

Jeannine M. Lanoux. EXPLORING THE EFFICACY OF WORKPLACE BOOK GROUPS AS A METHOD OF LEARNING IN A MANUFACTURING ENVIRONMENT. (Under the direction of Dr. Vivian Mott) Department of Adult Education, June 2004.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the efficacy of workplace book groups (WPBG) as a learning method in a manufacturing facility to answer two research questions: What is the relationship between WPBGs and self-directed learning? And in what ways do WPBGs influence organizational ways of knowing? By answering these questions, more may be understood about the efficacy of WPBGs as a low-cost, simple, interactive Human Resource learning initiative in the highly unpredictable workplace of the 21st century.

Qualitative methodology was used in this research because this produces descriptive data from the participants' frames of reference allowing the researcher to analyze and describe the phenomenon being researched. Emerging grounded theory bounded within a case study was the specific qualitative research strategy used.

This research found the participants in the WPBG applied certain concepts from the book to their lives using self-directed techniques such as: preparing suitable learning strategies, deciding the ways they were going to take the book from a simple reading strategy to comprehension, and finding answers to questions they had on their own.

This research also found that through interaction with the concepts of the book and one another, the book group members influenced organizational ways of knowing. The book group created a place around which participants could gather, develop more significant relationships in an informal learning experience, and truly learn how linked they were in their workplace. This research produced a new model, the Knowledge Creation Model, depicting the learning that happens in a WPBG. In addition, the methodology for conducting future studies into WPBG is also documented in this study.

Workplace learning has changed. In order to meet organizational knowledge utilization requirements and employee learning needs, businesses need to look for innovative, cost-saving learning methods, which create new knowledge networks. This research explains how, for the price of a book and minimal Human Resource interventions, WPBGs can meet learning needs in the new knowledge economy.

EXPLORING THE EFFICACY OF WORKPLACE BOOK GROUPS
AS A METHOD OF LEARNING IN A MANUFACTURING FACILITY

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In Adult Education

By
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IN MEMORIAM

*In honor of Edwin H. Neill II
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Who taught me:

“The quality of your life is a direct reflection of the quality of your thinking”,

“Everything matters”,

and

“We all need someone to make us do what we can”.

I am forever grateful for the inspiration that is Edwin’s legacy.

I hope by dedicating my life to the passionate pursuit of lifelong learning,

I too will touch the lives of many.

DEDICATION

I will never really be able to adequately thank my parents for instilling in me the love of reading, asking questions, exploring the unknown, and believing in myself. Without their unquestionable love, guidance, inspiration and support, I would not have been able to accomplish much of what I am most proud of in my life.

Pursuit of a research project requires not only a great foundation to begin with, but also a great deal of support from those nearest and dearest to you. My husband, and best friend, Jim, and my girls, Suzanne, and Caitlin were very supportive of me in completing this research. Without their encouragement, support, love and necessary pushing when I was ready to quit, I could never have gotten this done! Just their simple belief in my ability to achieve wonderful results has been the greatest gift.

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I. INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

The workplace has changed. Training budgets are getting smaller and smaller while the demand for highly skilled, cross-trained, and boundaryless career employees is increasing. The culture of the work environment today is fast-paced and ever changing as we emerge into a knowledge economy. With shrinking budgets and a more global market, employees take on more and more responsibilities in order to help the organization thrive. New work responsibilities require new skills, and Human Resource (HR) departments have to produce meaningful programs to meet their employees' needs quickly. Stakeholders want proof of transfer of learning as a return on their investment dollar. This leaves HR departments looking for new ways to cost-effectively train, quickly, while ensuring transfer of learning is taking place and knowledge networks are connecting. Peter Senge, in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) stated, "the organizations that truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people's commitment, and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization" (p. 4). How do HR departments bring all levels of an organization together to learn?

Rationale for Study

It is important within the business environment to explore ways of ensuring new learning in order to build human capital, knowledge networks, and a greater sustainable competitive advantage. Learning is important in today's competitive global markets as employees are one of the most important and expensive assets a business has. Without a highly-trained workforce, capable of life-long learning, corporations will struggle to remain competitive.

Organizational learning is not a new phenomenon. Evidence of organizational learning goes all the way back to the early American craft society and apprenticeships

where groups organized around a trade to become productive members of the new society. Experienced craftspeople would take in inexperienced people and slowly teach them new skills. Stubblefield and Keane point out that colonist education was influenced by a need for people to take on an “independent productive role in society” (1994, p.15). Learning took place in the one-to-one apprentice relationships and other informal small groups as townspeople gathered for civic education or learned together in churches, book groups, public evening schools, mechanics institutes, and lyceums.

As America grew from an agricultural society into an industrial society, learning moved away from the one-on-one apprenticeships to group learning through lectures, demonstrations, libraries, and industrial education. Early American adult educators were attempting to create systematic scientific education and more mechanistic and useful knowledge. Adult education flourished to move civilization forward, to help the nation gain financially in the commercial sector, and to shape the civic culture. Craft training seemed outdated as the American industrial age needed mass training of workers to meet the demands of the manufacturing economy. Frederick Taylor brought Scientific Management to factories in the late 1880s, allowing managers to gain control over the worker (Stubblefield & Keane, 1994, p. 149). This mode of industrial education and work process controls improved into the 1970s as the industrial age flourished and human resource development was born.

In the 1980s came the quality movement spearheaded by W. Edward Deming, and companies began to measure production capability, to look at continuous improvement, and try to understand variation (Aguayo, 1990). Plan-do-study-act cycles made their way into organizational jargon and worker education focused on how to constantly improve. Downsizing, rightsizing, buyouts, and bankruptcies marked business

in the 1980s and into the 1990s and worker education, for the remaining employees, focused on managing increased work responsibilities and learning quickly. Massive amounts of corporate knowledge were lost as employees relocated during these turbulent times; so organizational learning focused on learning capabilities, competencies, and becoming a learning organization. Technology driven initiatives, the Internet, and global competition shifted HR departments' focus from the management science of Taylor and the quality movement of Deming to examining transfer of learning, and best practices for knowledge utilization which was becoming more critical in the burgeoning information economy.

Business today no longer operates as a machine. The metaphor for today's business is the learning organization (Senge, 1990). Knowledge utilization is the key to productivity. Organizations struggle to produce the highest economic return with the resources they have. This means people are constantly learning to stay abreast of changes and leverage their knowledge capabilities. Training in the learning organization is focused on learning to learn and measuring that learning. Knowing how learning occurs in the workplace helps HR develop programs that work.

Learning, as defined by Webster's New World Dictionary is "the acquiring of knowledge or skill" (1980, p. 804). Education is defined by Webster's New World Dictionary as "the process of training and developing the knowledge, mind, character, etc., esp., by formal schooling" (1980, p. 444). Learning is different from education although learning occurs in an educative environment. Employees may acquire new skills from HR training. Employees may also learn from one-another in the break-room, in work areas, by co-workers' mistakes or while conversing during an HR-sponsored educational event. Knowing and knowledge creation are unique for different people. The

process of acquiring new knowledge and skills, that is, learning, happens in different ways and places for different people.

The area where one works can have a profound effect on learning. According to research “the culture or social unit has a strong influence on learning” and “individuals often involve others in a joint learning process that is very different from self directed learning” (Baskett & Marsick, 1992b, p.9). In addition, researchers note that the culture of an organization shapes what people learn and an individual’s knowledge profoundly affects group learning. Employees, therefore, bring many things to the work group that help the work group progress; the work group in return helps the employee develop. Although many employees may receive formal training in their pre-professional education, many receive advanced and specific training on the job and much of that is through workgroup interactions. Marsick (1987) suggested training and education previously focused on behaviorally based techniques while the new paradigm of learning is based on employees reflecting on their roles in the whole of the organization. Marsick said learning is about people “constructing meaning in their personal and shared organizational lives” (p. 4). Learning should not stop when people enter the workplace because people learn everywhere they go: work, social gatherings, day-to-day interactions with other people at work and play. That is the same learning needed in today’s work environment to support the growth of organizational knowledge in the new economy.

In a learning organization, transfer of learning is one of the measurements used to determine if training initiatives are creating needed results. Transfer of learning (TOL) is sometimes interchanged with the term transfer of training (TOT) although training is the action of teaching and learning is continually applying what you know to various work

and life situations. Broad and Newstrom point out that measuring workforce TOL is the “ultimate payoff for the organization’s investment in training”(1992, p. 4). Learning becomes a group effort as supervisors, trainers, and employees work together to create new measurable knowledge that benefits the bottom line.

One helpful, inexpensive, and simple way for HR to support self-directed, shared group learning is through workplace book groups (WPBGs). Book circles, such as the Seneca Ladies Literary Society in Woodstock, Illinois have been part of the fabric of our learning history since the 1800s (Johnson, 1998). WPBGs are a relatively new phenomenon, but they operate in much the same way as leisure book circles do.

Workplace book groups are groups of three to fifteen people who meet during the workweek to discuss literature of their choice, according to the Random House Publisher’s Currency Guide to Book Groups in the Workplace (Book Group Corner, 1996, Third Section, para. 1). The purpose of these book groups is to learn cooperatively through discussion with co-workers who may be focusing on the same issues. HR can initiate the groups’ formation, or groups can form on their own. Once the group is formed, ground rules are agreed upon, the timeframe is arranged, and the book is selected. Individuals read the book on their own time, reflecting on workplace applications, and then meet with the group to discuss. Some groups use formal questions provided by the publisher, while others write their own questions. Groups continue meeting this way until the book is completed. Some groups simply dissolve when a book is finished while others continue. Workplace book groups are a valuable, low-cost method for employees to study with experts from many fields. With very little set-up cost or time, companies can benefit from this new training program.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need for cost-effective, efficient, simple, and involved methods of HR training, which creates interaction and contributes to transfer of learning in today's workplace. Increased work responsibilities in global markets have stretched HR budgets while the demand for highly- trained employees has risen. Organizations strive to become learning organizations and capitalize on their culture and organizational expertise but cannot afford to lose, overburden, or underutilize employees. Needed are new methods of training based on established models of learning. The purpose of this study is to explore the efficacy of workplace book groups (WPBGs) as a means of workplace learning in a manufacturing environment. The research focuses on answering the following questions:

1. What is the relationship between WPBGs and self-directed learning?
2. In what ways do WPBGs influence organizational ways of knowing?

By answering these questions, more may be understood about the efficacy of WPBGs for a low-cost, simple, interactive HR learning initiative in the highly unpredictable workplace of our day.

Significance of Research

The significance of this research is three-fold. First, by understanding the learning that occurs in a workplace book group, HR professionals and trainers will be able to add an effective, low-cost, new model of learning based on an established model of learning. Second, the research will also contribute to HR best practices and develop new theory on the benefits of workplace book groups, since there is no literature regarding the efficacy of WPBG as a method of learning in the workplace. This research will form a base for future research into this learning method. This research will explore

how, for the price of a book, minimal start-up costs, and modest HR interventions, learning can occur in a workplace book group.

Thirdly, this research is also personally significant. I was fortunate to grow up in a print-rich environment where reading in a small intimate group within my family was the norm. I also worked for a company where the owner advocated for certain leadership books, which we then discussed in team meetings. Later, in my practice as a HR trainer, I used WPBGs in conjunction with management training initiatives. Conducting this research will satisfy personal curiosity as to the efficacy of WPBGs as a learning method. By knowing what learning may occur in a WPBG, this research can hold similar significance for other HR departments already using books in the workplace, or looking to initiate WPBGs as part of their training repertoire.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this research was to explore the efficacy of workplace book groups (WPBGs) as a learning method in the workplace. This chapter is organized into sections, which cover the search process, literature on book circles, self-directed learning, organizational knowing, transfer of learning and the conceptual framework upon which this research is based. Self-directed learning's impact was researched because of the extensive data and proof collected on this adult learning attribute. In addition, Guglielmino (2001) points out that the self-directed learner is the "keystone of the learning organization" (p. 37). Organizational knowing, another element researched, is important because organizations of the 21st century must capitalize on individuals and the ways they add to organizational knowledge in order to grow. In addition, transfer of learning, a component of HR training's return on investment (ROI) is examined because of the role it plays in organizational effectiveness. This study attempts to show through the words of the participants in a reflective self-report instrument, what is remembered after the book is finished. This remembrance is part of the transfer process, so transfer of learning literature is explored. These three areas are all crucial building blocks to understanding workplace book groups and how they can affect business and industry today.

Search Process

Group learning in book circles is interwoven into the history of America (Hartley, 2002). Nevertheless, as a learning method, little research has been conducted about how much is remembered after the book is closed. Although there are many accounts about the enjoyment of social book circles, how to form a book circle, and how to run a book circle, little is documented about the efficacy of book circles as a learning method.

A thorough search of the information available in scholarly journals was done through a subscription to an online library service. The databases searched included: EBSCO, including Academic Search Elite, MasterFile Premier, ERIC, Alt Health Watch, Nursing and Allied Health, Military and Government Collection, Sociological Collection, Psychology And Behavioral Sciences Collection, PROQUEST, including ABI/Inform Archive Complete and Global, Hoover's company, National Newspaper Abstracts, PROQUEST Newspapers, PROQUEST Research Library and Historical Databases. Internet Search Engines GOOGLE, MSN Search, and Yahoo were also used.

Keywords searched included book circles, book clubs, book groups, literary circles, workplace book groups, reading in groups, study circles, and combinations of such. In addition, a general search of these same keywords for all books published on these topics were done. There are many sources on book reading in groups for leisure, but few sources on WPBGs. A brief review of these sources follows.

Book Circles

Book circles have been part of American history since the early 1800s, although WPBGs are a relatively new phenomenon. This section outlines leisure book groups, the current increase in book circles, and how book groups can operate at work.

Leisure Groups

Hartley (2002) provided a comprehensive survey collection of 350 reading groups in the United Kingdom. Hartley estimated there were as many as 500,000 groups in the United States and 150,000 in the United Kingdom. Hartley's book painted a very thorough picture of the nature of leisure reading groups. Hartley stated that:

Reading in groups has a long past, it is also an experience with deep roots in our own personal histories. Our earliest encounters with books were most probably as children with a parent and perhaps a sibling, a small group, characterized by intimacy and pleasure. (p. 2)

Hartley did reference workplace book groups, and shared that numerous groups in the survey had grown out of workplace book groups. Hartley also stated that the caring professions “have generated some thriving work-based groups There are groups whose members all work with emotionally disturbed children or in medical centers” (p.11). Hartley said book groups were good at cultivating “interpersonal skills, flexibility, openness to new ideas, teamwork, and the ability to communicate so valued in today’s employees” (p.13). Hartley also stated that WPBGs benefit employees’ ability to deal with multiple uncertainties balancing many roles and complex events while heightening their sensitivity to different cultures. Hartley’s comprehensive survey highlighted many similarities between leisure groups and WPBGs.

The Increase in Reading Groups

Hall, in the article The “Oprahfication” of Literacy: Reading “Oprah’s Book Club” wrote “reading groups became a prominent figure in middle-class American life during the mid-1800s as the spread of education combined with an increase in leisure time” (2002, p. 646). According to Hall, Oprah Winfrey continued book groups’ “tradition of promoting literacy as a means of individual and cultural advancement” through her book club on her television show from 1996 – 2002 (p. 646). Hall suggested that perhaps one of the things that Oprah’s book club does is bring people into the study of literature because they realize they can better their lives through reading. Authors McGinley and Conley said that reading is not really one’s own until it is framed by discussions with other readers (2001). These articles point to the significant comeback reading in groups has made in society today.

