



A Condensation

Busting Bureaucracy: A Condensation

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(Nobody likes to read this kind of stuff. We wish we didn't have to do it.)

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A Condensation of the book:

Busting Bureaucracy

Introduction

Some years ago in our company (Kaset), we discovered something very important about bureaucracy. We noticed that the process of becoming customer focused seemed to reduce the worst effects of corporate bureaucracy.

At first we thought we had discovered an unexpected side benefit of being customer focused. Then we noticed something else. As organizations began to reach the middle phases of the transition to a customer focus, the bureaucracy began to be a barrier to further progress.

From those observations, we offer the following assertions:

1. In the early stages of becoming customer focused, the negative effects of bureaucracy are noticeably reduced.
2. In the later stages, bureaucracy becomes a barrier to becoming customer focused.

We recognized that if we were to fulfill our mission at Kaset of helping organizations achieve extraordinary customer relations, we needed to help them reduce or eliminate bureaucracy. After researching everything we could find written on bureaucracy, we discovered that lots of writers had written about what bureaucracy is, but very little had been written about how to reduce or eliminate it.

In 1992, I announced that I was writing a book on how to reduce or eliminate bureaucracy, and handed out some preliminary thoughts (this document). The purpose of the finished book would be to help people in organizations reduce or eliminate the negative effects of bureaucracy in their organizations. As I worked on the book, I kept discovering things that I didn't yet know, so I spent another year partly in writing, and partly in finishing my research.

What follows this introduction is the outline, or skeleton that I wrote before I finished the book. It gives you an overview of the book, and tells you the entire story that I have to tell about bureaucracy. What is missing is the detail: the examples, the “how to’s” that you will eventually need to reduce or eliminate bureaucracy in your organization. Think of this as a condensation or highly concentrated version of the book.

As I finished writing the “how to’s,” I sent this condensation to a number of writers, speakers, and consultants, along with a request for stories and examples. I will extend to you the same offer I extended to them. Read through this, and see if examples and real life situations come to your mind. If they do, and you’re willing to send them to me (ken@busting-bureaucracy.com), along with the appropriate section or page reference, I will put the most interesting and informative stories and examples on this website, along with your name, if you wish. You won’t get any money or royalties for your stories, but you will have advanced the cause of de-bureaucratization and perhaps provide a little notoriety for you.

How to Read the Book *Busting Bureaucracy*

In the book, sentences printed in bold are followed by text and examples or illustrations provided from my experience and other observers. The book is organized so you only have to read the bold portions to get the whole story. If you want some elaboration or illustrations, you can stop to read the text that follows. That way, you can make your own path through the book. You get what you're interested in getting, or need to get, and won't be required to plow through material you already know or have little interest in.

If you enjoy the ideas in this condensation, you will love the book.

Ken Johnston, author and dedicated bureaucracy-buster.

An Overview of Busting Bureaucracy

A. Organizations that organize based on the bureaucratic form exhibit many objectionable characteristics that their customers and employees describe as “bureaucratic.”

When customers report being dissatisfied with businesses and governmental organizations, they call them “bureaucratic” for many reasons.

Customers call an organization “bureaucratic” if it:

- Has rigid policies and procedures that customers think of as “red tape.”
- Is so committed to giving customers “*equal* treatment” that it doesn’t notice that equal treatment means “*unequal* satisfaction.”
- Seems inflexible and unresponsive.
- Has standard procedures that don’t satisfy the customers.
- Seems very difficult to get exceptions approved.
- Appears “uncaring,” i.e., customers are treated more like “numbers” than individuals.
- Is unwilling to admit mistakes, and attempts to shift blame for their own mistakes, onto the customer.
- Seldom innovates, and seems reluctant to change as times change or events dictate.
- Has products and services of inferior quality (compared with non-bureaucratic organizations).
- Is hard to reach during “company” hours, and during busy periods may not be reachable at all.
- Seems arrogant or humorless.

Inside the organization, employees live with some very negative by-products of the bureaucratic form.

Employees say an organization is being bureaucratic when:

- Every department has its own agenda, and departments won’t cooperate to help other departments get the job done.
- There is political in-fighting, with each executive striving for personal power.
- People in their department spend much of their time protecting their department’s

“turf.”

- People in *other* departments spend so much time protecting their “turf” that there isn’t enough time left to achieve the organization’s mission.
- They are treated as though they can’t be trusted.
- They are treated as though they don’t have good judgment.
- They are treated as though they won’t work hard unless pushed.
- Their work environment includes large amounts of unhealthy stress.
- The tendency of the organization is to grow more and more top-heavy, while the operating units of the organization tend to be too lean.
- Promotions are more likely to be made on the basis of politics, rather than success on the job.
- Top managers are dangerously ill informed and insulated.
- Information is hoarded or kept secret and used as the basis for power.
- Data is used selectively, or distorted to make performance look better than it really is.
- Internal communications to employees are distorted to reflect what the organization would like to be, rather than what it really is.
- Mistakes and failures are denied, covered up, or ignored.
- Responsibility for mistakes and failure tends to be denied, and where possible, blame is shifted to others.
- Decisions are made by larger and larger groups so no one can be held accountable.
- Decisions are made based on the perceived desires of superiors, rather than concern for mission achievement.
- Policies, practices, and procedures tend to grow endlessly and to become more rigid.
- Senior managers become so insulated from the realities of the front line that they may use stereotypical thinking and out-of-date experience in making decisions.
- Quantitative measurements are favored over qualitative measurements, so the concentration is on quantities of output with less and less concern for quality of output.
- Employees and customers are both treated more as numbers than people. Personal issues and human needs are often ignored or discounted.

B. The undesirable attributes of bureaucracy cannot be blamed on the people in the organization; they are created because the company is organized based on the bureaucratic form.

Max Weber, a German sociologist, wrote a rationale that made the bureaucratic form legitimate for units of government, and its use spread to business organizations. Even though his writings have been widely discredited, the bureaucratic form lives on.

The bureaucratic form has six major principles.

1. A formal hierarchical structure

Each level controls the level below, and is controlled by the level above. A formal hierarchy is the basis of central planning and centralized decision making.

2. Management by rules

Controlling by rules allows decisions to be made at high levels, which are executed consistently by all lower levels.

3. Organization by functional specialty

People are organized into units based on the type of work they do, or skills they have.

4. An “up-focused” or “in-focused” mission

If the mission is “up-focused,” then the organization’s purpose is to serve the stockholders, the board, or whatever agency empowered it. If the mission is “in-focused” its mission is to serve the organization itself, i.e., to produce high profits, to gain market share, or to produce a cash stream.

5. Purposely impersonal

The idea is to treat all employees and customers equally, and not be influenced by individual differences.

6. Employment based on technical qualifications

There may also be protection from arbitrary dismissal.

The bureaucratic form according to Parkinson has another attribute.

