THE EDELSTEIN
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The EXCEL Program

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Individual Executive and Management Development

Much has been written about the need for companies to keep pace with rapid change. In the book entitled: *The Fifth Discipline*, Peter Senge addresses this issue by describing the need to create the **Learning Organization**: organizations that grasp, manage, and effectively respond to changes in the marketplace that affect their businesses. In effect, Senge and others implore organizations to transcend their drive toward homeostasis, or the status quo, in an effort to remain open to information that will allow it to change and grow.

This need exists on the *individual* manager and executive level as well. In fact, if we are to have *learning organizations*, we must have *learning* executives and *managers* as well. Executives, like organizations, also strive for homeostasis and resist change. Subject to their own psychological defenses, aided and abetted by the organizational tendency to cleanse feedback or just not provide it, executives too easily become closed loop systems. Cut off from feedback they are unable to accurately gauge their decisions and impact. Ergo, over time, they grow out of touch and become less effective. Typically, without valid data by which to correct their behavior, executives and managers fall back on historically correct responses, which may not be responsive to the task at hand.

In addition, the business environment in which managers and executives work is continually changing. If it is not external business conditions, then it could be the restructuring of the organization itself, which results in a premium being placed on a wholly different management skill set: Today, the ability to influence, persuade, sell one's ideas and to manage across functions is at a premium, since the top down, control oriented bureaucracies have gone by the wayside.

EXCEL was designed to respond to these issues. EXCEL is a one to one, feedback intensive, executive and management development program. Through structured, individual sessions, spread over an eight month period of time, you will learn: how your own personal and work history effects your behavior at work today; how you are perceived by others in the workplace as reflected in anonymous feedback forms completed by 20-25 peers, subordinates and superiors; and how to modify certain behaviors so they are responsive to the demands of your current work environment. Your progress is assessed in follow-up surveys.

Benefits of this approach include:

a) All the time you spend in EXCEL is focused on your individual needs. In addition, within this confidential relationship, you are able to take an open and honest look at yourself, arriving at a more accurate self concept, from which you can begin modifying management behavior.

b) Since the program is based upon feedback from the workplace, you are working on issues that are highly relevant to you.

c) Since the program is spread over a period of time, you return to the workplace and have an opportunity to experiment with new management behavior while still in the program. This increases the likelihood that learning will be transferred to the workplace.

d) Typically, one session is spent sharing your EXCEL feedback with your supervisor. This enables your supervisor to: understand which management behaviors are being modified; which situations are being handled differently; clarify points that remain unclear to you; and learn how to be supportive during the change process.

The Value of this approach lies in the fact that:

a) Learning is integrated. Because you examine personal and work history you are able to understand and assume responsibility for your own patterns of behavior. This awareness and ownership is critical and enables you to overcome your natural resistance to change.

b) An accurate self concept and clear understanding of impact upon others is achieved through the EXCEL feedback. Perhaps the single most important reason training and development programs fail is that participants do not begin with an accurate picture of how they currently perform. Consequently, they are unsure of what they need to learn.

EXCEL Program Objectives

The first EXCEL Program objective is to:

- help you identify your most characteristic, reflexive, managerial behavioral responses, and determine when these are and are not responsive to the task at hand.

When your reflexive *response* is truly *responsive* (and you are not merely *responding*), then you may continue on with what comes most naturally. However, when it is not, the second objective is to:

- help develop alternative management behaviors that will enable you to deal effectively with the situation.

The goal is to help you develop sufficient flexibility so that you may adjust your management behavior to fit the person you are dealing with or situation at-hand. In effect, EXCEL is applied "Situational Leadership." However, what distinguishes EXCEL from Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership model, is that the focus is on *you* and the development of self-knowledge rather than on figuring out what others around you need.

For example, Situational Leadership prescribes that if you are leading a mature work group you do not need to provide a lot of structure. Rather, you need to back-off and allow the group to do the work. However, if you do not see yourself as a control-oriented, take-charge manager, you may not perceive a need to back-off. In effect, you could believe in and think you adhere to the tenets of Situational Leadership, but not be able to effectively put theory into practice because you lack self-knowledge and have a limited behavior repertoire.

Therefore, by the end of the EXCEL Program you will:

   a.   know what you currently tend to do (accurate self-perception).

   b.   know when doing what comes most naturally is and is not responsive to the demands of the environment.

   c.   be able to stop yourself from doing what comes most naturally when it is merely reflexive and not responsive to the work environment.

   d.   have at the ready, a broader repertoire of responses from which to choose.

The EXCEL Program

Depending upon the EXCEL Model utilized, program features may include:

- Ten, one-to-one meetings spread over an eight month period of time. Each meeting is approximately one hour and fifteen minutes in length. The one-to-one format enables all the time to be devoted to your needs and issues and makes possible an environment where you can address issues critical to your own development.

- 360° feedback from 20-25 subordinates, peers and superiors, utilizing "objective" Management Factors and "subjective" Narrative Comments, surveys (boss and OD Client Manager to have input on selection of survey participants).

