Chapter 11 – Robert L. Sandidge and Anne C. Ward

REFRAMING

The meaning of any situation or of any set of circumstances is found in the frame within which we view it. One of our favorite old stories is one based on the simplest question of frames: When something happens, is it good, or is it bad? The story goes like this:

A Russian farmer in the 1800s was out plowing his fields one spring day and, as he unhooked the plow from his horse, his horse leaped and galloped out of his fields and into the forest. The man walked back to the village that evening and told of the event. His friends and neighbors gathered around him and exclaimed about his misfortune, saying what an unlucky day this was for him. The man said only, "You never know."

Not more than two weeks later, the man and his son were out slowly plowing the spring fields by themselves, when the farmer's horse trotted back into the field along with another horse, a wild horse. When the farmer and his son arrived in the village at the end of the day, riding one horse and leading the second horse, all of their friends and neighbors gathered around them and talked about how fortunate is was that their horse went into the wild, because now they had two horses on the farm. Once again, the thoughtful farmer said only, "You never know."

Several days later, the farmer's son broke his leg when he was thrown from the wild horse while trying to break it in and train it for farm work. That night, the villagers cursed the unfortunate day that the wild horse came to the farm. The farmer said, "You never know."

Not long after, the entire village shook when the Cossacks came roaring across the plain, going from house to house, and conscripting every man of fighting age into service until they came to the farmer's home, where they left his son with his family because of his broken leg. That night, a mourning village came together to console themselves and each other and to tell the farmer how lucky he was that the wild horse had broken his son's leg. The farmer looked at all of his neighbors and said only, "You never know."

The villagers in the story were very quick to place meaning on every event, to interpret it, and place it in the scheme of things past and future. The "frame" of meaning through which they gazed let them know how they were to feel, what was to be done next, and what to watch out for in the future. The farmer in the story saw life and circumstances through a very different lens. He extracted no meaning from events and went from event to event, from moment to moment, giving what was called for and taking what was given.

Reframing takes the same situation and the same circumstances and then gives those "facts" a different meaning. This different meaning allows us to take a different approach and gives us new possibilities for the action that we might take and the responses we might make.

REFRAMING EXPLAINED

Reframing is about changing perception by understanding something in another way. Bandler and Grinder explained reframing in the following manner:

What reframing does is to say, Look, this external thing occurs and it elicits this response in you, so you assume that you know what the meaning is. But if you thought about it this other way, then you would have a different response. Being able to think about things in a variety of ways builds a spectrum of understanding. None of these ways are 'really' true, though. They are simply statements about a person's understanding. (1982, p. 43)

BASIC TYPES OF REFRAMING

There are two basic kinds of reframes: context reframing and content reframing. Both can alter our internal representations of events or situations, which permits us to experience the events in other, hopefully, more resourceful ways.

CONTEXT REFRAMING

Bandler and Grinder noted that "every experience in the world and every behavior is appropriate, given some context, some frame" (1982,p.9) *Context reframing* offers an understanding of how we make meaning through the environment – physical, intellectual, cultural, historical, and emotional – in which a situation occurs. It can also provide a pattern of thinking that helps us see the value in every situation regardless of any perceived downside.

Context reframing is taking an experience that seems to be negative, not useful, and distressing and showing how the same behavior or experience can be useful in another context. Children's stories are full of reframes designed to show children how what might seem a liability can be useful in another context. For example, the other reindeer made fun of Rudolph's bright, red nose; but that funny nose made Rudolph the hero on a dark night.

Context reframing can be used as a "perceptual filter," taught and practiced until it becomes an integral and habitual way of organizational thinking. It is a very useful tool in business as it is the way of thinking that gives one the ability to make lemonade from those unexpected (and unwanted) lemons. Creativity, new visions, innovations are commonplace for those who know to reframe and recontextualize problems and obstacles into opportunities and resources. The following stories are prime examples of this ability to reframe and recontextualize.

An Executive Director at a human service agency was looking for inexpensive raw materials to make dried flower arrangements for the agency gift shop. He called up the local funeral parlors and asked what they did with flowers after the funerals. As expected, the funeral parlors disposed of the flowers. The parlors agreed to give the agency the flowers at no cots. The agency transforms the flowers into beautiful arrangements to sell in the agency gift shop at a good profit. Throwing away dead flowers many not seem like an opportunity to many, but when you can reframe them into another context, you have created free raw materials.

Safety-Kleen in Elgin, Illinois was one of the fastest growing and most successful companies in the mid 1970s and 1980s. Its founder noticed that garages threw out the oil when they made oil change. It was not only a bad ecological practice it was wasteful. What other use could there be for used motor oil? The management of Safety-Kleen answered that question. Waste oil could be used in asphalt and other oil based building materials. It also could be cleaned and recycled. Safety-Kleen built a multi-million dollar business by putting out a fleet to pick up used oil. They were one of the first to collect the used oil and resell it; they also charge the operator for the service.

