



The Group Strategy & Action Program

Resistance To Change...How many brilliant strategies, remarkable plans and audacious projects have failed because some individuals did not adhere to newly defined corporate goals?

In our constantly changing world every industry has to adapt itself to its evolving environment. New decisions have to be implemented, new responsibilities assigned, and this implies that changes must occur, not only in the organization, but, most importantly, in the minds of people.

The *Group Strategy and Action Program* (GSAP) is a program and a process designed to bring about change in organizations. It differs from other programs in that it focuses on organizational systems (i.e. the network or roles, rules and relations that constitute the system) and not upon changing individuals in their interpersonal skills.

Connecting individual behavior and group performances develops the whole organization and not isolated parts of it. This results in:

- Better understanding of the organization.
- Clarification of goals and roles.
- Swift and effective change in behavior.
- Measurable or observable performance improvement.
- Change without turbulence.
- Improved organizational results.

Introduction

If you are reading this article it is probably because you are concerned about the issue of how to bring about some form of change within your own organization. The question is: What is it that brought you to the point of recognizing the need for

change, and even going so far as to consider a process for making that change?

In other words, why are you considering change now? Did something occur that moved you from awareness to action? Is there some specific issue that has come to a head? What makes the need for change necessary now, and not a year ago, or some time in the future?

Perhaps you might take a few minutes right now to reflect on the answer to these questions. Understanding what moves you now will significantly influence how you formulate the results you want to achieve.

It is worth reflecting on these questions. This is where the GSAP process begins.

Expectations

It may be that you have a very clear idea of the answers to the above questions. On the other hand, experience has shown that it is not immediately evident what it is that finally prompts us to take action to bring about change s.

For purpose of discussion, let's assume, whether you have a clear idea or not as to what prompted the need for change, that you have decided to do so. Moreover, let's assume you have chosen to run a *Group Strategy & Action Program* as a means of bringing about this change.

And one last assumption, let's assume that the program has been run and was the most successful program you have ever run. It exceeded all your expectations.

How would you know that it met all your expectations? What changes would have taken place that you could both measure and observe?

What would the results be and how would they look?

When you can answer these questions then you are well along the way toward creating the conditions for bringing about change. It is our experience that managers have difficulty in answering these questions. The first task in preparing to implement a GSAP is to help define the answers to these questions. The GSAP process works with what the results should look like rather than what the problem is (or appears to be).

There is a wide range of possible answers to the question of what the results should look like. The answers could be such things as:

- Build a management team capable of working together to achieve corporate objectives and reduce, or eliminate, the constant friction that characterizes the team today.
- Integrate two different systems i.e., an acquisition or merger; or combine two departments within an existing organization.
- Improve productivity by a minimum of 25% over-all.
- Develop a new business strategy and change the direction of the organization in order to compete more effectively in the market place.
- Change the culture of this organization to be more entrepreneurial and less bureaucratic.

What each of these objectives has in common is the need to bring about change. Traditionally, change has meant changing people. And this has proven to be less than successful in many if not most situations. The GSAP strategy is to change the system, and not to focus upon changing the individual.

"Managers all too often solve the problems they know how to solve, rather than the problems they actually have."

Change Without Change

The *Group Strategy & Action Program* builds upon the concept of change without change. What does this mean? It means helping individuals to bring about a change in their roles and not in their person. The Individual takes up many roles in any one day: as boss, colleague, subordinate, as spouse, parent, and as son or daughter. Each of these roles requires a different behavior. One behaves differently as a Spouse than as a Manager. We are capable of behaving differently in different situations. We can take up more than one role.

If a manager can learn to re-define his role, one can obtain swift and effective change in behavior, without the manager feeling that he has to change as a person. He is the same person behaving differently in a different role. This is change without change: a change in the role and not a change of the person.

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Resistance To Change

It is provocative and frequently self-defeating to tell managers that you are bringing them together to change them. Quite reasonably, managers, you and I, resist being changed. Moreover, beside the moral question of trying to change someone, it is neither practical nor probable. In the end individuals must make such decisions themselves.

The concept of change without change avoids the issue of changing people. Never-the-less, even changes in role should be built around organizational tasks and not be an end in themselves. It is around the achievement of the organizational goals that the GSAP helps managers to bring about a change in their role.

Managing change means changing the work system and not the individual.

Summary

The objective is :

- To achieve some definable objective which can be measured and/or observed.
- To build changes in role behavior around the accomplishment of tasks.
- To focus upon the roles and not changing people.
- To focus upon changing the organizational system and not the individual.

How Does The GSAP Work?

The *Group Strategy & Action Program* is a process; the content for this process is provided by the organization. In this sense, each GSAP is customized to deal with the issues of the organizations. No two GSAPs are ever the same.

The GSAP is a process not a philosophy. No "ideal" solutions or stereotypes are provided. Each system defines what is maximally effective for their organization. In fact, a rule of systems is that a system always reorganizes at the next higher level of effectiveness.

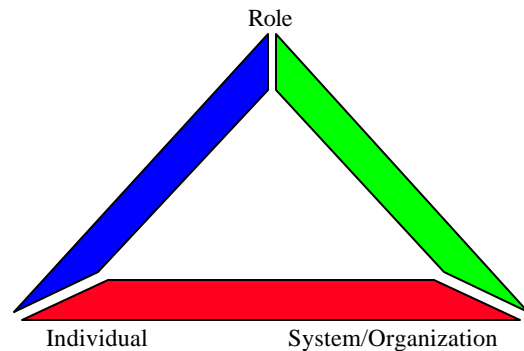
What the GSAP Is Not

- It is not an organizational study.
- It is not an excuse to observe organizational meetings or analyze individuals, or evaluate people.
- It does not use questionnaires, forms, management styles, etc.
- It is not confrontational, i.e., Sensitivity Groups, T-Groups, or an opportunity to "let it all hang out."
- It is not a "Needs Analysis."
- It does not use simulations, games or exercises.

