BACKGROUND

Since 1994, the client company, a government-owned telecommunications entity in East Africa, has been pursuing a Telecommunications Rehabilitation Program (TRP).

In 1997 they engaged a UK consulting agency to prepare the organization for privatization.

Leadership was identified as critical to the success of this process, so the strategy included development of key management.

CHALLENGES

The first challenge that the facilitators faced involved how they planned to successfully implement Human Synergistics’ methods and products in this environment. The group questioned whether applying a product of “Western capitalist” origin within a foreign culture (in a country that had only recently moved to democracy from a socialist socioeconomic model) would be relevant.

Other challenges dealt directly with the composite of the company and their business position, such as:

- The company embarked on a massive change process to become competitive in an increasingly globalized industry. This meant shifting a parochial, passive, and corrupt bureaucracy to a relatively high-performing, customer-focused business in just a few years.

- A procession of foreign “experts” had left a legacy of wariness toward outsiders, and had undermined the collective self-esteem of the managers.

- To maximize effectiveness, the facilitators wanted to avoid “selling” a solution. They instead needed to engage the participants in a learning approach that would equip them appropriately for the changes ahead.

- Language barriers posed another challenge. Though high-level business is conducted in English, below-management level’s primary language is Kiswahili, the common language across tribes.

PROCESS

The facilitators took two avenues to enable change within the company. One focused on leadership development and the other on strategies necessary in initiating their TRP. These strategies focused on improving:

- Infrastructure—network now 90% digitized
- Systems—technical, administrative and financial
- HR strategies—a comprehensive customer care training program, reduction of work force from 8,000 to 3,700 through redundancies and natural attrition

Facts

Industry
Telecommunications

Region
East Africa
In order to assess the company’s leadership, the facilitators used the Life Styles Inventory™ (LSI) to set a benchmark goal, understand the current thinking styles within management, and look at positive change over time. Following are the leadership development strategies:

**Stage 1, June 1997, June 1998**
- Begin annual LSI 1 management development programs
- Initiate individual coaching

**Stage 2, October 1998**
- LSI 2 program begins
- Group Styles Inventory™ used for team building
- Individual coaching and facilitated meetings with teams if requested by manager
- Managers set three to four Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) relevant to their thinking style improvement goals to be tracked monthly

**Stage 3, April & October 1999**
- 2 x LSI 2 post-tests
- Managers present their progress with KPIs

**Stage 4, April 2000**
- Leadership/Impact® assessment used for developing mid- to senior-level managers

The high level of **Passive/Defensive** thinking and behavior reflect the:
- government owned, socialist legacy
- tribal background forming the typical operating system
- bureaucracy
- uncertain future for employees, with government plan to sell off a controlling share of the business
- extremely high national unemployment (80% self-employed on the land)
- down-sizing and redundancies that have resulted from the drive for efficiency

Outwardly aggressive behavior is frowned upon in African culture and is not obvious in overt interactions; however, **Aggressive/Defensive** thinking is apparent in:
- strict hierarchy, authoritative style, rigid reporting lines, and excessive formality (e.g., reference to people by title and position)
- “big stick” approach used by managers to reduce endemic corruption
- severe punishment of mistakes
- unquestioning submission to those in higher authority (occurs naturally in tribal communities and seemingly has been transferred to the organizational context)

**RESULTS**

**ALL MANAGERS**
The facilitators began their efforts by compiling the October 1998 LSI 2 profiles of all managers within the company. This composite profile shows an overall thinking style that is associated to the management as a whole (Figure 1).

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**SENIOR MANAGERS**

Figures 2 and 3 show the 1998 and 1999 composite LSI 2 profiles for senior managers respectively.

The 1998 results showed high levels of Passive and Aggressive/Defensive styles (all above the 75th percentile), and only the Constructive style of Self-Actualizing above the 50th percentile (Figure 2).
The 1999 results show improvement in 11 of the 12 styles. All of the Constructive styles increased to above the 50th percentile, while we see a decrease in 7 of the 8 Defensive styles (Figure 3). This improved profile compared favorably to the 1998 All Managers LSI 2.

