



## INTRODUCTION

### **RAISING THE BAR**

It was a beautiful October morning when she called me. The sky was a clear Colorado blue, and the trees were a blaze of reds, golds, and brilliant yellows. A crisp texture in the air hinted of an impending frost.

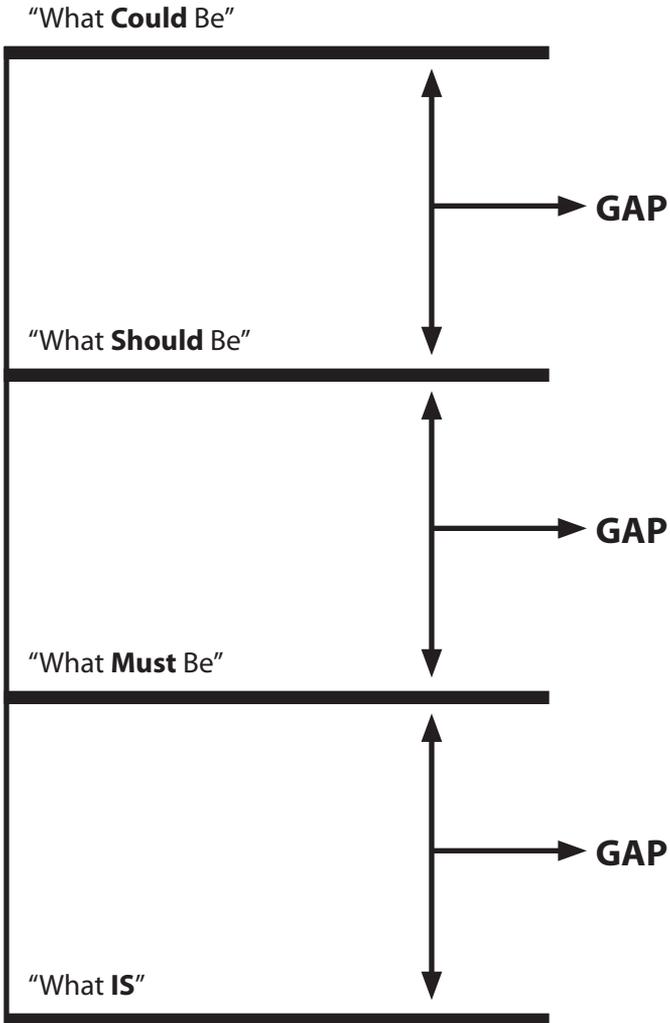
She spoke with great enthusiasm and eagerness. "I'm challenged to lead a significant increase in gross revenues this coming year," she began. "It is very doable but will require a lot of focus." She reported to me that during the past year they had achieved \$1.7 million in sales and that the goal for the coming year was to stretch this to \$2.5 - \$2.6 million.

"We need to raise the bar at this point," she pointed out. We need to close the gap between what we are doing now and our optimal performance. And I know exactly what we need to do to get to the next level -- a total productivity increase within this organization over the next 90 days."

She then proceeded to ask for my assistance in building a timeline with goals and objectives, a report on how to address all financial barriers, a new PR program, and a market-niche analysis done with all major stakeholders. I suggested we meet for breakfast to discuss her challenge and we set a date. Following this phone conversation, she sent me a huge packet of material with many charts and reports for my review.

A couple of weeks later when we sat down for breakfast, she repeated her challenge to raise the bar and achieve optimal performance. At that moment I took out a sheet of paper and drew a picture. Then, sliding the picture (see figure 0.1) across the table to her, I asked her a very simple question: "Which bar are you trying to raise?"

# “WHICH BAR ARE YOU TRYING TO RAISE?”



She sat quietly for a moment and replied, "I'm not sure I know."

As you can see, the challenge for many executives is to figure out which bar they are trying to raise. And while I admire the goal of striving for optimal performance, the key is to realize that optimal performance is the result of having an optimal organizational culture.

*From my own professional experience, there are four main characteristics to a successful organizational culture:*

**First: All involved are building something**, i.e., taking a vision and turning it into reality. They are clear about this vision and work very closely together to make sure they are in alignment with it at all times.

**Second: The organization has a core philosophy about how things are done and what is most important.** This mission, with its core values, permeates all they are doing on a daily basis, and, at the strategic level, it is their compass.

**Third: They have an internal drive for progress.** They have what I call the "want-to" factor which is translated into a "can-do" attitude. They determine to get better at what they are doing and are constantly seeking out ways to improve and innovate.

**Fourth: They have specific systems that preserve their core philosophy and stimulate progress.** These systems are critical to the success of their mission, and they are monitored closely and used faithfully, resulting in consistent results.

To continue with my story: Over breakfast that morning, I explained to her that raising the bar for optimal performance and striving to hit a \$2.5 - \$2.6 million-dollar goal was admirable -- but that the real challenge was to transform her current organizational culture into one where this level of

growth and customer service would become the norm rather than a singular event.

As we continued to explore this perspective together, she came to realize that, in the beginning, leaders must prepare the organization for change and create clarity about change.

Then, they need to build a foundation of trust and improve teamwork. It is the fusion of these elements that will develop a new organizational culture.

As an Iowa farmer taught me years ago, "What you feed, grows." The same goes for an organization. The key is to grow specific core elements internally, so that a cultural transformation is propagated, thereby bearing the fruits of a long-lasting and ever-unfolding success.

In this particular booklet, *Developing a New Organizational Culture*, we will explore how to prepare for cultural change, build a foundation of trust, develop win/win relationships, and apply feedback. We also will examine critical steps to building teamwork that results in improved communication, creativity, and innovation. Finally, we will delve into different ways to cope with the changes that come with this level of work. In particular, we will explore issues related to paradigm paralysis, and dealing with and overcoming resistance.

In short, we will raise the bar together, and continue transforming vision into action.

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