③ The Situation

How do you move from compliance to confidence to commitment in a team or organization?

Signs and Symptoms

People say that they are committed to the goals and work of the organization but they lack confidence in the ability of the organization to deliver.

People look to leadership to "walk the talk" before they commit to the work of the organization.

People blame the culture of the organization for not getting involved and they are not excited about the work of their organization.

Underlying Causes

People lack specific evidence in the behavior of key leaders that they are living the vision, mission and values of the organization.

People don't see leadership taking actions that deal with the negative patterns in the culture of the organization.

Patriarchal organization. Leadership confusion over issues requiring ownership.

In 1997 I had the privilege to work with Tim Dalmau with one of his professional services clients in South Africa. The country had recently gone through a tremendous transition from apartheid to a new paradigm in governance with the African National Congress headed by Nelson Mandela. As part of the government transition, all firms working under government contract were given five years to transform their various leadership structures to reflect the demographics of the country – 95 percent people of color.

One hundred and thirty-five partners came together at a multi-day planning conference in Durban, South Africa to explore the will of the firm to make this transition. We used the Confidence Line as our first facilitation intervention of the planning session. The 135 partners were asked to array themselves along a number line from 1-10. People were asked to rate their own confidence that the group of partners would do what was necessary to abolish apartheid practices in the firm. If you had the lowest confidence you would stand in the one position. If you had the highest confidence you would stand at the ten position. We were careful to distinguish confidence from personal commitment. People's commitment was not be measured or questioned.

Interestingly the CEO of the firm, who had always been a firm supporter of the transformation in the country, rated himself as a one. This was a shock

to the entire partnership team. The process was designed to identify what it would take to raise people's confidence level. This did happen through the conversation and became the basis for a roadmap for this firm's successful transformation in the country.
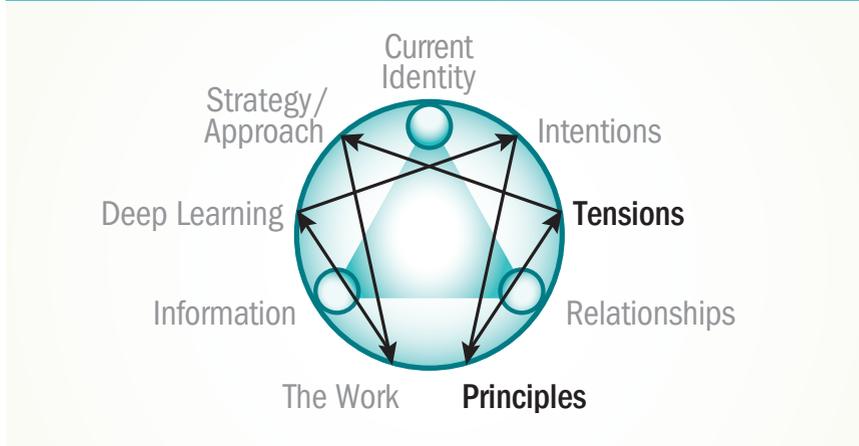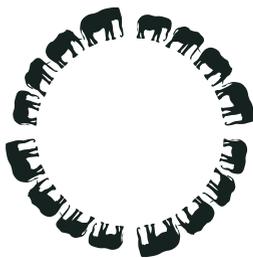
CONFIDENCE LINE

Process Description

The Confidence Line is a process that is used with a group from 20-500 people to surface the underlying concerns (elephants) in a very short period of time while maintaining safety. Frequently groups waste considerable time getting the real issues on the table. People don't put such issues on the table in groups because they don't feel safe to do so.

The process involves the following 5 steps:

Step 1: POSING THE QUESTION.

"On a scale of 1-10, how confident are you that this group of people will be successful in achieving the goals of our work?" 1 is the lowest level of confidence and 10 the highest.

Step 2: TAKING A POSITION.