7. Predisposition to grow in staff “above the line”

Weber failed to notice this, but C. Northcote Parkinson found it so common that he made it the basis of his humorous “Parkinson’s Law.” Parkinson demonstrated that the management and staff tend to grow at predictable rates, almost without regard to what the line organization is doing.

The bureaucratic form is so common that most people accept it as the normal way of organizing almost any endeavor. People in bureaucratic organizations generally blame the ugly side effects of bureaucracy on management, or the founders, or the owners, without awareness that the real cause is organizing based on the bureaucratic form.

My contribution is noticing that the *groups above and below the line have different missions*. The mission of the group above the line tends to be up-focused, or in-focused. The mission of those below the line is to do the work of the organization. This is also in-focused, but with different goals, and with a different team than those above the line.

C. Some other attributes of bureaucracy have to do with a set of beliefs that are found wherever the bureaucratic form is followed.

All functions and people must be under control.

In bureaucracies, the goal is to decide all issues in advance, and make procedures black and white. There is little room for gray. In a customer-focused environment, the goal is to give guidelines and allow the service provider to use judgment.

All functions of planning and control have to be done by management.

In bureaucracies, it is assumed that all controlling, reacting, responding, and flexing must be done by management.

Managers and managing are more important than the people who achieve the quality or satisfy individual customers.

It is bureaucratic to think that the higher you are on the organization chart, the more important you are.

Ambiguity is intolerable, and must be resolved.

In bureaucracies, everything is black or white. There is little room for gray.

Consistency has value.

Perhaps at one time consistency was seen as an aid to good quality, or to satisfying customers, but, as the focus of the organization turns inward, the idea simply becomes that consistency is important. Objective observers will notice that much of the damage to quality or to customer satisfaction comes from the importance that bureaucracies attach to the idea of consistency.

Equal treatment for everybody is fair for all.

All you can say about equal treatment for all is that it will result in unequal satisfaction for all. Bureaucracies value the process of equal treatment, but ignore the outcome of unequal satisfaction.

The notion of the slippery slope: “If I do it for one, I have to do it for everybody.”

This is an argument that pops up almost automatically in bureaucratic thinking, and is a sister to the beliefs about consistency and equal treatment for all. This idea is so pervasive because there are some situations in which it is true. The error is in over-generalizing the idea and applying it where it is patently false, and almost foolish.

It is important to minimize choices.

Because of the hierarchy and control from the top that characterize bureaucracies, choices are seen as confusing to customers and employees. The reality is that choices are confusing *to those making up the rules*, and to keep their job simple, they tend to minimize the number of choices given to customers and employees. It might even be said that, “The more bureaucratic the organization, the fewer choices offered to customers and employees.”

Work should be divided up by functional specialties and, where possible, work should be done by specialists.

The result of this belief is that workers tend to be organized into groups of similar workers, rather than organized by products produced, or customers served. The result of organizing people into groups doing similar work does great damage to the achievement of quality products, or to satisfying customers.

It is important to manage with a “problem-solving” approach.

In the problem-solving approach, someone — usually a manager — looks at a problem, “fixes” that problem, then moves on to the next one, without addressing the root cause and with no encouragement to address the root cause. When quality or customer satisfaction is everyone’s goal, then problems don’t have to be solved by managers alone. Empowered people, aspiring to continual improvement, can be trained to not only solve the immediate problem, but also to find the root causes and fix them.

D. There are better ways to organize an enterprise. If you were starting from scratch today in a service industry, you could organize your business using the “customer focus” model. If you were forming a business totally based on hard products, you would adopt the “total quality” model. If your business has both needs, then you could adopt a hybrid model, called the “customer-focused quality” model.

The “Customer-Focused” Model

Instead of a formal hierarchy, the customer focus model uses a very flat organization in which authority is delegated as near to the front line as possible.

Instead of management by rules, the customer focus model uses “empowerment with guidelines.” Employees are empowered to make the decisions necessary to satisfy the customer. They have guidelines to use, but are empowered to abandon the guidelines if they don’t result in satisfying the customer.

Instead of an up-focused or in-focused mission, the customer focus model has an “out-focused” mission. The mission focuses on satisfying — or better yet — dazzling the customer. The organization trusts that if it succeeds in satisfying or sometimes dazzling the customer, it will be able to achieve a good profit. High profit is not seen as the goal, but as a by-product of satisfying or even dazzling customers.

Instead of always organizing employees by the type of work they do (e.g. draftsmen, accountants, computer programmers), the customer focus model leads to organizing by multi-disciplinary teams to serve specific customer segments.

Instead of being purposely impersonal, the customer focus model balances both human and business concerns. The customer-focused organization manifests caring and concern for employees and for customers, in balance with concern for quality in the business aspects.

Instead of hiring based on specific skills or prior training, the customer focus model suggests hiring for both professional skills and the desired human attributes.

Instead of providing protection from termination, the customer focus model connects security with achieving the mission, i.e., satisfying or dazzling customers. Employees are protected from arbitrary termination, and termination is largely reserved for those unable or unwilling to satisfy customers.

Instead of a predisposition to grow “above the line,” the customer focus model aims to create one unified team (perhaps made up of many smaller teams), with everyone focused

on the same mission. When an organization succeeds in having everyone in the organization aligned around a single over-arching mission, incredible energy is available for mission achievement.

The “Total Quality” Model

The total quality management model is very similar to the customer focus model in terms of:

- Flattening the hierarchy
- Empowering people at all levels to do what is needed to ensure quality
- Using guidelines to replace rules

The differences are that the quality mission can be seen as being somewhat more in-focused, and there is less emphasis on adding the “human” back into the work environment.

Another difference is in what is measured. The customer-focused organization is driven by customer satisfaction measurements, which are at least partly qualitative, and the quality-focused organization uses quantitative measure to monitor quality.

Another difference is that the quality model offers increased profits via cost control, and the customer focus model offers increased revenues and improved margins via increased customer satisfaction and increased customer loyalty.

The “Customer-Focused Quality” Model

Pick one over-arching thrust or the other as the umbrella under which you organize. You want everyone in the organization to align around one common mission, and you don’t want two teams, one aligned around product quality and the other aligned around customer satisfaction.

Customer satisfaction is the easier overall thrust, in my judgment, because product quality fits comfortably under the customer satisfaction mission. Customer satisfaction — under a quality mission — tends to become in-focused and quantitative, rather than out-focused and qualitative. The difference is that if your organization is in-focused, it will pick up some of the bureaucratic attributes that stem from being in-focused.

Once you have the overall aligning mission, you will probably discover that people in the organization either tend to be involved *serving internal or external customers*, or they work on *producing the product*. You organize the organization using the principles of the customer focus model, and you differentiate the groups through the training you give them, and the measurements you use to give them feedback.

