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(We frequently get questions about the background we bring to the table that enables our clients to achieve fast-track improvement and employee buy-in. This is a "replay" of a typical conversation as part of "get to know you better" meetings with clients and others. It's designed to inform, not make you read between the lines).

I'll go back this far only because it's relevant to what we're doing now. My original background is in ship design and construction, and I'm a Naval Architect and Marine Engineer. This quickly gets you into a systems and process view of the world. The term "naval architecture" refers to design of any type of ship, commercial or military.

"Where do you go for that?" I went to a very small university called Webb Institute of Naval Architecture. (Webb was a clipper-ship builder, who started the school about the time iron & steel ships came in - a time when the old shipbuilders taught the young engineers). The school was very small - you and I would be a good reunion of my college class. I graduated in a class of 19; the whole school even today has only 75 students. It's a very heavy engineering curriculum. Classes ran from 9 till 3 or 4 each day, no electives. The professors were all practicing engineers, so the education was very practical - implementation oriented. The curriculum included work terms in shipyards, on board ships, and in design offices. When you graduated you were from the first day a fully-functioning professional.

It was also very much of a team environment. Everybody did his own work, but of course people were better in some areas than others, and you had to figure out how to help each other just to get through the program.

In any case, I then worked in a shipyard for a while, building nuclear subs and aircraft carriers. I also got involved in an in-house machinery development. As part of that, I worked with a fellow who probably didn't have a sixth grade education - but knew everything there was to know about burning steel, which was his job. And he'd be happy to tell you anything you wanted to know, if you were just willing to listen. The shared knowledge and team approach made the project go smoothly.

I then spent a lot of time overseas with Amoco. I was with them for about 16 years in a very non-traditional "career path" - I started as an engineer in the marine department; when I left I was in charge of new technology evaluation for the computer group.

It was an interesting time - I started with them one week, and the next week I was on a plane to Spain (where they had some construction projects going) - with my whole instruction-set being basically - "figure out what you are supposed to do, and do it." We had an inspection staff there, but I was largely on my own in terms of what needed doing. As part of that, I worked all over Europe, as well as in the Far East (Japan, Singapore) and spent some time in the Middle East.

Spain at that time was on the upswing, developing basic manufacturing and service capabilities as they went - which put us in some interesting positions.

We had a contract with the shipyard to build the ship - but we would find that subcontractors to the shipyard didn't have the capability to deliver the products or services contracted. It was not a question of contract enforcement - they simply couldn't do it. So what do you do? You don't have a commercial relationship with these people. But you need the products.

The typical "consulting solution" - go look at what they do, figure out the problem, and write them a report (red tie, report, and run) - was useless (not that it ever works that well). Whatever you told them, the report would already be gathering dust when you hit the driveway on the way out.

But if you could come in, look at what they were actually doing (not from the conference room, but in the operations themselves), lay it out in a way they hadn't looked at it before, and help them see what the solution was - and do this all quickly - you had a real winner: they would willingly and eagerly work with you on that basis; it permanently raised their performance capability; it was mostly their solution so you knew it would last; and we got what we needed.

That is in fact part of the genesis for what we're doing now. Not only did it work, but it was powerful enough to work across language and cultural differences.

I also did a lot of operating systems work with our affiliates. For example, looking with one group at their transportation operations, I found a way to reduce expenditures by 85% vs. the plan - with better operating results and higher profits. They adopted the idea as their own.

While I worked with Amoco I got involved in commercial negotiations on transport and construction projects: evaluating terminals, and contracting for, trading and converting ships. So from there I got involved in strategy and finance, including using analysis of operations, market position and cost structures to re-shape strategy, with high buy-in for execution and understanding that led to effective implementation. The finance area got me involved in project finance, which is similar to leasing, which got me involved in equipment leasing - particularly, computer equipment. And I got an MBA from University of Chicago.

(Along the way, I got involved in assisting attorneys on some large industrial accident cases. I was able to explain the "technical bits" to attorneys and in court in ways people could understand. I handle stressful situations well. As part of the forensic engineering required, I rapidly evaluated technical, operational and personnel issues from limited data, and formulated effective analysis, arguments and strategies).

When I got to the equipment leasing area, it took eight weeks to turn around a leasing transaction. The person handling the transaction had to be very knowledgeable in multiple areas - leveraged leasing, the operations of leasing companies, bank concerns, tax issues, finance issues, knowledge of the underlying technology... I took a look at it, we laid out the process and what we were trying to accomplish, and worked out what had to happen across multiple functions. And when I left that area we could turn around one of those transactions overnight - USING A CLERK.

Some experience with the technology got me into the technology management area. There I took over a job from a person who had a deep "computer" background, and saw his job as doing one activity - "evaluating technology." I saw the job as making sure that the operating parts of the business and the technology management area worked together to satisfy customers and help the company make more money.

This meant helping the people out where the rubber meets the road identify that some technology would help them do their work, getting them involved in figuring out the right technology and how to implement it, and

helping them get it done. I established a team-based system with innovative processes in which thousands of people willingly participated and received mutual benefit from their work.

I electively left Amoco, and have led an independent consulting business for 18 years. We specialize in developing employee buy-in and eliminating the "Sand in the Gears" in organizations. Key results according to our clients are the speed at which they achieve improvements, high employee buy-in developed, the transfer of expertise to their people, and the rapid payback and ongoing high return on their investment. Third party organizations have done case studies on our clients' success. Our clients have included manufacturing, distribution / transportation / logistics & multiple types of business services.

When we're working with a company, we pretty quickly understand how the elements of their business work together. As we work with the business, it's very common for people to say - even about their own area - "you know, I do this every day, and I never realized all the things that are going on." And often, as a result of a full view across functional boundaries, they will see immediate solutions to problems they have had, and had been trying to fix, for years. The solutions may develop directly, or build on our knowledge of solutions across industries, organizations and functional operations.

Whichever way it happens, at that point, who owns the solution? It's clearly theirs. And not only have they come to a solution, but they have also had experience in how to look at the process to get to a solution - so they can continue to do it themselves. It's a transfer of expertise to them, so the solutions continue to develop with the ongoing changes in the business. Process thinking and action becomes part of the culture.

I became a trained Lead Assessor, and have helped companies quickly achieve quality system certifications (e.g., ISO 9000 and others based on that standard). Certification is achieved as a by-product of next-level performance of the company. Our clients achieve *100% first-attempt certification* (national average - about 58%). We also helped a client achieve a state-level Baldrige award.

I am also a requested speaker, having given presentations, seminars and workshops for associations, industry and quality conferences, on topics including rapid achievement of improved operating and financial results, quality system certification, effective use of Deming's principles and the Baldrige Criteria for Excellence. I've also been quoted and published in magazines.