How to Beat the Competition

BUILDING BLOCKS FOR GREATER CORPORATE SUCCESS

A New Way to Raise Productivity, Build Financial Strength, and Increase Stakeholder Satisfaction

JAMES D. SPINA

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BY

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

My brother: Frank Sherman Spina, J.D.
The best brother on the planet and a super book editor.
Thanks, "Red"!

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OUR PURPOSE

This book emphasizes new ways to use Duality Thinking (DT) as a management tool, when correctly combined with Building Blocks (BB), to strategically reach goals and increase success. We have written the book using practical examples of the DT process.

DT works best when a sincere executive can hold two competing ideas in mind at the same time and can strive to produce an outcome that enables the organization and its stakeholders to grow and flourish.

It will enable readers to solve management problems arising from the differing, but interlocking, needs and expectations of all stakeholders. It provides methods to solve such problems with an understanding of the interactive relationships among all stakeholders. When used on a regular basis, this analysis can help to identify the causes of the problems.

To support this goal, it presents an internal, higher educationally focused system composed of many "Building Blocks." They contain classic management skills, such as improving listening and honing performance appraisal techniques, while fostering new ways to think of win/win problem solutions and flexible business strategies.

The "Blocks" also present new knowledge required to implement DT problem-solving skills. These skills need to be strong and effective.

Employers are facing business environment changes nearly at the speed of light. This problem requires firms to continually find creative ways to manage people. Such as enhancing problem-solving skills, encouraging Human Resources to adopt new ways to train, develop, and retain/reward talent are only the tip of the iceberg.

To simplify the DT process, the book's focus will be on increasing job satisfaction and retention of talent. Our research on *current competing publications* found many "cookbooks" containing the famous "one size fits all" recipe to boost job satisfaction and meet all stakeholder needs. None were found that proposed a new way to use DT to reach those goals.

“Is Duality Thinking the Answer to Stakeholder Satisfaction?”

—By James D. Spina, Ph.D.

1

UNDERSTANDING CULTURAL PERCEPTIONS OF WORK

"Don't Dress for New York City When Traveling to Key West"
— JDS

Recently, one of my veteran clients called me and asked, "Jim, what is happening with the talent pool today? I can't seem to find the right people to fill the openings for our teams no matter what salaries I offer. If I do luck out, the turnover rate for new hirings is beyond belief. They also tend to miss workdays or come in when they feel like it."

I replied, "It sounds like you have come face-to-face with some of the Generation Z, Crew and you just must 'buck up.' You are not alone and there are steps that you can take to engage and retain valuable people."

I concluded the conversation with my client and emailed him a list of common expectations of various generations and their differing needs. The information is as follows. This simple generation information will be very helpful to begin to understand how different groups of workers view the organization's future and gather their information.

Please note that differing perceptions are not cast in stone. For example, for years, Millennials had a reputation of failing to build financial wealth. This has changed due to a recent financial turnaround.[1]

GENERATIONS OF WORK

- Generation Z…Info: Entitlements, are Pessimistic Future, Born…1997–2012

- Millennials… 35% Open to Therapy, See Optimistic Future, Born…1981–1996
- Generation X… Love Texting, Social-Media, 401 K, & Retirement …Born 1965–1980
- Baby Boomers: Use Texting, LinkedIn, Optimistic but Aging. …Born 1946–1964
- Silent Generation: TV Info, Print, Facebook, Retiring in Process…Born 1928–1945

Many older employed people, worldwide in general, see work in a different light from rising Generation Z individuals. The recent pandemic had much to do with this.

What is the documented difference in Generation Z behavior? Generation Z workers seem to see jobs as undesirable environments if they require a fixed work schedule, have an office commute, and lack flexibility on how work needs to be done. A major problem is often little time for family. They may expect to come and go whenever they wish. At times, they might only work with minimal effort. This is often related to wage level. Someday, help wanted roadside signs will read, "Wanted: People Who Will Show Up!"[2]

As mentioned, the work rebellion of Gender Z employees is not limited to the United States. Strict organization environments in Asia draw resistance from this group. Less than 20% of employees under 35 years of age express job satisfaction in Japan, South Korea, and Hong Kong.[3] Long hours and stiff reporting relationships are key reasons for dissatisfaction. Prolonged staff dissatisfaction will lead to undesirable goals for productivity, quality, and smooth teamwork.

SIGNS OF A TOXIC CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT

Retention of talent, a strong need of most organizations, is being threatened by what is known as a toxic culture. This type of culture leads to a high turnover of key people. Studies of reasons for prediction of unplanned talent loss suggest that a toxic culture is up to 10 times more responsible for talent losses than salaries and other compensation such as stock options.[4]

Common features of a toxic culture often include too many working hours required, lack of respect for people, space consideration of a work–life balance, high organization instability, and an overly, fast paced and uncertain work schedule.[5] So, what can be done to ameliorate this conundrum, or simply put, "fix this mess"?

