



Improving the bottom
... line through people

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It's a Jungle Out There!

Is there an Anthropologist in the house?

The boss stops by your office and says "I've hired an anthropologist to do a 'Culture Improvement Analysis' (CIA) for our organization." You ask your boss "What's an anthropologist doing out of the jungle and in my office?" That's a fair question. Anthropologists use a qualitative research tool, better known as ethnography (Latin for "writing culture"), to unlock information trapped inside organizational hierarchies.



A CIA provides senior management with information they can use to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of their business.

Like a tribe, a business is a culture that must constantly adapt and find the most efficient ways to survive. Culture, whether in the outback or on the shop floor, is made up of a unique set of shared

assumptions. A corporate anthropologist uses ethnography to get at the business' survival-related strategies and practices by:

- Accessing the work culture's assumptions and shared beliefs;
- Obtaining an insider's perspective of the organization's culture; and
- Uncovering the best practices

from the people closest to the issues and challenges.

Follow the Signs to Safety

The first phase of a CIA begins when a corporate anthropologist gathers background research to develop open-ended questions and then conducts interviews at various levels in the organization's culture. Open-ended questions and anonymous, confidential

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Seen Any Blindspots Lately?

Fear is Always in the Back of the Room

As the old comic strip "Pogo" stated, "We've met the enemy and the enemy is us." I bumped into an ol' enemy a few weeks ago while a colleague and I prepared for a presentation to a group of middle managers in the Federal Government. The subject of the presentation was "The Seven Deadly Blindspots of Employee Discontent."

Johari's Window was the model used to describe the concept of seven deadly blindspots (Exhibit 1). Imagine a window divided into four panes or squares, each revealing information to you and to others. The Open Area (Arena) contains those things that both you and others know about you. It is in the public view. The Hidden Area reveals things that you know, but others don't. The Blind Spot contains things that others know about you, but you don't know. Your vulnerabilities live in this quadrant. The Unknown Area

reveals things about you that neither you nor others know.

I invite you to take the quiz as well (on page 4) and respond to the second question on vulnerability. In a workshop setting participants often uncover, from peers, rich feedback on blindspots previously unknown to them. They also discover the relative accuracy of their own self-reported blindspots. For most, the experience is humbling.

Since concurrent sessions were being offered at the same time, my expectation was to engage a group of 20 people in a dialogue on their blindspots. I also hoped to discuss how these blindspots could potentially detract from their effectiveness as managers (Quad 1). The session wasn't scheduled to begin until 1:30 p.m., so I arrived 20 minutes early. I wanted to set-up the room for a smaller group.



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interviews create an "iceberg effect," encouraging employees to surface information which ordinarily would remain submerged, unseen and potentially dangerous. One of the positive effects of the CIA includes an upward "morale spike," when employees feel "heard, secure, and inspired." Quite frequently, this is followed by a "ripple effect," as interviewed employees encourage their co-workers to cooperate fully in disclosing vital insights during the CIA.

Case Study # 1: Native Resentment -- From Sour Grapes to Sweet

In a CIA of a mid-sized Sonoma Valley winery, it was revealed that the vineyard manager felt underpaid, was resigned to being underpaid, and was prepared to "pack his bags for greener pastures." When asked if he had shared his feelings with upper management, he replied "They should know that I am underpaid." When asked if the anonymity and confidentiality of the interview agreement could be broken in order to inform management of his sentiments, his reply was an emphatic "No!"

Now what? How could disaster be averted for the winery as well as the vineyard manager without compromising the confidentiality

agreement? The anthropologist urged the winery's executive team to conduct a salary study of all senior-level managers. As anticipated, the results revealed that the vineyard manager's salary was below market. The winery adjusted



his salary, the harvest was saved, and executive management was able to implement a long-term vision for the winery.

Key Benefits

- The interview uncovered the bottom-side of the iceberg – competitive salaries.
- The executive team gained insight into the key issues making the native restless – competitive salaries.

Stepping Around the Quicksand

In phase two of the CIA, the intelligence gleaned from the interview process enables the business to identify "Case Study Employees". These employees, typically respected individuals within their peer groups, possess key insights about the issues and the trouble-shooting skills necessary to change existing problems. Information gathered by shadowing these employees enriches the interview data and allows us to propose "confidence-building measures" to senior leadership. These measures create and further employee incentive, often leading to greater productivity in the organization. When implemented, confidence-building measures increase

trust in the organization's culture and create a ripple effect that increases consensus and leads to greater employee participation. As the confidence-building measures develop, they also become the employees' plan.

Case Study # 2: Restless Natives – From Apathy to Involvement

A Bay Area School District encountered stiff parent opposition to a proposed agenda

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for change. Without parent support, much-needed facility upgrades and efforts to raise student achievement would remain stalled. The CIA revealed a long-standing rift between parents and the district office; however, the conflict wasn't with the current administration.