Viewing organizations, individuals, and the world with reframing tools opens us to potential rather than locking us into our perceived limits. An entrepreneur is fundamentally an expert reframer – that is, he or she is someone who can add value to resources and convert them into wealth.

Content Reframing

The second type of reframing is content reframing. *Content reframing* is simply changing the meaning of a situation – that is, the situation or behavior stays the same, but the meaning is changed. For instance, a famous army general reframed a distressful situation for his troops by telling them that "We're not retreating, we're just advancing in another direction." Another example is the reframing of death. Death is a life event that has different meaning in different cultures, and even many individuals deal with this event in vastly different ways. Some are forever grieving the loss, whereas others are joyous at the now eternal presence of the person's spirit. In other words, different people attach very different meaning and interpretations to the concept of death.

REFRAMING AS A COMMUNICATION SKILL

Bandler and Grinder noted that "as a communicator you want to have the ability to shift the frames that people put around anything" (1982, p. 33). Learning to reframe is essential in learning to effectively communicate with others and even with ourselves. In every field of endeavor, it is the person who sets the frame who defines the playing field, and, therefore the scope of the "game" to be played. The framer defines the focus of attention and sets the frames that define the presuppositions of the activity or conversation.

In politics, professionals who specialize in setting frames and in reframing situations are called spin doctors. Although this group may need to do a little "spinning" to gain a better perception of what they are saying, what they are doing is not new; it just has been given a name. Politics, marketing, sales, and effective communication of any type is about perception not about any objective truth. For example, you may recall the age issue raised when Ronald Reagan ran against Walter Mondale. In a television debate, Mondale made a comment that implied Reagan's age was an issue. Reagan replied that he did not think age should be an issue and that he had no intention of making a issue of his opponent's youth and inexperience. In that one comment, he totally reframed the question in a way that made sure that it would not be a major factor in the race.

This ability to reconceptualize and reframe concepts so that others alter their own perceptions is a concept prevalent in marketing. Reis and Trout (1981) explored the concept in their now-classic marketing book called *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*. In a more recent book by Mr. Trout defined *positioning* as "not what you do to the product, but what you do to the *mind - t*he ultimate marketing battleground is the mind, and the better you understand how the mind works, the better you'll understand how positioning works." (1995 p. ix, italics in original). Trout identifed two basic types of organizations with problems: those that have lost their focus and those that have lost touch with the marketplace. In both cases, he prescribed "repositioning" as the answer.

Losing focus and losing touch with the marketplace are problems that confuse the customer's perception of a company. In the first case, the market does not know what the company does. And in the second case, being out of touch with a changing world leaves the company positioned to fill needs that no longer exist. In both cases, repositioning requires redefining the company's purpose, what it is doing, and how it is being perceived. Organizations should remember that it is perception that motivates behavior, nothing else. Reframing, which is accomplished through communication, is a tool for changing perception.

Learning to Communicate

Reframing starts by recognizing how each of us processes our experiences. Reframing is not just a pattern to apply to the world "out there" but needs to be a resident program in our mental operating system. We tend to accept our perceptions at face value and use reasons like "that's just the way I am" as rationale for continuing to proceed with the same thought patterns.

To overcome our reluctance to challenge our perceptions, the personal challenge is to learn to communicate with ourselves with all the purpose, direction, and persuasiveness that we offer in a business presentation. How we think, or the structure of our thinking, affects the content in the same way that how we drive affects the safety and security of our passengers. In practice, reframing is widely used in the therapeutic context. When a counselor asks a client to "see it another way" or "think about it differently," he or she is attempting to reframe events to get him or her to see the problem in another light.

THEORY AND PRACTICE FOR INDIVIDUAL REFRAMING

Reframing is a key to the puzzle of self-fulfilling prophecies - the concept that your beliefs tend to unconsciously manifest themselves in your actions and decisions. Self-fulfilling prophecies have been called the Pygmalion effect from a play that later became *My Fair Lady*. In the play, Professor Henry Higgins won a wager that nurture was more powerful than nature. He trained a commoner, Eliza Doolittle, to have the manner and speech of a woman of the upper class. The story demonstrates that our self-perceptions, or who it is we learn to think we are, is a primary determinant in how we will fare in life. There is story after story about class room experiments in which teachers were told that a group of randomly chosen students were

gifted and that another random group were slow; sure enough, at the end of the experiment, students tested just that way.

