

## CHAPTER 15. INTEGRATING FRAMES FOR EFFECTIVE PRACTICE

### CHAPTER 15 OVERVIEW

#### **Chapter 15 Summary**

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Chapter 15 looks at what managerial life is really like, noting that it is messier and more turbulent than managers often like to think. Managers face additional confusion and conflict when individuals use different perspectives to frame the same event. To illustrate these possibilities, the authors depict a number of key organizational processes and activities as seen from each of the four frames (Table 15.1 in the text). The ability to define where people are “coming from” is a central leadership skill for which the frames serve as a template.

The authors also provide guidelines for matching frames to situations (Table 15.2 in the text). Conditions influencing the choice include: motivation and commitment, requirements for the technical quality of an outcome or decision, ambiguity and uncertainty, scarcity of resources, levels of conflict and diversity, and the top-down or bottom-up nature of the effort.

The chapter closes with a review of research. The authors look at three works on organizational excellence—Peters and Waterman (*In Search of Excellence*), Collins and Porras (*Built to Last*), and Collins (*From Good to Great*)—and at three studies of effective managers—Kotter (*The General Managers*), Lynn (*Managing Public Policy*), and Luthans (*Real Managers*)—to determine what they reveal about the use of frames. Finally, the authors review recent research on managers’ frame orientations.

#### **Chapter 15 Major Case Examples**

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- Mayor Rudolph Giuliani of New York City before and after September 11, 2001
- Dr. Gregory O’Keefe and the National Health Service Corps
- RJR Nabisco revisited
- Clerical and technical workers’ strike at Yale University
- Helen Demarco revisited

### SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHING CHAPTER 15

The chapter’s central ideas revolve around integrating the frames and developing skills in employing multiple perspectives. Instructors can focus on:

1. Developing skills in four-frame diagnosis.
2. Learning to match frames to the situations.

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Teaching methods appropriate for each approach are described in the sections that follow. Student exercises keyed to the approaches appear in “Student Exercises for Chapter 15,” beginning on page 5.

### **Chapter 15: A Focus on Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills**

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Previous chapters have emphasized the content and usefulness of each individual frame. Some students arrive at this chapter understanding some frames better than others. Others may be clear about frame content but less so about application of the four perspectives. Many are puzzled about how to bring together four seemingly disparate lenses. Instructors can use this chapter to review the basic content and focus of each perspective and to work with students in developing an integrative framework for using the four frames in combination.

#### **Chapter 15: Review Activities and Methods for a Focus on Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills**

Review of the four frames can take many forms:

- Offer a lecture, drawing on the overview in Chapter 1 (see Table 1.1 in the text and Table 3.1.1 in the Instructor’s Guide).
- Use film clips to capture the essence of each frame (see suggestions in the teaching notes for Chapter 1, “Chapter 1: Films or Videos Focusing on Frame Content”).
- Delegate the review task to students, forming student groups, assigning one frame per group, and asking students to review the essence of the frame for the class, relying on traditional lecture and presentations, and/or using a film clip, poem, or excerpt from popular literature to best convey the central content, meaning, and focus of a frame. Alternatively, ask each group to find a film clip that contains elements of all four frames. Have them come to class prepared to show their clip, and lead a discussion of how each frame applies.

Whatever method is chosen, instructors will want to be sure that the students leave the activity with a clear set of questions or list of key words that can become a diagnostic framework for approaching organizations. Students can then apply their frameworks to cases from the text or other sources or to films, as described in following sections, or can apply them to real-world organizations through fieldwork (see Exercise 15.1). They can also explore their own personal cases, the classroom as an organization, or a current event.

Before beginning any large-group discussion of a case, instructors may want to ask students to record their definitions of the central problem. Instructors can then collect the problem definitions on the board, poll the class for the number of students who agree with the various suggestions, and explore the dominant frame in the class’s choices. In addition, or instead, students return to their initial problem definitions after the case discussion to explore both: (1) the dominant frame in their initial diagnosis and the possible clues to their frame

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preferences and (2) the ways in which discussion of the case enlarged their appreciation of the case's complexity.

