

a:0324cofe - Outline for talk to Flint Chapter MSPE on

Conflict & Turmoil in the Engineering Profession -

Thursday, April 3, 1986

Random ideas about the subject

-The engineering profession has traditionally been splintered by disagreement and conflict with other related professions with which the engineer must interact.

-Examples of this are the attitudes among the construction professionals, the architect, the engineer and the builder.

-In industry we see the conflict between the inside and the outside - the inside being the internal operations of the company and the outside being the technical consultants brought in to provide services not available from inside staff

-Frequently the outside resource is used as a check and balance to what may be perceived as an inside bias.

-Much of my work is done as an outside review party to what has already been thought through by the company personnel itself.

-Many years ago, even recently, and in some cases, to this day the conflicts produced by the clashes of this type were able to be accommodated by the high professional attitudes and constructive level of advice brought to the conflict by both or one of the parties.

-However the system has always been fragile and more and more frequently today we see the fragility violated by those who have ulterior motives in disturbing

effect.

March 27, 1986

-The chasm of misunderstanding between the constructing and the designing groups is a source of concern because it leads those who perceive deficiencies in either sector to venture into those sectors without sufficient knowledge to be effective in them

-The complicating factor in many situations is the interposition of the legal obligation of the parties with the (escape) position they would like to take.

-The escape position is often presented as a method of doing something that someone wants to do, who does not feel he may have the qualifications for, but would like to try it because he feels better equipped than those who are formally equipped, but the new entry feels better qualified (usually by experience) to accomplish than he who is legally qualified (this observation has been deliberately made obtuse because it must stimulate some heavy thinking about the subject

-The principal of synergism is one that has been relegated to a far back seat because it makes a person think too hard about what others are doing that he or she might utilize effectively

-Top management is guilty of not properly gluing the pieces together in most management situations - they simply do not understand the need to work together in an effort that produces corporate results as compared to individual aggrandizement

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- Start by reading news article
re eat ~~light~~ bite

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a:cofe0331 - Outline for Flint talk on Conflict & Turmoil in the Engineering Profession

A. Introduction The existence of a conflict & turmoil problem is evident to some, obscure to others and severely debilitating to all

I. Is conflict & turmoil always bad?

a. Not if the end product of the turmoil is one that produces an effectively used result without excessive perimeter damage along the way

b. Conflict & turmoil should be used as a tool of the professional to create, as opposed to destroy

II. Where do we see the manifestation of conflict & turmoil?

a. The very inexperienced, the evil and the very experienced all have the capacity to use conflict & turmoil as a weapon to destroy what threatens their positions

b. A societal tolerance question is raised when the inexperienced use conflict & turmoil without realizing its negative impacts

c. An individual ethical question is raised when the very experienced use conflict & turmoil deliberately to achieve goals & objectives for themselves or others

d. A code of behavior or a moral question is raised when the evil person uses conflict & turmoil to further the encroachment of evil on our society

e. There are other levels of questionable and of positive uses of conflict and turmoil in our society that must be addressed by all the subgroups operating in the interstices between the three major elements addressed a moment ago

f. None of you in this room should feel personally threatened by these opening remarks.

g. None of you in this room should feel professionally threatened by these opening remarks

h. None of you in this room should be offended by these opening remarks

i. WHY?

j. Those of you who are inexperienced are learning of a way of thinking just by being here - from me, or from others that should wean you from the amateur to mature - notice the juxtaposition of the prefix

k. Those of you who imagine you are evil are probably experiencing a temporary aberration. I seriously doubt that any of you are evil in the sense that you deliberately espouse destruction or weakening of society's mores - however bad or good they may be at any given moment

l. Those of you who are very experienced may become temporarily or semi temporarily disillusioned and disappointed with society as a whole,

your profession as a group, and your environment as a horse collar - you are

fair game for an experiment in conflict & turmoil to see how much influence,

power and strength you can focus on a situation to make it turn out the

- PHWS
- CLIENTS/
EMULATOR
- PERX

MENTION
HIERARCHY
OF VALUE
SYSTEM
FOR
ENGINEERS
ATTORNEYS

CLIENT
FIRM
?