E. In existing bureaucratic organizations, one way to reduce bureaucracy is to attack the symptoms —fighting one symptom at a time — whether or not you decide to go further. It would seem valuable to train all of your employees and managers to recognize the symptoms of bureaucracy, so everybody could participate in reducing bureaucratic actions. This will also provide peer pressure to minimize the chance that bureaucratic symptoms would re-emerge.

You can take steps to deal directly with any one of the symptoms of bureaucracy that affect customers, suppliers, and others outside of the organization.

To combat *red tape*, you could:

- re-create your procedures taking the customer's point of view.

To combat *customer dissatisfaction*, you could:

- change the basic strategy in your culture from providing equal treatment to providing equal satisfaction.

To combat *inflexibility and unresponsiveness*, you could:

- train and empower front-line people and managers to be more responsive.

To combat the *impression that you don't care* about customers, you could do the things that you would do if you did care, including:

- make your policies, practices, and procedures "customer friendly"
- train, coach, and empower employees to be flexible and responsive
- train, coach, and empower employees to be friendly and caring
- consider the human needs of your customers as well as their business needs

Then, your customers would have real evidence that you care.

To avoid the impression that you are *unwilling to admit mistakes*, you can:

- train employees and managers in the fundamentals of "recovery."

Recovery is the art of handling mistakes that your people or the organization makes. Recovery is accepting responsibility, apologizing, making things right, going at least one extra step, and following up to make certain you've recovered. Recovery

is the art of turning a blunder into a positive memorable customer experience.

To combat customers' perceptions that your *organization isn't innovative*, or that your *products and services are below par*:

- use intrapreneurship, "skunk works," multi-disciplinary task forces, acquisitions, or a "quality" program.
- do whatever else you can think of to keep the oppressive weight of bureaucracy from stifling your organization's future.

To combat your customers' observations that *you aren't accessible*, become more accessible:

- add more hours to your workday.
- add 800 numbers to make it easy to reach your organization.
- add to the people who staff your customer contact points, so people don't suffer intolerable waits.
- open more offices, branches, or other points of contact so people can talk face-to-face with human beings if they wish.

To combat outsiders' observations that your *organization is arrogant and humorless*:

- change your strategy on public relations and advertising (and stop your senior people from being arrogant and humorless).

You can take the same approach, one symptom at a time, to reduce the negative effects of bureaucracy on the people in your organization.

To stop *departments from being in conflict* with one another:

- require that all departments nest their individual missions within the larger mission, and if necessary, reorganize into multi-disciplinary teams, and away from functional units.
- begin collecting feedback for each department from the departments they serve or interact with. Link the departmental manager's performance, and departmental funding, to the department's success in supporting other departments and helping to remove obstacles rather than being obstacles.

To stop *political in-fighting*:

- link individuals' goals to organization-wide goals. This will ensure that managers need to collaborate to achieve their goals.
- begin collecting peer and subordinate feedback for middle and upper managers, and eventually use it as part of the assessment and compensation system.
- change the budgeting "game."

To stop *turf protection*:

- balance the top-down feedback for manager evaluations with peer-level feedback on issues like collaboration with and support for other departments.
- Or, organize into multi-disciplinary teams focused on customer segments. The only "turf" will be the specific customer segments, and the only way to protect turf will

be to achieve the mission of satisfying those customers.

If you have an *environment where employees are treated as though they can't be trusted, as though they don't have good judgment, and as though they won't work hard unless pushed*, then:

- take steps to change your culture, values, and management style. Nobody yet has been able to get quality or commitment to customer satisfaction from disaffected, underutilized people that you manage by monitoring, controlling, and disciplining.

If you have a situation where the *normal work environment includes damaging amounts of unhealthy stress*, then:

- switch the emphasis from in-focused assessments of productivity, or cost containment, to customer-focused assessments.
- get rid of subjective, top down, in-focused, procedurally-based assessments of individuals that people feel they can't control, and replace them with objective, multi-sourced assessments that are mission-related.

If your *management and staff have grown more and more top heavy*, while the lower ranks of the organization tend to be too lean, then:

- re-deploy your people and your resources. Downsizing doesn't do enough to help beef up the lower ranks of the organization to ensure enough people to improve customer access, serve customers well, and/or do a quality job.

If *promotions are typically made on the basis of politics*, rather than mission achievement, then:

- inject an assessment of mission achievement as a factor in promotions, or,
- change the rules on how people get promoted.

If *top managers have become dangerously ill-informed and insulated*, then:

- use employee attitude surveys, customers surveys, MBWA (managing by walking around), and employee-focus panels to collect input to inform them. Make sure the senior people have access to samples of the raw information, rather than have it digested and interpreted by managers along the way.
- An alternative approach, and probably a better one, is to change the nature of the decisions that top people make by delegating operating, planning, and even strategic decisions to key people close to the front lines.

If *information is hoarded or rationed and used as the basis for power*, then

- break up the game by making virtually all non-strategic information widely available.

If *data becomes distorted to prove what is desired, rather than what really is*, then

- open up new channels of information and communication so distortions show up.

If *internal communications to employees have become distorted to reflect what the organization would like to be, rather than what it really is*, then

- reverse the process by introducing "straight talk."

If *mistakes and failures are denied, covered up, or ignored*, and responsibility tends to be denied, then change your management style from discipline, to coaching. Teach and promote “recovery,” and look at your systems, not your people.

If *decisions are made by larger and larger groups*, making responsibility easily deniable, then

- introduce the concept of decision sponsors, and track decision times.

If *decisions are made based on the perceived desires of superiors*, rather than concern for mission achievement, then:

- take steps to be less hierarchical, and increase measurements and feedback on mission achievement.
- Another alternative would be to link promotions and compensation practices to feedback collected from peers and subordinates in balance with top-down assessments.

If *policies, practices, and procedures tend to grow more ponderous and to become more rigid*, then

- redefine them into red and green rules (redefine the green ones as guidelines, and empower employees to ignore the guidelines when they interfere with mission achievement).

If *senior managers are so insulated from the realities of the front line that they use stereotypical thinking and out-of-date experience in making decisions*, then:

- delegate strategic and tactical decision power as close to the front line as possible.
- let the senior managers work the front lines one or two days a month. Adding new channels of feedback from the front lines will help, along with increased emphasis on participative decision-making.

If *quantitative measurements are favored over qualitative measurements*, causing people to concentrate on quantity rather than quality of output, then:

- withdraw the quantitative measurements and introduce qualitative measurements.

If *employees and customers are treated more like numbers than people*, and personal issues and human needs are often ignored or discounted, then:

- re-introduce the human component until it balances with the business component

F. A more powerful way to reduce bureaucracy is to modify one or several of the basic principles of the bureaucratic form. This does not require the adoption of a new organizing model, but it can bring more relief than fighting bureaucratic symptoms one at a time.

