

## Analysis Paralysis?

Analysis, diagnosis, prognosis, intervention? A simple process, it doesn't...

Board meeting. Everyone involved is arguing on a strategic project which serves the organisation to look ahead that future market crisis time. These are hours in which they debate on each possible choice; then about what the results of each of them will be, then about which are the ones that are really achievable and which are the ones that will create more problems. People are arguing about what the right actions are and, furthermore, what “*be right*” means itself...

The Sales Director says that the sales force is overwhelmed with procedures and they need to allocate more efforts, more time meeting clients, not spending resources in “marketing”. The Marketing Director would improve sales people’s performance by enhancing their job; he says they can sell more “*dog*” products if they carry information about the related services they can provide to customers.

The new services, on the other hand, have costs that create problems to the CFO: his plan can’t support that risk. He says there is no warranty about the market rising, the forecast is not reliable. Also, the setting up of the new services requires some weeks in training and organisation of the Delivery Service, which is already under troubles for the high turnover and the overwhelming quantity of work. Nobody wants to leave down anything; everybody has their good reasons to justify why investing more resources in their own department will solve many problems. They say: “... *you don’t need to change our behaviour nor our brand’s image in the market!*”

At the end of the meeting, **no** great decisions have been taken. No results have been achieved. They only got small choices like implementing changes in some procedures, modifying responsibilities and setting another quality test...



### What didn't work?

The decision process governance had not been mastered. When decisions must be achieved by sharing, they become real through relational and interactive processes. Those processes have to respect the comprehension process of each part as well the reasons of each one. Additionally, they have to prepare a negotiation base which improves satisfactory agreement for all parties. The truth is that, in the story, they didn't follow the negotiation rules and they had run too much trying to “*persuade*” others, indeed reaching the opposite effect.

Now we stay focused on one single part of the whole Decision Making Process, the part of the story which seems to present failures: the Analysis - Diagnosis - Prognosis - Solution sequence. Well, if you recall your personal history, how many time you had experienced meeting like the reported one? When it happens you can try to put yourself on third position: look as an external observer what is happening.

The starting stage has to be focused on an AS IS Analysis. It has to allow everyone to get a complete understanding of the situation, creating a common base of purposes. During the development of a shared analysis, people should become aware about the real problem and the reason to look for a solution. They will understand better the main issues which create the situation, the importance of those issues, how they affect the organisational procedures, as well as the deep true of the problem and the causes that have had produced it. When the full situation awareness will be reached, you can go ahead. Negotiation rules entail to reach a clear picture of the purpose: what is a real must for the parties?

As soon as all parties shared the purposes and they feel the importance of finding a real solution they can run ahead formalising a shared Diagnosis of the problem.

When the problem has been set on light, it can be declared univocally it is time to look for solutions: the Prognosis. It will be a sort of “*declaration of intent*” which introduces the real act to realize the solution as a project of change strongly will by people.

The adoption of the solution should be applied in a deep shared way when parties feel they have collaborated on the negotiation with active contributions. They can still get their own target, with regards to their value.

My today's opinion is how too often we enter in a debate with a small inquiry about the real situation. Too often we think people know the problem as we know it, we think they are aware of the situation and its complications, we think they are aware of how the problem affect the organisation purpose and they agree on the existence of solutions that improve all parties' situation.

Obviously, there must be a real wish to negotiate and, also, the related skills.

### **We can see deeper the Analysis stage.**

Time ago I had an experience in a Far East organisation. What attracted my interest was the difference between west approach and how that culture gave importance in the Decision Making. They can debate hours, days; until they are all not convinced, they do not stop the process. What becomes more evident is the care they use in sharing analysis in order to clarify the problem. No one thinks the problem is already clear for everyone, nor the problem is the one we already found, so that we have to solve just this one. Their process, slow at its begin, allows everybody to be able to develop full awareness of the situation and of the whole problem which grow up from it. Then, while sharing that, the wish to find the solution which may improves everyone's situation becomes real. In those companies, the solution deployment is natural; when they shared the diagnosis and they found the solution, it improves the change as well as everyone's commitment. This commitment is one of the main rules of organisational success.

It's up to us clarify what we want to do: proceed debating over possible solutions starting by uncommon issues. So we lose the innovation opportunity as well as the building of a Learning Organisation or we decide to set the foundation of a organisation able to learn, improving organisational skills as well as everyone's skills, to get the Competitive Advantage, the lone Distinctive Competency which no one else can duplicate.

### **Forbes Thought Of The Day**

" You can employ men and hire hands to work for you, but you will have to win their hearts to have them work with you. "

— William J.H. Boetcker