way

you want it to turn out. **YOU ARE ON DANGEROUS GROUND!!!**

Let's look at some specific examples of conflict & turmoil in the engineering profession

(I) In construction the attitude of the construction professionals among subcategories such as design, construction, ownership, vending, subcontracting and on and on ad nauseum

(II) In industry there is the conflict between the inside & the outside - the inside revolving around the internal operations and product of the corporation, while the outside focuses on the technical consultation needed

to provide expert knowledge and objective evaluations of potentially imbedding environments.

(III) Frequently the outside resource is used as a check & balance to what may be perceived as an inside bias. Here the conflict & turmoil is tempestuous and dangerous. Give examples - the dangers of Dodge City, the positioning at GS, the poor timing at D & A, the disintegration of the management planning function in a major engineering and fabrication operation CAS, etc. *

(IV) 0331 - St Louis, Missouri

-News broadcast

The media casts all kinds of implications of attack and resistance with heavy emphasis of technical data and its interpretation

One squib presented a technical opinion without identifying the technical expert who made the presentation

WHERE IS THE EXPERT?

WHO IS THE EXPERT?

-Oddly the program referred to above was sponsored by Buick Motor Car

-A matter of scale is always imposed on the dishonest action by physical, situational or personal impacts on the situation

-Interesting conflicts are presented to you today in such forms a a sign that reads "NOBODY ALLOWED PAST THIS POINT WITHOUT EAR PROTECTION"

-Yet 100% of the people that pass the point have no ear protection

-Technically - and it is a technical point - is this dishonest?

-The mechanical engineer of record is unable to design a mechanical system

to accommodate the desires of a lay owner. He says he will not be a party to having a contractor, legally qualified to practice mechanical engineering, redesign the system, subject to his (the engineer's) review. The reason given is that the contractor design is not to the standard that the engineer feels is demanded by the project. WHO CONTROLS THE JOB? WHAT WOULD YOU AS,

THE ENGINEER DO? WHAT WOULD YOU AS THE OWNER DO? WHAT WOULD YOU

AS THE

CONTRACTOR DO? WHAT RELATION DOES THIS HAVE TO PROTECTION OF

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LIABILITY?

HEALTH, WELFARE

& SAFETY OF THE PUBLIC? (this is one of our basic priorities, not maintaining an economic or quality stance in the face of inability to pay)

The seriousness of all this is that the conflict level is raised by those who stand to gain by the conflict and who understand far better than we (the relatively naive engineer) how to move the conflict level to its peaks and then to help resolve the problem by systems acceptable to society.

(I) Notice that the conflict is now in the hands of others. Many years ago, even recently, and in some cases even today, the conflicts produced by the clashes of this type were accommodated by the high professional attitudes

and constructive levels of advice brought to the conflict by both or one of the parties.

(II) The system is fragile in a litigious society

(III) Often the conflict is initiated by those of one discipline (religion?) who perceive deficiencies in the field of another. This leads to a venture into that field without sufficient knowledge to practice it - and often leads the expert to harden his position sufficiently to insure that any new good coming from the interloper will be efficiently aborted irrespective of worth

(IV) The complicating factor in many situations is the interposition of the legal obligation of the parties with the (escape) position they would like to take

(V) The escape position is often presented as a method of doing something that someone wants to do who does not feel he may have the qualifications for, but would like to try because he feels better equipped than those who have taken on the legal responsibility for the work

What can be done to help alleviate the situation?