Perceptions define our experience. Meaning is created in our brains from our experiences. Behavior is given meaning based on what we learned the behavior meant in the past. We have a past frame into which we fit current behavior in order to identify and understand it. The understanding comes not from the behavior itself but from the particular frame through which we chose to view it. Each of us perceives the world as it is filtered into our awareness through our frames of perceptions. Thus, each of us experiences and finds different and unique meaning in our world.

Reframing, then, is expanding our own or others' perceptions by providing a new frame through which to view a life situation. What is a disastrous problem for someone is a challenging growth opportunity for another. Victor Frankl (1963) who survived Nazi Concentration camp, recounted that although most of his fellow inmates lost hope and subsequently died, Frankl kept hope and planned for the lectures he would give after his release. In his own mind, he turned a potentially hopeless situation into a source of rich experiences that he could use to help others overcome hopeless situations. Fortunately, we do not have to be in such dire circumstances for reframing to be useful. Every moment of every day, there is opportunity to see things in another way. To see them through another frame of perception can give us hope and a better perspective of ourselves and others.

A major implication of this concept is that there are no correct or right frames of perceptions. There are only useful frames and not so useful frames depending on the particular context. A useful reframe is to understand that all perceptions are useful in some context. Given that, you can always ask yourself or someone else, "where would this perception be useful, or where would it make sense?"

Reframing in Practice
Celebrated medical hypnotherapist, Milton H. Erickson, M.D., mastered reframing in a therapeutic setting. (Rosen, 1982). When an individual would come to him with a problem such as procrastination, Erickson would immediately congratulate him and declare the client an expert on procrastination. He would then enlist the person to teach him how to become a master Procrastinator. By reframing what was perceived as a lifelong liability into a skill, Erickson helped each individual see this former liability as a positive attribute and an ability to be valued and used in the appropriate contexts. The person then could view his or her behavior not as something to avoid or get rid of but as a resource that has value when used appropriately. Two possible contexts in which procrastination could be useful are postponing dessert when dieting or delaying the expression of rage when angry. This ownership and mastery of, in this example, procrastination, gives the individual options to choose to use this skill in an appropriate context.

The ability to reframe virtually any issue into a positive attribute establishes an atmosphere of acceptance and cooperation rather than one of "expert and subject." Genuinely accepting every person's ideas, attitudes, and behaviors as positive and useful is to open ones own perceptions to the potential rather than the limitations of any situation.

Seligman (1990) noted that people who were more realistic (i.e., less optimistic) were accurate in their assessments of objective reality but were less happy and did not live as long as people who chose to be optimistic. Often people who are great optimistic reframers are discredited as being Pollyannas and criticized for being naïve. While the accusations may be "true" in a sense, it would appear the Pollyanna and naïve perceptions are actually more life-sustaining than those of the realist.

Reframing is more than a technique to resolve a difficulty. Reframing is an operating system for the organism. Once it becomes a habit, the whole world and everyone in it are seen in terms of "what is right" rather than "what is wrong." This is a fundamental shift in our cultural paradigm in that we are encouraged and rewarded to be problem-solvers from an early age. American culture gives great accolades and much money to those who can solve the big problems. We learn to measure our self-worth in terms of our ability to solve problems. Seeing oneself through the filters of being a problem solver sets one's perceptual filters to "scan for problems." Life is then seen primarily as a source of problems being served up so that we can maintain our status as master problem solver. Problem solving is a dominant theme in schools,

psychotherapy, management, and counseling. We continue our fascination with problems although we know that success is what creates success. Success stimulates success in persons and in organizations. Yet, we spend much of our personal and organizational time looking through the frame of "problem elimination or solution." How many of us as children learned that we got more attention from adults when we brought them a problem to solve? How many of us carry this unconscious pattern into everything we do today? Management consultants, managers, and employees often see their roles as problem solvers. This orientation can hide from us the small successes that if noticed and nurtured, can lead to a creative spirit of continuous improvement and success. An individual attitude of reframing problems into potential and opportunity is more than just "sleight of mind." It is literally a way to change the perceptions of ourselves, those we serve, and the organizations we lead.

THE QUALITY REVOLUTION AS A REFRAME IN BUSINESS

The total quality management movement in business was a major, across-the-board reframe. It affected the ways that businesses thought about every important relationship, from relationships with customers, to relationships with suppliers and employees. One of the primary changes brought about by the quality revolution was in the relationships between companies and their employees.