You could:

- Change from an in-focused or up-focused mission, to a mission focused on quality — or better yet — the customer.
Either new mission would require you to introduce new measurements (either quality or customer satisfaction) *based on customer feedback*. You could then allow the new measurements to take priority over the current measurements that measure in-focused goals. Once people at all levels understand that you really do have a new number-one priority, you have a chance of having a mission around which the entire organization is willing to be aligned.
- Convert from a hierarchical structure to a flat organizational structure by reorganizing to reduce layers and redeploying people to focus on dazzling customers, achieving higher quality, or both.
- Further reduce hierarchy by doing more participative management, and moving toward consensus decision-making.
- Convert from a managing by “rules” to empowering with guidelines.
- Add empowerment, so people charged with executing the mission would have the flexibility to deviate when needed, to achieve the mission.
- Reorganize away from specialized functional departments, and toward multi-disciplinary teams organized by customer group or product segment.
- Decide not to be purposely “impersonal” and increase the emphasis on the “human” component in employee relations and customer relations.

The Japanese inadvertently moderated several principles of bureaucracy, and demonstrated how effectively a modified bureaucratic form can compete with bureaucratic enterprises.

Japanese companies still have a long way to go to eliminate bureaucracy; however, many successful Japanese organizations have:

- Missions focusing on quality, and clear strategies that serve to align managers and employees.

- A very strong and clear-cut “hierarchy,” but the worst effects of hierarchy are moderated somewhat by their cultural endorsement of consensus seeking.
- Moderated the bureaucratic effects of “specialization” by bringing different specialities together in project teams, and inducing specialists to subordinate their craft to the larger mission.

Even in the absence of multi-disciplinary teams, with a clear and aligning mission, departments are more likely to work harmoniously with other departments toward the larger mission, rather than toward in-focused missions of their own.
- Moderated bureaucracy by installing out-focused missions, and imposing Japanese cultural values on the bureaucratic form.

Businesses in the United States and Europe who seek to compete with the successful Japanese organizations have the opportunity to catch them or pass them up by using something other than the bureaucratic form.

Ways to Reduce or Eliminate the Effects of Bureaucracy

The most powerful way to reduce or eliminate the effects of bureaucracy is to adopt a new organizing model. You could replace the bureaucratic form with a “customer focus” model (Section G), or a “total quality” model (Section H), or the hybrid “customer-focused quality” model (Section I).

G. In a service organization you could replace the bureaucratic form with a “customer focus” model.

Note: If you have an important customer service component in your organization, you would choose the “customer focus” model (continue reading this section; then skip to Section I).

If you *don't* have an important customer service component in your enterprise, then skip to Section H, which deals with a “total quality” model.

Customer Focus Model: The outcomes you want are straightforward.

You want to:

- Replace the in-focused mission with a customer-focused mission that everyone in the organization will support. This makes possible the evolution of a single, unified, and harmonious team, all committed to the same outcome.
- End up with a very flat organization, with people at the front lines empowered to be flexible, responsive, and caring and friendly enough to dazzle customers. This will allow your customers to be satisfied quickly and responsively by front-line people.
- Have front-line people organized into multi-disciplinary teams, where everyone on the team is aligned with the mission of customer satisfaction. This ensures that the customer contact people don't have to cross any departmental boundaries to serve the customer, almost no matter what special needs the customer has.
- Have a balance of concern for the business and the human components of customer transactions. This gives you the chance to build customer loyalty, since most of the components of customer loyalty are produced by the human components of the business transaction.
- Select your employees for their interpersonal skills as well as their business skills, so you have people who value satisfying customers, and so you can have good teamwork.
- Make customer satisfaction matter to your front-line people, their supervisors and managers, and to make satisfying customers a condition of continued employment.

The steps you take during the transition are each, by themselves, not too difficult. The extent of the transformation makes it challenging, and requires patience.

Create and articulate frequently a new, customer-focused vision.

Your goal is something so simple, direct, and compelling that you can describe it in one or two sentences. When you get it just right, everyone in the company can align with it, and use it to test their individual initiatives and decisions.

Teach everyone his or her new roles.

Enlist everyone in the fight against the negative attributes of the bureaucratic model that have crept into the culture. Teach everyone in the organization to recognize destructive behavior so they can stop doing it, and help others stop using it. The purpose of this step is to help your people resist backsliding from the new and less comfortable customer focus model to the more comfortable and familiar bureaucratic model.

Teach front-line people the skills they need to dazzle customers.

Dazzling customers isn't hard, but it requires some special skills. Teach internal support people that everyone has a customer, and that internal customer satisfaction is a must before you can expect the organization to fully satisfy external customers.

Change the way managers deal with the front line.

Convert them from a disciplinary strategy to a coaching strategy. Customer satisfaction requires the kind of front-line support that isn't produced by control and discipline.

Change the way middle managers manage their segments of the organization.

Your middle managers need to evolve strategies for managing service. This requires innovation and initiatives that are not highly valued in the bureaucratic form, but are needed to help make the organization flexible and responsive to customers.

Get senior management committed to customer focus, away from the bureaucratic rat race, and skilled in management by walking around.

When managers spend time listening to the employees, they become much more aware of the barriers that keep people from functioning effectively with customers.

Monitor your progress internally.

Employee perception and attitude surveys, combined with employee focus panels, can give important feedback to those responsible for managing the transition. Use the initial employee measurements as a benchmark, and measure periodically throughout the transition as a progress check.

Monitor your progress with customers by collecting feedback from your customers.

Use continuous feedback rather than annual surveys so that you can react more quickly to problems and opportunities. Feedback at the level of the individual or small team allows you to give front-line people feedback on what will become the most important part of their jobs — customer satisfaction.

Reorganize the front-line people into multi-disciplinary teams focused on specific customer segments.

Do your best to have everybody you'll need on each team to satisfy virtually every customer need without having to cross any departmental boundaries.

Re-deploy as many of the people supporting an “up-focused,” or “in-focused” mission as possible.

You risk credibility if you don't dismantle much of the apparatus supporting up-focused, or in-focused, goals. Also, your bureaucratic model may have left you top-heavy and bottom-thin. Downsizing only solves one of those problems. Re-deployment of at least

the slots will allow you to solve both problems.

You also need to get senior managers out of the bureaucratic mire. Reducing the in- and up-focused sub-units will free people from the “memo-and-meeting” rat race so they can get out and meet customers.

Make it matter that front-line people, supervisors, middle managers, and senior managers support the customer-focused mission.

- Use the customer satisfaction measurements that you install as part of the assessment feedback used in evaluations of customer contact people.
 - Introduce new peer ratings and upward assessments so that managers get feedback from above, below, and from their peers.
- This will ensure that managers stop focusing solely on satisfying their boss (as in a hierarchical organization), and focus as much effort on supporting their peers, and removing obstacles and supporting those who report to them.
- Add consequences by changing the reinforcers.

