

Mark's Morphing Management

Mark B. Silber, Ph.D., Organization Psychologist.
University of Phoenix, San Diego, CA, psychol@adnc

MORPH & MORPHING.....unusual, yet contemporary words in our 21st Century scientific vocabulary. Unusual, yet “Sci-Fi” contemporary words in our “X” scientific-fiction television programs and in strange occurring events in books. A question to be asked is, “why have we not seen this word & concept in the leadership literature?”

Organizations of all sizes and strategic missions morph-adapt to survive and to remain competitive. Services and products through evolution or revolution morph to meet morphing-changing marketplace needs.

Employee education, at in-house or out-house seminars, are constantly reminded of their need to morph their knowledge and skill sets...to morph, to change, to acquire new talents for their career evolution.

Morphing is when something changes its shape, form, capability so as to adapt to changing situations. Morphing is changing and becoming different in exchanges.. Constancy and “rigid” consistency are the opposite of the processes involved in morphing.

The hobgoblin of managerial career derailment can be rigid leadership style. One style of leadership exchanges DOES NOT fit all decision situations. Rigidity in human interchanges and ‘sameness’ in exchanging across different colleagues and staff persons is ineffective. It is a rigid “long shot” gamble that customers will always be there based on a desire for one product... one product or only one service forever.

Leadership does NOT imply conformance, but rather a sensitivity to pick up the cues to when and with whom to reconcile one’s leader style with changing circumstances. IT IS CALLED ‘CUE SENSE’. Now for a ‘super original thought’ = “Different folks need different strokes; different strokes for different folks”. Cue sense is being alert to the uniqueness of each person’s coping, needs, attitudes, expectations in the changing situations, tender emotional spots, etc.

That is, leadership adapts its style and approaches to the differences between individuals to produce other-person acceptance & harmony.

This is the challenge of being an effective change agent. In this adaptive manner and through the willingness to be different with different individuals.....because they are different among and between others.....the modifications facilitate a closer ‘fit’ with the personality drives and desires of other persons. The goals of this ‘closer fit’ are (1)



acceptance of change requests, (2) a congruity with the needs and expectations of the other person, (3) facilitation of achievement and objectives' performance.

Throughout the last 35+ years the assumptions and subsequent leader behaviors of Theory "X" and Theory "Y" have flooded the management textbooks and classrooms. Theory "Z" or SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP is stated in a cursory fashion in the above paragraphs. "Z" theory is recommended by this author. As the decision conditions and as the degree of emergency or crisis in those situations change, so must the leader style or methods change! To the point.... morphing of leader tactics/style is Theory "Z".

Of vital consideration in the morphing of a leader's style-approach is the MATURITY of the Associate(s). Some Associates on the staff are immature. Other staff Associates have demonstrated their maturity.

Maturity is (1) the degree to which an individual demonstrates self responsibility for performance and achievement, (2) self-initiating or self starting tasking, (3) self responsibility for performance follow through, (4) honest, regular, open communication of the good news and bad news of ongoing performance and (5) the demonstrated 'trust' factor in the manager-staff person relationship.

Leader morphing is based on these two realities....(a) changing situation judgment calls which need changing decisions and behaviors, and (b) other-person demonstrated maturity. Possibly Theory "X" leader behaviors are BOTH appropriate and inappropriate. Possibly Theory "Y" leader assumptions and actions are BOTH appropriate and at times inappropriate. As subordinate maturity is demonstrated, leadership morphing must also evolve/change. Morphing is surely salient as there are changing situations to confront!

C H A N G E = life and L I F E = change! The death rattle of faltering and failing sometimes is slow to be heard by individuals in management. Those feared "pink slips" or termination notices sometimes surprise an ineffective manager who did not see them deserved nor coming. The cry is, "why me?" Usually there were multiple answers to that cry. Some of those answers-reasons were hidden (not to be mentioned) to the terminated person. Issues, personal relationships, situations, organizational culture or organizational climate CHANGE. The dismissed person failed to change-morph with those changes. Morphing requires CUE SENSE.

Missed interpersonal and organizational cues produce "crying"!

Morph Management Missed Cues

Another title of this article's section might be Causes & Culprits Of Career Casualty.....Leadership Demise

- P = Paying the price of either (1) not taking the decision risk(s) expected of a leader in that position or (2) taking too much of a decision-action risk significantly



beyond what was perceived as appropriate or required. Negative consequences resulted.

- P = Productivity and leader performance did NOT keep pace with the changing pressures for new or improved outcomes. There was evidence of productivity slippage. Management performance waned as the pressures for acceleration increased. The manager could not keep up. The organization lost the zest or the mission & focus of the manager.
- P = Politics are the changing “iron mistress” within organizations. The “iron mistress” is seldom forgiving. A leader’s acceptability in the informal political world can slowly or swiftly change. A change of personal relationships, a change of management personnel, a change in cultural political values (mergers and acquisitions) produce political changes that the leader must tune into for self and career survival. The informal organizational world is the reality of shifting and changing sensitivities.
- P = Persuasion is a core competency of leaders. The inability or inadequacy to influence what changes are required is a death kiss for a leader. The skills of influence are the skills of power utilization in the tool kit of a manager. Some leaders do not power-morph; that is, they use only ONE style of influence. One power or persuasive style does not fit all individuals nor all situations. Flexible persuasive modes need to be acquired.
- P = Promise-keeping is the bedrock of leadership. Keeping a promise is central to upward, downward and lateral relationships in a high producing organization. ORGANIZATIONS RUN ON KEPT PROMISES. A critical basis for organizational living and leader excellence is the follow through on made promises!
- P = Predictable ethics bind and bond leaders. The discovered unethical person in supervision is abhorred. Ethical failure and dishonesty has snuffed out and stifled many careers of persons who were thought to have had promotion potential.
- When there is lack of predictability between individuals, there is the development of suspicion, uncertainty about ‘counting’ on one another, withdrawal from persons who are non-predictable.....even distrust.
- P = Partnership failures. We live in an organizational world of team relationships. Teaming has replaced being the organizational “lone ranger, the isolated performer who wishes to be a solo heroine or hero possibly at others’ expense. Some performers, initially, commence to gain organizational recognition by individual accomplishment. But then they soon learn that the organizational success and career ascent is related to team playing or partnering on a team.



Leaders who do not play well on a team, leaders who do not facilitate team accomplishment, are negatively noticed.

- Personal warmth and personal caring are hallmarks of successful leaders. Interpersonal 'coldness' and a self-centered focus surely do not enhance leader acceptability. The author strongly believes that leader excellence is partially based on being tough on agreed to performance objectives, but 'soft' on human beings! Personal caring for others, upward, downward and in lateral teaming is a quality of leaders....the 'oil' of organizations.

The "P's" in morPhing are core to leadership excellence. The rapid changes being experienced in our global organizations sometimes verge on 'organizational mental dysfunction'. Leader & organizational 'mental' health reside in and on the foundation of morphing..of adapting to these discontinuous changes.

