

Chapter 22

Touching Hearts

Developing a New Covenant Within Your Organization

***Touching Hearts* helps employees create new emotional bonds—covenants with one another and with the organization. These heartfelt commitments shape people’s attitudes and beliefs and change their behaviors.**

.....
When General Bill Creech took over the Tactical Air Command (TAC) in 1978, he was determined to change its culture from the bottom up. He wanted a culture focused on quality, teamwork, and performance. He quickly began refurbishing the shabby buildings and equipment he found throughout the TAC: repainting, putting carpets in offices, upgrading the maintenance shops and equipment, and so on. “*Quality begets quality*,” he later wrote. “And one cannot justifiably expect employees to appreciate quality, think quality, and produce quality if top management shows by its actions that it is indifferent to it.”

During his journeys from one TAC base to another, Creech ran across a beat-up old office chair used by a maintenance supervisor responsible for more than 100 people and hundreds of millions of dollars of resources. “One of its four casters was missing, stuffing was coming out, and its general appearance was atrocious,” he recalls. “In using that chair, he was making a graphic statement regarding the quality standard he expected.”

Creech took the chair back to his headquarters at Langley Air Force Base and put it in his conference room, for the chief logistician—the man responsible for equipment. “It became my symbol of the way we had been neglecting our people, their attitude, and the quality mind-set,” he said. “Everyone got the message.”

Indeed, when we did a video on Creech’s organization 15 years later, people were still talking about his chair. But by then the legend had grown. Major Carl Williamson, deputy director for quality education, told it this way:



[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor’s Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik

The chair was a beat-up kind of chair, very small, and had a brick under one of the legs. [Creech] asked the young man, “Have you tried to get a chair? Do you have another chair?” He said, “Well, yes, sir, we’ve requisitioned that, but you know, it’s going to take a lot of time for it to get out here.”

[Creech] took the chair, he had the chair flown back to Langley. So he flew himself back to Langley and walked into our senior logisticians and said, “Can I have your chair?” Now we’re talking about a beautiful, plush chair here. He took that chair, he flew it out to the young airman, and took the chair with the brick under it and gave it to the senior officer and said, “And when you fix the system that supports the people, then you can get yourself a chair.”

As Creech says, “Such symbols can be very useful in making sure everyone understands that there is a new approach to carrying out the business.”

When the late Martin Raff ran the West Midlands Employment Service in the U.K., he wanted to remove the physical and psychological barriers that separated managers from their teams. He started by removing the walls between managers’ offices.

I took the lead by moving out of my office into the open-plan area, in which about 40 other people on my floor worked, and took down the walls of what had been my office. It was very tough for about six weeks, and I longed for the quiet seclusion of my office. After that, I quickly began to feel comfortable in the open plan. . . .

*Nobody copied me initially. One manager said, “I’ve worked all my life to get my own office, and I’m blowed if I’m going to give this up for the sake of some theory.” . . . I never actually **ordered** anyone to move out—but I had a strategy for getting people out.*

Raff gathered a group of middle managers whom he knew were pioneers. He asked them to consider moving out of their offices en masse.

*To my astonishment, they reported back to me that it was **impossible** for managers of Job Centers to be in open plan. They argued that they needed privacy for seeing people, taking telephone calls and reading confidential files, and that the staff would not like managers to be with them all the time.*

After Raff applied what he calls “considerable moral pressure,” they agreed to try it for six weeks. “Within a fortnight,” he reports, “most of them said that



[Click Here to order](#)

they liked being out, and *none* went back after six weeks.” During the next two years, Raff took down the walls of managers’ offices throughout the organization. The change, he says, helped “to create belief that radical change in the way we worked was possible and *was* going to happen.”

Using a beat-up chair as a symbol of what has to change and taking down walls that separate managers and employees are two examples of the many ways reinventors can change their organization’s culture. They help change the *emotional commitments* of public employees: their hopes and dreams, their expectations, their commitments to one another.

As we explained in *Banishing Bureaucracy*, organizational cultures are rooted in emotional commitments, many of which are barely even conscious. In bureaucratic cultures, many people are emotionally committed to their status in the organization’s hierarchy. Others are committed to holding deep resentments—toward management, toward unions, toward politicians.

To create an entrepreneurial culture, you must get employees to commit to new things: taking personal responsibility for the health of their organizations, performing well for their customers, teaming up with their colleagues, and the like.

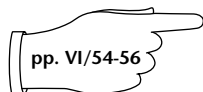
There are many ways to touch hearts. We are aware of at least five basic elements in the process of building new emotional commitments:

- Dislodging old emotional commitments through experience.
- Creating new emotional touchstones to guide behavior.
- Staging events that embody new emotional commitments.
- Reinventing the work environment to build new commitments.
- Using bonding events to create new emotional commitments.

The first element is the one we discussed in Chapter Twenty-One: dislodging the old emotional commitments by creating new experiences that help people let go and begin to change.

The second method is creating touchstones—symbols and stories—that give people guideposts to help them make changes and emotional anchors once they have embraced the new culture. Some touchstones are primarily emotional: they give people a gut sense of the new values and norms you are trying to create. Others are more rational: they give people a set of concepts, articulated in things like mission statements and codes of values, that they can use to figure out what behavior is consistent with the new culture. We cover

**FIFTY WAYS TO
LEAVE YOUR
CULTURE**



[Click Here to order](#)

the latter in Chapter Fifteen; here we focus on two types of emotional touchstones: symbols and stories.

The third method is to stage events and activities—celebrations, honors ceremonies, and rituals—that embody the new emotional commitments you want people to make. Symbols and stories signal the culture you want, and celebrations and rituals reinforce it. They actively fortify people when they begin to embrace the new paradigm, by recognizing and cheering on their efforts. They proclaim to everyone in the organization: *This is the kind of behavior we want!*

The fourth is to reinvent your work environment to communicate the values and attitudes you want in the organization. This helps answer what Bill Creech calls one of the four great management questions: “What’s in it for me?” Because concrete investments offer unmistakable proof of your values, they make it much easier for people to commit to change. Symbols, stories, celebrations, and rituals are all effective—but only if you back them up with action. If management’s actions contradict these signals, then employees will tune them out. As Ralph Waldo Emerson once wrote, “What you do thunders so loudly, I cannot hear what you say to the contrary.”

Finally, the fifth course is to build new emotional bonds between people around the values and commitments you want, through bonding events and truth-telling activities. This is a powerful way to solidify the new beginnings you are asking people to make. This is what a covenant is all about: as Webster’s says, it is a “solemn and binding agreement.” When your people make that kind of agreement with one another, they are forging the new culture.

There are many, many tools you can use to win people’s hearts. We have written about those we have encountered frequently, but there must be 50 more that people have invented—or will invent. Don’t let our list limit your imagination. The important thing is to understand the basic elements in touching hearts, then invent whatever tools will work best in your organization.

