neither are they necessarily compatible" (p. 67). This raises a key dilemma that was faced by the Agency Director and the Leadership Team in attempting to implement the restructuring proposals. Those whose positions would be directly affected by the restructuring addressed their individual needs and determined that they were contradictory to the needs of the workplace. Those individuals, the Regional Supervisors, felt threatened directly by the proposal. Hence, they felt directly threatened by the Agency Director and the organization. The additional time and flexibility which may have provided for development of plans to mitigate the impacts on these individuals was not allowed. Such mitigating factors as phasing in the restructuring over time in order to lessen the impacts on individuals and to avoid having to reduce people's levels of pay could have gone a long ways toward merging the needs of the workplace and of those individuals.

According to Briskin (1996), "To think as a living soul is to challenge and be challenged by our surroundings" (p. 138). This is exactly what happened within the Agency relating to the restructuring proposal. Many staff, especially those affected directly by the restructuring proposal, were vocal in their opposition. This manifested itself even to the point where those staff members attended public meetings held by the Agency in order to voice their opposition to the direction that the Agency Director and the Leadership Team were pursuing. The lack of a clear rationale and a persuasive reason for eliminating the Regional Supervisor positions further fueled the questions that these employees posed in opposition to the plan.

Briskin (1996) says:

**Logos requires opportunities to gain a voice so that fantasies of what is really happening under the crust of logic can be explored, questioned, and engaged. Logos is sought through redundancy, through repeated opportunities to voice one's inward thought so that it may be heard, challenged, and allowed a place among the ideas of others. (p. 139)**

**Many employees, staff, and some members of the Leadership Team felt that their thoughts did not receive an adequate airing, and that they were not being heard. Conversely, the Agency Director was not inclined to have his thoughts and ideas challenged in order to more fully explain the rationale for the restructuring proposal. One explanation is that this occurred because he was uncomfortable and unsure that the rationale for the restructuring could survive the scrutiny. I believe he felt this way because he was torn as to whether the approach was the right approach, and was uncomfortable with the fact that there was not a strong, logical rationale for eliminating the Regional Supervisors, other than the fact that there was a need to achieve some budget reductions.**

**One possible explanation of the Agency Director's approach as the restructuring debate continued is captured by Briskin (1996) in the following quote: "In organizations, logos is constantly bounded by the immediate rush for solutions. Deeper reflection is suspect, considered potentially wasteful, associated with "paralysis by analysis" (p. 141). The Agency Director had determined the course that was to be followed. He was not interested in further analysis or discussion regarding those decisions. He was impatient with any further challenge or lack of support for the course of action he had determined.**

**Briskin (1996) further indicates that communication plans within organizations which are designed to inform staff about the reasons and the logic for change instead inhibit logos when only the voice of leadership is heard, and that logos implies a need to hear from many constituencies within an organization. This was**

never effectively achieved by the Agency Director or the Leadership Team during the restructuring process. However, many other constituencies were heard from, and they voiced their opposition to the plan. The inability to co-opt these major constituency groups resulted in a dynamic of confrontation. The ultimate arbiters of those confrontations became the Commission, and by extension, the Governor's Office. With such conflicting views being expressed, the Commission opted for supporting a more middle of the road course of action in an attempt to appease the constituency groups and avoid, to the extent possible, appearing to be nonsupportive of the Agency Director and the Leadership Team.

The theologian Matthew Fox (1994) writes that work

comes from inside out; work is the expression of our soul, our inner being. It is unique to the individual; it is creative. Work is an expression of the Spirit at work in the world through us. Work is that which puts us in touch with others, not so much at the level of personal interaction, but at the level of service in the community. (p. 5)

This is an apt description of how staff in the field perceived their efforts and their jobs. The restructuring proposal was perceived as a direct attack on not only their jobs, but them as individuals. They interpreted the restructuring proposal as a statement that their efforts were not highly valued within the organization, or more specifically by the Agency Director and the Leadership Team. This type of reflection and interpretation by the Agency's field staff aims directly at the challenge Briskin indicates we face in associating work with meaning. He says, "The spirit in which we do our work is intimately related to the products of our efforts, to the service we provide to the larger community" (Briskin, 1996, p. 143). The staff's strong views and beliefs in the matter of their contributions to protecting the environment were directly being challenged by the restructuring proposal.