Book Groups at Work

According to the Random House Publishers' Website (www.randomhouse.com/resources/bookgroup/currencyguide_bgc.html) whose interests may seem self-serving, "companies are turning to the same source that inspired our world's greatest problem solvers – books" (1996, First section, para. 2). Random House, and other publishers such as Berrett-Koehler (www.bkconnection.com/literacy/start.html), also assert that since employers are looking for inventive ways to keep their employees up to date they have discovered a lucrative, unconventional training source in book groups. Random House suggests that companies are getting an incredible return for their investment in the cost of books, such as increases in productivity, better customer service, and teamwork, all attributable to book discussions. WPBGs become "a shared space that encourages new ways of thinking and communicating" and "inspire creativity, risk-taking, and new ways of seeing – habits sometimes lost in traditional corporate environments" (First section, para. 5). Guardian Unlimited concurs in its online newspaper article, quoting WPBG champion King as saying book groups "harness people's listening skills and build confidence" (Deeble, 2003, First section, para. 4). Watkins and Marsick (1993) say continuous learning is important in sculpting learning organizations, and one-way employees do that is through a "process of questioning, reflection and feedback from others" (p. 26), skills Random House and other publishers say book groups can facilitate. The Random House Website says the benefits of WPBGs are that they are low cost, flexible training initiatives that allow employees to devote as much time as they choose to a particular issue or theory, instead of being forced to move on quickly during high-cost, one-day training seminars. Thus, WPBGs

have come full circle; they are again being used as they were in the past, both as leisure learning, and increasingly as a new method of learning in the workplace.

Self-Directed Learning

Self-directed learning is the second area of literature explored in support of WPBGs. Given what is known about adult learners and their desires to have control over their learning, to be self-directed, to know why they are learning something, and to use their own life experiences in learning (Knowles, 1975), WPBGs may fit adults' learning preferences. Merriam and Brockett defined self-directed learning as "adults assuming control of their learning" (1997, p.137). Reading is often a solitary project undertaken for many different purposes, and according to the novelist Oz, (2001) "the game of reading requires you, the reader to take an active part, to bring to the field your own life experience" (p. 115). Taking an active role and bringing your own life experiences to learning are two of the same steps discussed by many of the leading theorists in classic works on self-directed learning. This literature review will touch briefly on seminal work by Tough (1971) and Knowles (1975) in their early models of self-directed learning, on Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) in their Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO) model, on Candy's comprehensive guide (1991) and Garrison's interactive model of self-directed learning (1997). In addition, a recent Guglielmino (2001) contribution will be discussed. These models represent not only classical work on self-directed learning, but major contributors to this adult learning model. HR departments and educators often focus on increasing adults' abilities to learn on their own or be self-directed. Whether educators help adult learners be more self-directed through finding resources or by evaluating their own learning, self-directedness is a key attribute of learning in adulthood.

Tough's Early Work

Tough, in his early work on self-directed learning found that people were learning everywhere. Tough studied sixty-six people in Canada and their planned learning projects and found the "typical person conducts about eight learning projects a year" (1971, p. 17). Learning projects are defined as "a major, highly deliberate effort to gain certain knowledge and skill" (p.1). Tough found that, on average, people initiated self-directed learning projects for several personal reasons: to find answers to questions, out of enjoyment of what was being learned, for new skill attainment, for self-esteem, to finish old learning projects, or simply to meet people. Tough studied many different methods adults used for learning projects; among them was the use of reading for learning. Tough says the self-directed learner "finds that books and other printed materials provide a highly efficient and flexible way to learn" (p 119). In addition, Tough found that learning often happened in small autonomous self-directed groups. According to Tough's findings in 1971, one adult out of five was involved in an autonomous learning group. Ultimately, Tough felt society would "benefit from a wide range of efforts to understand and foster human learning" (p. 169). Tough's findings contribute to the knowledge that people do learn from reading, operate in small autonomous groups, and initiate learning for many reasons. Capitalizing on these in the workplace may benefit both employers and employees by meeting self-directed learning needs. Tough's early work contributed to Guglielmino's (1978) development of the most widely used instrument created to measure levels of learner self directedness. It is called the Self-Directed Learning Readiness Scale and has been used in numerous studies of adult learners.

Knowles' Andragogy

Knowles (1975), writing about the same time as Tough (1971) on self-directed learning, wrote that as learners mature, they become more and more self-directed. He identified self-directed learning as one of the principles of andragogy, the “art and science of helping adults learn” (1975, p.19). Knowles defined self-directed learning as a process where individuals, alone or with others, identify their learning needs, set goals, find resources, prepare suitable learning strategies, and calculate learning outcomes.

Knowles stated that learners who

take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things, and learn better, than do people who sit at the feet of teachers passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners) They enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation. They also tend to retain and make use of what they learn better and longer than do the reactive learners. (p. 14)

The main purpose of education, said Knowles, was to build inquiry skills. Knowles echoes many of the same reasons mentioned by Tough (1971) on why learners undertake self-directed learning projects. Knowles cited achievement, growth, satisfaction of accomplishing something, a need for specific information, and inquisitiveness. These self-directed learning attributes can translate into people learning from everything they do, and every institution in their community and every person with whom they interact.

Brockett & Hiemstra's PRO Model

Brockett and Hiemstra proposed a model called the Personal Responsibility Orientation (PRO), based on the humanistic philosophy. The three basic tenets of this model were:

Human nature is basically good ... that individuals possess virtually unlimited potential for growth...that only by accepting responsibility for

one's own learning is it possible to take a proactive approach to the learning process. (1991, pp. 26-27)

The PRO encompassed both instructional methods used by self-directed learners and the personality characteristics of the learner. Personal responsibility is the basis of self-direction in learning and a learner cannot be self-directed without also being personally responsible. The authors stated that self-directed learning was not about learning in isolation, but rather means that the learner takes control and responsibility for decisions about everything regarding the learning experience, including the instructional methods. Brockett and Hiemstra recommended strategies for encouraging self-directed learners through facilitating their learning process with critical reflection, reading, and writing. Brockett and Hiemstra concluded with their belief that self-directed learning "is very much in tune with the natural way people live and learn" (1991, p. 218).

Candy's Outcome and Learning Processes

Candy (1991) discussed self-directed learning both as an outcome of learning and as a process of learning. Like Knowles (1975) and Tough (1971), Candy also identified psychological and philosophical characteristics. He called these personal autonomy and self-management and these were outcomes of learning. Self-direction is a process states Candy, not just a goal. How the self-directed learner organized their instruction is one such process. In formal institutions, Candy referred to this as learner-controlled and in the natural societal setting, autodidaxy. Autodidaxy is independent pursuit of learning outside of formal schools or institutions. Lifelong education or "autodidaxy" (p.16) was not an instruction method, but self-instruction, and differed in that the learners were in complete control of their own education. Furthermore, Candy pointed out:

Adult education is distinguished by the extent to which it arises naturally as a result of and takes place within, social contexts. Even truly independent and solitary learning activities are commonly the result of the learners' membership in some group or society, and although the learning process itself may be largely solitary, its intention and justification is social. (p. 22)

According to Candy, self-directedness has two personal attributes of the learner: capacity and autonomy. Capacity is the student's ability to manage the learning process, and autonomy refers to a characteristic of the learner which enables them to pursue the learning process. Candy felt adult education's goal of self-directedness arose because of rapid societal changes that increased the need for self-directed people. Candy also has written about the skills that increase a learners aptitude for connecting to autonomous learning which are; reading skills, profound approaches to learning, examining understanding, critical thinking, and questioning skills. In addition Candy has argued that learners participate in self-directed learning based on the subject, the context of the learning situation, and whether or not learners see themselves as self-directed.

The early process of documenting how self-directed learning happened followed the teaching methods of the time. Learners were thought to move through a series of linear steps to reach a learning goal. Tough's (1971) earliest research on self-planned learning activities was researched to the point that scholars established "the existence of the independent pursuit of learning in natural settings" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 295). To this initial body of knowledge by Tough (1971) and Knowles (1975) came more interactive models which included such factors as "opportunities people find in their own environment, the personality characteristics of learners, cognitive processes, and the context of learning, which collectively interact to form episodes of self-directed learning"

(Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 295). To further define these episodes of learning, the Garrison model will be explored.

Garrison's Motivation, Self-management and Self-monitoring

Garrison proposed three intimately, inter-related steps called "motivation, self-management, and self-monitoring" (1997, p. 22). According to Garrison, self-management was what went on external to the learning process. Self-monitoring was how the learners took charge of structuring their own meaning from the learning. In this step, the self-directed learner supplemented existing knowledge and cultivated new knowledge. The last step, motivation, played a meaningful part in the learner starting and continuing to maintain learning goals. Garrison believed there were two types of motivation: the motivation that made the learner engage in the learning activity and the learners' motivation to persevere in the learning activity. Garrison asserts that a large part of the research on self-directed learning had been on the processes external to the learner, while the actual process of learning received far too little attention. This comprehensive model, which includes the external and internal factors of the learner, better rounds out the characterization of a self-directed learner, said Garrison. By studying motivation, self-management, and self-monitoring process of learning, more can be understood about the self-directed learner.

The research on self-directed learning cited in this section includes the attributes of self-motivation, self-management, and participation in learning activities to supplement knowledge. In other words, the self-directed learner decides what detailed knowledge they will learn, where, and when. The self-directed learner also finds the time to learn, checks their own level of understanding and decides how to gain new areas of knowledge and skill. Reading is one method self-directed learners use and it also

includes many of the same attributes. Reading is a self-motivated activity that people engage in to supplement existing knowledge or create new knowledge, and as a task, is completely self-managed. Hartley said participating in a reading group is an interactive delight that brings in active readers and provides people with a sense of achievement (2002). Hartley further stated that reading groups are “an important combination which changes the way people read” (p. 127). In addition, Hartley pointed out that reading in-group changed “how people talk and think” (p. 128). It is the discussion within book circles that creates knowing.

Organizational Knowing

Knowing was defined by Baskett and Marsick as a process that “involves a continuous cycle of moving to greater certainty on a variety of issues, actions and agendas” (1992a, p. 2). Baskett and Marsick also stated that people usually perceived knowledge as having come from somewhere like books, journals, lectures, or tapes and accordingly had to be stored for later use. This type of knowledge was called formal knowledge. The authors suggested, “ ‘knowing’ is personal and involves gaining closer and closer approximations of a sense of certainty” (1992b, p.11). In other words, knowing does not become knowledge until people apply it to their own personal situation. With all the resources that individuals have available for learning, until they interact with their colleagues and work situations, learning does not occur.

Nonaka's Knowledge Creation

According to Nonaka, organizational knowing is not just a series of “input-process-output” (1994, p.14). Nonaka stated, “the theory of organization has long been dominated by a paradigm that conceptualizes the organization as a system that ‘processes’ information or ‘solves’ problems” (p. 14). Nonaka believed this left out the

measurement and acknowledgement of all the innovation and new knowledge created within the organization. Nonaka stated that although knowledge may be created in individual's minds, interaction between individuals is critical to develop these ideas. Knowledge creation comes from communities of interaction. Nonaka continued to describe the two dimensions of knowledge creation, tacit and explicit knowledge. Drawing on earlier work, Nonaka defined explicit knowledge as "knowledge that is transmittable in formal systematic language" and tacit knowledge, which "has a personal quality which makes it hard to formalize and communicate," (p.16). Knowledge conversion, Nonaka said, happens through a spiral process where tacit and explicit knowledge interact in a four-part configuration of "socialization, internalization, externalization, and combination" (p. 19). Nonaka concluded that workplaces, which create interactive places for explicit and tacit knowledge to combine, help this spiraling four part interaction to develop.

Marsick, Baskett, Cervero, and Lovin's Learning from Work Experiences

Lovin pointed out the significance of workplace relationships as a learning resource (1992). Primarily, Lovin felt that learning in the workplace resulted from experiences and how the experiences were viewed through relationships with co-workers. When professionals share their informal learning experiences, they come away with a more holistic way of knowing, not only about the learning experience, but also about their interdependent role within the workplace. Marsick, Baskett, and Cervero concurred with Lovin in a later chapter, that a key implication of more holistic ways of knowing "is the need for new models that take into account transformative learning, learning through relationships, intuitive knowing, the affective dimensions of learning and situational variables" (1992, p. 112). Perhaps, said Marsick, Baskett, and Cervero, this

meant something as simple as “redesign physical space so that interaction and learning occur more naturally” (p.112). Given the natural physical design of the learning space within a book circle, perhaps the ways of knowing spoken about by Marsick, Basket, Cervero, and Lovin can be enhanced by what Hartley referred to as “embedded reading, where the book thrives in a live cultural and social environment” (2002, p. 138).

Cook and Brown's Knowing

Cook and Brown argued that knowledge creation should not come at the expense of the individual over the organization or explicit knowledge over tacit knowledge. Knowledge and knowing are not mutually exclusive say the authors, but “mutually enabling” (p.383). They contend that all four forms of knowledge (tacit, explicit, individual, and group) should hold equal standing (1999). Secondly, they asserted that even though there may be a good understanding of these four forms of knowledge that does not mean everything is recognized about knowing. The authors claim that until more is understood about tacit, explicit, individual, or group knowledge, the way we speak about and are able to understand organizational knowledge will be hampered. Tacit knowledge may be used at times within explicit knowledge, or explicit knowledge may be used within tacit. Furthermore, Cook and Brown argue that knowing is about connections within the social and physical world. Cook and Brown declared that the term knowledge “indicates something an individual or group possesses, can possess, or needs to possess where as knowing is about relation: it is about interaction between the knower(s) and the world” (p.388). The authors conclude that more can be understood, and therefore gained, by understanding ways the action of knowing and the possession of knowledge can increase organizational knowing.

Communities of Practice

Learning through relationships, in “communities of practice” is one way to increase knowledge agrees Wenger (1997, p.38). Wenger said, “being alive as human beings means we are constantly engaged in the pursuit of enterprises of all kinds from ensuring our physical survival to seeking the most lofty pleasures” (1997, p. 38). Wenger says that people identify these projects and through interaction with one another in these learning settings, communities are formed and learning happens. Pursuing enterprises may be another way of looking at self-directed learning projects described by Tough (1971). Wenger asserted that as we continue to interact with one another over time through learning and reflecting, communities of shared practice are created. Usually, these are informal and social networks, and learning in these networks is both explicit and tacit. Wenger and Snyder defined what workplace learning should look like: “learning through interactions and relationships in networks of others who are experiencing and working on the same challenges and tasks. People learn in communities of other people working on the same things” (Wenger & Snyder, 2002, para. 3). Wenger said the members of these groups “share their experience and knowledge in free-flowing, creative ways that foster new approaches to problems” (Weiss, 2001, p. 40). Members in these communities feel “they grow every time they meet with the community” (p. 41). New knowledge adds to the organizational ways of knowing as spoken about by previous authors cited in this literature review. Knowing, according to Baskett and Marsick is not the immediate absorption of thoughts, specifics, or ways of thinking. Instead, HR departments should operate on the belief that transfer is a long process which requires interaction and the space to create these interactive

relationships (Baskett & Marsick, 1992b, p.12). Organizational ways of knowing are benefited by communities of practice.