(I) We all must better understand the relative position of the parties to any process

a. Management often draws further and further from the actual process of doing without providing the needed leadership that makes the doing process effective.

b. Statements such as "I don't know who those people are. They may or may not work for me" - confusion of the issue by "What was is that fellow's name?" or - "I'm just not going to pay him for that work" - but all this is complicated by a jargon that really says a lot without saying anything. Often the communication link is one that can easily be interfered with by language static, by red herrings that lead the emotional down paths

that end in active conflict rather than a positive solution to a problem

c. Most of the problems we face are people problems not problems introduced by the physical environment. Therefore we must learn all we possibly can about people and what makes them tick. As we learn it is important to practice what we are learning so it does not remain academic, but actually is practiced as a way of life.

(II) The use of synergistic processes should be made a way of life. Synergistic principals have recently been relegated to a far back row for reasons which are obscure. Synergism is combining a number of elements of a given value into a combination of greater value than that of the individual elements standing alone

a. Sometimes the synergistic system will help modulate conflict by sheer return on investment in resolving problems that reduce profit potential.

b. If it can be shown that debilitating conflict is engaged in at the cost of lost profit potential, then a cogent argument can be made for its ongoing use.

c. The use of synergism in reducing conflict levels requires you, the individual, the professional, the manager to search more thoroughly for optimum utilization of resources.

d. Top and middle management is guilty of not properly gluing the pieces together in most management situations - they simply do not understand the need to work together in an effort that produces corporate results compared to mere personal aggrandizement.

e. Continually search for methods by which the talents you have at your disposal can be more effectively used. Concentrate on assembly rather than dismantling.

(III) Responsibility for one's actions must be given back to the individual. This in turn will create a need in each individual to behave in a personal mode rather than a corporate mode.

a. A minute ago I said there is a need to work together for corporate effectiveness rather than individual aggrandizement. This can best

be done by the individual making a personal impact on the corporate action, that is in the best interests of others. The return benefit is almost inevitable. Increased respect, extra learning, extended informal interfaces,

greater personal involvement in business opportunities - the list of benefits

is long and authentic.

c. The concept of uninsured or unrepresented personal and professional liability may be difficult to cope with initially, and will probably never be totally achieved. However a constant effort to get rid of the indifferent, but financially biased representation would be a major step

forward.

c. You can be a part of the movement toward such conflict independence by reasserting your own personal and responsibility for your actions. Liability insurance feeds on those who perpetuate it. Bonding feeds

on those who perpetuate it. The animal can only be destroyed by starving it



professional

to death.

d. How can I talk like this? What gives me any idea that going bare might just work? What do I know about the impact of lack of bonding capacity on the ability to take work?

Well I do have some personal and vocational experience with many of these situations, but draw my basic hopes and thoughts from the industrial melag's *melage*

as it existed at one time in the dim, dark past. There have been times in the past where the competence, integrity and honorability of the professional individual was the stamp of the insurer and the surety.

e. What has changed? Do we really want to return to the kind of a life that allowed the professional to practice comfortably and with a risk that was considered a responsibility of the individual and his employer

To start the analysis we might look at one of the most common generators of

the disputed claim in the construction industry - deficient or defective contract documents. This item was found in a recent survey of 200 contested

claims to account for 41% percent of the disputes.

In classes I teach at the University of Wisconsin the overpowering complaint

of owners, contractors and design professionals is either the inability or the lack of ~~time~~ *effort & time* to produce good drawings and specifications!

Who is to blame? How can we say it is someone outside of this group? How can

we say it is the fault of society and its - and I gag on these words - life style. Does "society" want to prove it is able to cope with the unethical professional ~~and does it~~ through the legal processes available to all laymen? Do all the attorneys want to make their fortune off the generic construction industry?

I seriously doubt any of these is totally true - instead I feel it is within our own ball park it is best to thrash out the methods of coping with destructive conflict.

-Take some of the ideas from the common causes of contested claims handout

to present to the group as specific approaches

-Stress the need to pay the professional to do what it is that you wish to have done.

-The design professionals must better define where they fit into the

project
delivery system

-the people active and influential in the various professions must learn more about the nature of destructive conflict and work toward reducing its intensity and focus. Conflict must be channeled into arguments about the relative merits of a technical system, as opposed to fighting a major battle about which of two or more defective participants is the least wrong!
