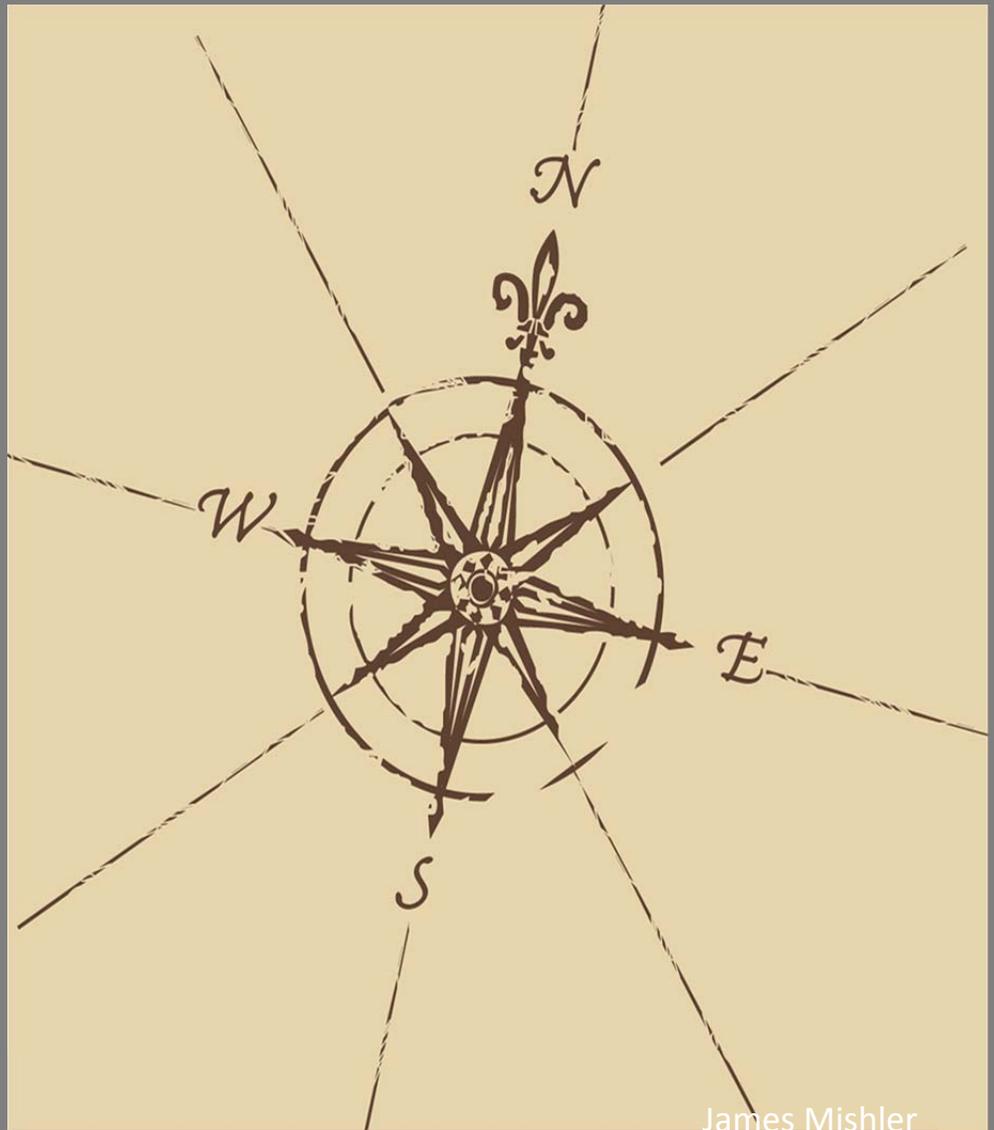2012
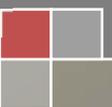
Understanding Guided Practical Survival for Managers

James Mishler
Woodview Learning Stategists LLC
6/7/2012

Acknowledgements

This paper is based is a compilation of material from a variety of sources. Some of it comes from Dr. William Glasser and his many writings including Choice Theory and Quality Schools, two of his premier books. Some of the pages I have 'borrowed' from my Choice Theory Colleagues. When I have done so, I have tried to give credit where credit is due.

I want to give special credit to Kathleen Mishler Bouwman (yep she's my sister!) who invited me in to work with fast food managers from their three fast food restaurants. I thank her for the opportunity and recognize the risk she took in looking at a different way to see the world. That experience was not only challenging but enlightening and has formed the basis for this and other papers along with shaping a training module for managers of all kinds.

