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AN EXERCISE FOR EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUNGIAN PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES AND ORGANIZATIONAL DYNAMICS

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an exercise, which includes both imaginal and verbal processes in relating Jungian psychological types to organizational dynamics. Guidelines are presented for using the exercise in a variety of settings.

INTRODUCTION

The relationship between Jung's (1971) psychological types and various organizational dynamics has been of interest to researchers for more than 20 years (Mitroff, 1983; Morgan, 1986; Patz, 1992). Given this degree of interest, it thus is not surprising to find that experiential exercises exist for exploring the relationship of type to organizational topics (Mitroff & Kilmann, 1975; Ramsboomair, 1994). In general, however, these exercises involve a reliance on verbal processes to the exclusion of the imaginal realm. The purpose of this paper is to describe an exercise, which balances verbal and imaginal processes.

THE EXERCISE

Objectives

The exercise has three objectives: (1) to teach the concepts of psychological type, (2) to demonstrate how psychological type affects the design of organizations, and (3) to make students more aware of the different learning styles in class as they engage in developing teams.

Materials Needed

At least five sets of material are needed. First, since students will need to complete the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI®; Myers & McCaulley, 1985), some form of the MBTI will be needed. Second, a sheet or two of newsprint for each group will be needed. Third, each group will need four or five different colored markers to use for drawing on the newsprint. Fourth, masking tape will be needed to post the groups' results for everyone to see. Finally, lecture materials (e.g., overheads) will be needed for the brief lecture portion of the exercise.

Instructions/Steps

1. Obtain MBTI scores before the exercise and group participants according to their scores. Four groups generally should be formed: those with preferences for sensing and thinking (ST), those with preferences for sensing and feeling (SF), those with preferences for intuition and feeling (N F), and those with preferences for intuition and thinking (NT). Groups of 3 to 6 people are preferable. For large classes or training groups, it is often interesting to form groups with even more specific preferences (e.g., Introverted ST and Extraverted ST). On the other hand, should only one person indicate a particular set of preferences (e.g., NF), that person should not be placed in another group but should be asked to work alone.
2. After participants have formed their groups they are instructed to "Draw something that represents your ideal organization" using the newsprint and markers provided. Participants also should be instructed to "be prepared to share your drawings with the rest of the class/training group." Give groups about 15-20 minutes to do their drawings. Expect certain groups, particularly those with S preferences, to ask for more details and structure. (As might be expected, the different type groups will handle the exercise differently.) When confronted with this question, simply reinforce the initial set of instructions.
3. Present a brief lecture on the sensing, intuition, thinking, and feeling preferences. The lecture should particularly emphasize the combinations of the preferences and that each combination of preferences tends to use a particular metaphor to represent their ideal organization. Experience shows the following relationships: ST-machine, SF-team or small family, N F-nature or human spirit, and NT-politics and power (including brainpower). More will be mentioned about these relationships in the processing section. The lecture typically takes 10-15 minutes.
4. Ask for volunteers to show and discuss their drawings. Instruct those participants who are observing to both look at the drawing and *Listen to* how the presenter(s) describe their drawing. Also, instruct observers to be ready to guess which group they think is represented by the drawing (ST, SF, etc.). As each group presents their drawing, ask them to tape it to a wall or board so that all

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drawings remain visible throughout the exercise for comparison.

Processing

When discussing their drawings, different groups tend to focus on different kinds of information and some groups give more information than others. Therefore it sometimes becomes necessary for the instructor to ask questions of the group (or better yet, encourage observing groups to ask questions). Some key questions to ask that get at the type differences include: Who makes the decisions in this organization? How do communications work in this organization? Where are you located in this organization? What's more important in this organization, practical work procedures or research and development?

Processing and interpretation also can be facilitated by seeking out the metaphor that seems to underlie the groups' conceptualization of their ideal organizations. As mentioned above, ST groups seem to employ the metaphor that their ideal organization is a machine and will often times actually draw a machine or engine of some kind (car, boat, engine with gears, and so on). ST groups also tend to draw the traditional organizational chart or a pyramid, which reflects the machine or bureaucratic organization with its emphasis on hierarchy. Experience also shows, however, that STs can mix their metaphors and draw organic symbols such as the human body, a tree, a plant, and so on. In these situations it is important to see that the human body or what ever is being seen as a finely tuned machine--efficient, rational, logical. Also, the way the STs talk about their drawing will be rational, analytical, impersonal, and so on.

The primary metaphors for the SFs seem to be the team and the small family wherein the authority of the whole (family, team) is balanced with a respect for the individuality of each member of the whole. Thus, drawings of small groups at a table or in other work settings are common. Another common image is the wheel (whole) with individually colored spokes (individuals) all connecting to a common core (goal). Other SF groups have drawn an arrow (whole) with the head representing the goal and the individually colored tail feathers representing the individual members. (In observing this group draw their image it was noticed that each member drew their own part of the tail feathers for the arrow.)

The NF groups tend to draw images that reflect the human spirit, nature, or culture indicating that the ideal organization is full of possibilities (N) for life (F). In comparison with ST and SF groups,

the NF drawings thus tend to be more abstract and such activities as leadership, communication, and so on are more dynamic and decentralized. For example, when one NF group was asked how the bees communicated in their beehive ideal organization, one of the NF group members responded "Well, they just know!" (Intuition at work, of course). Expect NF groups to also be idealistic and at times somewhat "romantic" in their images as compared with what traditionally shows up in business classes. For example, images of Camelot have been drawn and discussed by some NFs.

The NT groups tend to draw images, which reflect power, politics, space, molecules and mazes—all of which indicate logical possibilities. (Images from Startrek are not unknown!) Given that NTs value problem solvers, it should not be surprising to find images of brains, light bulbs, and lightening bolts—the ideal organization will be full of innovative ideas and activities. As with NFs, leadership and authority issues are more flexible and decentralized but NTs do have a tendency to want to be the CEOs. For example, NT groups will often draw the traditional organizational chart much as STs do. However, NTs will usually put themselves at the top of the chart.

Allow about 5 minutes processing time for each group.

Alternatives

This exercise focuses on the ideal organization of different psychological types and thus may be used in a variety of settings and classes. However, the exercise can be tailored to other venues. For example, the exercise has been used with first-semester college freshmen to teach about the different teaching styles they encounter in high school versus college. In this case the students were asked to "draw something that represents you ideal teacher." Similarly, with church groups, the type groups can be asked to "draw something that represents your ideal church." The same metaphors and issues seem to arise, but with a more topic specific flavor.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The exercise reported here represents an extension of an exercise used by Alan Hammer and John DiTiberio in the MBTI qualifying workshop conducted under the auspices of the Association for Psychological Type, St. Louis, MO, December 1986.

REFERENCES

[References available upon request]