Transfer of Learning

The phrases transfer of learning and transfer of training are often used interchangeably, but authors Ellerington, Marsick, and Dechant point out the difference between the expressions training and learning:

Training usually takes place in a classroom and is facilitated by trainers, controlled by experts, and structured or deliberately designed. Learning on the other hand takes place whenever problems or dilemmas are encountered, is facilitated (when it is) by educators and controlled by learners, and may not be very well structured or designed at all. (1992, p. 52)

Tennant (1999) defined transfer of learning as using knowledge from one situation and applying it (or not) to another and explained how learning is a social process rooted in what we do. Tennant further said that transfer of learning comes about when there is complementary learning and support in new situations. Tennant felt that a “balanced learning environment, which includes individual and group instruction, part and whole instruction, practice, exposure to a range of situations, and learning abstract principles in conjunction with many concrete examples” will help enhance transfer (p.177). Tennant also believed a climate with peer and supervisor support where the learner has opportunities to use the learning with positive outcomes, would enhance transfer. Transfer is also enhanced when learners can “engage in learning through communicating” and learners have “the capacity to be self-directed and control and regulate one’s own learning” (Tennant, p. 177). Haskell (1998) said, “in one sense we are all experts of transfer of learning ... yet we are all woefully lacking in higher order transfer of learning skills” (p. 18).

Marsick's Construction of Meaning

Marsick (1987) defined transfer of learning as “the way in which people construct meaning in their personal and shared organizational lives” (p.4). Daily interactions and experiences build learning in an individual and lead to learning in organizations. Marsick further stated that in organizations today, learning does not happen in “assembly line manner, emphasizing compartmentalization of tasks, jobs, and relationships. Learning calls for a flexible capacity for continual reflection on one’s actions and at times for critical reflection” (p. 9). The learning environment within organizations must reflect these changes. Organizations should offer opportunities for informal interactions with and self-directedness among learners. Marsick further said, “learning for organizational productivity cannot be separated from learning for personal growth as is often done, nor can the burden of change be placed primarily on the individual or in isolation from the organization” (p. 16). In order to have effective learning organizations, individuals must have input into their learning, be aligned with the whole of the organization, and, like Haskell (2001) noted, be allowed time for reflection and interaction for transfer to take place.

Haskell's Crucial Learning

Haskell, in Transfer of Learning (2001) advanced earlier definitions of transfer of learning as “our use of past learning when learning something new and the application of that learning to both similar and new situations” (2001, p. xiii). Haskell maintained that eleven principles are necessary for significant transfer of learning to occur. These are:

- Acquire a large primary knowledge base in the transfer area
- Have knowledge base in subjects other than the ones studying
- Know what transfer is
- Know the history of the subject being studied
- Be motivated to learn
- Have a supportive transfer climate

- Understand underlying theory in the area(s) to transfer to
- Encode learning in transfer terms
- Utilize lots of practice and drill
- Allow incubation time
- Observe and read the works of people who are exemplars and masters of transfer thinking (p. xv)

Haskell optimistically believed that transfer was a common occurrence, happening most every day; however, Haskell also wrote the opposite saying “general transfer from instructional settings...transfer leading to invention and discovery, seldom seems to occur” (p. 10). Haskell created a taxonomy to describe the six levels of transfer. This taxonomy ranged from the most common occurrence of transfer, nonspecific, to application, context, near, far, and creative, the transfer required for invention and discovery. Haskell further claimed that in the first three levels, “nonspecific, application, and context” (p. 29) transfer happens rather easily as these are applying what one knows to similar situations. Haskell argued that transfer is fundamental to all learning and “is responsible for the simplest of ideas and for the highest achievements of humankind” (p. 23). Transfer, according to Haskell is crucial for all learning.

Holton & Baldwin's Methods of Transfer

Haskell (1998, 2001), Marsick (1987), and Tennant (1999), among others, have stated that transfer is crucial for building learning organizations and for simple organizational survival in today's markets. Holton and Baldwin, editors of Improving Learning Transfer in Organizations, (2002) provide methods and ideas for improving the transfer climate in organizations. Specifically, Holton and Baldwin focused on the learning transfer system within organizations, and analyzing the “transfer gap” (2002, p.3). Holton and Baldwin presented five core assumptions on which their work was based:

- Transfer is a function of a system of influences – not just learning design
- Transfer is not necessarily resistant to intervention
- Achieving transfer does not require substantial new processes and systems
- Transfer interventions will be most successful where the explicit goal is performance improvement
- Transfer is multidimensional

(Holton & Baldwin, 2002, pp. 6-7)

Danielson and Wiggenshorn (2002), in the same volume, said learning should contribute to the competitive sustainable advantage an organization needs to survive. Learning must align with the organizational objectives, performance objectives, and must be embedded in organizational processes that “spark innovation, and future oriented thinking” (2002, p. 37). McLagan (2002) again reiterated what previous authors have said: Create a framework that brings people together in the natural learning process, which both capitalizes on social needs and fulfills individual needs. This will help people as they make deliberate choices of what to transfer to meet their needs in the workplace and beyond. In addition, McLagan (2002) expressed that in the complicated and rapidly changing environment of today, learning designers needed to give the learner more say and responsibility in the design and implementation of their own learning. These learning systems need to be open and visible at all levels of the organization and include effective feedback loops so the learners have just-in-time information about their growth and development. Learning designers in organizations “require extensive knowledge of how organizations work and of how learning and change happen at the social, group, team, and individual levels” (2002, p. 55). Transfer of learning in the organizational and worldwide setting of today requires learning to be the center of attention.

Conceptual Framework

Many authors have been cited in the supporting literature for this research. Now I will explain the constructs that are the conceptual framework for this project. Self-directedness as explained by Tough (1971), Knowles (1975), Brockett and Hiemstra (1991), Candy (1991), and Garrison (1997), all speak of concepts of self-directedness. Those concepts that I believe will apply to the participants in this study are Tough's (1971) finding answers to questions and new skill attainment, because as the participants read the book on their own, questions will emerge that they will either bring to the discussion group or find the answers to on their own. In addition the ways they learn to participate in the discussions will be wholly learned on their own. Knowles (1975) says that self-directed learners will identify their learning needs, prepare suitable learning strategies, calculate their own learning outcomes and build inquiry skills. I believe all of these constructs will be manifested in the WPBG because participants will take the book and decide how much they want to get out of it, how much they want to participate in the discussions, what they want their own learning outcomes to be, and figure out ways to ask questions to get the answers they want. I believe that inquiry skills will be strengthened week by week as they come to the group to discuss what the book has said in comparison to each other and their own work area. Each participant shall possibly exhibit their own degrees of responsibility towards the materials and the discussion as Brockett and Hiemstra (1991) say a self-directed learner shall. Candy (1991) suggests the social context effects the self directedness of the learner and I consider this WPBG, having been through the Assessment and Development Center, will be a highly motivated group that will drive each other in this particular social context to really take initiative to dissect the materials in such a way as to challenge each other's

knowledge. In addition, Garrison (1997) cites self monitoring as an attribute of self-directed learners where in the learners take charge of structuring their own meaning from the learning, supplement existing knowledge, and cultivate new knowledge, all things I think the WPBG may foster. So although this particular group of learners are not choosing the book that they will learn from, I still believe self-directedness will manifest itself in the times between meetings, how they read the book, how they apply the materials to their work place, and how they learn from one another. Self-directedness may be apparent in the discussions between members as they bring meaning and understanding to the materials in the context that they work.

Organizational ways of knowing, the second area of literature discussed in this research, analyzed through the works of Nonaka (1994) Marsick, Baskett, Cervero, Lovin (1992), Wenger (1997), Snyder (2002), Cook and Brown (1999), discussed the ways that knowing serve the organization. Knowing is a constant succession of learning events in which people move towards certainty about a number of things. The authors state that learners think knowledge has to have come from somewhere, like books, but that knowing is personal; it exists inside the learner. To bring this knowing out, the literature suggests interaction with colleagues in their work area in informal ways that allow for more holistic ways of knowing. Interactions with colleagues that are working on the same thing is especially useful for creating organizational knowing conclude the authors. By this standard of creating knowing, the members of the book group should be able to apply the book to their own world while interacting with peers about the same problems and challenges. In addition by building these relationships within the book group the learners might share experiences and learn from each other.

Transfer of learning, the last area of literature explored by Tennant (1999), Haskell (1998, 2001), McLagan (2002), Danielson and Wiggernhorn (2002), Holton and Baldwin (2002), Marsick (1987), Ellerington, and Dechant (1992), discusses the differences between training and learning, ways to facilitate transfer, aligning transfer with organizational objectives, creating the right framework for transfer to occur in a natural learning process, and building daily interactions for transfer to occur, among other things. These are all elements perhaps facilitated in the natural setting of the WPBG. In addition, since the book topic was aligned with the organizational objectives transfer may more easily occur. The WPBG participants will be allowed to construct meaning and knowledge in their own world, and apply it to their work-life. In addition, the natural learning setting, which will occur in the WPBG, may be very conducive to the natural learning process needed for transfer to occur. While transfer was not measured in this study, knowledge gained from the book will be shown told in the participants' own words, via a reflective self-report instrument.

Within this framework, transfer of learning, self-directed learning, and organizational knowing may emerge as the constructs upon which the workplace book group operates. In addition, because there is no literature available on the application of book groups to a work situation for these concepts, I believe these constructs are a good place to start.

Summary

The purpose of this research was to explore workplace book groups as a learning method in a work environment. The workplace has changed. Boundary-less career employees, global markets, technology, and rapidly obsolete information drive training initiatives. HR departments struggle to develop competitive, well-trained, reliable

employees, while managing budgets and stakeholders' return on investment. Learning, at an individual level and an organizational level needs to happen quickly to meet the demands of today's markets. HR departments constantly seek new methods to increase learning as quickly as possible.

Many of the authors cited in the review of the literature for this study supported like themes. Whether speaking of self-directedness, ways of knowing in organizations, transfer of learning, or learning communities, a common thread appeared in many of the works. To have thriving organizations in today's markets, learning must be embedded in the structure of the organization, and in the thinking of the individuals that comprise these organizations. To embed knowledge requires a high degree of learning from every circumstance in which individuals interact. Learning also requires a measure of self-directedness on the part of the individual as well. The right learning environments, in turn, can cultivate self-directedness. These factors, when interwoven, create organizational environments that stimulate creativity, innovation, and future-thinking employees, who shape sustainable companies. Learning methods need to include self-directedness, communities of like-minded employees who build organizational ways of knowing, which influence transfer of learning.

Workplace book groups incorporate many of those aspects of effective learning necessary for today's companies. When supported by management, a book circle is a gathering of like-minded communities working together, aligned under the strategies of the organization, to study with an author, through a book. WPBGs also allow critical time for reflection, discussion, and application to work situations, which are also keys to transfer. Tennant says learning is a social process "embedded in practice" (1999, p. 170) while Hartley uses similar terms to refer to book circles: "embedded reading, where the

book thrives in a live cultural and social environment” (2002, p. 138). Learning through reading with co-workers can be another tool for increasing transfer and knowledge while building a strong workforce.

Haskell, in the final chapter of Transfer of Learning (2001), touches on the metaphor of learning as the spherical helix of a mollusk shell, in that prior learning is the base of the spiral from which all new learning builds upon. Great inventors and thinkers, historically, said Haskell, all had a comparable ability to build on existing knowledge. Learning organizations, hoping to build on employees’ previous knowledge and abilities, perhaps should look at workplace book groups as an opportunity to create a powerful forum for learning. Chapter III, Methodology, will cover the research design used to explore the efficacy of WPBGs.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to explore the efficacy of workplace book circles as a learning method in the work environment. The research focused on two issues specifically: WPBGs utilization of self-directed learning, and the effect of WPBGs on organizational ways of knowing, which influences transfer of learning. As discussed in the previous chapter, very little literature exists regarding WPBGs as a method of learning in the workplace. Therefore, the investigative nature of qualitative research, especially emerging grounded theory based in a case study, was a suitable means for examining the efficacy of workplace book groups. This chapter describes the research methodology and design used to examine these issues.

Qualitative Research

Qualitative research is investigative in nature, seeking to “explore and understand a central phenomenon” (Creswell, 2002, p. 58). Qualitative research produces descriptive data from participants’ frames of reference allowing the researcher to analyze and describe the phenomenon being researched. The research is “rich in description of people, places, and conversations not easily handled by statistical procedures” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p. 2). Therefore, in endeavoring to understand the learning in a WPBG, a qualitative design grounded in the participant’s words, will paint the most vivid picture of what develops in WPBGs. This will contribute to knowledge on organizational knowing and transfer of learning, as well as creating a model for how to best conduct WPBGs in the workplace.

Qualitative inquiry uses “participant observation and in-depth interviewing” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992 p. 2) to create a text database that can be coded to discover underlying themes that emerge. Contextual information is also included in qualitative

studies to describe the setting, time, or individuals being studied. This is particularly salient information to have in regard to understanding the learning in a WPBG so that a model of how to conduct a workplace book group may be constructed.

Qualitative research is reported in various formats that may include “a long narrative told in story form or a more objective, scientific report that resembles quantitative research” (Creswell, 2002, p. 57). Qualitative reports include the voice of the researcher, incorporating “biases, values, and assumptions” (p.57). Qualitative researchers may even discuss past experiences, or cultural background and how this will affect their analysis and assumptions attained in the study.

Rationale for Case Study Design

The specific qualitative research strategy proposed for this research study was a case study. Since two book groups were operated simultaneously, this study was a dual-case design. The case study design is like a funnel, according to Bogdan and Biklen (1992). Research begins at the wide end of the funnel and proceeds down into the spout, as the research becomes more defined. At the large end of the funnel, the researcher will “cast a wide net trying to judge the feasibility of the site or data source for their purposes” (p. 62). As data and information come in, the researcher may refine the research to include new information as it is found. Case studies allow for continual modification as the research emerges and the study narrows. Research on WPBG is best accomplished through observational case study, which uses participant observation as the data-gathering technique. This case study was conducted at a manufacturing facility called NAACO,¹ located in the Southeastern United States. The company manufactures forklifts and other material handling equipment at this site. There are

¹ Full identification of the company was permitted (Appendix A).

approximately 1,083 people at this location. The company invests in their employees through extensive training and development, so they were supportive of testing WPBGs at their site.

Emerging Grounded Theory

Participant observations yield data, which when compared produces evidence by way of groups of codes, themes, or developing theory. Theory developed in this manner is called grounded theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, pp. 31-32). Grounded theory is one form of qualitative research used to “generate or discover a theory, an abstract analytical schema of a phenomenon that relates to a particular situation” (Creswell, 1998 p.56). Emerging grounded theory refers to the way the data collected are coded and categorized. In emerging grounded theory, the categories are allowed to emerge from the data instead of the data being forced into predetermined categories (Creswell, 2002). The researcher collects “primarily interview data, makes multiple visits to the field, develops and interrelates categories of information, and writes theoretical propositions or hypotheses or presents a visual picture of the theory” (Creswell, 1998, p. 56). The researcher also serves as an important tool in emerging grounded theory research as the primary data collector and analyzer. The researcher serves as the filter through which the data is passed. Since no research exists on transfer of learning within a workplace book group, emerging grounded theory method was best suited for this study.