PREFERRED STYLE
In 1999, senior and middle management developed an LSI ideal, or preferred, profile during their training programs (Figure 4).

While the current data suggests a typically poor management style, interactions with managers and their post-training activity demonstrates significant commitment to improving their effectiveness. Reports from many within the company indicate that managers are addressing both task and people aspects of their role as they work toward their preferred Constructive style.

SUMMARY PERCEPTIONS
In order to measure the correlation between thinking styles and perceived job effectiveness and quality of relationships, the facilitators questioned staff about their management. Workers were asked to rank their management’s effectiveness by answering, “How do you view this person’s level of effectiveness in his/her job?” for a number of leaders. The facilitators then compiled the LSI results of the 25% of leaders scoring highest in effectiveness and the 25% scoring lowest (Figure 5, on next page). The comparison of these two composite profiles shows a strong correlation between Constructive thinking styles and job effectiveness.

To measure the quality of relationships in the workplace, the facilitators asked the work force, “How would you describe the quality of this person’s work relationships with others?” Here again, they compared the LSI profiles of the top-scoring 25% with those of the bottom-scoring 25% (Figure 6, on next page). We continue to see a correlation between positive work styles and constructive thinking, here in quality of relationships.

OUTCOMES
The impact of the project on the company performance was measurable:

- Favorable performance trends have resulted in company-wide salary increases between 14% and 16.9%.
- Over 90% of network faults are now repaired within 24 hours, and the total number of connections has increased.
- Number of customer complaints is significantly reduced.

Key learnings from the project include:

- Cross-cultural validity
- Numerous “Preferred” thinking circumplexes drawn by different groups show a desire for highly Constructive thinking styles, coupled with relatively low Defensive thinking
Figure 5: Job Effectiveness

Figure 6: Quality of Relationship
About the Circumplex

Human Synergistics International’s Circumplex provides a way to “see” what drives the performance of individual contributors, leaders, work teams and, in short, the entire organization. It illustrates the factors underlying performance in terms of 12 styles of thinking and behaving. Some styles lead to effectiveness and productivity; some do not. Regardless of their impact, they all describe what’s happening inside the organization and provide a direction for change and development.

**Effective individuals in groups and organizations show STRONGER tendencies along the Constructive styles.**

1. Members are expected to be supportive, constructive, and open to influence in their dealings with each other. 
2. Members are expected to be friendly, open, and sensitive to the satisfaction of the work group.
3. Members are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression.
4. Members are expected to do what they are told and clear all decisions with superiors.
5. Members are expected to be supportive, constructive, and open to influence in their dealings with each other.
6. Members are expected to shift responsibilities to others and avoid being blamed for mistakes.
7. Members are expected to gain status and influence by being critical and constantly challenging one another.
8. Members are expected to operate in a “win-lose” framework and work against their peers to be noticed.
9. Members are expected to take charge and “control” others, and make decisions automatically.
10. Members are expected to avoid making mistakes, work long hours, and keep “on top” of everything.
11. Members are expected to set challenging but realistic goals and solve problems effectively.
12. Members are expected to gain enjoyment from their work and produce high-quality products/services.

**Effective individuals in groups and organizations show WEAKER tendencies along the Aggressive/Defensive styles.**

9. Members are expected to operate in a “win-lose” framework and work against their peers to be noticed.
8. Members are expected to take charge and “control” others, and make decisions automatically.
7. Members are expected to gain status and influence by being critical and constantly challenging one another.
6. Members are expected to shift responsibilities to others and avoid being blamed for mistakes.
5. Members are expected to do what they are told and clear all decisions with superiors.
4. Members are expected to conform, follow the rules, and make a good impression.
3. Members are expected to agree with, gain the approval of, and be liked by others.
2. Members are expected to be friendly, open, and sensitive to the satisfaction of the work group.
1. Members are expected to be supportive, constructive, and open to influence in their dealings with each other.

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