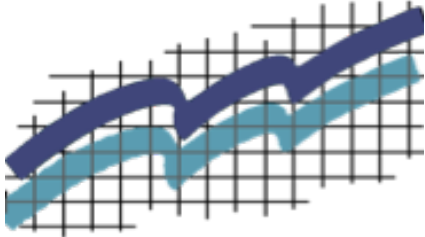


# Marilyn Manning and The Consulting Team's Leadership Tips



## NOTE FROM THE CONSULTING TEAM

Training, well planned and executed, resolves many workplace issues. And the conditions and culture of any organization can affect those results. The Consulting Team works with clients to ensure ripe conditions for training effectiveness. The work environment beyond the training room is the subject of this issue of Leadership Tips.

We present an interview with one of our team, new member Dr. Jerry L. Talley, to explore this subject. Many readers may remember articles in last year's Leadership Tips that featured Dr. Talley's study of the effects the economic downturn on the workplace. In this interview The Consulting Team offers you useful tools to ensure the best methods to apply to support continuing excellence for your organization.

Visit page 3 for our list of consulting services that help you to meet the challenges in today's work place.

Warm regards,

Marilyn

• (650) 965-3663

## To Train or Not to Train

### *That is the Question*

*A Leadership Tips interview with Dr. Jerry L. Talley supplies some answers.*

Leadership Tips: You're not a trainer or course developer; however, you have definite ideas about training, especially when not to train. Where do they come from?

Dr. Talley: For 30 years I've worked with many different organizations for strategic planning, assessments, governance, and leadership development. I helped them solve complex problems. Too often I've seen leaders choose training as the solution when the issue was not a lack of skills. I'm not opposed to training, only to training as a habitual reaction to organizational stress. It's optimistic to expect all new-hires to have the skills they need to do well. So, it makes sense to review skills and provide needed training. It's also optimistic to expect any performance problem to be fixed by training alone. Maybe an organization's values undermine its potential or its culture is at odds with its priorities. Different work groups can hinder information flow and decision-making.

Leadership Tips: Please share some examples.

Dr. Talley: Sure, suppose complaints about meetings cause a leader to decide that meeting management training is needed. The organization attends a program on building agendas, selecting participants, managing conflict, group decision-making, and follow-up. This seems reasonable. But afterward meetings don't improve. It happens the culture values double-booking meetings, so meetings are still poorly attended. Or management expects rapid email responses, so people monitor their iPhones and Blackberrys in meetings. Maybe the high value placed on individual accountability undercuts cooperation, so people defend personal agendas, rather than coordinating efforts. Another example is a Silicon Valley company that implemented new project management protocols. It trained people on the new system, then found that "work-arounds" and "exceptions" quickly became the standard. New regulations were referred to as "suggestions," then were ignored. The protocols faded away despite the training.

Leadership Tips: And what do you take from these examples?

Dr. Talley: Training may be inadequate to address a problem. The lesson is to determine if other dynamics are more powerful than skills, or are interfering in learning new behaviors.



Hamlet questions modern business practices (photo from Wikipedia)

*Continued on the next page*

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Leadership Tips: How do we find these other dynamics?

Dr. Talley: There's a 4-Step method, called *High Speed System Improvement*, that defines training needs, as well as problems in culture, work processes,

and structures, and leadership style. In step 1 key players meet to build a macro work map of the organization.

The map should capture 10-30 key work processes, without regard to departments or staffing, and be recognizable to employees. This step uses employee participation, with the goal being to build a shared awareness of the bigger picture.

Leadership Tips: After the macro map, what's next?

Dr. Talley: In step 2 we present and test the map at an all-hands meeting. Everyone should be able to find their typical workday, even spread across many work processes. Then we ask all employees to respond to a short survey for each work process. The questions are the same; employees can choose which processes they want to answer in the survey. The topics include product and service quality, the quality of worker interactions, examples of best and worst performance, and the survey taker's role in the process. The survey could also include other relevant organization issues. In step 3 we analyze the data. We color-code the macro map to summarize the findings.

Leadership Tips: Besides the color-coding, what more can be gleaned from this rich data?

Dr. Talley: The goal in Step 4 is here to funnel the data into employee discussions. Leaders can convene the all-hands group to review the colored map, ideally large enough to cover a wall. Leave room for people to write on the chart, with many at the chart at one time. The graphic is more than a communications strategy. It's powerful to have employees stand shoulder-to-shoulder, working on an issue, rather than sitting around the typical U-shaped table, voicing their concerns.

Leadership Tips: What comes from these discussions?