Data Collection and Analysis

According to Creswell, the aim of qualitative data collection is to “gather information from individuals who can help you address the research questions or hypotheses” (2002, p.159). This research would gather data in the form of workplace book groups, focus group interviews, field notes, memos, and researcher journaling.

Participants took part in one of two consecutively run book groups and then joined focus group interviews after completing two book groups and then at the end of all four-book groups. Data from all book groups and focus groups would then be coded and analyzed for emerging themes. See Figure 1 for a visual representation of the data collection and analysis chronology. Because the research was conducted in a specific, bounded system, the large oval represents the contextualized NACCO worksite. The three different shapes inside the oval represent the three primary data gathering strategies of book group sessions, focus group sessions, and reflective self-reports. In addition to these primary data collection strategies, other data not represented in this chronology were my journal entries, field notes and observations.

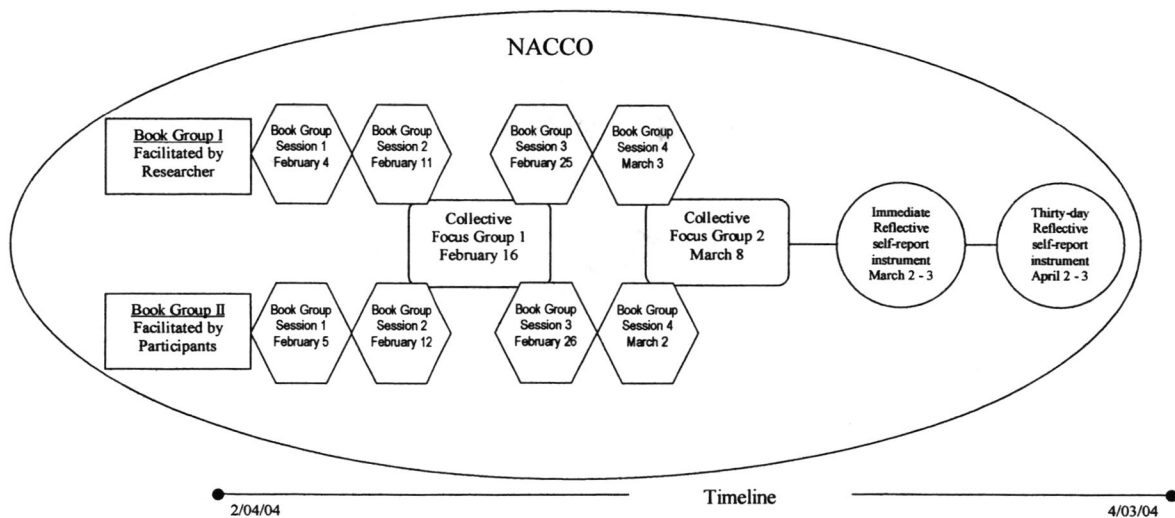


Figure 1: Data Collection and Analysis Chronology

Participant Selection

Eighteen individuals were selected as possible participants in this study. The criterion for selection was completion of a corporate sponsored event called the Assessment and Development Center. Employees were chosen to participate in the

Assessment and Development Center because they are on a company-defined fast track to upper management and leadership positions. In the year 2000, company leaders defined some strategic long-term goals for the company and found that many of the existing management people would be retiring within the next ten years. Through evaluation of existing managers in succession for these leadership positions, the company discovered there were managers coming up the ranks unprepared to assume these management and leadership roles. The company identified leadership traits needed to assume these roles and employees with these traits were identified and put on a fast track for development. These leaders then were sent on corporate assessment retreats where they identified the skill sets and projects needed to become company leaders in the future. The human resource manager and the researcher were looking for participants with a good knowledge foundation, a certain degree of management experience, and a representation of this company's upper management. These were the characteristics of the participants solicited for participation in this research study.

These participants were emailed an invitation to continuing professional development (Appendix B) by the Human Resource Manager, to which the researcher attached a Power Point explanation of book groups (Appendix C). Once team members emailed their interest in the WPBG, the twelve respondents were sent an email outlining dates and times for the months of February and March, along with location of the meeting and reading instructions (Appendix D). Team members were assigned to a group by the human resource manager based on the days of the week that would work best for them, while also providing alternative days of attendance for the group members. Groups were labeled I and II and had six members each. Participants were informed of their right to choose to participate or not on the first meeting and Informed

Consent documents were filled out on the first day of meeting (Appendix E). All meetings were audio taped and the audiotapes were kept by the researcher in a locked file cabinet to protect the identities of the research participants, following Institutional Review Board (IRB) research protocol. The IRB is an agency that protects the rights and welfare of human subjects in research. Through review of the research protocol incorporated in this study, the IRB granted permission for this research to proceed (Appendix F).

The Assessment and Development Center these individuals had participated in identified several traits for the participants to be working on to speed their development. Many of these traits fell under the broad umbrella of leadership skills so the human resource manager asked to use a book on leadership for this research. The researcher explored several book options, presented these to the human resource manager who chose the book to be used in the WPBG. The book chosen was Authentic Leadership (2003) by Bill George. The book was delivered to the two groups the week of January 26, 2004.

Workplace Book Group Operation

The simultaneous book groups ran concurrently at this manufacturing facility. (See Figure 1) The purpose of following two groups was to explore the ways WPBGs may differ in structure, facilitation guidance, leadership, and format. For instance, Group I selected to run as a facilitated group conducted as described on the Random House website. Random House website recommends the facilitator keep the group on task, allowing everyone time for discussion, and cross-discussion (Random House, 1996, Third section para. 2). Group II selected to use the methods described in most leisure book group guides, using Hartley's (2002) book as the guideline. Hartley found that leisure book circles run best when the members make decisions together about how the

book will be facilitated and discussed. Group I would have more direction from the researcher as the facilitator, while in Group II, the researcher would serve more as an observer of them facilitating themselves.

Groups

Group I met four times in February and March. Three to four of the same people participated regularly in this group. Two participants who had signed up to attend never did. They met for one hour at noon in a conference room, and the company provided lunch. This group followed the facilitation guide suggested by Random House (Random House, 1996, Third section para. 2) and the researcher served as participant observer in this group. A participant observer position in research is one in which the researcher takes part in the proceedings in the setting he or she is observing (Creswell, 2002). The researcher was the facilitator in this group, and so was in a less observational role but a more participational role. Facilitating meant the researcher kept track of the time, asked questions about the book materials, and kept the group on task. This method is most used in facilitated book groups or library led book groups (Random House, 1996, Third section para. 2). The researcher extensively audio recorded notes after each session to make sure of capturing observations while they were still fresh on the mind, in addition to recording the group session.

Group II also met four times in February and March. They met for one hour at noon in a conference room, and the company provided lunch for them as well. During the first meeting, the group chose how to divide the remainder of the book up, who would facilitate each different section, how the discussions would be managed during the allotted time periods, and how they would relate the material back to their job. Three or four of the same participants attended each session, while two who signed up did not

attend. The researcher served as participant observer, but did not facilitate or make any decisions for the group. This position allowed the researcher the opportunity to experience the book group with the participants.

All WPBG sessions were audio taped in order to capture verbatim, the group interaction from which observations can then be made. Audio taping also frees the researcher for careful observation. Bogdan and Biklen warn of the dangers of becoming so involved in the activity being observed that one is unable to monitor the process effectively (1992). Taping and note taking helped the researcher remain objective and capture critical comments, speculations, and perceptions that might otherwise have been lost.

Upon completion of the book, both groups were given a reflective self-report instrument (RSRI) to look at what was remembered from the book and discussions. This reflective self-report instrument was taken again thirty days later. (See Figure 1) The reflective self-report instrument included salient points the WPBG participants had brought up in discussions about how the material applied to their job or how they were using it in their work. There were four discussion questions on the reflective self-report instrument, which was sent by email to the participants immediately after the last book group was complete (See Appendix G). Participants were asked to return the RSRI to the researcher by email within 48 hours. This RSRI was re-administered thirty days later, as is recommended by Broad and Newstrom (1992). Re-administering not only determines what the learners know, but it also serves as a reminder of key points and applicability. This second RSRI was also emailed with the same instructions as the first one. The RSRI successfully demonstrated the learners' application of the material to

their work. The first and subsequent RSRI outcomes will be discussed in the findings in Chapter IV, as well as the rubric for assessing them.

Focus Groups Interviews

A focus group interview is “the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people,” (Creswell, 2002, p. 206). Focus groups are useful because they save time, as the research subjects are all in one place and what one research participant says can inspire another participant to remember noteworthy items. The focus groups were asked questions regarding their thoughts on the effectiveness of book groups as a learning method in their work environment, to what degree self-directedness was utilized, and if they thought the book group had contributed to ways of knowing in their workplace. See Appendix H and J for these questions. Both WPBG participants were invited to attend the focus group meetings together. These were held in the same conference room as the WPBG and lunch was provided. The first focus group was conducted after two of the four book group sessions were done and the last focus group met after all book group meetings were finished. These focus group meetings were recorded, and then the tapes were transcribed, and coded for themes.

Researcher Notes

The researcher kept an audio journal, as well as reflective and descriptive field notes, which were also constantly compared for emerging themes. A journal in qualitative research is used for the researcher to gather reflective and interpretive information about the research subject (Creswell, 2002). Researchers cannot keep themselves and their views out of qualitative research, so “personal interpretations” are documented in this journal and are used to clarify the “larger meaning of the data” (p. 279). This information becomes part of the open coding process along with the

observations, field notes, and focus groups, wherein the researcher begins to put the data into categories.

Field notes are text notes and/or diagrams of settings including room layout, furniture placement, participants' locations, and relationships during the book groups and focus groups. Field notes are another record researchers can use for documentation during research. Reflective field notes are descriptions of the researcher's thoughts, ideas, or concerns while observing the WPBGs and following focus groups, while descriptive field notes describe the physical layout of the places the WPBG and focus groups were held (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992). Both reflective and descriptive field notes will be used in this research. During the WPBGs, and the ensuing focus groups, the researcher noted participant's seat locations, room layout, in addition to participants assumed roles during the discussions. Notations of the researcher's thoughts during the book circles and directly after were also documented. This information was useful for several applications. First, it served as a basis for questioning in the focus groups. Second, field notes helped the researcher identify some emerging themes during each observation.

Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is the process of studying the text, unfolding the information collected, and explaining the findings (Creswell, 2002). The researcher puts the text into categories, and analyzes them, seeking to illustrate the central phenomenon being studied.

After data were collected using focus groups, field notes, or researcher journal notes, all of this information was then coded. Coding, which began immediately, is the process whereby "data are broken down, conceptualized, and put back together in new

ways. It is the central process by which theories are built from data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 57). Theory is built on these themes, categories, and codes. The researcher began analyzing the raw data, constantly comparing it and questioning how it fit together to create a picture of what emerged during the study. The researcher used memos, or notes to self during the coding process to explain thoughts about the ideas or coded categories emerging (Creswell, 2002). Generating this picture, or theory, is central to the process of grounded theory research. It is “an abstract explanation or understanding of a process about a substantive topic grounded in the data” (Creswell, 2002, p. 452). The theory emerged directly from the words of the participants.

The coding process began immediately with the first collection of data, and guided the next steps of data collection. The first data collected in this study came from the first book group and continued being collected in all subsequent book groups. At the conclusion of each WPBG the researcher listened to the audio taped interviews immediately following each session, and made auditory journal notes about things that stood out. At the next WPBG, the researcher allowed a few minutes for questions in relation to subjects of interest the previous week. In addition, data was also collected in the focus group interviews. Focus Group interviews were also listened to immediately following each meeting and the researcher made additional notes about salient points similar to the data which came out of the WPBGs. Data were analyzed for preliminary categories, which led the researcher to ask additional questions in subsequent meetings. Again, these data was immediately coded, compared to prior data, categories further refined, and directed each subsequent meeting. The next step was a few one-on-one email interviews for clarification of what was said during the different sessions. After these interviews, the researcher felt category saturation had been reached. Saturation

means the researcher determined subjectively that new data would not add any new insights (Creswell, 2002). Continued constant comparison of the data followed.

Constant comparison is the process one engages in while coding data. It is an “inductive data analysis procedure in grounded theory research of generating and connecting categories by comparing incidents in the data to other incidents, incidents to categories, and categories to other categories” (Creswell, 2002, p. 451). This constant comparison enabled the researcher to ground the categories in the data. Data are continually examined and categorized until saturation is reached. By aiming to reach saturation, where no new data, relationships, or categories are uncovered, the researcher verifies that the theory is conceptually adequate. Once saturation of the categories are reached, the researcher further refines the data by choosing a core category as the central phenomenon.

The core category, which emerges from the constant comparison of data, must be one that relates to all the others, frequently appears in all the data, indicates the importance to the research, and is not forced illogically into that central position (Creswell, 2002). Once the core category was determined, the theory was generated.

Validity and Reliability

Validity is determining the truthfulness of the findings (Creswell, 2002). Qualitative research endeavors to generate valid data to increase and add to existing information on the subject being reported on. Qualitative researchers do this through engaging in lengthy conversations with their research subjects in their own environment and by asking thought provoking questions that get at the core of the research question (Creswell, 2002). The qualitative concepts used to verify findings in this study were constant comparison, triangulation, credibility, and transferability.

Constant Comparison

Constant comparison, which is the very nature of grounded theory emerging design, is one method used in this study to validate the findings. Characteristically, the stories of the participants in qualitative research unfold in their words. Without the process of the researcher constantly comparing those words, the theory that emerges would not be valid. By constantly comparing themes, categories, text data, and field notes, the researcher insures there is evidence in the data to support the findings.

Triangulation

In this study, the data and findings were checked several ways to find supporting evidence for selected themes. The book groups, focus groups, individual email interviews for data clarification, frequent HR contact, along with an adequate number of participants in each group allowed different methods to get at the same data. The researcher's field notes were checked against audiotapes of the book circles. Triangulation was also employed through comparing field notes to transcription data, and one-on-one email interviews with focus group interviews. As Creswell says, this "ensures that the study will be accurate because the information is not drawn from a single source, individual, or process of data collection" (2002, p. 280). Triangulation corroborates evidence.

Peer and Thesis Committee Review

Peer review and close collaboration with the thesis chair were also methods employed in this survey to insure the validity. Three educated reviewers who were not vested in the study also reviewed the manuscript. Peers were a trainer, a public information officer, and communications specialist. In addition, a thesis committee was used. This auditing by members outside the research helped insure that the findings

would be grounded in the data, that all conclusions were logical and supported, themes and categories were appropriate, and methodology valid (Creswell, 2002).

Applicability of Research Findings

Applicability, sometimes called transferability in research, is the ability for research to be applied generally to all other similar settings (Creswell, 2002). So as not to confuse transferability with transfer of learning, the term applicability will be used here. The rich descriptive nature of qualitative research allows readers to make determinations about the research data as to its applicability and usability in their own context. Book Groups are already used in many instances for leisure learning. Whether applicable to all situations would be determined by the people within each different workplace and how they incorporated a book circle into their learning culture. However, the rich data presented within this study should give researchers and practitioner's ideas to improve their own practice, and add to the general knowledge of WPBGs.

Limitations and Assumptions

As with all research, there were limitations associated with this research. However, once these limitations and assumptions were identified, efforts were made to limit the effect of these assumptions and limitations on the research outcomes. The limitations identified were researcher bias, exploring only one work site, small group studied, short time period of the study, possible observer over-participation and lack of prior studies to build on.