Promotions, raises, rewards, and recognitions can all be realigned to reinforce the desired customer satisfaction behavior.

Make policies, practices, and procedures “customer friendly.”

- Open up new lines of information flow to get input from customers, suppliers, and employees on their satisfaction with policies, practices, and procedures.
- Generally, in-focused organizations create policies, practices, and procedures designed to meet internal goals. To support a customer-focused organization, the policies, practices, and procedures need to be rewritten until they are just the way that customers would ask you to write them: “customer friendly.”

It is useful to have the support of internal consultants and change agents.

Change processes and the principles of culture change are better understood today by organizational development specialists, and they can ease the transition. (Skip to section I.)

H. Organizations that are product driven, without a significant customer service component, can adopt a “total quality” focus.

This is very similar to the customer-focus section just prior (Section G). If you have an important customer service component *and* a product quality component, then read this and the next section on the combined thrust. If this doesn’t describe you, skip this section and go on to Section I.

The outcomes you want are straightforward.

You want to:

- Replace the in-focused mission with a quality-focused mission that everyone in the organization will support.

This makes possible the evolution of a single, unified, and harmonious team, all committed to the same outcome.

- End up with a very flat organization, with people at the front lines driven by the shared goal of total quality.
- Have people at all levels knowing and behaving as though all other goals and priorities take a back seat to quality in the products they participate in producing.
- Have front-line people organized into multi-disciplinary teams, where everyone on the team is aligned with the mission of achieving one or more products with extraordinary quality. This ensures that the people who do the day-to-day work of achieving quality don’t have to cross any departmental boundaries to solve problems or achieve quality improvements, no matter whether the needs are engineering, design, manufacturing, or assembly.
- Have the organization be concerned about the human needs of your co-workers, as well as the business needs of the people in your organization.

It is the organization’s caring and concern for people that builds loyalty and commitment to the organization’s goals.

- Select your employees for their interpersonal skills as well as their work skills, so you have people who value good teamwork.
- Make quality matter to your front-line people, and their supervisors and managers, and to make the support of product quality a condition of continued employment.

The processes you use for the transition are, by themselves, not too difficult. The extent of the transformation makes it challenging, and requires patience.

Create a vision of total quality for the organization.

Your goal is something so simple, direct, and compelling that you can describe it in one or two sentences. When you get it just right, everyone in the company can align with it, and use it to test their individual initiatives and decisions.

Enlist everyone in the fight against the negative attributes of the bureaucratic model that have crept into the culture.

Teach everyone in the organization to recognize destructive behavior so they can stop doing it, and help others stop as well. By making the fight against bureaucracy a conscious commitment, you help employees from backsliding into the comfortable old bureaucratic model.

Teach everyone his or her new roles.

- Teach front-line people the skills they need to play the new empowered role you want them to play. They'll need to know how to be more self-directed. They may need some additional interpersonal skills so they can work on multi-disciplinary teams and respect the people and values unique to those different disciplines.
- Teach internal support people that everyone has a customer, and that quality service to *internal* customers is a must if you expect the organization to deliver quality in products and services to its *external* customers.
- Change the way managers deal with the front line. Convert them from a disciplinary strategy to a coaching strategy. Total quality requires the kind of front line participation and initiatives that aren't produced through the traditional strategies of monitoring, control, and discipline.
- Change the way middle managers manage their segments of the organization. Your middle managers need to evolve strategies for managing the achievement of quality. This requires innovation and initiatives that are not highly valued in the bureaucratic form, but are necessary if that work unit, and those people are to be held accountable for the quality they produce.
- Get senior management committed to achieving total quality, away from the bureaucratic rat race, and skilled in management by walking around.

Monitor your progress internally.

Employee perception and attitude surveys, combined with employee focus panels, can give important feedback to those responsible for managing the transition. Use employee measurements as benchmarks, and as progress checks.

Monitor your progress with customers.

You need to collect feedback from your customers. Use continuous feedback rather than annual surveys so that you can react more quickly to problems and opportunities. Quantitative feedback on mutually established quality standards at the level of the

individual or small team allows you to give front-line people feedback on what will become the most important part of their jobs: total quality.

Reorganize the front-line people into multi-disciplinary teams focused on specific products or product segments.

Do your best to have everybody you'll need on each team to satisfy virtually every product quality need without having to cross any departmental boundaries.

Re-deploy as many of the people supporting an “up-focused” or “in-focused” mission as possible.

You risk credibility if you don't dismantle much of the apparatus supporting up-focused, or in-focused, goals. Also, your bureaucratic mode may have left you top-heavy and bottom-thin. Downsizing only solves one of those problems. Re-deployment, of at least the slots, will allow you to solve both problems. You also need to get senior managers out of the bureaucratic mire. Reducing the in- and up- focused sub-units will free people from the memo-and-meeting rat race so they can get out and spend time where quality is produced.

Make it matter that front-line people, supervisors, middle managers, staff managers and senior managers support the total quality mission.

If any unit seems exempt because of their special discipline, then look for ways to reorganize that unit and spread the individuals throughout multi-disciplinary teams.

- Use the quantitative (and hopefully some qualitative) measurements that you install as part of the assessment feedback used in evaluations of the work teams with quality objectives.
- Introduce new peer ratings and upward assessments so that managers get feedback from above, below, and their peers. This will ensure that managers stop focusing solely on satisfying their boss (as in a hierarchical organization), and focus as much effort on supporting their peers, and removing obstacles and supporting those who report to them.
- Add consequences by changing the reinforcers. Promotions, raises, rewards, and recognitions can all be realigned to reinforce the desired total quality behaviors.

Make policies, practices, and procedures support “total quality.”

Open up new lines of information flow to get input from customers, suppliers, and employees on their satisfaction with policies, practices, and procedures. Generally, in-focused organizations create policies, practices, and procedures designed to meet internal goals. To support a total-quality organization, the policies, practices, and procedures need to be rewritten until they satisfy everyone who must carry out your total quality mission.

I. Organizations with hard products that have a strong customer service component can adopt a combined thrust.

Give those people who are clearly involved with the product and its quality:

- The vision, guidance, and training needed to produce extraordinary product quality.

Give those people who are providing services internally, or are involved with the customer service component:

- The vision, guidance, and training needed to produce extraordinary customer satisfaction.

Give those people with overlapping responsibilities:

- Both sets of skills. Properly coordinated, the redundancies can be dropped and the two sets of skills will be seen to be in harmony.

J. To eliminate bureaucracy, you will need the support and participation of your entire management team.

Give your managers this book so your managers will understand the nature of bureaucracy and what the organization will need to do to reduce or eliminate bureaucracy.

Involve your managers, participatively, in deciding what to do about bureaucracy. Decide as a team how far to go, and what level of effort and priority to give it.

Whatever level of attack you make on bureaucracy, you'll want to teach managers about bureaucracy, so they can understand what they do that fosters it, and what they can do to reduce it.