An example of a new covenant between employer and employee comes from Jack Stack of Springfield Remanufacturing. Stack (1992) explained that he shares all of Springfield's production and profit numbers with every person in the plant and in the office. He even offers classes to his employees to teach them what every number means and how the financial reporting process works. This is a massive reframe in a business world that still tends to operate on a "need to know" basis. Since Stack started opening his books to his employees, Springfield's sales have soared, as have profits. Employee turnover is extremely low, whereas employees hold themselves and each other to the highest of standards. Stack wrote that

> We have a company filled with people who not only are owners, but who think and act like owners rather than employees. ... Owners, real owners, do not have to be told what to do - they can figure it out for themselves. They have all the knowledge, understanding, and information they need to make a decision, and they have the motivation and the will to act fast. (1992, pp. 15-16)

All employees want to find meaning in their work. If managers act as if this "frame" were true and if they hold it as part of their covenant with employees, then how will they think differently about what information they share with associates and team members? How will managers help employees to organize their work? What demands will managers make of their teams and of themselves to uphold the values that they have chosen to be the nonnegotiable elements in the organizations. How will managers go about choosing team members - our partners in service?

One of the most important reframes in the quality revolution is the definition of quality itself. The new definition is simple: *Quality* is what the customer says it is. Looking through this lens has been a big change for many enterprises. Moreover, the new ways of thinking continue to take on new frames as companies reckon with the challenges presented by the quality movement. Roles have shifted. Companies, in the demand for defect-free products, increasingly have started demanding the same of their suppliers. An organization committed to delivering the highest quality service or product needs to align itself with supplier companies and individuals who share this dedication to high-quality standards. This has led to more long-term relationships between customers and suppliers. Demming noted that,"in long-term relationships both supplier and customer have a chance to learn from each other" (in latzko & Saunders, 1995, p. 58). In this context, an organization's relationship with its suppliers is similar to the organization's relationship with its end-use customers. In other words, a firm that establishes a long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with suppliers is more likely to maintain consistently high quality.

And, if all of this information about quality and the changes it has wrought in business make us start to wonder about the cost of this reframe, Philip Crosby (1979) suggested that we think about that in another

way, too. He reframes the entire nature of the cost of quality in the title of his seminal book, *Quality is Free*.

MAJOR REFRAMES IN THE FIELD OF HUMAN SERVICES
How we think about what is most important in our work with people with disabilities are the frames that determine what values we espouse, what we choose to do, what we choose to learn. These frames have been changing significantly in almost every area of human services. For example, we heard a professional in the field of developmental disabilities offer, by way of definition of the disability, "What we know is that these people learn more slowly." This frames the entire nature of developmental disabilities as well as the definition of learning, the process of learning, and therefore, the nature of our work with people "who learn more slowly." How will we know if our work is successful? Using this professional's definition, we will watch for evidence of change, no matter how small, no matter how long it takes. We will watch for evidence of learning, and so we may pay more attention to what is to be learned and therefore, what we will teach. Within this definition, our roles are primarily as teachers and facilitators for those we support as learners. We are the links between the world, the entire environment, and those who are learning more slowly to more fully join in that world. Our roles shift slightly from being primarily providers of care to teachers. This definition affects what we will choose to learn ourselves.

The Reframe of Person-Centered Planning
If we assume the roles of teachers and facilitators, what is it that we are to teach, and what is that we are to learn? This is where the new frames of person-centered planning and the theory and practice of outcomes chosen by each individual become important. When we have the concept of a "learner," it becomes important to know what it is that the learner wants to learn so that we can provide the necessary experiences and facilitate his or her interactions with the environment. Only when we have this information can we teach what the learner wants to learn, and therefore, help individuals move toward those outcomes that they have chosen as the most important in their lives.

        In this frame, we reframe the past in terms of what we did not yet know. We reframe the future in terms of what we choose to learn and the goals we set. The present is for providing experiences that will give us the opportunity to learn in order to move toward important outcomes. The past nor the future is who we are. This is an empowering reframe because no matter where we find ourselves, we will always determine what is to be learned right here, right now. And we will go about setting goals for ourselves and designing learning experiments.

New Frames for Thinking about Environment
If we think of the immediate environment around a person as a "container" of that person, we must immediately recognize that the container we provide for persons with developmental disabilities is one we are constantly attempting to grow and enlarge. This container - a known environment - is the place in which a person has the most safety, the most familiarity, can move with ease, has the most defined choices, knows the expectations of the environment and the people in it. Within this container, he or she can adjust expectations accordingly, with some real knowledge of cause and effect.

        The concept of enlarging this space around a person with a disability is a major reframe. Knowing that the larger the container, the less predictable the environment, society historically has attempted to further and further restrict and constrict the containers provided for persons with all types of disabilities. This is where the importance and the complexity of increased choice become apparent. The larger the container in which we live, the more choices we will be called on to make for ourselves. The larger the container, the more personal responsibility. The larger the container, the more information about choices is required. The container also must be large enough container to allow for some real self-expression. Yet we must actually have a boundary to the container – the security of a known space – to have the comfort of ritual and the comfort of expectations that we can assume will be met.