- Targeted feedback - interviews with selected people, e.g., mentors, friends, boss, spouse, etc.

- Standardized test and report that ascertains reflexive management behaviors and where these may and may not be the most effective response to the task at hand.

- Development Plan - generation of custom Development Plan that is responsive to feedback and "real" workplace requirements.

- Inclusion of OD Client Manager into Plan development and execution.

- Coaching - in subsequent meetings the plan is reviewed based upon your experience with it. Post-mortems are conducted on specific workplace experiences and upcoming situations are discussed, taking into account the workplace feedback.

- Sharing of workplace feedback and action plan with direct reports to acknowledge receipt of feedback and solicit their support in making management behavior change.

- Facilitation of meeting with boss to review feedback and Development Plan and to solicit help in implementing plan.

- Followup survey (incorporating key points from Development Plan) to assess progress and determine what work remains undone.

- EXCEL Program, not including followup sessions, to be completed in six month period of time. Missed meetings to be completed via teleconference.

What Can I Expect to Gain From This Experience?

Findings from an Evaluation of The EXCEL Process*

We conducted an evaluation of 29 executives and managers who had participated in the EXCEL Program between 1998 and 1999. The survey was sponsored by Human Resources but conducted by The Edelstein Group. The questions on the survey asked respondents about 3 general issues:

- *Does the EXCEL process produce valuable behavior change?*

- *What kinds of changes are typically produced by this process*?

- *What activities in this process contribute the most to learning and change?*

Learning Process Produces Valuable Changes

62% of EXCEL Program participants rated the process as having been "very valuable" (on a scale of 1 to 5). 73% believed they made "consistent change" in their actions at work as a result of their participation.

Program participants frequently observed that some people seem to derive greater benefit than others, showing more significant or enduring change. We asked participants to estimate the benfit derived from the person who got the MOST from EXCEL, respondents indicated this person made "consitent change" in management behavior.

Executives and managers were also asked to compare the value of their learning from the program to that from other forums of learning. Respondents compared the value of this program to that of the mentoring and coaching that they received from managers within PacifiCare. They also compared it to their learning in related seminars. Executives and managers rated the value of this multi-dimensional learning process as "very valuable," and more valuable, on average, than the learning from internal coaching or from external workshops and seminars.

* A copy of the study may be obtained from Human Resources

***Learning Process Makes Leaders More Aware of Their Impact On Others,
Promoting Teamwork***

While participants developed their own goals and pursued an individual agenda of
adjustments in their leadership style, participants described a similar range of
changes typically produced by this program in themselves and in other participants
they worked with.   The kinds of changes typically produced by this learning
process included the following:

- Greater awareness of impact on others, improved interpersonal skills
- More team oriented, cooperative
- Less defensive, more open to criticism
- Improved listening to other's ideas, better communication
- More coaching and respect for subordinates, less commanding
- More assertive, less intimidating
- More results oriented

It is striking that a chief benefit of a learning program for individuals is improved
teamwork.   This is not surprising given the role of coworker feedback in this
learning method.   Participants describe the benefits to the organization of their
individual   changes   as   including   improved   teamwork,   cooperation   and
coordination, with better decision making from a more open exchange of
information. They describe their subordinates as being more involved, developed
and satisfied as a result of changes made in their leadership. Overall, participants
report recognition of the importance of relationships for effective leadership.

Hearing Direct Narrative Feedback Contributes the Most to Learning

Participants were asked to rate the relative contribution to their changes made by
the different activities in this learning process.   "Meetings with The Edelstein
Group" was rated most highly with "listening to the direct narrative feedback from
the 360° survey" not far behind. "Generation of the written Deveopment Plan"
was also considered key to success in the program.

It is important to note that the above rankings were averages. Individual participants vary widely in the activities they personally find most useful. While the life/career history, for instance, was rated seventh overall, a signifianct number of participants rated it highly as a major contributor to their change. Some managers develop insights that help them to place later feedback in a useful context. Similarly, the interpersonal style profile, along with the life history, tends to provide a more abstract and conceptual background for the later, specific points made in the feedback. Participants with more abstract styles get more out of these activities. Overall, the diversity of activities that managers find useful supports the use of a multi-activity learning process that combines feedback, insight, goal setting and repeated practice.

*What accounts for some people getting more out of EXCEL than others? **

We discovered eight factors contributed to the greater or lesser effects the EXCEL program seems to have on different people. Factors that account for the greatest change include:

1. Seeing the program as a voluntary opportunity for learning, not as an involuntary program of correction.

2. Making a commitment to participate fully in the steps of the process - to try it.

3. Having a willingness and the ability to hear critical feedback.

4. Receiving enough feedback to get a strong, clear message.

5. Accepting the feedback as accurate.

6. Wanting to change in light of the feedback.

7. Defining goals to make moderate, specific changes in one's own behavior and regularly practicing these goals at work.

8. Sharing one's goals with the people around one at work and recruiting people to help reinforce the goals with reminders and feedback.