RESOURCES ON TOUCHING HEARTS

William Bridges. *Transitions: Making Sense of Life’s Changes and Managing Transitions: Making the Most of Change*. Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1980 and 1991. These two books are superb guides to helping people make cultural transitions.

James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner. *The Leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1995. One of the better books on leadership; includes two useful chapters on “Encouraging the Heart.”



[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor’s Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik



Harrison Owen. *Leadership Is*. Potomac, Md.:Abbott Publishing, 1990. A brilliant little book on leadership that includes, among other gems, a useful chapter on “Growing Spirit Through Collective Storytelling.”

TOOLS FOR TOUCHING HEARTS

Creating New Symbols and Stories communicates at a gut level the culture you want to build. They become cultural artifacts: anchors that help bind employees together around common values, expectations, hopes, and dreams. See p. VI/77.

Celebrating Success creates regular and spontaneous events that honor the achievements of individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole. See p. VI/79.

Honoring Failure turns innovations that fail into opportunities to improve performance and promote innovation—not occasions to blame and punish. See p. VI/81.

New Rituals are special events that embody and reinforce the new culture. Repeated regularly, they give people new touchstones. When they are participatory, they also draw people in, helping them make the emotional commitments required by the new culture. See p. VI/84.

Investing in the Workplace upgrades the quality of the standard-issue working environment, which demonstrates a commitment to public employees. See p. VI/86.

Redesigning the Workplace reinforces the emotional commitments you want, such as a sense of teamwork or a commitment to customer service. See p. VI/87.

Investing in Employees shows workers that management is serious about the changes it advocates, because it is investing in the employees’ capacity to make those changes. See p. VI/87.

Bonding Events develop powerful new relationships among groups of employees, based on trust, collaboration, and taking shared responsibility for producing results. See p. VI/90.

Sending Valentines is a group exercise in which employees tell other work units what they would like them to do differently. It helps them speak the truth to one another without getting hung up in workplace rivalries and antagonisms—and to change their commitments to one another. See p. VI/96.



[Click Here to order](#)

**CREATING NEW
SYMBOLS AND
STORIES**

Almost anything can take on the power of a cultural symbol. When Peter Hutchinson stepped into the role of Minneapolis school superintendent, he found a large magnetic board hanging in the school board's meeting room. The district had been implementing site-based management, but in a very top-down manner. The central office had required schools to do a great deal of planning before giving them any autonomy, and the magnetic board depicted the results. "It had a line down the middle with the site-based schools on one side and the nondesignated schools on the other," says Hutchinson. "This magnetic board was a symbol of the dominance of the central office." Hutchinson took it down and declared all schools to be site-based from that moment on. The fate of the magnetic board became a powerful symbol of his new approach.

Bob Stone, former director of Vice President Gore's reinventing government team, the National Partnership for Reinventing Government, has long been a master of symbolism. When he first met with Gore to discuss reinvention, he took along one of his most potent symbols: a steam trap. A device used in steam heating systems, it takes condensation out of the steam lines. When we first met Stone, at the Pentagon, he showed us one and told us about it:

When it leaks, it leaks \$50 a week worth of steam. The lesson is, when it leaks, replace it quick. But it takes us a year to replace it, because we have a system that wants to make sure we get the very best buy on this \$100 item, and maybe by waiting a year we can buy the item for \$2 less. In the meantime, we've lost \$3,000 worth of steam.

Stone used the steam trap to explain the idiocy of government's centralized systems. Before the meeting with Gore, he told his two companions that they would know the meeting had been a success if Gore asked to keep the steam trap. Sure enough, he did—and it became the first in a succession of symbols Stone supplied to help the vice president communicate his message of radical reinvention. Perhaps the most famous was the ashtray Gore smashed on the David Letterman show, to illustrate the absurdity of federal procurement specifications. In nine pages, the draft specifications detailed exactly the size and shape federal ashtrays were to be, including the fact that when struck in a particular fashion, they should shatter into no more than 35 pieces, each at least a quarter of an inch thick.

Sometimes organizations adopt symbols that remind them of the culture they are trying to build. Babak Armajani, CEO of the Public Strategies Group, tells one such story:

We did a lot of work with the Roseville, Minnesota, schools. We were having trouble getting people to think of continuous improvement, in-



[Click Here to order](#)

stead of searching for “the right way” to manage. One day we were having one of these meetings, where different teams were reporting about what they did. A team of janitors said, “We want to show you the turtle.”

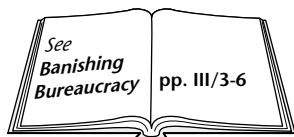
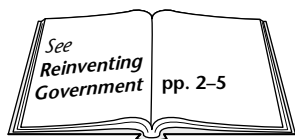
They were having enormous problems with the machines you drop into swimming pools that motor around and clean the pools, which are called turtles. Lowering these things in and out of the pools, they were getting banged up and broken, so they had these high repair costs. So they designed this little cart to carry the machine and lower it in. It lowered repairs, lowered their injuries, and lowered their workman’s compensation costs. All of a sudden everybody got it—that’s what continuous improvement was all about. So the turtle became their symbol of continuous improvement—they did turtle chains and turtle this and turtle that.

Stories are a similarly potent currency of culture. Over the water coolers and coffee pots, in the hallways and bathrooms, and at lunch, we tell stories about our organizations. They travel the organizational grapevine with remarkable speed and impact. In telling them, members of an organization share their unspoken assumptions and beliefs about the organization.

Leaders must generate and tell *new* stories to develop a new culture. Bob Stone and his team constantly told stories—many of them illustrated with the kind of symbols we have been discussing. In Visalia, Ted Gaebler constantly told stories about the entrepreneurial behavior of his staff: the third-level employee who bought an Olympic pool for half price because he wrote a \$60,000 check on the spot; the recreation director who built restrooms for the softball teams and made a profit doing it, by tacking on a concession stand; the police officers who pioneered a lease-purchase program for squad cars that was copied by two dozen cities.

Leaders often need stories to build their credibility. In Indianapolis, union members still tell the story of Transportation Director Mitch Roob’s laying off 18 supervisors so the workers’ bid to keep their work would have a shot. In Sunnyvale, people tell the story of a department head who faked his performance data because he didn’t believe in the city’s performance measurement system—and who was fired as a result. These stories are about leaders proving they are serious about change.

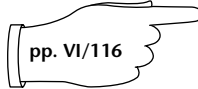
In telling stories, don’t ignore the grapevine in favor of official communications methods such as newsletters and memos. When Babak Armajani was an executive in the Minnesota Department of Administration, he and others realized that “if you told 20 people in the organization something, word would quickly get out to everyone.” So they formally convened those 20 people every time they wanted to get the word out, and they called it “the grapevine.”



[Click Here to order](#)

CELEBRATING SUCCESS

***Celebrating Success* creates regular and spontaneous events that honor the achievements of individuals, teams, and the organization as a whole.**



In New York City in early 1993, a team of about 20 employees in the Veterans Administration (VA) regional office assembled in Training Room B. They had been there many times before, to reengineer the organization's process for ruling on veterans' claims for benefits. But this meeting was special: Joe Thompson, the regional office director, was treating the team to lunch. Thompson had decided to implement their new process design throughout the agency, and he wanted to celebrate. He announced that each team member had earned an extra eight hours of leave and a \$200 bonus. Later, he took them to Washington, where they received a Hammer Award from Vice President Gore.