About Jim Mishler

Jim Mishler is a retired Special Education Administrator with 35 years of experience in public education. His educational experience includes working in a residential facility for delinquent teens, teaching at the elementary level, adjunct teaching at the university level and as an administrator for 20 years. He has authored several articles, and has presented at numerous state, national and international conferences.

Jim is currently a faculty member with the William Glasser Institute for Choice Theory and Reality Therapy where he focuses on training and teaching the concepts of the personal psychology of choice. He has been involved with Choice Theory and Reality Therapy since 1977 and was among the first in Michigan to embrace these concepts.

Over his years of experience he has facilitated many different groups including school related, church and community groups. As a result of his experience in facilitation he has become affiliated with Agora's for the 21st Century which is dedicated to promoting democratic dialogue. The primary vehicle for this promotion is a piece of software known as Cogniscope II developed by Dr. Alexander Christakis and others. This software enhances the decision making process by promoting deeper understanding and clarity of the ideas presented by all participants. In accomplishing its goal the Guided Dialogue Process promotes dialogue with civility and respects for all of those participating.

In 2008 Jim founded Woodview Learning Strategists LLC with the goal of helping individuals and organizations build "internal capacity". Translated, building internal capacity means to help individuals and organizations develop the structures needed to be effective and successful.

Contact Information

James A. Mishler, MA
Woodview Learning Strategists
309 Orchard Ave.,   Clare, MI 48617
989-386-9382 (H)   989-424-1133 (c)
mishlerjames@sbcglobal.net
www.woodviewlearning.com

Table of Contents

WGAI Presentation

Question to Answer

What are the critical core components of Choice Theory/Reality Therapy/Lead Management (CT/RT/LM) that a manager would need to know in order to begin applying the principles of Lead Management in the business world setting?

Genesis of the Question

In attempting to teach the principles of Lead Management to a group of fast food shift managers in a limited time frame (considerably less than the typical 30 hours in a standard basic week) it became apparent that mastery of all of the concepts of CT/RT/LM would not be possible. In a compressed time frame understanding the basic framework of Lead Management alone leaves little room for a deep exploration of Choice Theory.   However, without some working knowledge of CT/RT then Lead Management becomes a hollow shell, hence the question. To resolve this question CT/RT/LM trainers must think about training and core concepts differently.

Discussion

For purposes of this discussion the focus will be on the managerial staff that has the day to day responsibility of employee supervision and ensuring the production of quality products or services. In this arena productivity issues are almost always the result of a breakdown between managerial staff and the front line employee. When a business recognizes that it has a problem, it will respond by paying attention to the demands of Time, Money and Return on Investment (ROI). These are main drivers behind of most, if not all, business decisions.

Business Needs vs. Therapy

The business world has a very different set of needs and orientation to employee behavior from that of the worlds of therapy and schools. In the business world Time is money, lost time is lost money. Further, any training must directly relate to the improvement of the 'bottom line' either in direct monetary gain or in improved efficiencies (aka, 'Return on Investment' ROI). Both of these are expected to happen in a relatively short time frame if not immediately. The connection of any training to this set of understandings is critical. Developing a deep understanding of any concept in this environment will be difficult.

For the trainer of CT/RT/LM the business setting offers a huge challenge. As trainers in CT/RT/LM we are accustomed to moving through the process in a deliberate fashion designed to produce a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught leading to an enriched application of the therapeutic aspects of CT/RT/LM. Many of our 'students' (aka participants) come to us with a skill set that implies

background knowledge of many of the concepts we teach. While they may not possess the exact vocabulary or a deep understanding of our concepts they have had exposure to them in previous learning settings (e.g. seminars, college courses etc...). If you will, a foundation exists upon which to build. For those who come to us with limited background our training is designed to take its time introducing and developing the new concepts. For all practical purposes Time is our friend and ally.

Many middle managers from the business world do not come to a CT/RT/LM training session with the same foundation that therapists, teachers and counselors might arrive with. In fact many middle managers in small organizations (e.g. fast food franchises) do not possess college training or experience. Their main asset resides in their 'on the job' knowledge of the organization and its processes. The chances that these managers will be sophisticated in communication skills or have an operating knowledge of human behavior will be remote. As a result they are likely to unknowingly say and do things that may destroy morale thus reducing productivity and quality services.