The reframe here – that is, the change in mindset - is one of quality of life as opposed to the safety of imposed restriction. Just trying on this mindset, to the extent that it is different, will change our thinking, which will tend to change our behavior.

THEORY AND PRACTICE FOR ORGANIZATIONAL REFRAMING

Covey (1989) uses the concept of a paradigm to explain how the way we see a situation and how we interpret its meaning, determines our possible choices of response. Covey would give a drawing to participants in workshops that, depending on how one looks at it, can be a drawing of either a very young, smartly dressed woman, or of a very old, haggard woman. He has his students write stories about the woman in the drawing and has the participants share their stories with each other. Students who saw the old woman in the drawing are in shock and disbelief when they hear stories about the young woman in the picture. Each group wonders about the sanity and sensory acuity of the other group. The perceptions of each group are so firm by the time they invent their stories that it takes a long time for each group to demonstrate to the other group that their eyes are seeing an accurate picture. Each section of the drawing must be explained in terms of the picture they are seeing until the other group suddenly cries out, "Oh! I see her now." The lines, the shadows on the page, had not changed, but only through reframing is each participant able to see two distinctly different pictures in those lines and shadows.

How an organization interprets the meaning of a situation will determine its choices and responses. Schwarz and Volgy (1985) challenged (and reframed) the meaning that the Reagan Administration put on the economic difficulties of the early 1980s. The authors used the analogy of a patient who was experiencing symptoms of the heart and respiratory system. These symptoms might indicate that the patient was having a heart attack. If that were the case, the patient would need immediate, drastic measures in order to pull through. They used this interpretation to explain the drastic, rather painful, measures of supply-side economics that the Reagan economists were proposing.

Schwarz and Volgy (1985) then took the exact same heart and respiratory symptoms and explained them as the symptoms of a person who was in the last half mile of a marathon race. The marathon runner had been taxing his physical systems in order to finish a highly unusual event that required great strength and stamina. Moreover, although the runner had used up all reserves in his physical system, the recommendation to the runner would be to rest for a period and then start building reserves again. If the symptoms of the runner were confused with those of a heart attack victim, the measures taken by doctors would either kill the runner or seriously damage his health.

The authors then went on to argue that the economy had just run a marathon, that it had demonstrated its strength and stamina in a difficult time, and that it was now time to rest and build reserves; it was not a time to take drastic measures in an experiment to find out what would "trickle down" to those who had already been called on to give their all and who had given it faithfully.

Analogies and metaphors can be useful tools in the challenge to see a business situation in a new way, through a new lens. Take the common example of interdepartmental strife. Imagine a situation in which accusations, mutual blaming, and miscommunication in a growing organization are escalating into a situation that could affect the quality of customer care. It can be useful to try on several different frames as a way of both gathering information and generating potential possibilities for intervention. One might look at such a situation through a number of lenses, such as family systems, complexity or self-organizing system, organizational structure, and time and space.

Family Systems

If we look at a situation through a family-system theory lens, we might gather information by asking the following questions:

❖ *Triangulation:* Is there a pattern of people drawing others into their interpersonal (or interdepartmental) conflicts? Is there a tendency to encourage people to take sides?

❖ *Distance:* is communication between people in the departments becoming less frequent? Has communication been cut off altogether?
❖ *Over-focus:* How much organizational energy is focused (unproductively) on this particular conflict? What effect is this intense focus of attention having on other parts of the organization? On the conflict itself?

Complexity of Self-Organizing Systems

In 1992, Margaret Wheatley brought the new scientific theories of chaos and complexity into the world of business when she wrote *Leadership and the New Science*. Wheatley wrote about the nature of self-organizing systems in which

Small, local disturbances are not suppressed; there is no central command control that prohibits small, constant changes. The system allows for many levels of autonomy within itself, and for small fluctuations and changes. By tolerating these, it is able to preserve its global stability and integrity in the environment. (1992, p. 95)

In light of this lens, or interpretation, we might bring the non-cooperating departments together, make sure it is clearly understood that organizational values will be upheld; ensure that quality of care and service will be held to our highest standards; and then make resources of time, space, trust, and leadership available to both departments. We also would expect them to reorganize themselves in order to better serve both their customers and the overall organizational values.

Organizational Values and Goals

In viewing a conflict through an organization's values and goals, managers can ask the following questons:

- What is really most important in the organization — being right or meeting outcomes?
- To which organizational values could the conflict be giving voice?
- Does everyone involved know what the organizational values are? How do they know?

Intentions and Expectations

To ascertain the employees' intentions and expectations, managers can ask the following:
- What are the deeper intentions and expectations?
- What skills are required in order to meet those intentions and expectations?