Celebrating success makes people feel good about their work, their colleagues, and themselves. More important, it reinforces the values and mission of the organization. Celebrating the behavior you want to see is one of the easiest, most effective ways to get people to buy into a new culture at an emotional level.

Many leaders are unaware of the power of celebration. They may think celebrating is unnecessary—it should be enough just to know you have succeeded. They may already be focusing on the next challenge. Or celebrating may make them feel uncomfortable, because they don't know how to give or receive praise.

But celebrations are powerful ways to influence behavior. They give employees special moments they can share. They stimulate a deep-rooted commitment to organizational goals, because they help create a sense of belonging and acceptance. Showcasing successes “generates a sense among everybody that you can make a difference and that there's a structure that supports your good ideas,” says Colonel Dick Frishkorn, former director of quality for the Air Combat Command.

In short, celebrating success helps develop an emotional covenant that shapes behavior.

Most public organizations don't know how to throw a party. And even if they do, they worry about being criticized by elected officials or the media. So the first rule is to celebrate unabashedly. Have fun, and don't be defensive about it. When Alan Krause was a deputy in the New York City welfare department, he held staff celebrations in classy restaurants, staged fashion shows, even hired rap groups to perform songs about reducing error rates.

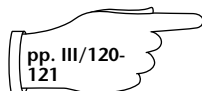
Another rule is to be clear about what you're celebrating. To celebrate *success*, you must define what success is—for the organization, teams, or individuals. It should be closely related to the organization's mission, goals, and values. For example, managers, union representatives, and employees of the 6,000–



[Click Here to order](#)

employee Internal Revenue Service center in Ogden, Utah, decided to celebrate their “champions”—people who exemplified a customer orientation, innovation, and dedication. Phoenix annually honors city employees who implement innovative ideas or take extraordinary actions.

In both places, employees decide who wins these awards—an excellent way to make sure employees buy in emotionally. Some organizations use on-the-spot awards, in which peers can honor one another without going through nominations and selections. Peer awards create powerful emotional bonds among employees. (For more on performance awards, see Chapter Six.)



Celebrations don’t have to be planned; they can be spontaneous, like Joe Thompson’s luncheon. But it helps to establish a more formal, ongoing process as well. One reason is that this allows lots of employees to get involved—and to be recognized. From 1987 to 1991, the Ogden IRS office honored more than 1,400 champions. Eighty-seven of them had their names engraved on a “quality champion” board in the hallway of the center’s main building.

Making celebrations a fixture also helps deal with political and media scrutiny. It says to elected officials and journalists, “When we perform well, we celebrate—just like you do when you win elections or break big stories.”

When you can, it makes sense to invite your stakeholders and customers. In particular, get the “big cheeses” there: the mayor, the governor, CEOs, union leaders. Their presence builds interest in the event and makes the celebration even more meaningful to workers. And it insulates the organization from attack.

Do’s and Don’ts of Celebrating Success

Spread the honors. Keep the process of identifying success from getting too clubby; don’t let any clique hog the awards.

Let the public in on your success. Phoenix broadcasts its annual ceremony over the city’s cable TV channel. Sandra Hale, former commissioner of administration in Minnesota, worked tirelessly to generate newspaper and television coverage of celebrations. She called her campaign “exposing good government.” “If the public hears only criticisms of your agency, there is nothing to bank against,” Hale explains. “One of my reasons for wanting to get out the positive messages . . . was to develop the kind of relationships that would help us in the tough times.”

Defend yourself against people who attack you for celebrating. When the state treasurer in Minnesota criticized Hale’s use of \$10,000 for an employee recognition day and dinner, Hale shot back: “What would they have preferred we use [to motivate employees]? Whips?” She repeated this everywhere. It sent a strong message to her organization—and to politicians who liked to take potshots.



[Click Here to order](#)

Don't just look for "home runs," or extraordinary successes. Find the smaller successes and celebrate them, too. They offer employees a more believable model of what they, too, can accomplish.

Don't celebrate just individual accomplishment. Team and organization-wide accomplishments are as important as individual accomplishments—even more so.

RECOGNIZING EMPLOYEES: PITFALLS TO AVOID

- Nominating processes that take too much of the nominators' time.
- Having too many different kinds of awards.
- Awards that lack clear standards.
- Giving people in more visible jobs more of the recognition.
- Favoritism in making awards.
- Elitist celebrations that exclude people.

HONORING FAILURE

***Honoring Failure* turns innovations that fail into opportunities to improve performance and promote innovation—not occasions to blame and punish.**

Government organizations are extremists when it comes to failure. At one extreme, they ignore it; pretending it didn't happen seems to make it so. At the other, they punish the people who try something new and fail. The sum of both extremes is a "no mistakes" organizational culture of blaming and fear, cover-ups and snow jobs. This discourages employees' creativity, preventing innovation and improvement.

Yet an innovative, entrepreneurial organization will always have failures, simply because its members are trying new things. This is widely recognized in the private sector. "Tolerance for failure is a very specific part of the excellent company culture—and that lesson comes directly from the top," wrote Peters and Waterman in *In Search of Excellence*. "Champions have to make lots of tries and consequently suffer some failures or the organization won't learn."

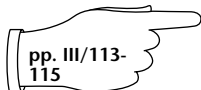
The same is true in the public sector. When the Ford Foundation and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government launched their Innovation in American Government Awards, in the mid-1980s, one of the first things they learned was that the winners experimented constantly. Just as in any other field, they made progress through trial and error, and they learned from their errors. Few of the winning innovations emerged full-blown from innovators' minds.

New York City's School District Four, which pioneered public school choice, provides a perfect case in point. Its leaders tried new schools, grew the ones that



[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor's Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik



succeeded, and shut down the ones that failed. As Seymour Fliegel said in his book *Miracle in East Harlem*, “The District Four experience suggests that in order to build a network of good schools, one also has to be willing to fail.”

One response to failure phobia is to create a performance management system that can distinguish between honest mistakes and behavior that requires sanctions. Another important antidote—albeit a tough one for many leaders to swallow—is to honor those who try new things and fail. This tool honors risk taking by signaling an understanding that, as Peter Drucker once said, “Innovative ideas are like frog’s eggs: of a thousand hatched, only one or two survive to maturity.” The eggs that don’t make it are honorable failures.

This is initially a leader’s tool, because only leaders can change the “no mistakes” tone and create safety for employees. How they deal with failures—other people’s and their own—matters greatly.