Researcher Bias

Research bias poses possible limitations in all qualitative research. Researcher biases are the values, beliefs, opinions, and feelings of the researcher, which affect the way the research subject is analyzed. The researcher's assumptions included beliefs

that company sponsored education works, people love to read and learn, adults are self-directed and autonomous learners, and that WPBGs facilitated among peers were a better method of operation than supervisor led WPBGs.

Because these assumptions were identified, the researcher believed they could be overcome, especially through the help of peer evaluation, thesis committee review, and constant comparison of the data for what was true in the participants' words.

Time and Site Limitations

The time frame of this study added to two of the limitations: studying only one work site, and the short time period to collect and code the data. Given the institutional logistics and time frame of the university and the work site, time limitations were imposed. Given the difficult task of finding an adequate work site for holding the WPBG, and meeting the qualifications of the canons of science, Institutional Review Board, and thesis committee schedules, the researcher was restricted in the time frame available for data collection and analysis. Multiple sites, with more participants, and more iterations of the book circle, followed by additional focus group interviews would broaden the understandings of WPBGs. However, given the exploratory nature of emerging grounded theory bounded within a case study, one site over a short period of time with these participants did produce new theory on the efficacy of WPBGs, so this study did add to general knowledge, which was its intent.

Possible Observer Over-Participation

One limitation the researcher was concerned about was possible over-participation in the book groups. Over-participation was defined as researchers "getting so involved and active with subjects that their original intentions get lost" (Bogdan & Biklen, 1995, p. 88). To insure the research remained focused on the original intention of

efficacy of WPBGs for transfer of learning, the researcher taped reflective audio field notes right after each session, and audio taped each book circle session to record any observations that may have been lost due to involvement in the book group. Repeated review of the taped book sessions also allowed the researcher to reflect on the degree of participation and modify behaviors if necessary in later sessions. In addition, the data triangulation process and member checks served to minimize this problem.

Lacking Prior Research

The final limitation identified in this study, lack of prior research to build upon, was also the basis for choosing emerging grounded theory design. Because little had been written about the efficacy of WPBGs before, the researcher thoroughly and constantly compared the data. Further use of comparison of one type of data against another to verify codes and categories, as well as extensive reflective and descriptive field notes, and again use of peer and thesis committee review, all helped to overcome this limitation. In addition, having no prior research may have actually benefited this study, in that prior information did not sway the adoption of early categories to put the data in.

Creswell states that research is done because of its contribution to “adding to our knowledge of educational issues; improving practice; informing policy debates” (Creswell, 2002, p.3). The researcher strongly wanted to add to existing knowledge and improve practice on WPBGs and their effect on transfer, self-directed learning, and ways of knowing in the workplace. Therefore, every effort to overcome the limitations and assumptions in this study were made so that this research would add value.

Summary

This chapter presented the research methodology used to study the efficacy of WPBGs as a learning method in a manufacturing environment. This qualitative research study was an emerging grounded theory design bounded by a case study of two WPBGs inside a manufacturing plant based in the southeast. The distinct characteristics of qualitative research, case study method, and grounded theory were explained in the discussion of qualitative research. Data collection included focus group interviews, audio-taped WPBGs, one-on-one email interviews for clarification, researcher journaling, and reflective and descriptive field notes, which were coded by the researcher and put into categories and themes for the story to emerge from the participants' words. Once the story emerged, this information was assembled to answer the research questions. Validity and reliability were sought after through constant comparison, triangulation, member checks, and peer and thesis committee review. The chapter concluded by discussing the limitations of the research that may decrease the reliability of it. Addressing limitations helps to limit their effect on the research. The following chapter outlines the findings from WPBGs in a descriptive narrative.

IV. RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to explore the efficacy of workplace book groups (WPBGs) as a learning method in a manufacturing environment, as well as to explore participants' self-directedness and the book groups' contributions to organizational knowing. By answering these questions more can be known about using workplace book groups as a learning method in the workplace. This chapter explains the context of the work site examined and presents the results from the two book groups, two focus groups, and the reflective self-report instruments of the learning from the book in application to their workplace. Included is a description of the participants, the information about what emerged during the book groups, and focus group data are presented.

Context of Research Site

The research was conducted at a large design, engineering, and manufacturing plant of material handling equipment in the Southeastern part of the United States. Originally called North American Coal Corporation this corporation now goes by NACCO Industries, Incorporated². The parent group employs 14,400 employees in all, while approximately 1,083 people in all capacities relating to the design and building of these large pieces of equipment work at this location. Training initiatives in this location are related to the overarching principles and mission of the parent organization. The mission of this organization is "to be the leading global supplier of lift truck products while meeting the expectations of our stakeholders who are our external and internal customers" (corporate Website accessed Nov 22, 2003). The nine guiding principles, which support this mission, are:

² The company has permitted itself to be identified. (Appendix A)

- Be aware of and responsive to the needs, of our internal and external customers.
- Achieve operational excellence by meeting the quality and time requirements of all customers at the lowest cost.
- Aggressively drive the total quality process to continuously improve performance in all aspects of our business.
- Provide competitive products and services to the user in our chosen markets.
- Develop separate marketing and independent distribution organizations dedicated to continuously improving the market share of our products.
- Promote mutually beneficial external relationships, which conserve our resources and enhance our growth opportunities.
- Create a caring, communicative and participative culture where everyone understands they are here to serve a common purpose.
- Continue to demand the highest standards of personal integrity and ethics in all aspects of the business.

Successful execution of our mission will enable us to grow profitably and provide increasing opportunity, reward and security for all who are involved in our business, while fulfilling the expectations of our stakeholders. (Corporate website accessed Nov 22, 2003)

Like many other factories, businesses and corporations nationwide, human resource (HR) departments strive to provide cost-effective and job related training for the employees. The Vice President of Human Resources at NACCO oversees three departments under which the training function falls. An HR Manager, a Training and Development Coordinator, and a Training Administrator manage training. All locations have at least one person dedicated to training and some locations have groups of trainers that focus on demand flow technology training and the certified manufacturing process. This division also has two sales trainers and six technical trainers who offer some training to company employees but primarily train their distribution network.

Training initiatives focus on leadership, time management, sales, budgets, and management skills. In addition, new initiatives on accountability and strategies for feedback have recently been established. A 360-degree assessment process, which is a tool that peers, supervisors, and subordinates use to rate management's performance, is

used in this workplace. In addition, all managers and supervisors utilize a performance management process (PMP), which includes a personal learning plan, extensive career development plans, and job descriptions. The personal learning plan documents what learning activities each employee will participate in during the coming year. When the supervisor rates the employee as having been effective at completing these activities, learning is assumed to have occurred (Appendix I). In addition, this worksite has recently begun offering an Assessment and Development Center as part of its succession planning and development initiatives. The Assessment and Development Center was “an opportunity for those attending to participate in an intensive holistic personal assessment, receive professional feedback, and develop a plan to further develop areas where opportunity exists for improvement” (personal correspondence with HR director, 1-21-04). The areas covered in this program include:

Assessment of critical thinking, numerical and verbal reasoning assessment, exercises on emotional intelligence and personality profiles, assessment of an individual's competency against the company model, pre-work by participant, their peers, subordinates, and their managers, professional one-on-one coaching, and a personalized development plan. (personal correspondence 1-21-04)

The eighteen individuals originally solicited for participation in this study had all attended the Assessment and Development Center.

Portrait of Participants

This section describes the participants in this study. Of the eighteen who had completed the assessment center, a prerequisite for attending the book group, twelve individuals signed up and nine participated. The three that did not participate had work related travel conflicts, which occurred after they planned on attending the book group sessions. For the purpose of protecting the identities of the participants, pseudonyms and approximate number of years of service will be used to describe this group.

The nine participants were all Caucasian, and there were eight males and one female, reflective of the overall management of the organization. All were in management positions for varying numbers of years, ranging from nearly thirty years to less than five years. They supervised as many as five hundred and as few as one. The group had held supervisory positions ranging from above twenty-five years to less than a year. They had all completed the Assessment and Development Center within the last eighteen months.

Book Group Participant Descriptions

Group I participants were Mark, Stephen, Johnny, Ricky, and Kathy. Mark had the most experience in the group, having more than twenty-five years at the company with about twenty of those in management. He supervises a staff of approximately nine people who manage five hundred in a factory setting. He came to all four sessions of book groups and both focus groups, arriving late to one focus group and leaving one book group early for prior obligations. Kathy was the only female participant in the group and attended one book group session and one focus group. She has been with the company for about five years and has two open positions that she will supervise when they are filled. Ricky attended all four book sessions; three sessions with Group I and one session with Group II. Ricky has been with the company less than nine years, supervising for about four years, currently supervising one. Ricky also attended both focus groups. Stephen attended three book group sessions and both focus groups and has been with the company approximately nine years and supervises one at this point. Stephen has the least number of years supervising and called himself a “newbie,” having less than a year of supervisory experience. Johnny attended two book sessions and

both focus groups, and he supervises about five people. He has been with the company for about ten years and has been a supervisor for approximately four years.

Group II participants were Mike, Charlie, Joseph, and Robbie. Charlie and Robbie attended all four of the book group sessions; Charlie only attended one focus group and Robbie attended both focus groups. Robbie did attend one session with Group I. Mike attended three book group sessions and one focus group, while Joseph was present at two focus group sessions and two book group meetings. Mike has been with the company for approximately five years, has been a supervisor for about a year and manages approximately seven people. Charlie has been with the company around ten years, all of which have been in a supervisory role and he supervises seven. Joseph has just about four years with the company in a supervisory role covering ten employees. Robbie supervises approximately ten employees, has been in a management position for about eight years, and with the company for ten.

Although the groups were supposed to start with twelve participants, due to workload and travel, the group dropped to nine by the first session. Each group had one person who completed all book groups, focus groups, and both reflective self-report instruments, which will be covered in a later section. See Table 1 on the top of the next page for a complete breakdown of participation, employment, and supervisory history. After Table 1, the next section covers the costs associated with the workplace book group, including time invested by the human resource manager and coordinator.

Group #	Name	Book Group 2-04-04	Book Group 2-05-04	Book Group 02-11-04	Book Group 02-12-04	Book Group 02-25-04	Book Group 02-26-04	Book Group 03-03-04	Book Group 03-02-04	Focus Group 02-16-04	Focus Group 03-08-04	RSRI	RSRI	TOTAL COMPLETED	Approximate # Years with Company	# Years Supervising	# Supervised
I	Mark	1		1		1		1		1	1	1	1	8	< 30	< 25	9
II	Robbie*		1	1			1		1	1	1	1	1	8	< 13	< 8	10
I	Ricky*		1	1		1		1		1	1		1	7	< 9	< 4	1
II	Charlie		1		1		1		1		1	1	1	7	< 10	< 10	7
I	Johnny					1		1		1	1	1	1	6	< 10	< 4	5
II	Joseph				1		1			1	1	1	1	6	< 4	< 4	10
I	Stephen	1		1				1		1	1		1	5	< 9	< 1	1
II	Mike		1		1				1		1	1		5	< 5	< 1	7
I	Kathy	1								1				2	< 5	< 1	2
*Attended with alternate group																	

Table 1: WPBG Participation, Employment History, and Supervisory Information

The costs for this WPBG consisted of the book and lunch costs, which the company provided, and the time HR devoted to the project. Fourteen books were bought at a cost of \$293.55, including shipping and handling. Lunches were provided by an outside vendor and cost about \$600. The time devoted by the HR manager and the training coordinator was approximately eight hours divided over four weeks before the first session met and during the six weeks that the book group and focus groups met. This included scheduling and invitations for participants, room reservations, catering requests, book ordering, and book distribution, all of which were handled through e-mail or interoffice mail. Facilitation time was one hour per session, and each group broke the book up by its sections resulting in four meetings. The focus groups lasted one hour

each and were held after the second book group session and upon completion of the book group. This site was chosen because it is representative of many businesses in its managerial hierarchy, training budgets, and outcome measures, and because of the support given by the HR department. Furthermore, because learning objectives are included in the performance management process (PMP), and management at this facility believes in the value of education for employees, like the Assessment and Development Center, it was particularly appropriate for this research. In addition, because two WPBG groups were allowed to run simultaneously, it was an optimal site to explore the efficacy and optimum operation of WPBGs. The next section will specifically discuss the research findings presented as three main sections of Application, Interaction, Book Group Operation, and the Reflective Self Report Instrument.

Findings and Discussion

All communications were audio-recorded and then transcribed from the beginning to the end of each book group and focus group. The purpose of sharing insights from these audio-recordings is to illustrate from the participants' perspectives the richness of the information they gleaned from the book as well as portray examples of their application of these concepts to their workplace and lives. In exploring the eight hours of audio taped book group interactions, distinct categories emerged. These were applying the book concepts to their work, learning from each other's areas of expertise and opinions through interaction, and how the two groups were similar and different in their discussions. The preferred method of book group operation will also be reviewed. The first area to be discussed is the application of the book concepts.

Applying the Book Concepts

The concepts in this book were the leadership philosophies of Bill George, former CEO of Medtronic. The book discusses leadership from a CEO perspective, which was the perspective of the author, Bill George. The participants in the book groups took these concepts and applied them or discarded them as they saw necessary. This section will discuss how the participants of the book groups shared information about their application of the book concepts to their respective work areas. This information is derived from the book groups, and focus group sessions. Group I and Group II met four times each resulting in eight book group sessions total, and the focus group of combined participants met twice. See Figure 1, Data Collection and Analysis for an illustration of the process. The groups discussed the book according to its parts. Part One had three chapters; Part Two had five chapters; Part Three had six chapters, and Part Four had three chapters and an epilogue. A copy of the book's Table of Contents is in Appendix K. The two groups were facilitated differently but followed the same format in reading and discussing the book. I offered the two groups the option of being self-facilitated or facilitated by me. I served as the role model for the facilitation in both groups on the first day. Group I chose to be facilitated by me, and Group II became the self-facilitated group. I came to the first session of Group I with a list of questions prepared (Appendix L), my book heavily highlighted, and key pages marked with Post-it notes. The first session of Group II, I arrived with an unmarked book, and no prepared questions. What follows are some examples of their weekly applications of the concepts and their answers to questions during the focus groups. Appendix H has the list of questions asked in the first focus group and Appendix J has the second focus group questions.

When I questioned the book group members about ways they took the book concepts from reading to application, these are some of their more salient responses. Stephen, the self-described newbie to management said, "I think it's baby steps ... seeing you know, what's good in there and what I can apply." He also said he wasn't trying to "change the world" but that changing "small steps in your scope of influence" would be easier than doing something large. Robbie gave examples of areas where he was applying some concepts. He said he was thinking about what he had learned as he approached new situations, and as a result he had decided he would spend more time "balancing," a key concept George speaks about in his book. In addition, Robbie also liked what George said about building relationships and being connected to employees at work and said, "I'm interacting with some fellow employees and it's about being connected and yeah, maybe I should do more here than just put that in the back of my mind. Think about it." Ricky, however, felt a little frustrated with the reading material saying that it was directed more towards a CEO level and "you would like to be able to put a lot of things into place now, and I got a lot of ideas, but you just got to be patient and wait." Kathy rounded out this discussion by saying there were many things you could do about "understanding your employees and things you can do to interact with your employees to show leadership ... that anybody at any level could do."

