



## TenStep Supplemental Paper

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3 January 2004

### Corporate Sickness

Anyone who has been associated with a sick group unit at some point in his or her career knows how it leads to frustration and a sense of helplessness among all employees involved. The problem is compounded if the malady was not diagnosed in time. To effectively diagnose a corporate illness, one must begin with the symptoms. Next, the causes need to be identified, and then a prescription should be recommended for getting the organization back on its feet.

#### Healing a corporate sickness

The recovery process comprises a few steps:

- 1) Getting started
- 2) Assessing the extent of sickness
- 3) Choosing the right treatment and using it
- 4) Periodic check-ups

#### Getting Started

Just like a medical doctor, an organization first needs to recognize the problem or symptoms that led to the decline in productivity, quality or market share, the dropping or disappearance of projects, and increased absenteeism or turnover.

Once such serious problems are observed, the course of action and resources required to fix the problem need to be decided upon. Often, for a quick fix, an organization sends its members to seminars and hosts training programs to address the problem. Nevertheless, since this doesn't address the root of the problem, the problem continues to exist. This leads to indifference. After awhile, employees start expecting nothing from management, and cynicism sets in.

For the best results, employees must implement recommendations made by the management or by outside resources. The external resource must be neutral, knowledgeable in team assessment, and capable of giving guidance.

#### Assessing the Extent of Sickness

Assess the breadth of the problem and identify its causes. Use surveys to determine the breadth and depth of your organization's symptoms. The former can be divided into:

- **Symptoms within just a few groups.** These causes concern the goals, roles and relationships within a team.
- **Inter and intra-group symptoms.** Issues that cause negative effects between teams, such as a disagreement over responsibilities, allocation of scarce resources and power conflicts, are the focus of attention here.



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- **Pan-organization symptoms.** Such illnesses could be the result of organizational structure, compensation, management style, performance appraisal, employee selection process, authority or communication patterns, etc.

### Choose the Right Treatments

- **Treating intra-group problems.** If problems within a group exist, they can be treated by clarifying roles, setting goals, solving problems and training in small group skills.
- **Treatments for inter-group problems.** Peace can be restored within such groups by inter-group teambuilding, where members discuss their problems and arrive at a solution, or by establishing cross-functional teams to deal with "bridge" issues that cut across organizational lines.
- **Treatments for changing organization-wide systems issues.** These include changing the organizational structure to be more customer-based, changing market focus and the organization's strategic plan, etc.

### Periodic Evaluation

Organizational health must be aligned with established measures of success, and checkups ought to be conducted periodically.