Dr. Talley: Here are some possible outcomes:

- Several work processes show a common

problem, like "conflict" or "need more innovation." This might be a training need for a useful skill for several work processes.

- One work process may have several problems, e.g. lack of resources and poor quality. This may be improved by a process re-design.
- In a process crossing numerous departments, hand-offs are a frequent source of problems. This might be addressed through a more careful design of the hand-offs.
- Several processes reveal cultural issues, e.g. an unwritten rule, "don't bring problems to management without solutions," so problems are left to grow before key people notice. These issues may surface in training, as people learn to talk openly about the work culture or managers practice listening skills and how to act on comments from the front line.

Leadership Tips: Any last thoughts?

Dr. Talley: There are the 2 key outcomes from this method. First, we have a picture of the organization, which supports thinking about the whole, not just the parts. Second, the organization has engaged employees to think together about their work environment. Thus, decisions about where to focus or what to pursue have broader support. Change efforts (including training) can come FROM employees rather than being targeted AT employees.

## Tools of the Trade: High Speed System Improvement

**Step 1:** Key players build the organization's macro work map

**Step 2:** Test map at all-hands meeting; survey employees on work processes

**Step 3:** Analyze survey data; color-code macro work map

**Step 4:** Reconvene all-hands group to review colored map & work issues

# The Consulting Team's Latest Service Offerings

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- ✓ Facilitating High Speed System Improvement
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Appreciative Inquiry is a process that focuses on what's working vs. what's wrong. It offers a powerful technique to both managers and staff with its fresh, positive approach to problem solving. Learn to apply this process to support effective change, open communication, and positive morale, even in a challenging environment.

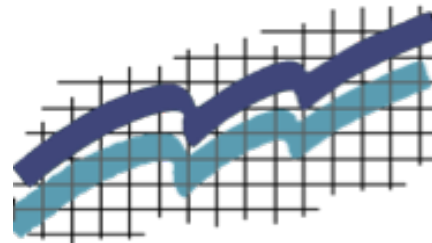
### *Communicating Strategic Change: Building an Effective Communications Plan*

Is your strategic plan gathering dust on the shelf? Does workgroup resistance stall your progress? It may be that you need to communicate it more effectively. This course provides tools to plan strategic communication and practices to build communication skills. Learn how to identify your audience and their needs, how to manage and overcome resistance, and the basics of verbal and written communications needed to meet your strategic plan goals.

## About Leadership Tips:

Leadership Tips is a periodic newsletter to help deal with the difficult issues in today's busy and hectic work environment. To see past Leadership Tips go to [www.theconsultingteam.com](http://www.theconsultingteam.com) and select Newsletters

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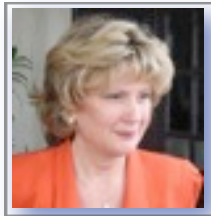
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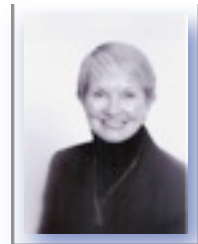
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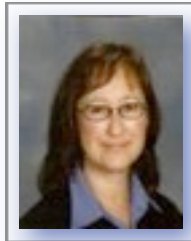
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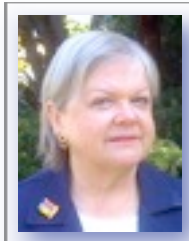
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## ***Jerry Talley***

For the last 30 years Jerry Talley, Ph.D., has helped organizations unravel intractable organizational problems that compromised their performance and quality of work life. After 15 years on Stanford's Department of Sociology faculty, Jerry began organizational development consulting, including sophisticated assessment services to over 250 private, public, and not-for-profit companies. His clients have been in the fields of high tech, pharmaceuticals, hospitals and health care, banking and finance, commercial construction, the military, manufacturing, consulting firms, public utilities, city and county agencies, publishing, hospitality, entertainment and broadcasting, and retail.

His special focus is on advanced problem solving. Based on his experience as a consultant and therapist, he has developed a model for dissecting the worst organizational challenges into manageable steps. The model is based on the finding that there are only six types of problems in the world. The first step in any successful solution is to clarify the *type* of problem involved before crafting effective interventions.

After years of work with interviews, observations, surveys, and focus groups, Jerry has developed tools for fully engaging employees in change efforts. This not only leverages the collective wisdom of those closest to the issues, it ensures smoother implementation, since his process secures involvement and buy-in from the start.

Jerry also founded and ran the South Bay Organization Development Network for 16 years. This professional support group explores models, cases, and discussions of almost 1,000 organization development, training, and human resource professionals in the Bay Area.