Joseph appreciated the author's take on customer satisfaction and customer focus and brought the company's PMP plan into his discussion of the application. He said that as he read the book he would look at his performance objectives and decide which ones were inward focused and did not affect their end use customers, and which were outward focused, influencing the end-use consumer of their trucks. In addition, he said that as he read he would take other pieces of the book and apply them to what he

does and how he leads by thinking about them. He said “I think you can take approaches or concepts or ideas that come out of the book and apply against your own objectives.” Kathy also felt the book principles were directly related to the development function of leadership in the PMPs in addition to some of the plans she was working on from attending the Assessment and Development Center. Ricky concurred, saying the book helped in areas he was working on from the Assessment and Development Center as well. Charlie said the PMP attribute of quality versus the financials was one he had applied from the book. He said he thinks back to the book and the application of long-term benefits paying off down the road for the customer, and he wonders if his company will apply the same long-term thought process that is awarded in the PMPs, as the book does.

Digging a little deeper than the original general question of how to apply, I next asked for examples of ways they had already applied the concepts from the reading to their work areas. Mike echoed Ricky’s earlier sentiments of the level for which the book was written. He said he found “significant inconsistencies” between what the author was saying in the book and what their culture or operating status was. Mark, however, had found application to their quality program and their thirty-minute burn test (a quality test performed on their lift trucks before they leave the plant). He said he really liked how the book had talked about meeting the customer’s expectations as the number one priority of any organization. What that did for him was give him a “little inner strength there to say ‘Hey, we are going to stick with this and we are not going to take a side road here’ ... it kind of reinvigorated me.” Robbie shared that he had applied the concept of being more connected at work to be able to share both “good news and the bad news” effectively. He also was paying more attention to his department’s customer focus, a key

point in George's book. Johnny shared two applications he was making from the book. He appreciated the "core value circle ... to crystallize it for yourself so when you are communicating ... the vision or something else, you're reinforcing it ... really live it day to day." Joseph liked the growth concept George talked about, but questioned whether it applied across industries asking, "can you do it in our industry the same way you can do it in a high growth industry?" He said you could take away certain things from the book and apply them relative to the industry in which you operate.

I also asked if there were other ways of taking the concepts to application. Johnny suggested that the next facilitator could recap the prior session as a way to remember the concepts. He said that teaching the concepts to others would also help him apply them. Stephen said that the key thing would be in "relating it to an area that you already know." He suggested using a NACCO case study of the topic to see what was the same and different between the book and their business. He also said that in each chapter he did a "mini-Power Point slide" at the beginning of the chapter as sort of a visual reminder of what the chapter was about to help him apply it.

One focus group question I asked was in relation to action items that they wrote down in comparison to the discussions about the book. Johnny shared the one he had written down was about learning more about governance because he had been appointed to a board since the book group had begun and wanted to apply some of the principles in the book to the way he would approach his new board position. He said he had read the chapter again "out of fear" and "took considerably more notes" on the second read-through because of his new board position. In addition, at the final focus group, Johnny had added succession planning to his list of action items, following a lengthy discussion of succession planning in one book group session. Mike said he had

done things differently in his last staff meeting because of reading the book, and he had asked his boss about their group doing a book group. Stephen said his action item was instilling more pride in their “cool product.” Even though NACCO does not make pacemakers like Medtronic’s in the book, Stephen still felt material handling equipment is something that they should have a lot of pride in and that was what he would try to instill that in his fellow workers since reading the book.

After asking them about action items, I also asked about questions they wished they had asked each other during the book group sessions. Mike, the self-proclaimed “doer,” said he would have like to opened up the white board in the conference room and written down where the organization in the book appeared to be compared to where their organization was. He wanted to benchmark against the book because he had a “real disconnect between what he’s saying and what I believe I see in our organization.” Joseph responded that he thought that was a good idea because it was beneficial hearing everyone else’s perspectives. Mark thought that would be a good idea as long as the information was kept between them and the differences were used to identify gaps to help them obtain their goals.

The first portion of the book, which we talked about the first week, discusses “Becoming an Authentic Leader” and begins with a discussion of failed leaders, the importance of authenticity, values, and passion. Both groups discussed the affects of the accounting scandals on their business and ways to combat employee’s poor perception of leadership during these times. Mark said that he would go back and rethink how he shares any management decisions with his people so that they have the most understanding of the situation to see the owners and president as good leaders. Mike discussed his passion for work as a way to help his employees understand what is

important to him. They continued talking about the passion George talks about in his book and how much different the product orientations were. Robbie said it was a lot easier to have such passion over a pacemaker or defibrillator than it was over a forklift, to which Mike responded that NACCO customers have “great passion for the quality” of their product. Perhaps, they said, “we are not making lifesaving equipment, but customers having downtime” with equipment because of quality issues were similar to George’s book.

Group I and Group II both spoke about balance and crucibles in life in regards to time spent at work and time spent doing other things. Stephen from Group I said “I guess you gotta know when to say when and when to do 90% and call it complete.” Kathy, also in Group I, said “I caught myself reading this book, going, ‘Hmmm, maybe I shouldn’t spend 14 hours at work every day,’ ” and that the book reminds you to “stop and smell the roses.” Charlie from Group II shared what he thought the author was doing by writing this book. He said, “he is trying to pass on to people so they don’t have to learn the hard way. A heart attack or something like that’ll make you shift real quick.” Mark from Group I said that a crucible would “pull you out of your daily grind” and not to “take things for granted.” Overall, both groups discussed the points from the book well in the first hour we were together.

The second portion of the book, which we discussed the second week together, discussed ways to build an authentic company including the importance of the company mission statement, aligning personal values with organizational values, and the bottom line in relation to customers and shareholders. Mike led Group II this week and his questions are included in Appendix M. I led Group I again and my questions are

included in Appendix N. What follow are excerpts from their conversations about the book concepts and applications to their world.

The book says there are no internal customers. Both groups remarked how they liked this approach and discussed ways they bring that thinking into their work. Mark said that his department makes regular visits out to the end-use customers to make sure everyone remembers who they are working for, much like George's point in his book. Joseph said:

It all seems so simplistic when you stop and you think about some of the examples that they use, you know when they talk about Gurshner, when he first came to IBM, and the stress in the organization at the time, yeah it probably would have been easy to slash and burn and cut divisions. But to think at that level, with the size of the organization, you would think of number of people you're responsible for and say no and we need to stay on the course, we need to focus, keep the dollars going into research and development, keep the dollars going into the people. So that you ultimately satisfy the customer, its just such a bold move, but so simple in some other words.

Group II also thought that it was easier for George's company to do that since they made pacemakers, but it was harder to tie into the mission of NACCO and lift trucks. The two groups also discussed how hiring the right people would help to drive depth into the organization. Hiring the right people and making sure they could do their jobs was all part of being able to service the customer. Joseph also pointed out areas where they had not done as well as the book in holding people accountable and areas where loyalty had been rewarded instead of performance, which the author said would not build the depth in an organization that it needs. Mark said when he recognized that it is "the strengths of different people" that really make a better company. He said the book discussed how it was important to get a problem on the table. When his group has a problem they do that because with eight other people sitting around that table, they have

over a hundred years of experience. Through some “healthy discussions” they can come up with the right answer.

Part three of the book, discussed our third time together, focuses on innovations, ethics, acquisitions, shareholders, overcoming obstacles and growth in organizations. Like NACCO, George’s company Medtronic was publicly traded, so as the groups discussed this section, they were able to relate it to their workplace. Group II was led by Joseph this week; his notes are included in Appendix O, and Group I, led by me, are in Appendix P.

Joseph compared what they were doing at Medtronic and said “can we get anything from this type of approach that Medtronic takes? I mean do you see that difference between what we do as a manufacturer of hard equipment versus what Medtronic’s does, servicing, you know the medical industry?” Robbie thought that their companies were similar because they were both using technology, although the lift truck industry was a little more constant than the medical device industry in his opinion. Joseph also wanted to know if the others looked at NACCO with the same thoughts on growth. The book suggested short, intermediate, and long-term projects to invest in. He said “Do we put those opportunities in the box, and say short term, intermediate term, long term?” Charlie thought they did the same, while Robbie said he disagreed because he thought they only had short-term projects and long-term projects. Joseph also wanted to know if it made sense for them to acquire another cyclical company or should NACCO be looking at “diversifying the offerings of the company.” Robbie responded that they should stick to a core competency, as the book recommends, and added, “I’d like to see us, if we do something, make sure we

do it right and get the cyclical but make sure we are doing it so that we can be stronger.”

Group I began discussing what George called the “soft side” of business, living the mission. One thing that Johnny had underlined in the book as being particularly interesting was “internal decision makers have no framework for making decisions if there is no clear mission.” He went on to say that the whole concept of the book was “customer first, employee second, and stakeholder third ... I do not know that we live that every day. We say it every day. I do not know that we live it every day.” Ricky said it would be easier to do what Medtronic does because of the product orientation. Johnny replied that it would be easier, but part of their job as leaders was setting the tone for creating that passion in their own business. Group I went on to discuss the seven deadly sins listed in the book, and the application to their world that really stood out was changing strategy without changing culture. I asked them if they had a successful strategy and culture change at the same time. They talked about their merger and acquisition several years earlier. In discussing how the strategy and culture had changed, Johnny said: “It took a lot of work. A five-year time. I do not know that I recognized it as something quite like this at the time,” meaning that after he read the book’s explanation and discussed it with the group, he saw the similarities between the two.

The last portion of the book, discussed our last time together, focuses on governance, sticking your neck out, and succession planning. Group II was led by Robbie who asked some very good questions from the book concepts. In fact, because this group preceded Group I this week, I asked him if I could use some of his questions

the next day when I facilitated Group II. His questions are included in Appendix Q, and mine are in Appendix R.

Robbie asked what really stood out about governance for Group II. Since NACCO is governed by a board and some dealers in their distribution network also have boards, they understood the concept and could apply it to their world. In fact, both Mike and Charlie had been affected by Sarbanes-Oxley, (the public accounting reform investor act of 2002) much like Medtronic had, so when Robbie asked what had stood out, Mike said he thought it was “pretty apropos.” In the governance portion on sticking your neck out, Robbie asked if they thought their company was doing a good job at initiating change in their industry. Charlie felt they were doing so on a particular project where they are completely redoing a truck platform. Mike felt the customer was always right and that listening to the customer helped to “drive change in.”

Succession planning was a lengthy discussion in both groups, with the focus on how they were preparing for their own successors. The book opened up an opportunity to discuss succession planning not only in application to their work area, but also in their dealer distribution network. Many of the dealerships are family owned businesses, so the book group members could apply the concepts from George’s book in working with these dealerships on succession plans. Internally, Charlie felt their company had done a good job preparing people through the Assessment and Development Centers.

This section summarized salient examples of the book group members’ application of the book concepts to their world and their workplace. The next section discusses the interaction among the book group members, with the book concepts, and the questioning of each other in relation to their workplace and the book.

Interaction Connecting Book Concepts and Participants

Anytime you bring people together in an organization for learning, there is some expectation that the learners are bringing rich and varied experiences with them, which will add to the program. This section discusses the ways these individuals took the book concepts and their experiences and used them as a catalyst to share insights into their rich and varied experiences. Questions were asked during the focus groups (Appendices G and I) which show this interaction as well as examples during the weekly book group sessions. There are rich examples of ways the participants interacted and through this interaction found deeper meaning and application of the concepts to their work. Some are examples of tactical things to do, while others are examples of experiences that are shared, from which the participants learn. In other words, through the interaction, the group members picked up ideas from each other about better methods of operation for themselves, or learned by example of shared thoughts, feelings, or opinions.

When I asked the participants what they liked about the book group, Joseph responded that it was nice to get different perspectives. Charlie built on that, saying “not only the exchange, but what someone finds important, what we didn’t get, we get a different perspective.” Ricky also liked learning from others, saying

you can read a lot of books on your own and think you are getting it, but when you talk with other people and see what they got that you missed it really helps. It’s just a good review also of what you’ve read -- to see it, read it and then hear it.

Stephen added that having everyone talking from cross-functional work areas really helped to hear others perspectives. Kathy added that hearing from those a “little bit wiser “and hearing from Mark was good because “he seemed to be wise and true to some of the things that were in the book. I thought that was interesting.” Many said it was the only way they would find the time to be disciplined about reading.

I was also interested in how they prepared for each week and what they thought of the discussions. Stephen, the self-described “newbie,” said he highlighted in his book, but took notes on things that he really wanted to “interplay off somebody. Like if I know there’s a point there that I want to get Mark’s perspective, or Robbie’s perspective. Yeah, that to me is another level.” Joseph enjoyed when Mike was the facilitator, since he “took time to develop some targeted questions to present to the group.” Joseph liked this because it not only showed what was important to Mike, but it also brought the rest of the group onto the same page of discussion. Joseph felt the facilitator could be very

Advantageous, because, you know, you take someone’s perspective and they do have some functional knowledge or what’s happening in the organization and, if its handled properly and they point questions at different people in the group depending on their knowledge base [this] can be a real learning experience.

Johnny agreed, saying for the book concepts to really be embraced and “start to change the culture, you gotta lob out those tough questions” to see how it is going to apply. He also said that he saw the facilitator role as being one in which “everybody brings certain things, certain talents and insights. How do I get at it? In other words, how do I learn from that?” He felt that developing questions as a facilitator would help him to learn from the others in the group and find out their perspectives on the book as compared to their workplace and really learn.

After they had participated in two sessions, I asked them if they began to prepare for the book group any differently than they had prepared for the first session. Ricky responded: “I would see these other guys making points that I didn’t, I missed, so I try to read it from a different perspective, not just my own.” He said reading to be prepared for the group took longer. Johnny shared that he might have read differently if Joseph or Mike had been facilitating because they

seemed to be the “mean group,” to which Mike said he only sent out one reminder e-mail to make sure his group came prepared. Mike defended his behavior saying he had to remind everyone in Group II because Group I got a guide which made it easier for them. He was referring to questions I had sent out to Group I after the first meeting, recapping what we had discussed. Kathy referred to Group I as “more relaxed.” The friendly competitiveness between the two groups was very obvious and seemed to spur their desire to read and know the book concepts.

During our focus group Joseph referred to a question Mike had raised while facilitating. Joseph called this “position-specific” question an “attack” on their internal audit program. Many of the focus group members protested that “attack” to which Joseph replied:

I don't want to give the impression that the conversation got stuck on a specific item. It didn't. The conversation we are talking about [was] ultimate customer satisfaction and how you need to provide value to all the stakeholders. And so the conversation or the audit piece came up and we started talking about ... how does [our] organization ultimately provide satisfaction to the customer and was the customer the dealer or was the customer the customer that was using the truck? ... It was taking the concepts in the book and expanding to what we do or certain situations that we might encounter. I just see the facilitator as a way of, and when I am the facilitator, as a way of saying, ok everybody brings certain things certain talents and insights, how do I get at it? In other words how do I learn from that?

This was a good example of the book concept spurring a conversation about a work related topic where they learned from each other through their interaction. In addition, by sharing this information, the others in the focus group also learned from it. Mark and Joseph both agreed that the learning became “exponential” because each person might pick up different things from the book

and share them, which served to expand the experience. Mark said “anytime you read a book you are learning something; anytime you are listening to somebody else’s perspectives and views, you’ve learned something.” Mike said that one thing he liked about the book group was bringing different people together to discuss it because everyone did not agree. He said part of learning from each other came from being able to “challenge my thought process” against the others. He said “if you pick a book that everybody sits there and agrees with, I mean, it’s kind of like, why do you have to discuss it then? I mean, what’s the point.”