Organizational structure

A manager who views departmental conflict through an organizational structure lens might ask these questions:
- How does the current organizational structure foster the conflict?
- How is power being used in the conflict?
- Where is the organization's energy going? What is getting lost in the conflict? How can it be found again?

Time and Space

Changing the context of a situation often changes its meaning, which changes expectations, imagined possibilities, and choices of behavior. One way to change context is to expand, contract, or in some other way change the time and space within which a situation unfolds. A manger who views interdepartmental conflict through the lenses of changing time and space could explore conflict resolution options in the following ways:

- ❖ *Change the context.* Imagine that the conflict continues to escalate over the next year. What will it be like a year from now?
- ❖ *Imagine that the conflict has been solved* and that communication throughout the entire organization has improved as a result of steps taken and information generated. How did that happen? What was necessary?

Schwartz (1991) discussed the ability to try on different ways of making meaning by shifting time. He takes teams through a process of imagining what changing circumstances might mean. As the groups develop their stories of what they think will happen because of what is currently happening, they determine the best course of action based on that interpretation. Schwartz then has them put that one interpretation aside, take the same set of circumstances, apply a completely different meaning, and develop an appropriate course of action based on the new meaning given the same circumstances. The result of this kind of thinking and rethinking is a greatly increased ability on the part of team members to be able to see multiple potential interpretations of circumstances with which they are presented; and they develop a deeper wisdom about possible choices.

REFRAMING AND SYSTEMS THINKING
Systems thinking is described by Senge:

> Business and other human endeavors are ... systems. They ... are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions, which often take years to fully play out their effects on each other. Since we are part of that lacework ourselves, it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern of change. ... Systems thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively. (1990, p. 7)

Senge introduced a tool for diagramming systems that shows cause and effect, as a way to "see" what is actually happening graphically (i.e., how the elements of a system are related). This allows us to "step back" and see the situation portrayed outside of ourselves so that we can more objectively move things around, play with the variables, make predictions. Any method we use that gives us more objectivity will help us to get out of our frames of meaning and, therefore, to have more choices with which to experiment.

We invite consultants into our organizations in the hope that they will help us see our situation in new ways. Consultants can do this precisely because they are not deeply or historically involved I the organization. They tend to see in terms of patterns. Because they are detached from the organization, consultants are often able to discuss organizational patterns in objective terms. This, in turn, can teach the members of the organization to reframe their thinking into more objective language. An experienced consultant is also likely to have seen and worked with similar organizational patterns before, and we expect him or her to help the organization change frames with confidence.

Leadership and Management Issues
A frame's usefulness can be evaluated by the following seven objective variables: inclusiveness, connection to organizational values, positive focus, systemic in nature, uses strengths over weaknesses, emphasizes learning and possibility over failure or impossibility, and the new frame fits the mindset of the organization and participants.

   Inclusiveness A useful frame will tend to be more inclusive. This viewpoint will be able to incorporate many different, perhaps even disparate ideas. Helgesen (1995) offered a major reframe of the way organizations are organized. She contrasted architecture of a web with the typical hierarchical structures of many organizations. She said that "The 'dynamic connectedness' of the web means that web organizations reflect organic rather than mechanical principles; that is, *they work in the same way life does*" (1995, p. 16, italics in original).

Connected to Organizational Values Organizational values can be fully supported by the most useful frames. These frames will tend to allow the most long-term thinking that will actually carry the organization's values through time.

Positive Focus The most useful frames will be positive in focus and in language. Goals framed in terms of where we want to go are more achievable than those framed in terms of what we do not want to happen. Robbins noted that "reframing in its simplest form is changing a negative statement into a positive one by changing the frame of reference used to perceive the experience" (1986, p. 293).

Systemic in Nature Frames fit not just one part of the organization but the organization as a whole. The frame takes into account the systemic nature of all decisions through time. Making use of systems diagramming is often helpful in determining the through-time effect of a way of thinking.

Makes Use of Strengths Over Weaknesses As Clifton and Nelson stated, "The greatest chance for success lies in reminding people or organizations of an existing strength, and getting them back on track while instituting a management strategy for the weaknesses" (1992, p. 17)

Emphasizes Learning and Possibility over Failure or Impossibility The concept of organizational learning is an empowering one. In fact, reframing "failure" into "learning" allows us to use the concept of continuous feedback and continuous learning while we make our way toward our goals and outcomes and strive to take our organizational values into the world. Kouzes and Posner (1993) had this to say about the importance of learning and leadership: "Developing capacity requires that leaders provide a climate conducive to learning. ... A prime requirement for people to be capable of learning — able to change and develop new skills - is an environment in which they feel safe. They must be able to trust the system and the people involved" (p. 168). Developing good feedback systems for continuous learning is one of the prime responsibilities of leadership.