Students can discuss their reactions in small groups or share their observations in the larger class. These discussions lead nicely into a discussion of the power of and need for reframing. Such a discussion may be especially important for instructors working with young students or students who struggle with the concept of multiple perspectives. Instructors in such situations may want to devote time here to reviewing the importance of reframing (see Chapter 1 teaching notes for suggestions). In summary, they will want to caution students to note the importance of completing each frame's diagnosis of situations rather than quickly predetermining the frame that is most applicable.

(Also see Exercise 15.2 for a four-frame group assessment activity.)

### Chapter 15: Cases for a Focus on Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills

As mentioned, review activities are aimed at helping students to develop their own diagnostic frameworks for approaching organizations. Once the frameworks have been developed, students in large or small groups can apply them to cases, exploring the implications for understanding and action. One place to start is with the cases in the chapter.

- Students can discuss or explore the four-frame implications of Dr. O'Keefe's situation.
- Students can re-explore the Helen Demarco case, referring back to their notes about Helen and examining what they *now* realize and how they *now* feel about the situation in the light of the frames. What new insights do they have? (See the teaching notes for Chapter 2, "Chapter 2: Cases Focusing on Private Theories and Personal Judgments" and Exercise 2.1, for additional suggestions about discussing the Demarco case.)
- Another option is to assign the RFK High case that appears in Chapter 20, working here on the process of integrating the frames for organizational diagnosis before moving on to Chapter 16 and an integration of the frames for effective action. This may be especially important for instructors working with undergraduates who need extra time and opportunities to explore the case situation or for instructors with fifty-minute classes who struggle to fit preparation and role-playing activities for RFK High into short class periods.

Other suggested cases for four-frame diagnosis include the following:

- *Government/public administration:*
  - Job Corps (HBS 9-375-152), a case out of the Johnson administration, still provides a superb example of a multiframe turnaround of an organization that was near death when a new administrator arrived.
  - Improving Compliance with U.S. Tax Law: The Internal Revenue Service and Nonfilers (KSG 1576.0) looks at the challenges facing an IRS official who is charged with reversing a steady increase in the number of Americans who should but don't file an

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income tax return. The case includes structural and human resource issues within the IRS and political and symbolic issues in the agency's relationship to its environment.

- *Law*: Case of the Part-Time Partner (*Harvard Business Review*, reprint 90507).
- *Business*:
  - Asda ([A] [HBS 9-498-005], [B] [HBS 9-498-007], and [C] [HBS 9-498-008]) deals with a company that was one of the most successful retailers in Britain in the mid-1980s but was near death by 1991. A new, talented CEO enters with the hope of turning things around. A video (HBS 9-499-506) and teaching note (HBS 5-498-033) are also available.
  - Charlotte Beers at Ogilvy and Mather ([A] [HBS 9-495-031], teaching note 5-495-033).
  - People Express (HBS 9-483-103).
  - Karen Leary ([A] [HBS 9-487-020], [B] [HBS 9-487-021], and [C] [HBS 9-487-022]).
  - Suzanne de Passe at Motown (HBS 9-487-042).
- *Education*:
  - Zero Tolerance in Memphis ([A] [KSG 1438.0], [B] [KSG1439.0], and teaching note 1438.2), mentioned in the notes to Chapter 11, chronicles challenges facing a new superintendent of schools in Memphis who believes the schools have put too much emphasis on discipline and too little on learning.
  - Laura Johnston and the Sandia High School: Racial Transformation ([A] [KSG 1308.0], [B] [KSG 1309.0], [C] [KSG1310.0], and [Sequel] [KSG1310.1]) describes the efforts of a high school principal to transform her school using principles from the Coalition of Essential Schools and the challenges that she encounters in the process.
  - Chancellor Joseph Fernandez and the Children of the Rainbow Guide (A and B, from HGSE).
  - Higher education cases include Bingham State College (A, B, C) and Crisis at Wesleyan University (X, Y, Z) from IEM.