There are many ways to communicate that your organization values innovation, even when it fails. Here are a few:

Celebrate honorable failures. Ted Gaebler created the best example we know when he served as city manager of Visalia, California. At the suggestion of two of his department heads, he created an award for the year’s most spectacular failure. One year he even won it himself, when he suggested at the annual corporate report meeting—without checking with his city council and with television cameras rolling—that the city distribute its surplus in the form of “dividends” for its shareholders, the citizens.

You don’t have to use a formal award. In the late 1980s, in Michigan, Doug Ross encouraged a particularly entrepreneurial staffer, Geri Larkin, to create a new program to support start-up companies. After a year and a half, it became clear that it was not working. Larkin recommended closing it down. Ross decided she was a hero: she had tried something for which she had a passion and that fit the department’s mission, she had documented the results, and she had told the truth about them. So at a departmental gathering, Ross recognized her and told her story.

Honor your free spirits. Another method is to give awards to the free spirits in the organization for breaking the mold and pushing their innovations. The Albuquerque office of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service gives a Giraffe Award to people who “stick out their necks.” The Department of Veterans Affairs gives out Scissors Awards to employees who cut red tape and improve efficiency.

Declare an amnesty. Stephen Cohen and Ronald Brand, authors of *Total Quality Management in Government*, recommend an organization-wide “amnesty” that signals that employees will not be punished for reporting that performance is poor. The amnesty encourages employees to “tell management



[Click Here to order](#)

the truth” about what is working and what is not.

Hand out forgiveness coupons. Dan Beard, former commissioner of the U.S. Department of Interior’s Bureau of Reclamation, issued forgiveness coupons to his senior managers. They read: “It is easier to get forgiveness . . . than permission.” Managers could cash them in when they made mistakes.

Protect your employees from punishment. It’s not enough to permit or celebrate honest mistakes; it’s even more important to protect employees from punishment. Butch Marita, a former regional leader of the Forest Service, understood that fending off vengeful Washington staffers was part of his job. Often, when Washington headquarters wanted him to punish an employee who had goofed up, he just ignored them. Typically, the pressure went away.

The economist John Kenneth Galbraith perfected this technique when he was director of the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey in Europe, at the end of World War II. Gifford Pinchot III tells the story in his book *Intrapreneuring*:

Under his care were a few unruly mavericks whom he could count on to succeed at any task too tough for the military system. Unfortunately, these doers of the impossible had little respect for the system and were always in trouble. Galbraith received stacks of complaints urging him to discipline them.

Galbraith knew that bearing down on them was out of the question, but he had to do something about the avalanche of complaints. He hit upon this solution: each time he received another complaint he would lift up his desk blotter, slip the complaint underneath, and forget about it. Soon the inevitable follow-up call would come: “Major Stuffed Shirt here, have you done anything about that impertinent So and So?” Galbraith would respond, “Funny you should mention that. I have your memo right in front of me on my desk. Rest assured I am handling it as it should be handled.”

Prepare the politicians for failure. One of the biggest fears in government is that failures will be made public—drawing ridicule or punishment from elected officials and the media. In a hostile environment, public officials ask, how can organizations be honest about their mistakes? When little that government does can be kept confidential, how do you engage in self-criticism that surfaces problems?

There are no easy answers to this. Cohen and Brand advise organizations undertaking quality-based improvement projects to limit how much self-criticism they put into writing. Another tactic is to package reports on mistakes together with reports on successes. When you have the politicians in to celebrate success, also acknowledge some failures in front of them. Even better, bring



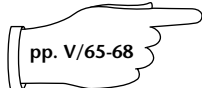
[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor’s Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik

the politicians into the organization's change process and educate them about the fact that there will be failures as well as successes. If they develop some ownership of the changes, they will be more tolerant of failures.

Sometimes, you can announce mistakes before they happen. In the 1980s, Doug Ross created the first state government youth corps in Michigan. He anticipated that starting up the program in just two months—signing up 40,000 youths and putting them to work—would lead to problems. So he publicized a toll-free telephone number—inviting the public to let him know if they saw youth corps workers loafing or causing problems. When the calls came, Ross welcomed them. He did not have to defend the program, just improve it.

Reinvent the role of the auditors. Often it is not the politicians people fear but the auditors. When Vice President Gore began holding “town meetings” at federal departments in 1993, he found the employees’ most bitter complaints were reserved for the inspectors general and their staffs, who stifled innovation by investigating every time someone deviated from the rules and regulations, regardless of their motives or results. Many leaders of the 300 reinvention labs that sprung up over the next few years were careful not to report in detail on what they were doing, for fear of the auditors. The solution, which Gore and his reformers have worked hard to achieve, is to reinvent the role of the auditors.



NEW RITUALS

***New Rituals* are special events that embody and reinforce the new culture. Repeated regularly, they give people new touchstones. When they are participatory, they also draw people in, helping them make the emotional commitments required by the new culture.**

The 1,000-member Phoenix Fire Department uses many rituals to shape its members’ emotional commitments. One of the most important occurs when Chief Alan Brunacini hands a small red booklet, *The Phoenix Fire Department Way*, to new hires. It is the agency’s Bible. On the cover is a space for the new firefighter’s name. Inside are the commitments a Phoenix firefighter must make.

Like novices entering a religious order, the new firefighters commit publicly to follow “the way.” It is all part of winning their hearts. “We deal with people very personally—intensely,” says Brunacini.

We hold their hand. We tell them they’re going to be okay, they’re going to survive. Those are very primitive things, but they are very socializing. We put our hands on people.

Like many organizations, the U.S. Defense Department’s Defense Reuti-



[Click Here to order](#)

lization and Marketing Service has an annual meeting of its 100 or so top managers, to align the organization around the same vision and to plan strategy. When Captain Don Hempson ran the organization, two of the top brass—a different two each time—would appear at a key dinner dressed as “Reut Rabbit” and “Bucks-a-Billion Bunny.” No one could tell who was under the costumes, but it didn’t take them long to figure it out. The ritual, corny as it was, reinforced the sense of play Hempson wanted to create in an otherwise formal military organization. It also helped create a sense of family and teamwork within a world that was normally very hierarchical.

Not all rituals have to be participatory to be effective. In Minneapolis, Superintendent Peter Hutchinson appeared on the school district’s cable television channel every weekday evening at 6 o’clock to read books to children. He started the ritual to communicate the enormous priority the district placed on improving student reading. “I probably read 100 books,” he says.

Rituals sometimes mark organizational passages: endings, beginnings, even wanderings in between. The induction of Phoenix firefighters marks a beginning. In the late 1980s, the Minnesota Department of Revenue used a ritual to mark an ending.

The department was about to move to a new, much nicer office building. But many employees were grumpy about the disruption. They worried about being across the river, away from the restaurants. They worried about having to walk too far to catch their buses. They fretted about losing their current offices—even though the new building was a palace compared to their old one.

Finally, one of the managers got tired of all the complaints. He announced that they were going to have a “funeral” for the old building. He and others built a wooden coffin and got permission from the fire department to light a bonfire under it. They promoted the funeral throughout the department.