Teaching managers about bureaucracy

Teach upper and middle managers the principles of sub-optimizing, so they won't mistakenly organize anything else sub-optimally.

It is de-bureaucratizing to take sub-optimized functional departments and disband them, re-deploying the people into the line units where they will be mission driven, not function driven.

It fosters bureaucracy to assign individuals or sub-groups a suboptimal mission within the operating unit.

It is de-bureaucratizing to assign individuals or sub-groups missions that are “nested” within the larger mission.

It fosters bureaucracy to delegate decision-making authority based on levels in the organization rather than experience, training, or proven judgment.

It is de-bureaucratizing to delegate as many decisions as possible as close to the front line as possible, based on experience, training, and proven judgment, rather than level in the organization.

It is bureaucratizing to attempt to control people at lower levels of the organization with rules, and especially so if those rules get in the way of achieving the mission.

It is de-bureaucratizing to participatively arrive at guidelines that people can use to govern their own actions. Managers then can replace control with observing and coaching.

It is bureaucratizing to require pre-action sign-off before subordinates can act, because pre-action sign-offs dis-empower, create bottlenecks, and destroy accountability.

It is de-bureaucratizing to use post-action review in those situations where external

controls are needed. Post-action review allows people to act as needed to achieve the quality or customer satisfaction mission, and then, in situations that require strict controls, be accountable to explain the actions they took.

It fosters bureaucracy to behave as though lower-level employees can't be trusted to work without being pushed, and can't be trusted to make good judgments on issues relating to their jobs.

It is de-bureaucratizing to behave as though lower-level employees can be trusted to work without being pushed, and to begin with the assumption that they have good judgment and will use it if given the encouragement and authority to do so.

It is bureaucratizing to carve out turf, defend that turf, and require others to inform you or get your input prior to making any decisions that might be interpreted as falling within your "turf." (This inhibits mission achievement and creates dependence, rather than independence.)

It is de-bureaucratizing to teach, grow, and empower others to make choices or decisions in areas in which you have expertise. Ideally, you use your knowledge and expertise to support mission achievement and to create independence, rather than dependence.

It fosters bureaucracy to organize so as to require front-line people to cross-departmental walls in order to access the support they need to achieve their mission. The more walls that must be crossed, the more opportunities there are for system snafus, delays, and customer frustration.

It is de-bureaucratizing to organize so that every human and material resource needed to satisfy the mission is available to front-line people from within the work unit, thus eliminating “turf boundaries” that have to be crossed.

It fosters bureaucracy to allow rules, guidelines, procedures, policies, or practices to stand unexamined in the face of employee or customer dissatisfaction or product failure. In this context, rules are made dominant to the mission.

It is de-bureaucratizing to consider that rules, guidelines, policies, practices, and procedures are tools designed to help achieve customer and employee satisfaction or product quality. From that standpoint, when faced with poor product quality, or an employee or customer that is dissatisfied, it is de-bureaucratizing to assume that the person is “right” and the rule, policy, etc., needs to be examined.

It is bureaucratizing to ration information. Information, when rationed, becomes a tool to support power or dependence, and rationing it creates feelings of being excluded or shut out” of the team or mission by those who don’t have access.

It is de-bureaucratizing to make information available freely as needed or as desired. Information empowers, sponsors innovation and creativity, and creates the experience of being “included” as part of the larger team or mission. It isn’t necessarily the information itself. Having free access to it, even if you don’t use it, is almost equal to actually getting it.

It is bureaucratizing for one work unit to issue rules that put a burden on customers

served by that work unit, in order to make the system “simpler,” “easier,” or “consistent”

It is de-bureaucratizing for the service unit to issue guidelines (rather than rules), that make things better, easier, and simpler for the people using the system, and to recognize that the unit itself may have to operate with more flexibility and less consistency, understanding that that is the price of serving their internal customers in an extraordinary fashion.

K. To reduce or eliminate the negative effects of bureaucracy, you'll need the help and support of the employees who are not in management.

They may not listen if you tell them, so give them this book, and let me try. I'll tell everybody in the organization that:

This isn't just another "program."

It isn't aimed at getting more out of labor's hide for fewer bucks. It isn't just another step in the labor/management war. If you and your fellow employees join in the commitment to a customer or quality focus, with the goal of eliminating bureaucracy, the war is over!

The successful Japanese companies, the ones showing what is possible in manufacturing, are not at war with themselves. They are one team, in harmony, with a quality focus and a long-term view. For your organization to thrive, all sides must put away their parochial views and disarm. What's needed is one team, with one vision.

The labor/management fight is over. The line/staff fight is over. The headquarters/field fight is over. Anybody, whether labor, manager, professional, staff, or administration, who continues to act as though they are at war with some other part of the organization is standing in the way of your organization achieving its mission. Sure, you'll need some time to adjust. You'll need time to give up obsolete ways of thinking, and to adopt the new model. But, if you are steeped in the old ways of internal strife and warfare, you must change or get out. Otherwise, you'll hurt your organization, and that's not what they're paying you to do, or why you joined the organization in the first place.

When management asks front-line people to participate in something as all-encompassing as a new vision, or getting rid of bureaucracy, the first response is often fear.

Learn and understand the process, and your role in it.

It's a new game, and from now on, it's the customer, or quality, or both, that count. Management has wised up to the realization that profit is a by-product of quality products or customer satisfaction. You don't achieve extraordinary quality or service by managing profits. You achieve extraordinary quality or service by managing quality or service. If you think this is just this year's program, you may well be mistaken. The intention is for a lifetime change. The objective is a permanent organization-wide shift in the vision, the goal, and the culture.

- Stop watching the boss; watch the customer, or the quality of your outputs, or both.
- Stop focusing on "your turf" or "your rights." It's not an internal war any more. Focus on what you are contributing to satisfying the customer.
- You'll have a new union: a union of all the people in your organization coming

together as one team.

- If you're not serving the customer, you're probably serving someone who is. If your job is to serve someone within the organization, then your new challenge is to give your internal customers the same extraordinary service your organization wants to give to external customers.
- In a service world, we owe each other good service. Here's the social compact: In a service economy, we take turns serving each other. When it's our turn to serve, we give the customer the deference, the respect, and the dignity that customers deserve. When it's our turn to be served, we can then expect, and even demand, the deference, the respect, and the dignity that we deserve.
- Whomever you're serving, give them the things they want from a service provider. Customers want friendly and caring service, they want you to be flexible, they want you to help them problem solve, and they want you to recover when you make a mistake or the organization goofs.

That is:

1. Be friendly and caring.

2. Be flexible.

- Stretch for the customer. Pay attention to the outcome, not the process.