**In the restructuring proposals that were put forth by the Agency Director and the Leadership Team, the opportunity for logos to occur within staff, and even the Leadership Team, was not encouraged at all. If an approach to the restructuring had been taken which allowed individuals to creatively identify ways to achieve the goals of restructuring, and thereby increase the opportunities for staff buy-in to the restructuring, the chances for success may have been much greater.**

**Briskin (1996) indicates that an individual's role is related to the soul because it is rooted in an ability to reflect, and to sense what is most critical within relationships. The Agency Director viewed his role as dictating the course of events. He viewed the role of staff as being that of following the dictates of management. Briskin says:**

**Role taking is an active rather than passive response to our environment. In taking up role, we find out something about our courage and creativity in how we respond to the opportunities and constraints of our world. We become active participants in our destiny. (p. 197)**

**The Agency Director made a conscious decision regarding his role in the restructuring plan. That role was to mandate what course would be followed. The Assistant Directors also determined what their role would be in the restructuring plan. A couple of them were supportive. However, several were not supportive and decided to play a role of undermining the restructuring plan, and covertly, if not overtly, resisting it.**

**The role that one assumes allows one to define the parameters of work, and determine the aspects that are most meaningful to one's position in the organization. Briskin says that by assuming a role, one can protect oneself from the psychological assault of the expectations of others. One is able to do this because one knows who they are and what the organization is attempting to do. The Agency Director firmly**



believed that the course of action he was pursuing in regard to restructuring was a correct one, and that he was able to withstand the criticism and stay the course on the restructuring proposal because of his view of his role in the organization. Several of the Assistant Directors and the Office Chiefs reached a completely different conclusion based on their view of their role in the organization. These differing views of role, especially in regard to restructuring, allowed for the different conclusions and actions based upon the same data.

This concept of role takes into consideration the person, the role and its relations with others and the system in which all action takes place. The restructuring proposal put into motion a variety of roles within the staff. These roles were constantly changing and adapting to the restructuring proposal as it changed over time.

Briskin (1996) says that the assigned role is what others have determined is our place within an organization. He indicates that these assigned roles are how others within the organization view a person's place within the group. It is my contention that the various staff within the Agency, including some Assistant Directors, Office Chiefs, and field staff determined that even though the Agency Director obviously held a critical role within the organization, that he was assigned a role by the staff that resulted in his being viewed as ineffective in his job.

According to Briskin (1996), "The danger of the assigned role in organizations is that it can place us in a box from which we cannot escape" (p. 205). This is what happened to the Agency Director. He became viewed as ineffective within the organization because of the restructuring proposal. He also was viewed as being a mere instrument of the Governor's Office, and by extension, the Commission. Therefore, the general view being held by staff was that the Agency Director was not

taking action in the best interest of the Agency, but was doing what others felt should be done. Briskin sums up what happened to the Agency Director very succinctly when he says, "The assigned role, often unspoken, has the potential to become destructive because feedback to or about the individual becomes narrower and prejudiced in a certain direction" (p. 205).

A possible explanation is that the Agency Director did not really go through a full process of reflection and creativity to determine his role. Instead, he adopted what he felt was the role expected of him by some members of the Commission and the Governor's Office. He did not view himself as having the opportunity or flexibility to create what he felt his role should be. While this in and of itself was not a necessarily negative position to take, what was missing was the nexus between the organization and the Agency Director's desires.

Briskin (1996) further states, "Taking up one's role, even when we don't quite get it right, affords others the opportunity to take up their own stance. We cannot give someone else a role, but we can model it and learn from the consequences" (p. 208). Once the Agency Director had determined his role and the course of action, it did afford others the opportunity to determine what their positions would be. While the Agency Director hoped that he would be able to persuade the Leadership Team, the Office Chiefs, and staff to support the restructuring proposal, he was not able to achieve that to a significant degree.

However, the Agency Director utilized his organizational power and personal power in support of the restructuring proposals.

Briskin (1996) discusses the fact that individuals have their own views of the organization, and that our behavior emerges from this picture that we have of the organization. He indicates that we often act, even without awareness, in relation to

our internalized view of the organization. Further, he states that this picture is created as a result of our experience. It is my contention that the experience of the Director in the organization was significantly different from the experiences of other members of the Leadership Team. The Agency Director had worked the majority of his 25+ year career in one division of the Agency. Most of the other members of the Leadership Team had experience working in multiple areas of the Agency, and therefore had a broader perspective of the organization and its functioning. Consequently, there were competing views regarding the restructuring proposal, and the effectiveness and need for the Regional Supervisor level of management in the Field structure. To an extent, the tension within the Leadership Team was a result of these differing backgrounds of experience between the members.

Briskin (1996) explores applying the concept of multiple perspectives to system thinking. It leads us to want to know and appreciate how others view the same system. For example, are individuals within a system aware of their external environment? Do they all interpret what is outside the boundary of their system in the same way? Do individuals respond with different emotions?

