

# Developments in Business Simulation & Experiential Exercises, Volume 11, 1984

## CORPORATE MALADIES THROUGH THE EYES OF THE MEMO

WRITER: A SELDOM USED EXPERIENTIAL TOOL

John N. Yanouzas, University of Connecticut  
Patricia B. Sanders, Central Connecticut State University  
John F. Veiga, University of Connecticut

### ABSTRACT

One of the most underrated and often ignored sources of conflict and misunderstanding in organizations is the memo. While many management training programs endeavor to improve memo writing skills, the "behavioral" qualities of the memo have been largely unexplored. Memos have the potential to stimulate, heighten and exacerbate conflict. Such behavioral qualities provide a stimulating vehicle for exploring a management case or episode. The following exercise called - TRIMMING THE FAT AT DELPHI - is one of three exercises designed to highlight these issues.

### DIRECTIONS

1. Each person in the class will be assigned to either the role of Manager of Management Consulting Group or Manager of the Printing Department.
2. The instructor will pair off participants who will be required to communicate with each other only through written memo during a designated period of time.
3. The instructor will distribute role information to each of the two parties.
4. The first memo will be sent by the Manager of the Consulting Group. The Manager of the Printing Department must then respond to this first memo.
5. A mail box will be set up to facilitate the exchange of memos. Each party will be required to respond to a memo within 24 hours of receipt and no later than noon of the day after receiving the memo. Responses must be in the mail box by noon.
6. Each party should send at least two memos and the memos must be typed (or legibly printed).

DELPHI ORGANIZATIONAL SERVICES, INC. - Delphi Organizational Services, Inc. (DOS) was founded in 1955 as a management consulting firm by its present president, Lee Otis. Its current name was adopted in 1971 after the firm had expanded beyond the original consulting services into training and publishing management literature. The current organization includes:  
a Consulting Department, a Publication Department, a Training Department, an Administrative Services Department and a controller (See Organizational Chart provided by authors).

Each of the 3 line departments is headed by a Vice President who, along with the President, form an Executive Committee. The President has withdrawn from the daily operations of the company and channels his efforts largely into developing and maintaining external relations. He is involved in developing better relations with several trade associations, he does some public speaking, he solicits articles for the company's journal, Management Today, he writes for the Current Trends Newsletter and presides over

the Executive Committee which makes policy decisions and formulates strategy. All members of the Executive Committee are senior partners who have ownership in the firm.

The most recent organization change occurred in 1977 when the Consulting Department was divided into two subunits -- Management Consulting and Technical Consulting. The manager of the Management Consulting Group, Len Keller, became the Vice President of Consulting, a Senior Associate, Roi Erving, was promoted to Manager of Management Consulting Group, and Eli Bloomstein was brought in to head up the Technical Consulting Group. In the past two years the management consulting business has fallen off sharply and accordingly there have been some layoffs of Associates. But the technical consulting business has been growing steadily largely due to the increased pressure experienced by manufacturing businesses to improve the control of waste disposal. The Technical Consulting Group has specialized in toxic waste disposal.

The economic recession has also affected other areas of the firm's business. While in-house training has held its own, conference training which involves one to three day seminars has required a 25% cutback in programs offered. The counts in seminars of two- and three-day duration have fallen from an average of 35 to 17 but the one-day seminars especially the series on Programming Your Personal Computer have grown in demand. Accordingly, some trainers have been released and a few new ones in computer programming have been hired.

This slow down in business has also affected the Administrative Services Department. Personnel has been laid off in the Graphics and Editing Department and a few new people hired who can do editing, graphics and typing. The Vice President of Administrative Services, An Bruant, is convinced that flexibility is needed in the personnel employed in administrative services. The economic benefits of having multiple skilled personnel in graphics, editing and typing is apparent but it creates management problems. People keep getting shifted back and forth, employees are somewhat confused and the managers of the departments feel they are losing control. Rumors abound about possibly combining the three departments and having only one manager in charge of them. Because of the specialized skills involved in the Printing Department, the personnel in that department have not been affected by the consolidation efforts occurring in the other three departments; however, a few people in word processing have been released. The Manager of the Printing Department, Robin Carter, relies on some part time people to work during periods of high demand. Some efforts have also been made to reduce the rigidity of the criteria used for scheduling printing jobs for the three line departments -- Consulting, Publications and Training.

It seems that the cost savings efforts are having a payoff, costs have been reduced by close to 10% for the last two quarters. The President has been encouraged by the efforts of all those involved and has urged everyone in management to continue looking for more ways to reduce costs.