“We said, ‘Bring symbols of the old Revenue Department and burn them,’” remembers Babak Armajani, then deputy director. “Then we’re going to move across the river, and we don’t want to hear any more about the move.”

Employees responded enthusiastically.

People brought all kinds of stuff: memos, dead rats, furniture, you name it. It was a cold afternoon. People stood in line and threw stuff in. We burned it up, and everybody cheered. After that, there was no more bitching. People started saying, “When are we going to move?”

You can make rituals out of almost anything: graduation and award ceremonies, annual meetings, homecoming ceremonies, holiday parties, speeches, even collective bargaining exercises. The key is the content: if possible, involve employees in something that helps them let go of the old culture or embrace the new.



[Click Here to order](#)

INVESTING IN THE WORKPLACE

***Investing in the Workplace* upgrades the quality of the standard-issue working environment, which demonstrates a commitment to public employees.**

John Glenn tells an apocryphal story about orbiting the earth the first time. As he rode in the tiny space capsule, he says, it was a great comfort to know that everything keeping him aloft had been purchased from the lowest bidder.

In truth, NASA does not always buy from the lowest bidder. But many other public organizations do. The rule, for less exotic employers, is all too often, “Invest as little as possible in the quality of the government workplace.”

“When I took over TAC, the appearance and upkeep of the aircraft in that huge fleet could most charitably be described as *shabby*,” remembers Bill Creech. “In fact, in my first swing around TAC’s many bases nationwide, I found lots of *eyesores* which had no place in an outfit that ever hoped to be proud and professional.”

The problem is not limited to American governments. When Derek Volker became director of the Australian Social Services Department, he took one look at the carpeting in its hundreds of welfare offices and knew he had to do something about it. “It was a horrible *bluey* color that immediately stained once somebody dropped something on it,” he says. “It was stained, looked horrible—but very, very good-wearing stuff. So it would last for five years, with all the stains all over the place, and with cigarette holes in it.” He quickly replaced it with pastel-colored carpets that created a more cheerful atmosphere.

Employees read management’s indifference to workplace quality as a signal that they, the workers, are not valued. This affects their attitude, reducing their sense of commitment to the organization and producing a culture of low expectations. Leaders like Volker and Creech make upgrading the workplace a central part of their culture change strategies. Creech was a fanatic on the subject: he had virtually every building in TAC repainted, he gave the mechanics new uniforms and cleaned up their facilities, and he launched programs with names like “Proud Look” to refurbish every part of the organization. (The joke was that if you stood on a corner at a TAC base for too long, you’d get painted brown.)

To change the pattern of chronic, debilitating underinvestment, public organizations must take a number of steps:

Figure out which changes will make the most difference to employees.

Just as with customers, you can’t assume you know until you ask. For some employees, it’s not the office that matters the most. As we describe in Chapter 17, in the 1980s, the city of Madison, Wisconsin, bought new cars for its police department. The city was concerned about costs and saving fuel, so it bought



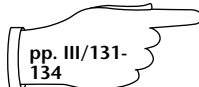
[Click Here to order](#)

small, fuel-efficient vehicles: Omnis and Horizons. But their engines were weak and they were too small for transporting arrestees or drunks. The officers hated them. “Nobody had asked the officers how they wanted their *offices* to look,” says Michael Masterson, a captain in the department.

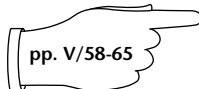
Find the money you need to invest in workplace quality. Figure out where you can save money, or what you’re spending money on that you can abandon. “We funded [workplace investments] out of our many savings elsewhere, as our family of quality programs took hold,” Creech says.

One way to reduce costs is to have employees do much of the work. When Creech had all TAC facilities repainted, TAC workers did the job. Creech joined the crew that painted his headquarters—generating a powerful story for the organizational grapevine. (They still call the color TAC used “Creech brown.”) To hold costs down, he often had facilities refurbished and renovated rather than replaced. He even opened what he called “self-help stores,” where employees could pick up wallpaper, paint, building materials, tools, brushes, and the like for free.

I had another rule: if the government paid for a new thing, I tried to have a 2–3 percent self-help component. Say I’m building a new squadron building; I complete it 98 percent, but I don’t finish off the pilot briefing room and so on—and I give them the materials to finish it. So they own it. . . . Invariably when I would go into a building they would show me what they had done, not what the government had done for them.



Another way to find money is to use shared savings: allow employees to keep budget savings they achieve and invest them in improving workplace quality.



Make government purchasing systems more employee-friendly. Adding fresh paint and changing carpeting doesn’t take care of the systemic causes of underinvestment. You have to tackle the procurement process, which usually values low cost over quality and ignores what employees want. The Madison police built employee satisfaction into bidding specifications for new cars, police radios, winter boots, guns, and other equipment. When officers were given a voice in selecting their cars, says Masterson, their purchases consistently came in under budget while satisfying employees.

REDESIGNING THE WORKPLACE

***Redesigning the Workplace* reinforces the emotional commitments you want, such as a sense of teamwork or a commitment to customer service.**

Derek Volker didn’t just replace the carpets in his welfare offices. He also had the television sets in the waiting rooms moved. Usually the TVs were hung from the ceiling so clients could watch them and the service counter at the same time. In one office, however, the staff couldn’t hang the set from the ceil-



[Click Here to order](#)

ing, so they put it on the wall across from the counter. Then they turned all the seats in the room around to face the TV.

“The tension in this office, which was a fairly difficult one, just dropped completely,” says Volker. Clients “weren’t worried about what was going on at the counter,” he explains. “They were concentrating on the TV.” This reduced the pressure on employees enormously. So Volker told all welfare offices to move their televisions onto the wall opposite from the service counters.

In Volker’s case, redesign was a simple, almost accidental change. In other cases, it is a profound, well-thought-out restructuring of the basic relationships in the organization. Consider the story of Martin Raff and the U.K. Employment Service we told at the beginning of this chapter. By taking managers out of their offices and putting them in with their employees, Raff proved to employees how deep his commitment was to a less hierarchical, more teamwork-oriented organization. When managers go so far as to give up their offices, they earn enormous credibility for the new culture.

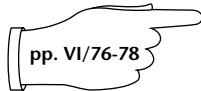
Minnesota’s Department of Revenue conducted a major reengineering project in the early 1990s that required enormous cultural changes. Some supervisors who got excited about the new culture decided to attack the stress levels among employees who sat all day, wearing little rubber tips on their fingers, processing tax returns. First they created a “stress room,” where employees could go at any time and listen to music. Management backed it completely. “We just said, ‘Our supervisors will worry about it if people disappear,’” says Babak Armajani. Next they hired a full-time industrial nurse to deal with medical complaints. Then they turned one employee into a full-time “stress reliever.”

“Among other things, she would carry a boom box with her, and every so often she’d walk into the processing room and tell everybody to stop working,” remembers Armajani. “Then she’d turn on the boom box and lead them in five or 10 minutes of aerobics. People loved it, and it led to much higher productivity.”