On the other end of the continuum many middle managers in larger organizations while highly skilled in the technical aspects of their work they are frequently not 'tuned' in to the needs of those they supervise. More often than not the organization has the expectation that technical prowess far outweighs the need for deeper interpersonal skills. Unfortunately, when productivity and quality begin to suffer they look to technical side for solutions first before addressing interpersonal issues.
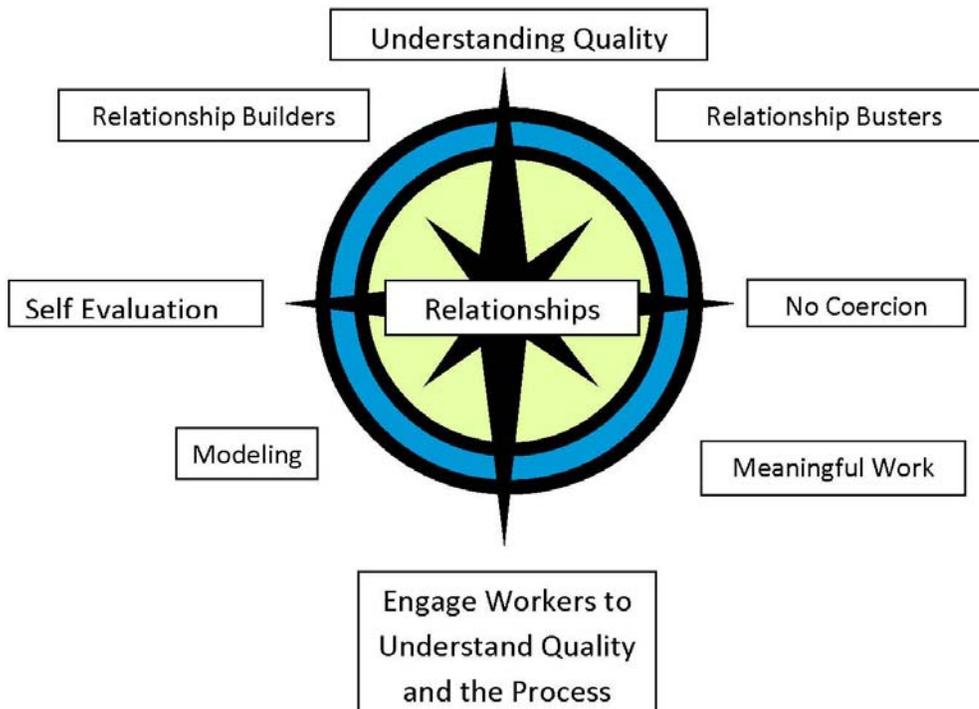
Regardless of the managerial work environment (small or large organization) there may be a need to improve interpersonal skills in an effort to improve their ability to supervise a workforce. Looking back to the earlier paragraphs of this section where time, money and ROI are the driving forces, managers must learn to be skillful in interpersonal interactions on a very short timeline. Thus enters CT/RT/LM which is a complete package of skills and understandings. The twofold challenge for the trainer will be, 'what are the core components of CT/RT/LM that need to be understood/mastered in both a compressed time frame and with a limited prior working knowledge of the concepts of human nature?

Critical Components

The chart on the following page helps to identify those components of Choice Theory which can be focused upon in a short time frame. The metaphor of the compass is that it gives direction regardless of which way you are facing. Using the compass as an evaluation tool the manager can engage in a process of Self-Evaluation to determine what the cause of their current problem(s) may be and thusly find a proper direction to proceed.

The manager's compass or GPS is designed to work in any managerial or corporate environment; however, its primary focus is to develop the skills of the individual manager. Skillfully applied the needs of the organization will be effectively met. Even if the organization does not endorse LM as mode of operation the individual manager may still employ them successfully without compromising or being insubordinate to the prevailing organization culture.

Middle Manager's

Understanding Quality

Relationship Builders

Relationship Busters

Self Evaluation

Relationships

No Coercion

Modeling

Meaningful Work

Engage Workers to Understand Quality and the Process

GPS

Guided Practical Survival

Compass Directional Explanations

In its original form this page is to be printed on the back of the Compass /GPS Page to serve as a portable guide.