The New Frame Fits the Mindset of the Organization and Participants
Senge introduced the notion of "mental models" and noted that

> One thing all manager know is that many of the best ideas never get put into practice… We are coming increasingly to believe that this 'slip 'twixt cup and lip' stems, not from weak intentions, wavering will, or even non-systemic understanding, but from mental models. More specifically, new insights fail to get put into practice because they conflict with deeply held internal images of how the world works, images that limit us to familiar ways of thinking and acting. That is why the discipline of managing mental models -- surfacing, testing, and improving our internal pictures of how the world works -- promises to be a major breakthrough for building learning organizations. (1990, p. 174).

Reframing is a leadership and organizational skill that will go further than any other in allowing us to change mental models and to share useful mental models. In order to do this, the person or group attempting to reframe a situation must have a deep understanding of the current mental models in practice.

Reframing In Practice - Encountering Difference

Difference of opinion is difference in models. A difference in models produces a difference in framing and perceived or projected meaning on a given situation. In field of disabilities there are many different mental models in practice. To understand what frames others are using and how they are making sense of the world through those frames, it is useful to examine and understand the prevalent models in the field. (see Table 11.1). It is not surprising, then, that how one frames disabilities has everything to do with how he or she responds both personally and professionally. The frame influences the thinking in every aspect of approaching the person with a disability, and it affects all the systems and surroundings. Each frame offers a different view of the nature and source of the problem, evidence procedures, impact of the problem on the individual, solutions sought, and strategies employed.

In Daniel's (1991) model, the individual defect paradigm frames the desired outcomes in terms of improved functional capacity, return to work, and improved personal adjustment. The focus is on fixing the individual. The community an social unit paradigm places value on stronger relationships, fuller life for all citizens, and community ownership of problems and solutions. The focus is on building community and family capacity to support people with disabilities. The technology/ecology frame uses filters to enhance individual choice and control through the use of technology. Access to information and technology is key to self-determination. The individual rights paradigm frames the rights and responsibilities of full citizenship. Disability is viewed in the frame of an ongoing civil rights struggle.

Each frame has it's own language, cultural heroes, and advocates. It is easy to see that each paradigm or cluster of ideas puts a different frame and shows a different picture of the same situation. Each view is not necessarily right or wrong, just a different point of view that is typically used by the advocates to sway public thinking and support their way.

Table 11.1 Frames of reference	Focus of Paradigm
Individual Defect Paradigm	The Patient, the client, person with the disability
Community and Social Unit	The family, community, service system decision makers.
Technology / Ecology	Systems of information, financing, implementation and development of assistive technology.
Individual rights	Society, laws, regulations, relationships

Source: Daniels (1991)

MANAGEMENT PARADIGMS

Management is thought and subsequent behavior based on theories and ideas. How we do everything we do is based on a conscious or unconscious paradigm. We are full of assumptions, theories about how we work, how the world works, why people behave and misbehave the way they do, and how organizations work. Although many of these ideas are not conscious, they drive the frames that we put around each management situation.

Leaders draw on a variety of ideas and paradigms as they work to improve and change their organizations. Since the early 1970s, social scientists have focused on the ideas about how organizations work. The theory base is diverse, but four frames emerge (Bolman & Deal, 1991): rational systems, human resources, political, and symbolic.

Rational systems theorists focus on goals, roles, and technology. For them, the frame is about developing structures to support organizational purposes. Organizations establish purposeful goals and then select structure, policy, and procedure to accomplish those goals.

Political theorists see the world through the filters of power, conflict, and the distribution of scarce resources. For them, organizations are like the wilds in which success comes to those who understand the

uses of power, coalitions, bargaining, and conflict. Whereas rational systems theorists would design new structures to reduce conflict and human resource theorists would encourage people to talk it out, the political theorists would accept conflict and move on to building a larger coalition to exert more influence.

   Symbolic theorists are concerned about problems of meaning. The frame here is that managers must rely more on images, drama, magic, and luck to manage the meaning of events in the organization. Symbolic theorists are consummate reframers.

CONCLUSIONS: MAKING SENSE OF ANOTHER'S FRAMES

Understanding where others are "coming from" requires the ability to step outside one's own mental structures to perceive the situation through another persons frames. To find the sense in the situation that someone else sees, you have to look at it through his or her frame. Once you do that, you will have some ground for redirecting his or her attention to looking at it another way or through another frame.

     Reframing is a tool, which when skillfully applied, can bring greater understand of those who think and act differently than oneself. Knowing that there are different possible frames and paradigms will give us a way to engage those different models of the world in a deeper, more accepting way. We can then realize that those who disagree with us are speaking and acting from within a different frame, perhaps a different theory of disabilities, or a different theory of management.