What The GSAP Is

In the confines of a few pages, it is not possible to give the experience of the GSAP process. What can be done is to provide some understanding of what the GSAP objectives are and a brief description of the over-all process.

The GSAP deals with three issues: the Individual, the Role, and the Organization (or System):



The role is where the individual and the organization meet. The organization defines the formal role; the individual in taking up the role, defines the role through his behavior. When the individual and the organization agree, you will have a smoothly functioning organization. The degree to which the individuals' perception of the role and the organization's definition of it are out of synchronization, is the degree to which one can expect "noise" in the system.

The GSAP deals with all three issues: the Individual, the Role and the System.

The individual is dealt with in specially designed interviews.

The role and the system are dealt with in a two and a half day program. The interviews are conducted one to three weeks in advance of the program and are an integral part of the GSAP process.

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I. The Individual

Prior to the GSAP program, each individual is interviewed. Unlike most interviews, which are for the benefit of the interviewer, the GSAP interview is for the benefit of the person being interviewed.

As a result of the interview, the managers should walk away with an enhanced knowledge of the

system within which they work, and the many interconnections and relations which influence their day to day activities. In addition, managers will be able to relate their roles to the roles of others within the system, be aware of the interdependence of these roles and of the behavior as it attaches to roles.

Most important, in a successful interview, managers begin to recognize that they are part of the problem that they have with others, and in some way they actively support the problem. It is the beginning of recognizing the role they play in influencing the behavior of others. This paradoxically focuses their attention on the system and not on individuals.

The interview is a systemic interview and is structured in three parts: (The entire process takes approximately two and a half hours.)

- Task assignment
- Interview preparation
- Actual interview

II. Role and System

The GSAP is a two and a half day process which focuses upon the "Role" and the "System," culminating in the development of a strategy and action plan to deal with the identified significant issues.

The GSAP moves through a process of examination and exploration as follows:

1. Role Analysis

The role is explored through the examination of problems or issues which managers are confronted with as they take up their roles within the organization.

The problems dealt with in "Role Analysis" meet the following criteria. They are current issues which are still unresolved, which are significant, in which the manager has a stake in the outcome, and which involves others within the organization.

The process of examination called the "Role Analysis" is a structured process of exploration specifically designed for the GSAP.

As a result of the "Role Analysis," managers will have the opportunity to explore underlying issues associated with their roles and understand what might be the "real" problem as opposed to the perceived problem. All too often, managers are apt to solve the problems they know how to solve rather than the problems they are confronted with.

This permits managers to re-define their roles within the context of the problems they have to deal with and to learn how to manage themselves in their roles around the accomplishment of organization tasks and goals.

2. System Analysis

The system analysis is a unique process which provides an opportunity for the organization to examine the working system, the network of relations, and the interconnection of roles which constitute their working system.

Each of us carries in our head a kind of "mental map" which defines the way we look at and deal with issues. This map is usually unexamined, and simply evolves in our mind as we increase our experience. It is our assumption that management is ultimately in the mind. It is our ideas which determine the action we take. These ideas are largely influenced by the "mental maps" we have evolved.

This system analysis not only provides for individual examination but creates an opportunity for the system to examine itself and the way in which it functions. It is the beginning of organizational learning.

The entire management system will begin to develop not only an understanding of how things function, but how they might function. Most important, this new understanding (which we might refer to as a "mental map"), is shared by all involved. It makes it possible for the organization to begin to develop new rules, and role relations, to create a coherent, integrated system which is mutually understood and agreed upon.

3. Lecture

There is only one lecture, and this takes place on the second day. It is designed to take note of the learning and changes that are occurring and to provide a background and understanding which will increase the learning of the managers.

4. Staff Hypotheses

From the first contact with the Organization, through the interviews and the implementation the GSAP, the Staff are constantly formulating and testing hypotheses.

The Staff use these hypotheses as feedback and as an intervention into the Organizational system. The objective of the hypotheses is to help the system adjust and adapt its understanding of how it functions before developing its strategy and action plans.

5. Strategy and Action Plans

The final stage of the program is the development of strategy and action plans. These are developed on the basis of the over-all stated objective and upon the results of the program process itself.

It should be noted that the GSAP uses no simulation, game-playing, etc. but rather deals constantly with the realities of the organization. This affords the managers with an opportunity to better understand the management system, their roles and relations and the issues which they must deal with and to factor this into their strategic planning and action plans.

The strategic planning is done in sub-system groupings and then shared between and among all the sub-systems, where they are subject to review, examination and evaluation.

The last session affords the Senior Executive of the System with an opportunity to review the session, the strategies and the action plans, and to set the direction of the organization upon their return to the work setting.

6. Follow-Up

The change process is supported through regular consultations: One month later, through interviews, any necessary corrections in direction are recommended; and four months later a one day follow-up session is conducted.

Meanwhile, individual consultations, on an on-going basis, are held as needed to support individual projects.

Results

Extensive experience with the implementation of the GSAP in over a hundred organizations has demonstrated that measurable and observable changes will normally take place within a one to two months time frame and continue progressively, depending upon the nature of the issue at hand.

For further information :

Borwick International, Inc

New York Office
Tel. 212 664 0295
Fax 212 957-0954
Borwick International, Inc
146 West 57th Street
Suite 68/69 D
New York, NY 10019

OR

Brussels Office
Tel. (32.2) 535.7547
Fax (32.2.) 535.7575
Borwick International, Inc.
149/24 Ave Louise
1050 Brussels
Belgium

EMail: Irving@Borwick.biz
www. Borwick.biz

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