Lead Management: Lead Management is important because it provides a framework for behavior which helps to promote highly effective individual and eventually organizations. For the Middle manager it becomes a 'compass' for conducting themselves as individuals on a daily basis. Regardless of what is happening in the organization as a whole, whether it is a change in goals, operating philosophy, or mission, the principles of Lead Management remain a constant. Lead management is focused on individual performance and not the philosophy of the day as seen on TV or in the current press, because of this it can operate in any philosophical or change environment. Lead Management is philosophy neutral.

Guided Practical Survival: Implementing the tenants of CT/RT/LM places the emphasis on the individual Middle Manager and not on the organization itself. Frequently, the actions from the upper part of an organization place the Middle Manager in the unenviable position of carrying out an unpopular policy or agenda. If the manager wants to stay employed they must follow the directive. How they follow the directive is a different matter. The Middle Manager can use the principles of Lead Management to build an effective work unit under their direction without being insubordinate to and still achieve the goals and purposes of the greater organization. The 'how' of implementing or using the principles of Lead Management becomes the challenge for the Middle Manager.

Relationships: Positive Relationships are the backbone of Lead Management. Without positive relationships it is difficult to be productive. Left in the vacuum of negative relationships managers are left only with coercion as a major motivator. Once an organization begins to rely on coercion as its primary motivator all that is left is an unhealthy work environment where productivity and quality both suffer.

Relationship Builders	**Relationship Buster**
Listening	Being Critical
Supporting	Blaming
Encouraging	Complaining
Respecting	Nagging
Trusting	Threatening
Accepting	Punishing
Negotiating	Rewarding Control

No Coercion: Lead Managers will not engage in coercive behavior to get tasks completed.

Meaningful Work: Unfortunately, too often employees are asked by their managers to engage in tasks that have little or no relevance to the production of quality work. In many cases these task are an enormous distraction from the task at hand. Over the long term such irrelevant requests diminishes the desire to produce quality work along with the definition of quality.

Self-Evaluation/Continual Growth: Self-Evaluation speaks to both continual improvement and enhances quality of service or product. Self-Evaluation promotes a conscious awareness of what quality is and how it can be achieved. It puts the emphasis on the individual's role and responsibility in promoting quality. When people regularly evaluate their own behavior and performance they take a greater pride in the final product. The culture of Self-Evaluation must be fostered and nurtured regularly.

Modeling: In this aspect the focus is on all levels of management but in particular Middle Managers. All managers must be ready and willing to models the kinds of behaviors needed to make the organization successful. Modeling takes the forms of both Explicit Teaching and Implicit Modeling.

Self-Evaluation/Commitment to Improvement: Getting better and working constantly to improve cannot happen without Self-Evaluation (from above). Assuming the status quo is just fine allows complacency to creep in to the system. In a culture of constant improvement quality is emphasized and appreciated by all. Working toward such quality naturally produces personal improvement. When individuals are working of continual improvement in a positive fashion they become more capable of contributing suggestions to improve the organization overall.

Engagement of Workers To Understand Quality: There are essentially two elements to this principle. First, there must be an ongoing discussion about what quality means to the organization. This understanding of what quality is should be clear to all and exist outside the context of any philosophical or goal change. In addition there needs to be an ongoing dialogue about the definition of quality. It is through this discussion that everyone in the organization begins to share the mission and focus of the organization.

All of the above material is based on the collective works of Dr. William Glasser, creator of Reality Therapy and Choice Theory.

Additional Considerations

To give depth to the compass it is also helpful to pay some attention to everyone's basic 5 needs (Love/Belonging, Freedom, Survival, Fun, and Power/Control) and how those needs influence behavior. During typical intensive weeks considerable effort and energy would be expended in teaching these concepts, however, they would not be the major focal point of a beginning manager training. It is helpful for managers to know what motivates employees over the long run but in the short term that only serves to confuse the issue, too much time gets spent in analyzing the causes of the behavior resulting in a loss of focus on the current issue. Stated differently, it offers some form of excuse for the behavior which is counterproductive. In the event that an organization or individual wants a deeper understanding of Choice Theory then the focus of the training dramatically shifts to something more traditional.

Role of Reality Therapy or WDEP

The Workplace

The idea of using the principles of Choice Theory and Lead Management in isolation without applying the principles of Reality Therapy is a bit like putting your shoes on without tying them up. It will work for a little bit but sooner or later you will fall down. It also seems equally incongruent to apply the techniques of counseling to the business setting. Principles of counseling are just too fuzzy for the technically focused. Remember, time is money, lost time is lost money and how will this apply to the bottom line. With some adjusting, the basic application of Reality Therapy can work extremely well in the work place. Earlier in this paper I alluded to the fact that some of the questions addressed in the paper came from working with fast food managers. While this author learned much about how to fry chicken and make tacos I also learned much about the logistics and mechanics of working in a fast food restaurant. In problem solving with those managers I learned how and what adjustments needed to be made. To adjust Reality Therapy to the work place there are some factors that need to be considered. Those factors include: the pace of the work environment, external controls and rules that cannot be altered and the general safety and wellbeing of the workers involved.