After a series of involvement meetings, the parents chose three confidence-building measures to increase their trust level in the current administration: 1) provide covered eating areas, 2) purchase more garbage cans, and 3) host a school hat contest.

Once these measures were instituted, the school district earned the trust and respect of parent leaders and were able to work cooperatively with them in achieving common goals.

Key benefits

- The CIA uncovered potential pathways to partnership – unheard requests.
- Confidence-building measures allowed opposing sides to look past their differences based on past grievances – a cooperative relationship was built based on new behaviors and expectations.

Attaining the High Ground ... and Holding It

In the third phase, the corporate anthropologist combines all intelligence (i.e.: surveys, focus groups, interviews and current ethnographic data) into an action plan.

Case Study # 3: Uncooperative Natives -- From Individuals to Team

A softball-team sized accounting firm acquires a law firm, computer service company and a financial planning company in a leveraged buyout. Now able to provide one stop shopping to clients, the newly formed company experienced coordination and logistical problems in their attempts to achieve a seamless continuum of services. Each division accuses the others of "dropping the ball."

The CIA determined that the principals were attempting to manage the law and financial planning firms by employing management practices based on their accounting divisions tax season deadlines. While these

practices were important to the accounting division, the other divisions did not need to operate under the same formulaic approach.

Key benefits

- The CIA created collaborative decision making.
- Built agreements for working together.
- Senior leaders could take meaningful actions.

Overview: Out of the Jungle and into the Meadow

The business world can be a jungle and who better to guide you through its potential perils than a corporate anthropologist? Using the CIA, the corporate anthropologist helps you to see and address hidden dangers. The ethnographic method turns resentful natives into fulfilled employees, restless natives into collaborative partners, and uncooperative natives into bridge builders. Guiding your business culture through the jungle and positioning your organization as the "survivor" is the forte of the corporate anthropologist.

The CIA is a joint partnership between David Matsuda, Ph.D. and Darryl W. Hewitt, Ph.D.

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Seen Any Blindspots Lately?

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When leading a workshop, I want three things to happen: First, I want participants to find the message interesting and appealing; second, I hope that they enjoy the session; and third, I wish to be invited back (Quad 2).

Shortly after lunch, a steady but unexpected stream of managers filled the seats. Managers crowded the front, back, and middle rows in the room until there were no seats left and little standing room. I was surprised, since the presentation was being offered with three other sessions. Nearly every conference participant must have been in this session. You'd have thought I was giving away Starbucks's coffee and Krispy Kreme donuts!

As the room filled, I began asking myself "What's so interesting about this topic?" And, like one of those hummingbirds zipping past your ear in the backyard, it hit me; everybody's got blindspots – including me!

At an almost imperceptible level, I began to notice a sudden shift in my energy and the meaning I assigned to the topic (Quad 2). When fewer people were in the room, I had felt calm. But, as the room began filling up, I felt anxious. My physical symptoms were cold hands, agitated stomach, and sweaty underarms. My fear was present in the room.

Can you imagine that the importance I

had created around this session triggered several physiological responses that, until that moment, were just outside of my awareness? It struck me then that if I was conscious of the physical symptoms, just what other blindspots might the audience be in touch with that I was also not aware of (Quad 3). It was a harrowing experience, talking about blindspots while in the process of experiencing them!

I became familiar with a new level of awareness from this experience; I couldn't change who I was while speaking before this large audience. Fear is always there, in the background. I can, however, transform how I respond to it.

Like the three imaginary characters haunting Dr. John Nash in the movie "A Beautiful Mind," we all have phantoms and fears. Thankfully, most of us don't have them to the extent that he did.

Each of us has our own way of dealing with our fears. Many ignore them, others pretend they don't exist, and some of us wage war against them. It's not whether you're powerful enough to beat them back, but whether you can "hang" with them when they're present. Our usual response to fear is to avoid the unpleasantness of fear.

Personal growth lies in the recognition

BlindSpots Quiz

Can you identify your top three blindspots (Quad 3)?

How might these blindspots increase your vulnerability at work or in life?

that fear lives beneath the surface. If you choose to act in the face of fears, rather than reacting or covering up, you've grown. If you disguise them, you cut off access to another part of yourself rather than being open to it. Stepping away from the fear keeps you wed to your blind spot. In the fear, lies a new level of awareness and growth.

Even if just for an instant, being with the fear allowed me to discover a blind spot, a deeper layer of self, another awareness of me.

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Exhibit 1. JOHARI'S WINDOW

	THINGS I KNOW	THINGS I DON'T KNOW
Things They Know	<p>Quad 1 Open Area (Known by You and Others)</p>	<p>Quad 3 Blindspots (Known by Others, but Not by You)</p>
Things They Don't Know	<p>Quad 2 Hidden Area (Known by You Alone)</p>	<p>Quad 4 Unconscious (Not Known by You or Others)</p>



Quarterly

For Information on the topics in this newsletter, or to arrange for training or speakers in the areas it discusses, please contact at us:

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