



## Diagnostics: The Survey from Hell.

It's important for business leaders to be reasonably versed in the difference between *Diagnostics* and *Survey Guided Action-Learning-Planning (Development)* based on Diagnostic Surveys. We only do Survey Guided Development, not just Diagnostics as a singular stand-alone process. Why is this so important?

This story, told to me by a high-ranking senior executive will illustrate what happens when Diagnostics are *not linked* to a *Survey Guided Action-Learning-Planning Development Program*:

- A large public sector corporation (name withheld for confidentiality) conducted a top-to-bottom organizational "Climate Survey" (these have been done for over 50 years; I was trained in this methodology in the early 1970s and we have done for decades with excellent results for reasons that will be evident below).
- There was no plan to integrate the feedback of survey data with an *action planning process* that engaged managers and employees to co-create improvements.
- Instead, in the interests of "transparency" (which they erroneously thought would create trust), they posted each subsidiary's data on the internet, in the naive belief that people would naturally solve their problems by some invisible miracle *deus ex machina*.
- OMG, what a total disaster! Senior Leaders and Middle Managers have nothing but complaints, anger, and resistance from their employees.
- Senior Leaders are now in disastrous reactionary mode, caught flat footed. They are experiencing the biggest crisis in the organization's history.
- It is now a total mess; employees (who are now aware of the problems in the organization) only see their experience through a negative lens. The employees set up a website to share comments and criticisms -- which is just fueling the fire into a conflagration.
- "Employees are leaving in droves" was the comment of one very disheartened senior executive. And the problem is super-serious because the employees are highly specialized and cannot be readily replaced. Now the organization's core mission is highly jeopardized and its customer base is severely compromised. (I would estimate the damage is in the tens of millions of dollars.)

**What went wrong?** The problem lies with the Diagnostics Company itself.

- To use a medical analogy going back to the Greeks, the objective of any Diagnostics is "to do no harm."
- The Diagnostics Company, which had to bid competitively to win the contract, was awarded the contract without a proper feedback and action-planning engagement as an integral part of the analytics. This was not just unethical, but it harmed the "patient" severely.

If you are in a position to engage in diagnostics with a client, set the standards of excellence and ethics and expectations and risks up-front.

- If you have to, explain to the client that we won't do diagnostics unless it's integrated into a Survey Guided Development program for Collaborative Excellence.
- Share this story with them if they are still resistant.
- Be willing to walk away if we are put in a position where we are hamstrung and cannot produce excellent results.

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