The internal pictures that employees create will shape behavior as much as the external factors and processes that affect them. This offers some significant insight as to what happened at the Agency. Many of the staff, especially Field staff and the Regional Supervisors, and in some cases the Regional Assistant Directors, held an emotional connection to their past, and a sense that they were serving their communities. There was an emotional connection in terms of the strong belief that they were protecting the environment, not only for the citizens but for future generations.

The restructuring proposals put forth by the Agency Director and the Leadership Team did not fully account for these different perspectives that existed within the organization. Rather, the attempt was to overrule and ignore these perspectives due to the overriding concerns that were behind the restructuring, such as budget constraints and the need for a flatter organization with less management.

Hirschhorn and Gilmore (1992) suggest that when the authority boundary is not being managed well, that the tension necessary between leading and following is torn apart. This then leads to rebellion, distrust, and passivity. This is what happened during the restructuring proposal. There was a breakdown in trust between the Leadership Team of the Agency and the staff. The various subgroups within the Agency polarized. This led to a struggle for power between the Agency Director and Leadership Team, and staff. Many staff felt exploited and angry.

Briskin (1996) says, "When one's identity feels threatened, leading to fear of annihilation, individuals become deeply mistrustful and act contemptuously toward each other" (p. 229). This is what happened.

Briskin (1996) talks about an organization having a "preserving system" and a "purposeful system." In the preserving system, the focus is internal and is concerned with people and their feelings, customs, and habits. The preserving system has human relations that exist outside of the scope of direct managerial control. This inward focus can lead members to concentrate on how to repel change. New management is many times viewed as something that will come and go. In the process of restructuring, it is my contention that not enough attention was paid to the preserving system of the Agency. While attempts were made to explain the need for the changes and the restructuring due to outside forces, these arguments were not persuasive.

Briskin (1996) states, “Leaders who attempt too dramatic a change are messing with a life form that can mutate unexpectedly and in unforeseen ways” (p. 233). This is what happened in the Agency. The restructuring and the elimination of positions did not occur in a timely manner and were discussed for many months. Over time, the anger of staff and their belief that the rationale for the restructuring was not persuasive, led some of them to act overtly in opposition to the restructuring plan. Again, this was evidenced by staff giving public testimony in opposition to the restructuring plan.

Conversely, the purposeful system pays more attention to the boundary between the organization and its environment. It takes into account the environment, rather than focusing entirely on internal relations. The Agency Director and the Leadership Team never effectively managed this boundary between the purposeful system and the preserving system. This failure to effectively manage that boundary led to the dissension and lack of support by Agency staff for the restructuring, and also resulted in a lack of support by the external environment, evidenced by the constituency groups that argued strongly against the restructuring as well.

From a different perspective, it can be argued that field staff focused too greatly on the preserving system, and were not open to different ways of performing their job responsibilities. By taking this narrow view, they hindered the Agency’s ability to react and adjust to changing factors impacting the Agency from its external environment.

Briskin discusses the differences between power and authority. Authority, in general, relates to one’s position within the organization. Power, however, comes from an array of personal and individualistic attributes. In order to be effective, one needs both authority and power when taking actions. While the Agency Director had

the authority to take the actions for restructuring, he did not couple it with the personal power and attributes to allow him to persuade others to follow that authority.

In summary, Weick's (1995) theory of sensemaking provided the basis for analyzing the Agency and the proposals for restructuring. The model developed from that theory offered a framework to analyze the effects of the proposals on the organization and the actions and decisions of the Leadership Team. Utilization of Weick's theory and the model developed in this study provides a new approach for the study of leadership and organizational change, one which allows for the examination of actions in relation to the components of the model.

Briskin (1996) and his work provides concepts which help to further explore the motives behind the actions of individuals, and adds more depth to the application of sensemaking by focusing on the internal make-up of individuals and how this impacts on their actions relating to what is happening at the organizational level.

Then combination of the concepts of these two authors provided for a more rich, robust analysis and establishes a basis for its application in future studies.