I asked them why they enjoyed challenging each other’s perspectives, since this surfaced as a way that they learned from each other. Mark responded that it helped him gain greater respect by being able to see the other side of the coin. He said, “I’m focused on manufacturing; you know, you guys are marketing; you’re engineering. Everybody has different perspectives that come out probably from a professional as well as a personal standpoint.” Mike said that when someone challenged his thinking, it pushed him. Joseph felt that he learned by taking the “devil’s advocate approach” and that when someone came back with a response, it “changed the way you look at something and you learn that way.”

The next section contains significant examples from Group I interacting with the first three parts of the book, followed by Group II examples on the same part of the book. The fourth part of the book had many examples of interaction from Group I, so is covered by its own section. Group II also covered part four, but had more examples of “application” than “interaction”, which were covered in the Application section.

Stephen was in a group with Mark, the most experienced of the group members. In a discussion of one aspect in the book called “hitting the wall,” where the author describes getting to a point where he could move no further in his job, Stephen asked Mark for his “take on it.” Mark shared how he had “hit the wall” in a previous job and came to work for NACCO. Mark also explained that everyday there were opportunities to excel and improve, and that it was looking at crises that would help create opportunities. The topic of balance, one concern that all group members seemed to have in common, dealt with trying to find work/life balance. Stephen asked for input from the more experienced group members, Mark and Kathy. Mark shared that he thought “life was not a practice run” and how he agreed with the author that exercise, meditation, and really enjoying the work you are doing are necessary.

This conversation also continued with a discussion around setting realistic goals while still challenging yourself and your employees to meet a goal without compromising quality. Stephen asked the others: “How do you know when you have reached the point of diminishing returns?” Ricky responded, “When deadlines are originally set, that’s based on the best information we have at that time. If you are going to deviate from those deadlines, you have to have some better information that says this is why we had to do this.” Robbie shared that some projects just do not have the internal support processes in place in time so that was part of the challenge. Mark shared that there was a fine line between moving a projected marketing date and losing competitive advantage, and that adhering to a “gate process” would help in moving forward with quality.

In another instance, the group was discussing culture changes, comparing their company to the book. There was a lengthy discussion of their merger and acquisition from 1985. Group I discussed whether the merger was accompanied by a successful culture change or not. The conversation that followed detailed the perspectives of Ricky, Mark, and Johnny. Johnny said once he “got visibility to [the acquisition and merger] and understood the economics of it” he could appreciate why it had happened; he added that the same understanding and vision had not been transmitted to the front lines, to the people that “live and breathe it everyday.” I asked them how they would get that info to the front line. Mark suggested that visiting in the marketplace helped a great deal. Johnny said that as a company they needed to get back to the mission of why the acquisition and merger were important and train their people on it. Mark said what he did was try to spend a little time each day on the floor with the front-line people. He had a personal rule that each day he had to speak to just two different people out of the 500 that worked for him. He would ask them what they thought they could do about quality or improvement, or he might just answer questions for them. By talking to two different people a day, he was able to communicate culture change similar to the way the book talked about it. Later in the focus group, Johnny referred to Mark’s practice and said that was one tactical example of something he would put into practice in the future.

In Group II, the self-facilitated group, Mike, discussed many aspects from the book in relation to knowledge of their work areas. Mike asked his group about their thoughts on what the book called “internal processes” versus looking outward to the customer and what impact that part of the book had on them. Joseph related that part of the book back to his PMP. He said he looked at his objectives to see if they were inward focused on processes or outward focused

on the customer. He said he thinks in terms of what he needs to do to improve service to the customer and ties it back into his PMP. Charlie said, “that ain’t a bad thought process,” and then later in the focus group, he commented, “I like the process, you know, the comment that Joseph made, I never sat down and looked at my to-do list like that.” This was a good example of the interaction around a book concept being related back to their environment and how they learned from each other.

The attack on the audit, as Joseph called it, began with a question by Mike: “I was thinking about these internal processes and etc. and where is the value? I mean, I know where the stress is, the process has generated a lot of stress ... but where is the real value?” Joseph responded at length from his perspective:

Is there a bigger picture? You know, who is the customer? Is your ultimate customer being impacted by abuse within the dealer channel? Certainly they are. If a dealer is charging too much warranty on some transactions, is your ultimate customer impacted by dealer abuses and would an audit program such as the one that we do, does it truly provide any value to the customer? Well, to the extent that you have dealers abusing pricing or warranty or whatever program it might be, there is value to the customer, the ultimate customer. All those dollars ultimately impact what we could spend on our R&D, you know, resources we can put into other products and drive value to the customer.

Mike said: “I agree with you there. You talk about values and compromise and consistency and etc. and I say, ‘guys, our value is really over here,’ ” meaning Mike felt the audit process was more a hindrance than a value. Joseph responded that Mike was hung up on the short term versus the long term. He said, “Medtronic is saying you don’t want to take a short term perspective. You don’t want to have to worry about today; you want to worry about driving value long term to your customer ... how the customer

should ultimately benefit from this.” Mike brought up a position-specific question, a question that only someone in Joseph’s position would be able to answer, and got a thorough explanation of Joseph’s stand on their internal audit process as it related to the book. This was another good example of learning through interacting with the book concepts and each other’s different perspectives.

Group I interacted significantly more with the fourth part of the book while Group II made many applications from book part four. This section covers salient examples from Group I. Succession planning, in the last area of the book, elicited many responses from both groups. Some were just application or discussion of George’s concepts, as discussed in the previous section, but in Group I, Stephen specifically said to Johnny, “I was waiting to hear you; you always talk about succession planning with a lot of enthusiasm, so I was interested to hear your comments.” Stephen then asked how the other group members prepared people in their department and if they had a “checklist.” Johnny replied that he did have a checklist, and he had two names on it. Then he explained his process to Stephen. He said he had told the people he had in mind that he wanted them to work on specific skill sets, develop particular areas, in line with their PMP and training curriculum, and determined the things for them to focus on. Stephen responded that he really was working on “delegating to his employee with a higher purpose” and wanted to be able to talk to him about succession planning but did not know how to go about doing it. The book opened the door for that conversation to begin, and through interacting, Stephen learned ways to help his employee develop.

The last section of the book also opened the door for a conversation on sticking your neck out; Johnny and Ricky learned from Stephen how someone in their industry had to stick his neck out against the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). In the

book, there is a story about Medtronic going to battle against the FDA for drug approval. In Group I's world, the equivalent would be restrictions on emissions for the trucks that are used indoors. Stephen shared how they had gone to battle to make sure the restrictions did not pass. In addition, when Johnny shared how he wished they would stick their necks out more internally, Stephen also did a good job of reminding them of ways they were developing new technologies, doing research and development, all of which would move them forward faster.

This section has covered the ways the groups interacted with the concepts in the book and each other to learn more. I tried to show the ways their diverse backgrounds and experience brought depth to the interacting in ways different from application. By discussing first what happened during the focus groups and then salient points from the different book group sessions, the ways they dialogued around the concepts from the book were illustrated. In showing the richness and depth they brought to the book groups, the reader should be able to better understand how book groups can add important knowledge to their organization.

Book Group Operation

The methods by which the members discussed the book and approached each session will be discussed in this section. In the focus groups we discussed the types of books they thought would be appropriate for a workplace book group, which people should be brought together to read a book at work, the number of people that each group should have, how to facilitate a book group and best methods for facilitation.

Types of Books

The majority of the book members thought it would be best to use business books to start with, and then perhaps branch off from there to many other genres of

books like self-help, great literary works, or biographies. Mark suggested the books Gung Ho and Good to Great, and then said that those in the plant might use a book on command flow technology or just-in-time manufacturing. Mike thought a book that people would see as either black or white “really divisive in terms of causing conversation ... real exchange of thoughts” would be good because he felt this book was too “apple pie and motherhood.” Charlie felt that perhaps a book on emotional intelligence would be good for them to bring into “the thought process,” because they had learned about it in the Assessment and Development Center and further discussion would help. Joseph said that he agreed a self-help type book would work for them. Johnny said if the book group was going to be something that went out across the whole company, he felt a business book would be the best place to start, although he did think something from the Assessment and Development Center topics would also be good. He said to get them “a little further outside the scope because we all tend to think that people think the same way we do.” He suggested critical thinking as another area that would be good to read. Robbie said if it were a group like theirs, “some biographies” would also be inspirational. Stephen thought any book that could tie back into the workplace would work well.

People

In discussing who would be the most suitable people to gather for a book group, Mark said he felt he had the right group in terms of “diversity” and the “quality of the discussions.” Stephen said theirs was a “varied audience of experience and work areas” and that he got a lot out of the “interplay” and hearing what those that had “been there longer had to say.” Mark suggested including minorities to also get some different views and more diversity since they were all fairly homogeneous. Robbie agreed, saying it was

nice that they had people from the different areas of the company, but that the group did need other diversity. Mike said it was great to be able to “interact with people that, you know, I need to have or may have need to have contact with, you know, in the future, and use this as a way to also ... build a relationship.” Charlie said he thought it was good that people knew each other because they can better challenge each other; Ricky said he thought people would still challenge each other as they got to know each other better. Charlie thought “you have to build the team before you really get interaction.” Johnny shared that many of the people around the table were the same people that were in all the same meetings. He said, “It seems like you’ve got that same 80/20 rule applying. Could a book group be the right catalyst in bringing some people that don’t normally get a voice?” Joseph responded that it would be helpful to “get their perspective.” Joseph thought that the people that wanted to participate would, and those were the people “you really want.” He said if there was an individual who had not participated in the Assessment and Development Center but wanted to join the WPBG because they were a “good reader and they enjoyed sharing thoughts, I mean that’s the type of person you want at the table.” Johnny said he was “thinking about the secondary benefit, not only for the group of people in the book group, but also for the organization in more people using this as a theatre.” They saw the WPBG as an opportunity to bring in more voices and create opportunities to get to know more people within the company.

The best number of participants they suggested was more than two, because, as Ricky said, “you need at least three people in there to get really good ideas.” Joseph said if you had six participants, the meeting would go on a long time.” He suggested keeping it to five participants. Mike said that in their environment they needed ten people so they could always have at least five show up. Mark said it probably would depend on

how talkative everyone was. Johnny agreed, saying if there were more than five people, the meeting time would have to be longer because an hour was barely long enough.

Facilitation

The last focus group began with questions about how they would facilitate a book group. Whether they were in the self-facilitated group or my group dictated their answers at first, representing their perceptions of facilitation. Mark started off by talking about how having an outside facilitator gave the book group some structure and continuity. He said having a facilitator also made it a priority in terms of “I need to get this done and go” to the meetings. Charlie said the only difference between the two groups was that when “you had different people asking questions, depending on your background, you got a variety of questions” and that each time they went to a different chapter “the questions were totally different, and so it was a little bit different twist.” Johnny from Group I said that he thought it would be good to get the outside facilitator “sanity check” once in awhile to keep the group from only seeing things from their own company perspective. However, he said, having an internal facilitator would help them ask the tough questions relative to their business. Ricky, also in Group I, said he thought the outside facilitator was “very helpful” and would “tend to be more knowledgeable on the area you are talking about.” Stephen, also from Group I, thought that as long as NACCO employees were in the room, they were bound to throw in the company perspective. Mark said they would probably have the tendency to look at the book only from “lift truck lane,” while an external facilitator could bring a broader perspective to it.

Those that had facilitated a group or been in a co-worker facilitated group offered these perceptions. Robbie, who had been a facilitator for Group II the last week said:

As a facilitator, I thought I got more out of it because I had to go back and read it and make sure you had questions for the whole group, so you had to really think about and process, how I would use it, and how would someone in credit use it, how would someone in marketing use it, to make sure you take a look at those other aspects.

Robbie also said that with some different “thought provoking questions” you could create some dialogue or “confrontation.” Mike thought that being the facilitator brought a “different level of learning and exercise.” Joseph felt he put more time into the reading and developing of questions so he “got more out of the chapters.” Mike, who facilitated the “attack on the audit”, said that it was his intention to push buttons, “not necessarily because I didn’t agree with what I was thinking.” He just wanted an “interesting exchange.”

We also discussed the option of having a different person facilitate each chapter instead of having only four people doing one section each. Johnny said that he thought, “you would lose traction pretty quickly” in a situation like that, meaning there would be a lack of continuity by switching facilitators so much. Charlie thought that additional facilitators would mean more conversations and opportunities to “challenge each others thought processes.”

We discussed whether receiving the questions in advance would have been beneficial or not. I asked them whether they thought they would have read outside the questions or only paid attention to those questions. Mark said, “I would have read outside” because he thought since the company had made the investment in the books and paid for their time to discuss them, it was a “win-win and I am going to spend the time investing in the book.” Charlie thought that since everyone had volunteered to be in the book group that everyone would read beyond the questions. He said, “Yeah, we are all here to learn and try to grow.” Robbie thought, however, that they would read the

whole section they would concentrate more on the questions and not hit the other areas “to the same proportions” and that he liked the questions to keep the dialogue going. Ricky suggested that it was easy to “subconsciously focus on the questions that you had in hand and maybe miss some other points cause you were concentrating on finding the answer to that question.” Stephen suggested sneaking in some “non-issued questions” to keep people reading broadly enough. Johnny said if we were rotating facilitators each week, then having the questions in advance would really help to know where they were going. He was traveling the first two weeks, and when he got the questions that we had gone over in the group (Appendix S), it really helped him see where we had been in the book.

Reading for Deeper Comprehension

I asked them how a workplace book group facilitator might encourage participants to read the book at a deeper level and really try to apply it. Johnny said having prompt questions in advance would help, so that participants could take notes and think about it from a different perspective. Joseph suggested having different people facilitate but not telling them which week they were going to be the facilitator. Charlie thought that might “hurt attendance.” The whole group laughed at that comment, and then Mark said if they were not prepared, the group could “vote them off.” Mike said, “It seems to me if you like want to participate in this kind of thing, you are going to do it.”

I also asked if they thought there was any way to bring in a fresh, outside perspective while keeping the NACCO perspective, too. Joseph thought that the group could have both simply by rotating facilitator roles. Robbie added that diversity would help bring “fresh perspectives” and as “you grow you get more rapport so that you can start asking the hard questions.” Ricky thought however, that an outsider would be more

capable of asking questions that others might perceive as dumb. He said, "Somebody might be embarrassed to ask that question cause they feel they should know that, but the outsider can ask it and see who really does know or who really thinks they know it." Mike disagreed, saying their group was a "no holds barred group." Joseph closed by saying he really liked the format where the participants were facilitating.

Best Methods for Facilitation

The participants were asked if they would participate in a WPBG again, six said yes, and one said definitely. I asked for ways that our WPBG might have been better and got numerous suggestions, here detailed as "best methods." Suggestions were made that it would be a good idea to have two groups so that participants would have the flexibility of attending on a different day as scheduling dictated. Mike suggested that the first meeting of the book group be used to establish some team guidelines and requirements for participation, standard operating procedures, so those who are "intimidated" would be more comfortable and willing to contribute. The internal/external facilitator question was discussed at length. Stephen, who was in Group I, suggested a hybrid situation, as did Johnny, who said an outside person gave a sense of structure, but warned that some employees would not participate if they thought the book group was just another "HR-sponsored event." In addition, Johnny said that if an internal person, not HR, sponsored the WPBG it would be assured of continuing. Joseph reiterated his stand on an internal facilitator bringing in a "little of their functional background, leadership style" and that it made everyone think about it a little more. He felt there was a more active dialogue when they facilitated themselves. Many suggested a reading group for professional journal articles instead of a book, thinking that they

could each read one and come together to discuss them, thereby lessening each individuals reading load while learning from each other.