Every work environment is different and each has its own pace. The pace in the kitchen of a fast food restaurant can be frenetic at times. Employees are literally running from point to point while multi-tasking. Contrast this with the slower more deliberate pace of office work. While it may seem obvious it is much easier to engage an employee in an office setting about unproductive behavior it is an entirely different proposition to do so in the kitchen of a fast food franchise. Using any elaborate form of questioning procedure could be very disruptive to the overall operation and the delivery of service and product. Managers must consider the pace of work and the potential disruption to the operation before engaging an employee regardless of which setting (office vs. restaurant).

Many work sites are governed by workplace rules that are either the result of state laws or company policies and procedures. Most managers will be intimately aware of or very knowledgeable of those rules. They are there for a reason, either to promote safety or enhance the quality of the product being produced. While employees may be casual about rules compliance the manager cannot be. Therefore, it

is incumbent upon the manager to help the employee understand not only the rule but the need for it as well. Being a rules nag is different than helping someone understand. There are times when the manager must insist that a particular rule, procedure etc… be followed. How that is done is critical.

Finally, the general safety and wellbeing of the employee needs to be protected. Workers who feel unsafe or badgered well eventually be unproductive workers. The manager when addressing an issue must keep safety and wellbeing in mind.

Two tiered approach

The number one goal in applying the tenants of Reality Therapy to the work place is to develop a more positivly focused form of communication between the manager and the employee. Once the manager is consistently applying the concepts of Reality Therapy it becomes a way of interacting with employees that is both non-threatening and productive.

Reality Therapy at its core is a way both thinking and interacting with another individual. In general it is a methodical system designed to lead the client through a process of Self-Evaluation leading to more responsible and effective behavior. With this in mind the Lead Manager needs to be able to address issues on two levels or tiers; on the work place floor where the pace is frenetic and where any interaction could be disruptive and in a more deliberate manner in the privacy of the manager's office. Using the principle of Dr. Wubblding's WDEP the Two Tiered approach can take shape.

WDEP Translates to:

- W=What do you Want or What is your Goal?
- D=Doing, or what are you currently doing?
- E= Evaluate what you are doing.
- P= Make a Plan to change

The 'quick hitter'

When the pace of work is frenetic and time is of the essence the manager needs a quick set of questions that can help the employee refocus on the correct procedure without being disruptive to the general flow of work. This is not the setting for a long protracted theoretical discussion on procedures!

The quick questions worked out by fast food managers were:

- What are you doing? (**Replaces the Wants/Goals question temporarily**)
- What is the correct procedure? (**checking for knowledge and evaluation0**
- How quickly can you get back on track with the procedure? (**and making a plan**)
- Can I come back in XXX minutes to see how you are doing? (**plan follow up**)

All of this is done in a businesslike casual tone of voice it is not meant to be harsh or accusatory. Using an accusatory tone of voice becomes disruptive, threatening and in the end counterproductive.

Repeatedly using this type of redirection will eventually become second nature to the manager. Employees will come to see this approach as just the way the "boss" does it and they will see it in a

more constructive manner. Being consistent and business like reduces the likelihood that the employee and those around them will interpret this as a humiliating event.

The Longer Conference

In the event that the "quick hitter" questioning does not produce long term change then the manager must move on to more serious interventions. In the privacy of the office with sufficient time and no disruption to work flow the manager can engage in a longer more in depth application of the WDEP procedure.

Implications in Training

As with all training in Choice Theory and Reality Therapy, **Role Play is absolutely critical**. Managers must practice and experience this process to become comfortable and proficient. In some ways their role play Practice is far more critical than other groups of trainees. The role play portion of the training has to help the manager get so comfortable with the process that it starts to become second nature. If the process comes across as scripted or disingenuous the manager will lose credibility until they can reach that point.

During the practice sessions subtle instruction into more of the basics of Choice Theory can occur as they will enhance and enrich the experience. This incidental learning becomes valuable in any potential follow up sessions at a later time.