Finally the stress reliever convinced Armajani to turn a room in the basement into a gym. “We got sick leave way down, much lower than the rest of state government,” he says. “We got an incredible return on those investments.”

If you want to be sure to get employee buy-in, go one step further and give them control over workplace design. Quit telling them what they can do with office plants and coffee makers and the like. And if you have the courage, invite them to redesign their offices or shops.

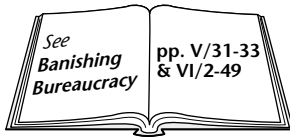
Madison, Wisconsin, did this with its Experimental Police District, set up in 1991. The 38 volunteers who staffed it designed their own station, a one-story house renovated around an open-space plan. A three-year evaluation of the district by the National Institute of Justice found increased satisfaction with



[Click Here to order](#)

working conditions and increased interaction among employees.

INVESTING IN EMPLOYEES



***Investing in Employees* shows workers that management is serious about the changes it advocates, because it is investing in the employees' capacity to make those changes.**

To change your culture, we argued in *Banishing Bureaucracy*, you have to convince people to let go of their old paradigms, cope with the confusion they experience, and finally embrace a new paradigm—a new set of assumptions that revolve around customer service, innovation, continuous improvement, empowerment, and results. You are asking them to trust you enough to let go of the safety of their old paradigm.

Most employees will do this very reluctantly. They have heard their leaders talk about change for years. They have watched department heads get excited about searching for excellence, producing total quality, reinventing government, and reengineering processes. They know everything there is to know about fads. By now, they could be from Missouri, because their attitude is “show me.”

If you really want the culture to change, in other words, you have to offer proof. One of the best ways to do this is to put your money where your mouth is: invest in helping employees develop the new skills and values they will need to succeed in the new culture.

Sunnyvale, California, offers a good example. Its culture is one of hard work and an intense focus on bottom-line results. It produces high stress levels. Yet most employees have fully embraced that culture. Why? In large part because Sunnyvale is willing to invest in them.

Union president Loren Wisner feels good about working for Sunnyvale, he says, even though “people are really pushed to the limit, and they don’t get a lot of strokes around here.” When we asked him the best thing the city had done in his 20 years to improve morale and performance, he talked about its training courses. Any employee can take any course for free—in management skills, customer service, even writing skills. “I’ve really benefited from this organization,” he said. “I’ve taken a lot of training, and it’s really helped me. I’ve had some really positive experiences—and it’s that way for a lot of people.”

But investing in employees means much more than training. The seminal study on what motivates employees identified seven factors, in the following order of importance: achievement, recognition, challenge, interest, responsibility, advancement, and salary and benefits.

Investing in employees means investing in all these things. To give employees greater opportunities for challenge, achievement, and advancement, you will need what is often known as an employee development program. In Visalia, Ted Gaebler asked for volunteers to create the program, then trained



[Click Here to order](#)

them. They set up training courses, did career counseling, and even did internal consulting. Because it was run entirely by employees, the program helped staff members get out of their boxes and stretch themselves. It both facilitated and symbolized an important piece of Visalia's culture: the fact that good employees could move up very quickly.

Carol Cairns was a police officer when she volunteered to help create the employee development program. She ended up as the city's human resources director. And she was not alone: Gaebler also plucked his risk manager, his municipal services director, and his general services director from the police department. At the airport, he promoted the secretary to manage the place.

Every employee in Visalia knew these stories. It meant an enormous amount to them that employees who worked hard and showed an entrepreneurial bent could rise quickly to the top of the organization. This opportunity to rise as far as your talents can take you—this very real commitment to job mobility for employees—is one of the best ways we know to get *everyone* in the organization, from the top managers to the most junior secretaries, to commit to the new culture and give their all.

"Promotions are the lifeblood of an organization and have tremendous symbolic as well as actual impact," says David Couper, former chief of police in Madison. "Who gets promoted sends a louder message than any words from management. It sends a strong message throughout the organization as to the direction of the department and the values of top management."

In 1986, when Couper first surveyed his employees, the promotion process was their biggest concern. Given that feedback, he created a quality leadership council, made up of nine volunteers, to advise him and his management team on implementation of quality principles department-wide. It took on the issue of promotions as its first challenge. Led by a sergeant, it looked at public and private promotion processes and listened to people in the department. It then recommended an eight-step process for all promotions except to captain—including creation of a "quality leadership academy" that anyone applying for a promotion would have to attend. This meant Couper could no longer decide who would move up, but he signed on. "The chief gave up a tremendous amount of his discretion, his power," says Captain Mike Masterson.

BONDING EVENTS

***Bonding Events* develop powerful new relationships among groups of employees, based on trust, collaboration, and taking shared responsibility for producing results.**

On a Saturday morning in 1989, Peter Plastrik found himself sitting in a conference room with about 20 other employees of the Michigan Department of Commerce. His heart was pounding and he felt very nervous. He didn't like



[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor's Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik

what was happening, and he wasn't sure what was going to happen next. Looking around the room, he could tell that many of his colleagues—maybe all of them—felt the same way.

They were guinea pigs, a group that had volunteered to start addressing racial problems in the agency. Months earlier, a leadership team had identified relations between black and white employees as a critical issue that needed attention. Black employees felt they were subject to various forms of discrimination. Plastrik (who is white) and others had arrived that morning to work with a facilitator, C. T. Vivian, a minister and legend of the civil rights movement. No one knew what to expect, although word had gone around that Vivian's style was "confrontational."

An hour into the meeting, Plastrik would have said that "confrontational" was an understatement. He felt verbally assaulted by the aging, wiry black man. Even humiliated. Years later, he remembered the painful feeling, although not all the details. Vivian had subjected the white members of the group to harsh questioning. Were they racist? No? How could they say that? How did they know? What did they really know about black people and their condition in America? Where did they get their ideas about black people? He had thundered at them for what seemed like hours. They were winners in a society that victimized blacks. They only knew blacks as stereotypes. Vivian seemed to have an endless stream of angry accusations and tricky questions.

Occasionally, Vivian turned to the blacks in the room for affirmation of his views. They seemed unsure about how to react, but they did not deny what he said. "The level of intensity was pretty much set for everybody—black folks as well as white folks," recalls Willard Walker, the agency's personnel director (who is African American). "It was total exposure, even for those of us not directly challenged in any way except to sit through it and watch C. T.'s process. I didn't like watching the pain; it was not nice."

Several people, including a black man, walked out of the meeting and did not return.

When the group broke for lunch, Plastrik was seriously depressed. He dreaded going back in for more punishment. He considered leaving, but did not. Over the food, no one talked much. After a while, they filed back into the meeting room. The chairs were arranged in a horseshoe, and Plastrik sat at one of the ends.

When everyone was seated, Vivian came over and stood in front of Plastrik and asked him to stand up. When he did, Vivian took his hands and held them. He looked Plastrik in the eyes and said softly, "I ask you to reconcile with me." Plastrik did not understand. Vivian explained briefly that he wanted Plastrik to forgive him for the morning's treatment—that it had all been done to make Plastrik feel just a small bit of the oppression that is a daily burden for blacks in



[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor's Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik

America and that is unknown to most whites.