People are asked to physically move to an imaginary number line that stretches around the room. Generally you want a minimum of three and maximum of six people per position. In a large group you can break them up into a number of smaller groups at the same confidence line position.

Step 3: **SMALL GROUP HUDDLE.**

In small groups of like rankings (all the 2s together, all the 3s together) they discuss two questions – "What is your rationale for choosing this rank?" and "What has to happen within the team, organization or system to increase your confidence level?"

Step 4: **ELICITING ANSWERS TO THE QUESTIONS.**

Starting with the lowest ranking group, the facilitator listens to the answers to the two questions, specifically charting the answers to the second question – "What needs to happen to increase your confidence?"

Step 5: **DEBRIEF.**

The facilitator processes the overall responses by asking the following three questions:

1. What surprises occurred from the process?
2. What insights seem most important across the group?
3. What new group agreements will we need to be successful?

CONFIDENCE LINE

Outcome

Rational Outcome

This is a prevention strategy and is generally utilized at the point of Tension on the Process Enneagram. The focus is to build understanding about what it will take to develop the confidence of the group to be successful in their work.

Experiential Outcome

The process creates a sense of relief for a group to finally get the real issues on the table. It also creates a feeling of connection when individuals discover they are not the only ones with certain concerns or issues.

Process Tips & Reminders

It is extremely important to set the proper context for using this process. People are told that this process will in no way test their commitment to their organization or team.

The chart becomes a "contract" for the team or organization when the facilitator charts the answers to the question, "What will it take to increase your confidence?" The answers to this question will actually improve confidence and break the cycle of apathy.

The process can be used at later points in time to measure progress relative to changing the culture within an organization.

Tips and
Reminders

Next Steps for the Team

The Confidence Line creates a social contract between the participants and Leadership. These agreements (what will it take to increase your confidence?) need to be translated into group agreements, and where appropriate, into strategies. The agreements should be translated into specific agreements – agreements that are behaviorally-specific and measurable, and the strategies then become a strategic roadmap for further planning with the team.

Alternative Approaches

You can reach these same outcomes through a variety of approaches. You might construct a Discussion Method conversation that focuses on the steps the organization would need to take to increase confidence among all employees. You could also reach this same outcome and a full plan by using the Mental Models Process. In this case the process would surface the underlying leadership and cultural patterns that hinder confidence and commitment. Be sure to enter this process with a clear and measurable negative result *(see Mental Models process page 72)*.

What if this Process Doesn't Work?

It is helpful to understand that apathy often comes from people not feeling responsible or not feeling capable of making a difference (see Sustainability Reminders). Understanding this would help a facilitative leader to talk about these dynamics directly,– especially the issue of capability – and assist the team in developing a plan to address these underlying dynamics.

Sustainability Reminders

Lack of confidence in an organization can be caused by many system issues. At its core people have lost confidence in leadership to operate in ways that are consistent with the goals and values articulated by the organization. They often experience that leadership is not willing to make the difficult decisions that change the way the organization does business. Examples are that budgets drive programs; the culture manages management; there is little or no obvious accountability in the system. Think "below the green line".

In organizations with low confidence you often see the major sustainability blunders, such as:

- Patriarchal thinking that leads to a false sense of security.
- A silo approach to the design and operation of the organization.

In addition, there is often confusion in leadership about which decisions should be made by leadership and which decisions need to be made by a broader constituency of stakeholders *(see the Stacey Model page 5)*.

The Stacey Model clearly tells us not to waste people's time on issues that already have high agreement and certainty, or issues where these are significantly lacking. Involving people in the wrong issues often contributes to lack of confidence in leadership.

Ralph Stacey Model

In situations of closed or contained change the consequences of any change are predictable – there is a clear link between cause and effect. Control can be exerted through planning or direct management action.

Far from Agreement

CHAOS

Extraordinary Management

ORDINARY MANAGEMENT

Close to Agreement

Close to Certainty

Far from Certainty