NOTES

1. WSJ, Millennials Experience Dramatic Financial Turnaround 8/13/24.

2. Ip, Greg. *Wall Street Journal*, 3/11/24, p. R8(3) WSJ 8/4/25 Gen Xers Being Forgotten.

3. Bartleby, "The Economist": 6/15/24, p. 57.

4. MIT Sloan Management Review, Sull, D., Sull C., Zweig, B: 11/22.

5. WSJ Moise, I., Thomas L., Langley, K., Bank of America Ignores Rules Barring Dangerous Workloads: 8/13/24.

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2

MEETING STAKEHOLDER AND GENERATION NEEDS

"Differing stakeholder needs must be viewed as one challenge and not as mutually exclusive needs." — JDS

STRATEGIC DUALITY THINKING AS A MANAGEMENT SKILL

This chapter describes the concept of Duality Strategic Thinking in detail, and it is illustrated by exploring two common examples of the method starting with examples from centuries ago. It introduces tools for practical use of duality thinking (DT) to solve current management problems and implement never-ending changes in business environments.

In the distant past, DT began to be used mainly by politically minded people as they strove to capture or maintain power and influence in independent domains of a changing world. Historically, readers will recall that the genius thinker, Thomas Jefferson, had the natural gift of being able to hold two conflicting ideas, known as dualities, in his mind at the same time.

There is evidence that two of his opposing views were that some people are limited to thinking without taking any action while other special people, like politicians, who think and then simply begin to maneuver.

Another reported duality of his was to support the idea of governing a country by using democracy and aristocracy at the same time. His most well-known duality is that while he said that all men are created equal, he owned about 600 slaves over his lifetime. Jefferson was one of those people.

Something could exist in two states at the same time. The most popular example of this duality is that a light beam can exist and travel as a wave and particle at the same time.

Other more practical ways to envision this conundrum could travel two paths at the same time. He often did just that.[1]

His most stunning example is the secret message he sent to Congress explaining the success of the Lewis and Clark Expedition in 1803. In it, he spoke of the necessity to bring the native Americans into the fold of the U.S. culture.

He felt what he was doing to achieve this was for the tribes' greater good. In the secret letter, he summarized his duality thinking when he said the exchanging what the tribes wanted, and what the United States wanted, will develop their wisdom to in getting the benefits of the government of 1803.

Many, many years later, a huge battle between and among famous physicists took place to challenge the concept of classic physics as the only *one* and true path to take when studying the universe.

Quantum mechanics later emerged as a new way to explore it. It required scientists to accept the concept that are: **One**, consider a baseball thrown by a pitcher to a batter. It's the job of an umpire to decide if it is a strike or a ball but until he does, it is both.

Two, perhaps you have seen a parent smiling and crying at the same time at a daughter's wedding – Joy v. Sadness. **Three**, believe it or not, a recent article in the *Wall Street Journal* describes a Greek Duality wine vase made about 2,500 years ago.[2]

Fig. 1 illustrates the myth of the death of Actaeon, a famous hunter who bragged that he was better at hunting than the goddess Artemis.

As punishment, she turned him into both a man and a deer at the same time with pointed ears and an emerging rack, so the male stag and his own wolf dogs could murder him as he hunted. *Duality Thinking really goes* "way back!"[3]

Hmmm, so you may ask, "What does all this have to do with managing people and organizations?"

INTRODUCTION TO STAKEHOLDER NEEDS

A clear understanding of interactive relationships between and among six primary stakeholders' needs is the key to creating and implementing the Building Blocks system. The information shown below lists the key needs of primary stakeholders.



Fig. 1. **Ancient Greek Vase.**

Talent needs interesting work with fair wages *Investors* need ROI and growth

*Organization*s need talent, profit, low costs and high production

Communities need local investments and high reputations

Customers need low prices and high quality with good service

Suppliers need long term contracts, fast payments and good will.

Do you see any chances for conflicts requiring duality thinking?

How might stakeholders' needs affect management performance?

Note: Most needs will reflect the missions and values of the various stakeholders and their individual organizations.

The what's in it for me type of thinking, instead of using "**Duality Thinking**," will usually end with win/lose or lose/lose decisions.

Keep in mind that people in their 20s might have very different views about motivation on the job, especially regarding management's respect for differing views about the workplace so let's get started![4]

DUALITY THINKING CHALLENGES

- Customers need low prices while organizations, such as corporations, need high profits.
- Employees want interesting work while high production is a key need of many organizations.
- Communities look for more jobs and investors seek strong ROI results.
- Suppliers need rapid payments from organizations and customers look for quality.

All these demands, and others like them, challenge managers to skillfully work in two directions at the same time. Let's consider three management problem examples that usually arise: **One**: Managers must address the challenges of pushing for higher production faster, and cheaper, production moves may require cutting costs leading to lose/lose outcomes.

Example: Long time owners of famed hunting rifles will not buy those made after 1964, when cost cutting reduced quality and performance.

Many highly skilled veteran gunsmiths often choose retirement earlier rather than build cheap products. This unplanned loss of talent was a major blow to ROI for investors.

Two: Some automobiles no longer have actual bumpers that prevent damage to vehicles. Plastic poor quality "bumpers," designed to raise profits, often explode like eggshells when they receive even a slight impact.

Buyers of cars that cost many thousands of dollars are not happy with higher cosmetic repair prices. They may decide to "hold their noses," run their cars longer, and then look for other brands with better quality reputations.

This reality is likely to negatively affect profits and cause excessive inventory to build up.

Three: Research also suggests that interesting work, sincere recognition for excellent work, valued rewards. When suppliers wait for overdue payments for products/services, new vendor orders may be refused, and existing inventory may fail to meet customer demands… Bye-bye business! What other workplace dualities have you witnessed? How common were they? What results occurred?