When Plastrik told Vivian that they were reconciled, Vivian moved on to the next person in the same manner, then worked his way around the room. The tone of the meeting changed miraculously. Everyone talked about the experience and their feelings. The awful pressure in Plastrik's chest eased.

The meeting proved to be a breakthrough. It led to a prolonged, often intense and candid dialogue between black and white employees about their racial relations. "Those who sat through it were the better for it," says Walker.

We felt a responsibility to put the relationships among us back together again. That was the strength of the whole thing. We all felt the pain—but we did a decent job of talking about it after C. T. left. We didn't try to pretend it didn't happen. The strength of the experience was when we tried to set up communications after C. T. left. We carried the dialogue forward.

The participants developed and implemented a plan to improve racial relations. "The trust, discussion, and dialogue that were built enabled us," Walker says. They got the agency to commit to new strategies for minority recruiting, promotions, and mentoring. And leaders invited all other employees to attend Vivian's training, if they wanted to.

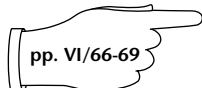
"Those people heard stories about what had happened," Walker says. "There was peer pressure on them to go, too. They thought, 'If I don't do this, I may not be viewed the way I want to be viewed by my colleagues.'"

The retreat with C. T. Vivian built bonds that were still powerful half a dozen years later. "The results of that experience are still with many of us," Walker notes. "It still sustains our relationships. You can tell by the way we greet each other and continue to come to each other when things are going wrong."

The Power of Bonding Events

A bonding event is a way of jump-starting or hastening the process of building emotional bonds in an organization. Not all of them are emotional battlefields. In Chapter 21 we discussed "critical mass events" such as large-scale, real-time strategic planning. These are bonding events, too. They bring employees together to work on the organization's direction. Some—but not all—of that work involves making new emotional connections.

Bonding events do not even have to involve the organization's work: you can take employees off to do other work that builds new emotional bonds. For example, Xerox has had teams of employees spend a day building a house for poor people in their community. Its leaders think this is valuable because em-



[Click Here to order](#)

ployees get to build something of value, the company communicates its commitment to helping others, and the employees bond with one another during the work.

The most valuable bonding events happen when you put real time, energy, and care into them. Not every bonding event has to involve the tension and drama that C. T. Vivian provided—but they do have to create emotional risks, to get the participants to make significant new emotional commitments.

The Michigan Commerce Department experience illustrates several key elements of successful bonding events:

They overcome the workplace taboo against showing and dealing with emotions. Most employees leave their emotions at the door when they get to work. “We spend years and years editing our emotions at work—for very good reasons,” observes John Johnson, a longtime organizational development consultant.

If we show them, we get into trouble. People can get demoted, fired sometimes, or shunned by others. So the work setting is essentially non-emotional. Usually, it is not an intimate community.

Bringing emotions out into the open and working with them is not easy and often risky, but it is absolutely necessary. “If you want people to join together, then they must begin to buy into the dreams and deep commitments of the person next to them,” says Johnson.

They overcome the lack of trust, respect, and acceptance that divide people in most organizations. “Trust glues people together,” says Steve Kaagan, a consultant, professor of leadership development, and former Vermont commissioner of education. “If there isn’t mutual trust, there’s no lubrication for bonding.”

During bonding events, group members build trust by learning to respect and accept one another. “Trust is built by consistently respecting other people’s fundamental humanity,” explains Kaagan.

During the process, you uncover people’s individual gifts, honor them, and use them. It’s amazing to see. You’ve worked with each other for years, and you know so little of each others’ gifts. Suddenly, you’re in a group that knows what you can bring to the table, that appreciates each others’ gifts. That’s key to creating a sense of belonging.

They build a strong sense of personal responsibility for shared goals and efforts. After their encounter with C. T. Vivian, each of the Commerce Department participants wanted to work on the problem of bridging racial rela-



[Click Here to order](#)

tionships in the agency. They had different ideas and feelings about what should be done, but they took responsibility for making something happen together. “When this happens,” says Kaagan, “you get tremendous emotional energy.”

The ABCs of Bonding Events

John Johnson describes the process of bonding as a “journey you take with other people, a direction you go in together.” A bonding event “quickens the process.” It gets individuals “to experience each other in moments of substantial challenge and stepped-up emotions. They experience handling each other’s emotions and helping each other take on the challenge and survive.” There are many ways to make this happen. Johnson has taken groups on canoe trips for several days in the Boundary Waters of Minnesota. He has also had groups do gourmet cooking for one another at his home. Some organizations, such as Outward Bound, specialize in creating bonding experiences for teams. They take groups sailing, mountain climbing, or hiking together for a week or two.

The key to a bonding event is to challenge people in ways that open up and change their hearts. First, people must get away from work for a prolonged period. When the Michigan Commerce Department decided to take a leadership group off for a breakthrough retreat, its consultants said four days would be required. This seemed excessive to Plastrik, who was designing the event. But as it turned out, every minute of the four days was necessary.

Second, you must create an emotionally safe environment in which people can try out new ways of relating to one another. “People need practice at this,” says Kaagan. “Building new emotional bonds doesn’t happen naturally in organizations; you have to try it out and see the outcomes.” Usually, a trained facilitator is needed to make the bonding environment safe and to keep it that way. “No greater wounding can take place than to have this emotional opening up followed by repression,” says Kaagan. “Everyone in an organization can give you chapter and verse about this happening: ‘I tried it once, I opened up, and later someone came in and stepped on my face, and I haven’t said a word since.’” The facilitator makes sure this doesn’t happen.

Obviously, the boss must be on board. The leader’s behavior during a bonding event is crucial. Is he receptive to or defensive about what is said? Is she willing to examine and change her behaviors? Every move the leader makes will be interpreted by others in the group. These signals can build trust or destroy any hope of building trust.

Third, you must create structured challenges for the group that remove barriers between members and give them compelling opportunities to work together. This, too, usually requires the help of consultants skilled at designing group dynamics. Good facilitators have an enormous kit of group exercises that can be used to design the bonding event. Some challenge participants’



[Click Here to order](#)

perceptions of one another and of themselves. Others require participants to solve problems that force them to work in new ways with their colleagues.

Fourth, you must be ready for what can happen when the lid comes off. Often people vent their anger, resentments, or anxieties. David Couper, the former police chief in Madison, Wisconsin, remembers the anger that spewed out when he first met with employees to find out how they thought the department should change: “It was like dealing with a foster child, an adopted child, saying, ‘I’m going to be bad to see if you really love me or not, Dad.’”

Venting is natural in people who have kept their emotions tightly reined for years. “People need an opportunity to vent at authority,” Kaagan says. “They need some kind of escape valve, a chance to get things off their chests. Once that’s done, you can get on with the real business.”

A key part of the real business is to get people to overcome their fear of voicing concerns about the organization and about other members of the group. “People need air time, they want to be heard,” says Kaagan. They need help naming dangerous issues such as racial or gender discrimination and then discussing them.