3. Help your customer problem solve.

4 Recover when your unit or the organization goofs.

- Admit it when there has been a mistake, and apologize on behalf of yourself, the work unit, or the organization.
- Make it right, if you can.
- Go the extra step: provide a symbolic atonement.
- Follow up to be sure the customer is "recovered."

The organization and the people in it can't and won't change overnight.

We're all human. If you and your associates take this new commitment very seriously and don't make any big missteps during the transition, I'm guessing it'll take at least five years before you're where you want to be. I've been observing some really good people in some really good companies making this transition, and it never goes as fast as it seems it should, or as fast as you want it to. However, the act of starting begins a momentum that grows and grows until it has an energy of its own that pulls you along.

Remember, it isn't just management who has to change; bureaucracy contaminates everyone in the organization.

In bureaucracy, you find yourself waiting for someone to tell you what to do when you need to be taking your own initiatives. You'll find yourself afraid to act for fear of being wrong when you need to act. You need to have the courage of your convictions. You'll find that bureaucracy has taken a lot away, and you'll need to take conscious steps if you want to really pull your weight toward achieving the mission.

- Get comfortable with responsibility and risk.
- Get comfortable with the idea of pro-activity and initiative.
- Get in, get out, or keep quiet.

Cynics don't help. Blamers don't help. Complainers and whiners don't help. Help if you can. Get out if you can't help. And, if you can't help, or get out, keep quiet.

- Be a cheerleader and a coach if you want to really help.

You'll be asked for feedback; give it straight, make it helpful.

Even if you have a long history of being asked and never hearing anything back, open up and give feedback when it's requested. Sometime during the transition, you'll actually start getting feedback back after you send it up the line.

- At some point, people are going to ask you, "How good is your boss at supporting you in your role?"
- They're going to ask you to give feedback to others on your team, your peers, so that they can learn to be good team players. The idea is to change the feedback system so that it doesn't all just come from the top down. Eventually, you'll be getting feedback from those you serve, from your peers and from your manager. The feedback will be less painful because it won't be coming from the perspective of monitoring, controlling, and disciplining that marked the bureaucratic system. Instead, the feedback you'll be getting will be more from the perspective of coaching, so you can become a more valuable member of the team.
- If you serve internal or external customers, you'll be asked what your customers say they want from you or your work unit. It's now well understood that people who serve customers are a good proxy for the customers themselves. So, you'll be asked for your ideas on what the organization can do to support you in satisfying your customers.
- You'll be asked, "What policies, practices, and procedures stand in the way of you achieving zero defects or serving your customers well?"
- Departments that serve you will be asking you, "How well are you being served by the people, policies, practices and procedures of the work units that serve you?" Don't hurt, but don't hold back. Be straight, say what you think and feel, so people can learn what it will take to give you extraordinary service. Don't make them guess.
- You'll be asked, "What suggestions can you make that will improve the products or services that you are providing your customers?" Perhaps for the first time, the organization will really be receptive to suggestions and ideas. The bureaucratic defensiveness and turf protection that squelched so many good ideas in the past will gradually disappear.

L. You'll need to change some beliefs that may be basic to your culture currently.

Here is a list of beliefs that will need to be gradually changed as your culture adapts to the new model.

It is bureaucratic to believe that “all functions and people must be under control.”

To become customer focused, it is valuable to give up the idea of control, and believe in the value of responsiveness, or flexibility. Customer satisfaction can't be controlled. You do your best to earn it, but you can't demand it or control it. Control focuses on processes. Customer and quality visions focus on “outcomes.”

To achieve total quality, or customer focus, it is useful to give up the compulsion to control, or be in control, and trust that if you believe in the vision, and are flexible and responsive enough to achieve the vision, you will achieve more than you will by striving for the sense of being in “control.” In a customer-focused organization the manager becomes more of a supporter, coach, and obstacle remover.

It is bureaucratic to think that all functions of planning and control have to be done by management.

To be customer focused or achieve total quality, much of the planning, controlling, reacting, responding, and flexing must be done by frontline people, people who don't manage others, but manage the achievement of quality, or who manage the satisfaction of customers.

It is bureaucratic to think that managers and managing are more important than the people who achieve the quality or satisfy individual customers. It is bureaucratic to think that the higher you are on the organization chart, the more important you are.

Those who strive to become customer focused, or to achieve total quality, soon discover that the truly “important” people are the ones who are part of achieving the total quality or who satisfy the customers. Regardless of what management wants, says, or does, if the front-line people aren't on the team, the mission isn't achieved. Team members know that you don't rank people in terms of importance. Every job and every role is important. Eventually, importance becomes much less of an issue.

It seems to be a basic precept of bureaucracy that ambiguity is intolerable, and must be resolved. Things must be black or white. There is no room for gray.

To achieve total quality or to consistently dazzle customers, your organization and your people must have some tolerance for ambiguity. You have to deal in the real world, facing real problems and real people. In the real world, there is a lot of gray. If you

attempt to make things black or white, you miss too much. Rules can be unambiguous, while guidelines are ambiguous, i.e., “If the guidelines don’t work to achieve the mission, then forget the guidelines and do what it takes achieve the mission.” That’s pretty gray.

The most widely held (and perhaps the most damaging) belief underlying bureaucracy is the belief that consistency has value. Perhaps at one time consistency was seen as an aid to good quality, or to satisfying customers, but, as the focus of the organization turns inward, the idea becomes simply that consistency is important. Objective observers will notice that much of the damage to quality or to customer satisfaction comes from the importance that bureaucracies attach to the idea of consistency.

For those striving for quality or customer satisfaction, it is valuable to believe that consistency is nice and comfortable as long as it achieves the desired quality or results in satisfied customers. But, the moment that it gets in the way of quality or customer satisfaction, forget consistency and substitute flexibility.

A sister to the idea of consistency is the idea that equal treatment for everybody is fair for all. All you can say about equal treatment for all is that it will result in unequal satisfaction for all. Bureaucracies value the process of equal treatment, but ignore the outcome of unequal satisfaction.

If you strive for an objective outcome, like quality in your product, or customer satisfaction from your service, then you will find it useful to confront the misperception that equal treatment for all is good. You will instead substitute belief in the idea that equal satisfaction for all customers is a much fairer goal than equal treatment for all.

How do you want to be measured? By the treatment you give, or by the outcome you achieve? Customers are only interested in getting satisfied. If equal treatment doesn’t satisfy them, then they expect you to treat them unequally. If you leap to the conclusion that unequal treatment is unjust, then pay attention to the idea of choices. Giving the customer lots of choices makes it possible to provide as many different treatments as customers tell you they need in order to be satisfied.

Another false belief that underlies bureaucracy is the notion of the slippery slope: “If I do it for one, I have to do it for everybody.” This is an argument that pops up almost automatically in bureaucratic thinking, and is another sister to the belief in consistency and equal treatment for all. This idea is so pervasive because there are some situations in which it is true. The error is in over-generalizing the idea and applying it where it is patently false, and almost foolish.