## Chapter 15: Films for a Focus on Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills

Many of the feature films cited under one or more frames can also be used as four-frame cases. Hollywood depictions of life in organizations often focus on the seamier political side (as in films like *Disclosure*, *Wall Street*, *Working Girl*, and *Office Space*), but all of the frames can typically be found. Similarly, feature film depictions of life in schools (as in *Dead Poet's Society*, *Lean on Me*, *Mr. Holland's Opus*, *Stand and Deliver*, and *The Breakfast Club*) may emphasize one or two frames more than others but usually contain rich possibilities for multiframe discussion, examining which frames are most appropriate in various situations. The novel and film *Lord of the Flies* make a good nontraditional, four-frame case that works especially well with undergraduates.

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## Chapter 15: A Focus on Matching Frames to Situations

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Instructors working with developmentally sophisticated audiences such as advanced graduate students or experienced executives may choose to skip the review suggested above and focus instead on practice in matching frames to situations. Instructors can review or have students review the factors discussed in the chapter. They can then assign a case and see which frame the Bolman and Deal guidelines suggest. (See the case suggestions above, “Chapter 15: Cases for a Focus on Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills,” or review the case suggestions for Chapters 3–14 for a wide selection of cases that illustrate one or more of the frames.)

Students will want to explore whether they agree or disagree with the authors’ “best frame” suggestion, discuss other criteria that seem relevant in the situation, and so on. Students can work in small groups and then report their conclusions to the large group; meet in small groups to prepare for large-group discussion (which significantly improves the quality of participation); or prepare assigned study questions in anticipation of large-group discussion. Student preparation can also take the form of a written assignment.

Again, as described in an earlier section (“Chapter 15: Review Activities and Methods for a Focus on Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills”), instructors can use case discussion to help students think about their own frame preferences and potentially hidden “frame biases.”

Finally, in courses in which students write personal case papers, students can meet in small groups, apply the guidelines suggested in the chapter, and explore the “frame match” in their own personal case situation.

## STUDENT EXERCISES FOR CHAPTER 15

### EXERCISE 15.1

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#### **Focus:** Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills

Chapter 15 presents an excellent opportunity to use fieldwork as an experience in four-frame diagnosis.

**Option 1.** Assign each student to an organization or let students choose organizations. Even a brief visit (such as an evening at a restaurant, standing in line at the registry of motor vehicles, or wandering through a shopping mall) should provide ample material for a four-frame diagnosis. Students can present their analyses in class to demonstrate how the frames are expressed differently across organizations.

**Option 2.** Divide the class into frame groups and have all groups visit the same organization. The groups can then come together and construct a multiframe profile, exploring the interplay among different perspectives.

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**EXERCISE 15.2**

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**Focus:** Four-Frame Diagnostic Skills

Have team members fill out the Team Assessment Scale, a multiframe measure available at [http://bloch.umkc.edu/classes/bolman/team\\_frames\\_assessment.htm](http://bloch.umkc.edu/classes/bolman/team_frames_assessment.htm). For ongoing teams, this assessment provides a way to use the frames to assess how well they're doing and which areas might need work. In the instrument, items 1–4 are structural; items 5–9 are human resource; items 10–12 are political; and the rest are symbolic.

Ask individuals to complete the instrument, and then have teams meet, post the results, and discuss. Tell them to focus on both mean and variance: Where does the team seem to be high or low, and where do individuals seem to agree or disagree? (Paying attention to the distribution makes it more likely that they'll notice, for example, areas in which most people think things are great but one or two individuals don't agree.)

A variation is to ask individuals, after they have completed the assessment, to meet first in cross-team consulting pairs or trios. Each individual can talk about strengths and weaknesses in his or her team and get consulting help on how to raise these issues with the team. After the consultations, individuals go into team meetings. The consultation often helps individuals to clarify what issues they want to raise and how to raise them in a productive way.