     By using reframing skills, we can explore the other person's views in order to find the frame of reference out of which they are thinking and operating. Only then can we reframe the situation and move on to creating a frame that will allow the deeper intention of both people to guide our plans and actions to mutually beneficial outcomes.

References:

Bandler, R., & Grinder J. (1982). *Reframing*. Moab, Utah: Real People Press.

Bolman, L.G., & Deal, T.E. (1991). *Reframing organizations: Artistry, choice and leadership*. San Francisco: Josey-Bass.

Clifton, D., & nelson, P. (1992). *Soar with your strengths*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Covey, S. (1989). *The seven habits of highly effective people: Restoring the character ethic*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Crosby, P. (1979) *Quality is free*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Daniels, S. (1991). *Disability paradigm*. Unpublished manuscript, Washington, DC.

Frankl, V.E. (1963). *Man's search for meaning: An introduction to logotherapy*. New York: Penguin USA.

Helgesen, S. (1995). *The web of inclusion*. New York: Currency/Doubleday.

Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B.Z. (1993) *Credibility*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass

Latzko, W.J., & Saunders, D.M. (1995). *Four days with Dr. Demming: A strategy for modern methods of management*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Ries, A. & Trout, J. (1981). *Positioning: The battle for your mind*. New York: McGraw Hill.

Robbins, A. (1986). *Unlimited power*. New york: Fawcett Columbine.

Rosen, S. (1982). *My voice will go with you: The teaching tales of Milton H. Erickson*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Schwartz, P. (1991). *The art of the long view*. New York: Currency/Doubleday

Schwarz, J.E., & Volgy, T.J. (1985). The myth of America's decline. *Harvard Business Review, 63*, 98-107.

Seligman, M. (1990). *Learned optimism*. New york: Alfred A. knopf.

Senge, P.M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York: Currency/Doubleday

Stack, J. (1992). *The great game of business*. New York: Currency/Doubleday

Trout, j. (1995). *The new positioning*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Wheatley, M.J. (1992). *Leadership and the new science*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

RECOMMENDED READINGS

Anderson, W.T. (1990). *Reality isn't what it used to be*. San Francisco: Harper Collins.

Carse, J.P. (1986). *Finite and infinite games*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Collins, J.C., & Porras, J.I. (1994). *Built to last*. New York: Harper Collins.

Crum, T.F. (1987). *The magic of conflict*. New York: Simon 7 Schuster.

DeBono, E. (1990). *I am right: you are wrong*. New York: penguin uSA

Dobyns, L., & Crawford-Mason, C. (1991). *Quality or else*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Dykstra, A., Jr. (1995). *Outcome management*. East Dundee, IL: High Tide Press.

Felts, B. (1993). Interview with Richard Bandler. *NLP Network News, 1* (4), 1-11.

Goldstein, J. (1994). *The unshcakled organziation*. Portland, OR: Productivity press.

Hagen, S. (1995). *How the world can be the way it is*. Wheaton, IL: quest Books

Hardy, R.E., & Swartz, R. (1996). *The self-defeating organization*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Kelly, R. (1992). *The power of followership*. New York: Currency/Doubleday.

Kohn, A. (1993). *Punished by Edwards*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

Lynch, D. (1984). *Your high performance business brain: An operator's manual*. Upper Saddle River, NJ:
   Prentice-Hall.

Lynch, D. (1988). *Strategy of the dolphin: Scoring a win in a chaotic world*. New York: William Morrow & Co.

Muldoon, B. (1996) *The heart of conflict*. New York: G.P. Putman's Sons.

Ray, M., & Myers, R. (1986). *Creativity in business*. New York: Doubleday.

Ray, M., & Rinzler, A. (Eds.). (1993). *The new paradigm in business*. New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher

Watzlawick, P. (1978). *The language of change*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Watzlawick, P., Weakland, J., & Fisch, R. (1974). *Change: Principles of problem formation and problem
   resolution*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Wheatley, M.J. (1992). *Leadership and the new science*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Not in chapter as published:

Some Prevalent Management Frames:

Peter Senge's - *Learning Organization* - Sees organizations as complex systems of interacting internal and external dynamics. Because of this, an organization can only excel to the degree it is actively learning.

Sally Helgesen's - *The Web of Inclusion* - Perceives organizations as networks and clusters of resources and customers with constant changes in the interrelationship among the individual webs. Webs are both a structure and a process that is organic.

Jack Stack's - *Open Book Management* - Operates on the belief that by opening the company books to everyone more of a partnership is created and that each employee becomes more invested in the outcome.

Participative Management is a frame that assumes that management functions can and need to be carried out throughout the organization rather than with a few managers at the top.