### Future Research

Weick (1995) indicates that there are certain methodologies that can be utilized to understand sensemaking. These examples include utilizing naturalistic inquiry (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), grounded theory (Wicker, 1992), case scenarios (Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993, p. 261), interviews (Fineman, 1983) and others. He takes these numerous and diverse studies and identifies the following 10 characteristics, which suggest a mindset for methodology that tends to be associated with sensemaking:

1. **Investigators make an effort to preserve action that is situated in context.**
2. **Observers rely less on researcher-specified measures and more on what participants say and do in response to minimal prodding and prestructuring.**
3. **Observers work in close rather than from the armchair.**
4. **Participants, rather than observers, define the work environment.**
5. **Findings are described in terms of patterns rather than hypotheses.**
6. **Explanations are tested as much against common sense and plausibility as against a priori theories.**
7. **Density of information and vividness of meaning are as crucial as are precision and replicability.**
8. **There tends to be intensive examination of a small number of cases rather than selective examination of a large number of cases, under the assumption that person-situation interactions tend to be similar across classes of people and situations.**
9. **Sensemaking tends to be especially visible in the settings observed. Settings are chosen more for their access to the phenomenon than for their representativeness.**
10. **Observers mobilize a set of methodological tactics that enables them to deal with meanings rather than frequency counts.**

**Based on this, Weick (1995) suggests that one potential area of study is in the area of commitment. When people become committed to an action, sensemaking then focuses on searching for explanations to justify that action. Therefore, interventions that assist people in taking action should reduce confusion.**

**There is a current movement away from hierarchy and the vertical structuring of organizations toward more horizontal structuring and self-managed teams.**

Research in this area can focus on sensemaking when it is organized horizontally and explore changes in socialization, selection and, scanning.

Weick (1995) also suggests that we need to know more about the boundary conditions for sensemaking processes, such as enactment, behavioral commitment, innovation, and the management of meaning. He says that we need to know more about what happens to interpretation when the constraints of context, distributed information, and differentials in power vary. He also indicates that we need to know more about sensemaking under conditions of low discretion, to determine which processes are used and which are avoided. Weick also suggests that another growing area of importance is the relationship between information technology and sensemaking. The issue is the disparity between the speed and complexity of information technology and the ability of humans to comprehend its outputs.

With this background, I would offer several suggestions for further research in the area of sensemaking. One area would be to take the model of sensemaking developed in this study and look for opportunities to further refine it. In other words, what further detail or breakdown of the model in the four major categories (argument, expectation, commitment, manipulation), or identify one of those four major areas for a detailed study or review within an organizational setting.

A second area for research would be further refinement and delineation of the questions utilized in the interview instrument for this study. How can the existing questions be improved upon in terms of their wording, and their ability to elicit responses. Additionally, what new questions could be asked that would more fully explore the concepts of each of these areas of sensemaking.

A third area of inquiry would be to focus on comparisons of sensemaking between individuals in an organization, but more importantly, between individuals



internal and external to the organization under study. In other words, a comparison of sensemaking from these internal and external perspectives could shed additional insight as to how one's position within an organization or in relationship to an organization affects one's interpretation and perception of events.

Another area of inquiry is to take an event and explore people's perception of it from various levels in the organization. For example, this study concentrated on interviews with individuals at different levels in the organization, however the focus was still on the top levels of management. Further research could concentrate on a more stratified sample of all levels within an organization to determine how sensemaking occurs regarding a particular event from those various perspectives. From such studies, results may identify differences in sensemaking based on one's level within an organization.

Another area for research would be to explore opportunities for identifying more structured approaches and different methodological approaches to sensemaking that put some boundaries and form or format to sensemaking research. This seems, at first encounter, to be contrary to the whole sensemaking approach described by Weick, which is very broad in nature. However, in order to encourage its use within organizations and by individuals at various levels within those organizations, it is my opinion that there needs to be additional, concrete instruction to assist individuals in engaging in sensemaking activities. If the whole topic of sensemaking is left too broadly defined, then to many it will appear that there really is no such approach that will benefit them. The risk is that sensemaking will be viewed as an idea without much focus. The idea of a growing body of research and knowledge utilizing different specific techniques can result in different examples of how to explore sensemaking within organizations, and allows leaders, managers, and practitioners of the art to

identify the specific approaches which they feel will be most useful in furthering sensemaking within their organization.

Finally, this study raises several questions. In terms of methodology, does the method that was utilized necessitate the fixing of credit or blame on a particular person in the organization? From a public policy perspective, does a failure of internal transformation enable and/or force external efforts at change? And from an organizational perspective, does a perceived need to retain power and position impede internal transformation?

**Appendix A**  
**Human Subjects Institutional Review Board**  
**Letter of Approval**

Human Subjects Institutional Review Board



Kalamazoo, Michigan 49008-3899

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**WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

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Date: 27 August 1997

To: Ralph Chandler, Principal Investigator  
David Freed, Student InvestigatorFrom: Richard Wright, Chair *R. Wright (PWS)*

Re: HSIRB Project Number 97-07-10

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Implementing Organizational Change: Sensemaking and the Case of the Michigan Department of Natural Resources, 1992-1995" has been **approved** under the **exempt** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: 27 August 1998

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