Organizations that value total quality, or customer focus, want their people to make decisions and choices based on the mission outcome, and not on the process. So, the process becomes much more flexible, as long as it is aimed at achieving the desired outcome. If you have to wrap the product in green to satisfy this customer, you wrap it in green. If you have to deliver the paper to the third floor for this customer, you deliver it to the third floor. You trust that people are reasonable and understanding, and you realize that “flexing” the process to satisfy one customer doesn’t mean that you will have to make that same accommodation to all customers.

Because of the hierarchy and control from the top that characterize bureaucracies,

choices are seen as confusing to customers and employees. The reality is that choices are confusing to those making up the rules, and to keep their job simple, they tend to minimize the number of choices given to customers and employees. It might even be generalized to say, “The more bureaucratic the organization, the fewer choices offered to customers and employees.”

Organizations that empower their employees to make decisions aimed at satisfying customers find that the employees will create lots and lots of choices for customers. That is because customers really like to be satisfied, and the more choices there are, the more likely it is the customer will find one that satisfies.

One of the underlying principles of the bureaucratic model is that work should be divided by functional specialties, and where possible, work should be done by specialists. The result of this belief is that workers tend to be organized into groups of similar workers, rather than organized by products produced, or customers served. The result of organizing people into groups doing similar work does great damage to the achievement of quality products, or to satisfying customers.

Organizations seeking total quality or customer focus will organize people by products produced or customers served. This ensures that the quality needs of the product (or the service needs of the customer) drive the unit, not their specialty. The organization still has people with the needed special skills, but they aren't grouped into groups of others with the same skill. They are grouped into teams with the many disciplines needed to achieve the total quality required, or to satisfy customers.

It is bureaucratic to manage with a “problem-solving” approach. In the problem-solving approach, someone — usually a manager — looks at a problem, “fixes” that problem, and then moves on to the next one, without addressing the root cause and with no encouragement to address the root cause.

When quality, or customer satisfaction, is everyone's goal, then problems don't have to be solved by managers alone. Empowered people, aspiring to continual improvement, can be trained to not only solve the immediate problem, but also to find the root causes and fix them.

M. Many of the ideas and principles outlined in this book apply to government as well.

Citizens are frustrated with the results of governmental bureaucracies in dealing with our critical social problems.

Let's stop blaming the people in our public bureaucracies. Many good and caring people go into government and are eventually overwhelmed by having to work within the bureaucracy. It isn't the people; it's the organizing model.

Let's stop blaming the politicians. Most of them are attracted to government service because they really care and they want to make a difference in their world through public service. Politicians will tell you that politics is the art of the possible. And they'll tell you that much less is possible when all of their decisions and strategies are only as good as the implementation by the bureaucracy.

The bureaucratic model forces government agencies to be up-focused and in-focused, rather than customer-focused. Agencies must first satisfy the legislatures who bring them into being and are responsible for funding them. Once they satisfy the legislators, they are driven to satisfy their own needs internally. Only then — if they have any energy or resources left — can they be concerned with satisfying their customers, or achieving their external mission.

The bureaucratic model segments government into specialized agencies concerned only with their own special interests. They aren't chartered to take a broad view, and sometimes aren't even allowed to. They have to keep citizens concerned with their cause or they won't get funded. If they solve their problem, the need for the agency will go away. So, basically, the self-interest of the agency is to some degree opposite that of the public.

The hierarchical design of the bureaucracy ensures that the people at the top will make the decisions. The result is the kind of central planning that almost single-handedly has been the downfall of state socialism and communism around the world. We mustn't let central planning and bureaucracy bring us to our knees as well.

The bureaucratic focus on rules instead of mission achievement causes the red tape that citizens and businesses find so frustrating and wasteful. It isn't the people; it's that the people in government are forced to follow rules that sometimes get in the way of achieving the mission.

The "impersonal" design goal of bureaucracy results in good, caring people being forced to behave in ways that seem to us as cold and uncaring.

Strategy #1: Until we can reduce the amount of governmental bureaucracy, let's use the bureaucratic process itself to reduce the negative effects of bureaucracy on the

citizenry.

- Ask legislators to pass regulations linking agency funding with citizen satisfaction ratings. This will help governmental agencies balance their up-focus with a customer focus. The people in those agencies will appreciate our help in giving them a clear charter to satisfy customers.
- Ask legislators to pass regulations requiring that budget cuts impact first above the line, and last below the line. This will either trim the fat above the line, or better yet, erase the line.

Strategy #2: Let's give the bureaucracies more competition from non-profit organizations and private enterprise. This will help them become less in-focused and more customer focused.

- Let's give private enterprise a chance at the kids that public education has given up on. And if the private sector produces good results, let's install their products in our public schools. If we are truly going to achieve our ambitions for our kids, we have to help the people in education overcome the immobilizing effects of bureaucracy. (See Ken's article on Education at <http://www.busting-bureaucracy.com/education.htm>).
- Let's privatize more of the functions now handled by agencies of government. If we have to involve government, let government oversee things rather than actually do the work, whenever possible.

Strategy #3: Let's stop turning our problems over to government if it is going to try to solve them through bureaucratic process.

- For example, the solution to the drug problem isn't further escalating the war. Bureaucracies are limited to a few processes and are process driven rather than result driven. If we were willing to turn the drug problem over to the private sector and keep bureaucratic agencies away, it's quite possible the "drug problem" would disappear, virtually overnight.
- Another example is that not very many people think that the Veterans Administration runs better hospitals or gives veterans better care than they could receive from the doctors and hospitals that you and I use. For less tax money, it's possible we could give the veterans much better care with less bureaucratic nonsense than they get from the Veterans Administration.

Strategy #4: Let's define a new model for government agencies to replace the bureaucratic model. One possibility is to use the Malcolm Baldridge award criteria as a model for governmental agencies.

- Let's ask our lawmakers to pass the legislation necessary to transfer the burdens of some of our most immobilized bureaucracies to newly designated agencies organized on the new model, and let's see if the new agencies don't do a better job for the citizens. Remember, it isn't the people; it's the organizing model.

Closing

If you have experiences or stories that will help others to understand the observations or assertions in this condensation or in the book, I'll be deeply appreciative if you would share them with me. E-mail me at ken@bustingbureaucracy.com. If any of them are also funny, they will help to enliven my dullish prose, and to relieve the somber mood produced by considering bureaucracy in any depth. They will be added to this website, along with your name, if you so choose.

When you read the book, if there are any assertions or observations that you disagree with, or wish to dispute, please feel free to do so. I will consider adding your thoughts to mine so that readers will have the opportunity to understand all sides to the issues.

Whether you are sending stories, experiences, assertions, observations, or disputations, please give me your name so that we can include your contributions.

Note: If you wish to read the entire book, it is available at
<http://www.bustingbureaucracy.com>