Just as important, they must learn to listen to one another. “People also want to know that they were heard. It means a lot to them when others hear the content of what they’re saying, then can play it back to them, and take responsibility to build on what they said, not just go off in their own direction.”

As participants build trust during bonding events, they begin to see one another in a different light. They learn to be more accepting of one another, instead of assuming the worst motivations on the part of others. They realize that other people can change. And—slowly—they learn to take responsibility for the health of the group, not just for their own well-being. Participants stop waiting for someone else to take act; they stop being bystanders.

“The process creates a different relationship between the I and the we,” says Kaagan.

Every I is joining to form a we. People start feeling a collective responsibility. You can see it in their words and bodies. They start to attack tasks together. Nobody sits back. You can feel the excitement.

Finally, you must organize the follow-up. The event accelerates the journey, as John Johnson says, but it is not the entire journey. Before people leave the event, they should make commitments about what they will do together when they get back to the organization. There is always the risk that nothing will happen because of the distractions of the daily grind. The group needs to anticipate this problem and figure out how it will keep its momentum going.



[Click Here to order](#)

RESOURCE ON BONDING EVENTS

Stephen S. Kaagan. *Leadership Games: Experiential Learning for Organizational Development*. New York: Sage Publications, 1998. Kaagan gives readers 25 useful exercises to employ in bonding events.

SENDING VALENTINES

***Sending Valentines* is a group exercise in which employees tell other work units what they would like them to do differently. It helps them speak the truth to one another without getting hung up in workplace rivalries and antagonisms—and to change their commitments to one another.**

This tool, described by Robert Jacobs in *Real Time Strategic Change*, breaks down barriers between people in an organization and builds powerful commitments among them.

At a meeting, people in each unit in the agency create wish lists of changes they want other units to make. As Jacobs explains, these “valentines” list the things others need the unit to do differently in the future so that the entire organization can better meet its customers’ needs. For example, line employees might tell the procurement office they need supplies when they order them—not six months later. They might tell the maintenance shop they need their vehicles fixed right the first time. Participants sign and post their valentines on a wall under the name of the appropriate department.

Then the departments read the valentines they have received. This is the first tricky step in the exercise, because most units will react defensively. Typically, a consultant coaches participants in how to prepare non-defensive responses and how to deal with other people’s defensiveness. Jacobs describes what often happens next:

*You pass the Valentine sheets around and read them, vent your frustrations and note who sent which Valentines. . . . It’s not easy for people to make the shift from blaming others to taking responsibility for your function’s contribution to the problems plaguing the entire organization. . . . You finally break through. It is at this point that the message becomes very clear. The only way to bring about significant change across the organization is for everybody—including you—to make it happen, to start **doing** things differently.*

As a result, units begin to commit to some of the changes the valentines requested.

The process offered employees in Sedgwick County, Kansas, “an opportunity to say things to each other that often wouldn’t be said otherwise,” says

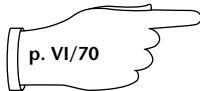


[Click Here to order](#)

Jerry Harrison, an assistant county manager.

The way it plays out it's not a "gotcha." Instead it's more like "Let me help you so you can help me. . . ." People really didn't realize the impact they had on other departments, but when they kept getting the same messages from all over the county it became easier to see these themes and became harder to ignore them all. . . . The messages are so clear that something clicks and you see the world differently.

And that is what culture change is all about.



RESOURCES FOR SENDING VALENTINES

Robert W. Jacobs. *Real Time Strategic Change*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1994. We recommend Jacobs' excellent book in Chapter 13. The section on sending valentines is on pp. 84–85.



[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor's Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik

Notes

All quotations that are not attributed in the text or in these endnotes are from interviews with the authors or their associates. Only in cases where there might be some confusion about the source of a quotation have we indicated in a note that it came from an interview.

Chapter Twenty-Two

- P. VI/72: Creech quotation (“Quality begets quality . . .”): Bill Creech, *The Five Pillars of TQM: How to Make Total Quality Management Work for You* (New York: Dutton, 1994), p. 171.
- P. VI/73: Creech quotation (“Such symbols can be . . .”): Ibid., p. 172.
- Pp. VI/73-74: Raff quotations: Martin Raff, *Leading Transformation* (Salisbury, England: British Deming Society, 1995), p. 13.
- P. VI/75: Emerson quotation: quoted in Al Gore, *From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government That Works Better and Costs Less* (Washington, D.C.: National Performance Review, 1993), p. 72.
- P. VI/77: Stone’s story: See David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1992), p. 10.
- P. VI/80: Hale quotation (“If the public hears . . .”): Sandra J. Hale, “The Minnesota Approach to Revitalizing Government,” in *Lessons for Florida: The Minnesota Approach to Revitalizing Government*, ed. Florida Center for Public Management (Tallahassee: Florida State University, 1992), p. 8.
- P. VI/80: Hale quotation (“What would they have preferred . . .”): Quoted in Kim Ode, “She Strives to Make System a Pleasant Surprise,” *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, Oct. 20, 1987, p. 1C.
- P. VI/81: Peters and Waterman quotation: Tom Peters and Robert Waterman, *In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America’s Best-Run Companies* (New York: Warner Books, 1982, p. 223.
- P. VI/81: “When the Ford Foundation . . . full-blown from innovators’ minds”: Fred Jordan, *Innovating America* (New York: Ford Foundation, 1990), pp. 117–118.
- P. VI/82: Fliegel quotation: Seymour Fliegel, *Miracle in East Harlem: The Fight for Choice in Public Education* (New York: Times Books, 1993), p. 126.
- P. VI/82: Drucker quotation: Peter F. Drucker, “The Innovative Organization,” in *The Frontiers of Management* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1986), p. 261.
- P. VI/83: Galbraith quotation: Quoted in Gifford Pinchot III, *Intrapreneuring* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), pp. 146–147.
- P. VI/87: Creech quotations: Creech, *The Five Pillars of TQM*, pp. 171, 173.
- Pp. VI/88-89: “A three-year evaluation . . . interaction among employees”: Mary Ann Wyckoff and Wesley G. Skogan, *Community Policing in Madison: Quality from the Inside, Out: Executive Summary* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1993).
- P. VI/89: “The seminal study on what motivates employees . . . salary and benefits”: Frederick Herzberg, *Work and the Nature of Man* (New York: World Publishing, 1966.)



[Click Here to order](#)

◆ **Notes**

- P. VI/90: Couper quotation: David C. Couper and Sabine H. Lobitz, *Quality Policing: The Madison Experience* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1991), p. 62.
- P. VI/91: Jacobs quotation: Jacobs, *Real Time Strategic Change*, p. 84.
- P. VI/97: Harrison quotation: *Ibid.*, p. 85



[Click Here to order](#)

From *The Reinventor's Fieldbook*, by David Osborne and Peter Plastrik. ©2000 by Osborne and Plastrik