Reflective Self-Report Instrument

The first reflective self-report instrument (RSRI) of the book concepts was issued by e-mail immediately following the completion of the four book group meetings. The same RSRI was administered a second time after thirty days to look at ways the book group members had deepened their understanding of the concepts in that time. The purpose of the RSRI was to look for knowledge and use of the book concepts in the participants' words. The RSRI consisted of four essay questions, which were to review how the book group members had applied the book concepts to their workplace. Only four of the nine participants returned both RSRI's; two members only returned the second one, two people returned just the first one, and one did not return either because of only participating in one book group session and one focus group. What follows is the analysis of the immediate RSRI to the thirty-day one by the four members that turned in both. All comparisons are made in relation to the book concepts because the purpose of assessing was to determine if the group members were taking the book concepts and applying them to their workplace. The rubric used to evaluate these RSRI's was to first read the four first ones together and the second ones together. Then, key words from the book concepts were circled in each RSRI. Then, each individual's first RSRI was compared to the second one, looking for the number of key phrases that were the same or different. After analyzing for key phrases, depth in answers between the two was compared. This was a legitimate process to use because it compared like to like and used key concepts from the book in determining knowledge gained and used. Chapter

Five will discuss implications of the RSRI in detail. The RSRI questions are in Appendix F.

Comparing the immediate RSRI to the thirty-day one, this section will compare results from the participants who submitted two RSRI, so there are only four in this sample. Each of the four participants results are shared by contrasting the immediate RSRI to their later one.

Johnny's RSRI essay question one asked how to be an authentic leader. The answer to essay question one was lengthier on the immediate RSRI than on the thirty-day RSRI but there were key words on both that were the same and mirrored concepts in the book. He kept his answers of customer focus, company vision, and inspired workers as keys to achieving authentic leadership in both answers to the first question. On the second RSRI, he added, "Key performance indicators must continue to be measured to capture financial and operational trends."

Question two asked how to build the NACCO mission. Like the first question, his answers were longer on the immediate RSRI, but contained key words that were the same on both. On question two, immediate RSRI, he said, "Mission-driven firms will create more long-term value as they are thinking beyond today" and focused his answer around values, vision, "delighting our customers," quality, and providing a "positive motivational environment to our employees." Thirty-day RSRI, question two, he again used values, and this time said, "I intend to develop a departmental charter that is consistent with our mission and maintains a consistency to the core standards our dealers and employees can feel proud to support." This was a statement of what he was doing with the concepts from the book.

For question three, which asked about ethical leaders staying focused, Johnny gave a lengthy response on the immediate RSRI. He focused on the risks companies can face if they focus on results only, versus behavioral standards and what happens when companies create environments that do not allow employees “input or ideas.” He said, “Senior managers should ask employees to rally around a vision and actively participate toward that vision.” In the second RSRI, his answer was very short and made reference to the “seven deadly sins” from the book, and said, “always fully understand all aspects of a potential ethical crises.” He added that they needed to remain focused on serving the customers, their mission statement, and the company values, again repeating key words in both RSRI answers.

Question four, which asked how he will make an ethical decision, on the immediate RSRI, he mentioned going back to the values taught to him by ministers, parents and teachers, being true to those values, and the added benefit of his employees understanding him better because he was consistent. In the thirty-day RSRI, he spoke again of honoring his personal values and then added a new dimension of checking with HR or legal for ethical decisions that he cannot answer on his own. Again, he had core phrases on both RSRI, with added scope on the thirty-day RSRI.

Charlie’s RSRI was very consistent between the immediate RSRI and the thirty-day one. On the first question about authentic leadership, on both RSRI, he mentioned setting goals and priorities, balancing long and short-term goals, and managing resources. On the thirty-day RSRI, he added, “If you do not balance your resources, you cannot understand if you are being effective as a manager.”

Question two, about building the NACCO mission was also similar on both RSRI in that he referenced his long and short-term goals on both. Charlie then added

profits and energizing the workforce. He also spoke to managements' rapport with employees allowing them "to be challenged without being threatened and allowing the energy and enthusiasm of the manager to easily spread to the group."

The second essay question, addressing building NACCO's mission, elicited thoughts of stakeholders, company values, and the mission statement in both RSRI. Robbie spoke about mentioning the company's values and mission at his team meetings in both RSRI as well. In the thirty-day RSRI he mentioned being able to "achieve these goals by attaining more balance between my private and public life," bringing himself and his life into the answer this time.

In essay questions three and four, Robbie was one of the more thorough respondents on the thirty-day RSRI compared to the immediate RSRI. In the immediate RSRI, he spoke about "working within a tighter circle than your allowable circle" as George speaks about in his book. On the thirty-day RSRI he said, "By balancing priorities in their lives and by focusing on long-term objectives, leaders can stay true to their purpose." He also added "balancing outside activities ensures that manager's lives have purpose and meaning beyond work," which he said is what ensures leaders "do not get caught up in the quest for money and power."

In essay question four, about how he will remain ethical, he pointed to core values in his immediate RSRI and brought in his Christian principles of "what would Jesus do" in the thirty-day RSRI. He also referred to his litmus test as the "mother test," meaning anything you would not do in front of your mother is "likely not the right decision to make." The thirty-day RSRI contained more in-depth answers than the immediate RSRI for Robbie.

Mark's RSRI is the last RSRI to be compared. Mark's answers on the thirty-day RSRI were much more succinct than the immediate RSRI, but contained related elements. Both question one answers, on being an authentic leader, referred to core values, saying "thank you sincerely and often" and watching out for George's "seven deadly sins." Both RSRI's said, "Customers come first." Question two, referring to building the NACCO mission also referred to company values, safety, quality, and continual improvement on both RSRI's. On the immediate RSRI, he also mentioned NACCO's reinvestment in the company and advancing technological changes as contributing to stakeholder value, but did not mention this in the thirty-day RSRI.

Question three, asked about staying focused as an ethical leader, is more thorough on the thirty-day RSRI than the immediate RSRI. On the immediate RSRI, he quoted quite a few things from the book, and then adds his own short opinion. On the thirty-day RSRI, he used no quoted material saying,

This unending quest for money and power is not inevitable though. First managers must obtain balance in their lives. By developing strong values in the non-business setting, (i.e. church, community activities, volunteerism) they will be less likely to focus on money and power personally. In addition, leaders must practice the idea of the servant as leader. This idea forces humility, which effectively counters the pursuit of power.

He took a similar stance on question four, which asked how he would remain ethical. On the immediate RSRI, he referred to asking HR, legal, or a mentor for help in making an ethical decision he is not sure of. On the thirty-day RSRI, he brought in his Christian principles, and like Robbie's "mother test," he mentions a "fraternity hazing" example where you would not do anything in hazing that you were embarrassed to do in

front of your mother. On this RSRI he also said that he thinks of ethics as “obedience to the unenforceable” which he said forces him to realize that it is not a legal decision he is making but a “decision affecting my values.” Questions three and four were much more thoughtful answers for Mark on the thirty-day RSRI.

Summary

This section has explored the context of the research site, painting a picture of the participants so the reader can get an idea of who took part in this WPBG. This section has also shared findings from the audio taped book groups, focus groups, and reflective self-report instruments. The first section was a thorough explanation of the context of the workplace and portrait of this workplace’s participants. This allows the reader to have a conceptualization of this particular group. The second section discussed the findings from the weekly book group sessions and focus groups. The first part discussed ways the participants simply made application of the book concepts to their world. The second section discussed how they interacted with one another and these book concepts to create a deeper understanding of these concepts within their workplace. Best methods for conducting a workplace book group were also shared. The last section discussed the RSRI taken immediately and thirty days later to show transfer of the book concepts to the participants and their workplace. By sharing these findings from the perspective of the participants, the reader can see what emerged during this particular workplace book group. By understanding this, more can be known about the efficacy of workplace book groups as a method of learning in a manufacturing environment. The next section discusses these conclusions and offers recommendations for future research.

V. SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

The purpose of this research was to explore the efficacy of workplace book groups as a method of learning in a manufacturing environment. In addition, this research advanced information on the relationship between workplace book groups (WPBGs) and self-directed learning and the ways WPBGs influence organizational ways of knowing. The major sections of this chapter summarize and discuss the results, and make recommendations for further research.

Summary And Discussion of the Results

Two distinct themes emerged from audio taped sessions of the WPBG and focus groups. The first was applying the book concepts to the participants' world, and the second was interaction between participants with the book concepts and their workplace. In addition, the best method for conducting a book group was also discussed by these participants.

Self-Directed Application of the Book Concepts

Reading is a solitary activity wherein readers interact with written words in a book and bring their own meaning to the concepts contained in the book. In a workplace book group, the readers take these self-prescribed meanings and apply them to their workplace and lives. This application of meaning includes questioning by the participants of how the book concepts are similar to their workplace and how the book concepts differ. In exploring these applications, the reader gains deeper understanding of the book, and begins to see different applications through the discussions with the other group members.

To be able to apply the book concepts to their work and personal lives, the participants had to prepare suitable learning strategies for the book. The learners

decided the ways they were going to take the book from a simple reading strategy to comprehension. This meant the participants not only figured out their own learning strategies, they also found answers to questions they had on their own. The book group participants prepared suitable learning strategies in readying for each book group sessions which is consistent with both Knowles (1975) and Tough's (1971) conceptualizations of self directed learning. Participants shared how they read the book, when, and what they did to help them remember the concepts. For example, Johnny said he made "a mini-PowerPoint slide" at the beginning of every chapter with salient points to help him remember the important pieces. Kathy used highlights sparingly and "one sticky-note" to help her remember important examples. Joseph and Robbie both took notes from the chapters preferring to keep their book "clean and pristine." Ricky and Charlie read theirs at the gym so they would have time to think about it when there were not other pressing things on their minds. As the discussions progressed through the weeks, I asked them if they had changed the ways they prepared for the sessions. Ricky pointed out that he had begun to notice the things that seemed important to the other participants and began to read the sections for those perspectives.

The participants also found answers to questions that arose as they read either by asking each other about specific topics, or doing an online search. In the week before the session that Joseph was facilitating, he sought out fellow group member Charlie to question the differences between the book concepts and the way their company approached long-term projects. Joseph then went online and did a search about Medtronic, the company the book is written about, and then forwarded financial information out to the entire group through email. This was a good example of group members finding answers on their own as they worked to apply the concepts of the book

to their world. This process used by the participants is another example of self directed learning as proposed by Knowles (1975) and Tough (1971).

Candy (1991) discussed self-directed learning as a process wherein the learner has the attribute of personal autonomy and learning takes place as a result of and within social contexts. The particular social context of this group compelled the members to be very autonomous and self-directed in their pursuit of comprehension as they applied the book concepts to their work. This was especially clear in our discussions of facilitation of the book group. Group I joked about Group II being the “mean group” and Kathy said her group was “more relaxed,” indicating that these two groups knew each other well and wanted to pull as much from the concepts as they could to show the other group members that they had done their work. Also in preparing questions to ask one another, knowing one another’s roles and experiences played a part in what they brought to each session to ask. For example, Stephen said to Johnny “I was waiting to hear you - you always talk about succession planning with a lot of enthusiasm” because he was particularly interested in what the more experienced Johnny was going to say. The groups could only make those applications of these book concepts within this group, within this social context. Because they knew what the others were in charge of, they could ask each other very “position-specific questions” as Mike did of Joseph during the ‘audit attack.’ A position-specific question is a query of one participant to another participant because of where they work or the position they hold. The discussion of the ‘audit attack’ was when Mike specifically questioned Joseph on his perspectives on their company audit procedures in comparison to the book’s concepts on audits. This workplace book group and the social context within which it operated, definitely affected

how this group applied different concepts in the book and questioned each other, as outlined by Candy (1991).

Garrison (1997) discussed self-monitoring, or how the learners take charge of structuring their own meaning from the learning. In this WPBG the participants applied the book concepts to structure their own meaning from the concepts. Mike, for example, said several times that the book was too “motherhood and apple-pie” for him, meaning the concepts of this book as presented were not realistic enough for Mike’s taste. Outcomes from the book for him were the concepts benchmarked against where they were in their industry and where he thought they should be. Mike did not read the book as though the things written about were absolutes; instead he looked at it as a mode of comparison and used those concepts he thought useful as supplements to what he already knew. Joseph applied the concepts from the book against his personal management plan (PMP) and used the material to look at his “inward vs. outward” focus. The same thing happened during their discussion of succession planning in that they added to their own comprehension of how succession planning worked at their organization in comparison to the ways described in the book. Every one of the book group participants walked away from that week’s discussion more knowledgeable about succession planning from each other and from applying the book concepts. The book group was a powerful forum for the participants to cultivate new knowledge through applying the book’s key points, driven by the group and their own self-directedness.

Interaction Connecting Concepts, Participants, and Increasing Organizational Knowing

In a workplace, when employees get together and communicate, learning can occur. Whether this conversation is a formal HR discussion or a chat around the water cooler, these discussions are happening; the organizations that can capitalize on the

fruitfulness of what happens in these discussions will develop stronger employee networks more quickly, enhancing learning within the organization. Nonaka (1994) suggested organizations structure learning time to create interaction between workers to encourage an increase in organizational knowing. Nonaka stated knowledge may be created in individuals' minds, but interaction among individuals is critical to develop these ideas. Knowledge creation comes from communities of interaction. Baskett and Marsick (1992b) stated that knowing does not become knowledge until people apply it to their own personal situations. With all the resources that individuals have available for learning, learning occurs when interaction between colleagues and work situations happen. The interaction in the WPBG increased organizational knowledge and the following examples explain how.

Ricky said that reading and discussing the book really helped him because "when you talk with other people and see what they got that you missed it really helps." Stephen liked that they were all talking from cross-functional work areas and hearing others' perspectives helped him learn more. Stephen prepared for each session by highlighting specific examples that he wanted to "interplay" off the participants in his group which he said was another level of learning for him. Joseph also pointed out how Mike asking questions helped him to see the book concepts in a new light, and to understand Mike's perspective better. Johnny said through the questioning and discussion of the book concepts with the group, he increased his application of the book to work. Another good example of how the interaction helped create organizational knowing dealt with Mark's comment that "anytime you read a book you are learning something; anytime you are listening to somebody else's perspectives and views, you've learned something." Mike liked the book group because it brought different people

together to discuss the book and through discussions of their different opinions about the book concepts, he learned. Mike liked the part of learning in the book group that came from being able to “challenge his thought process” against the others. This is much of what Nonaka referred to in her knowledge conversion description. Knowledge conversion happens through a spiral process where tacit and explicit knowledge interact in a four-part configuration of “socialization, internalization, externalization, and combination” (1994, p. 19). Explicit knowledge in this book group’s case is was what the group referred to as “position-specific,” or the formal language and knowledge each individual had from working in their specific area of expertise. The tacit knowledge, which “has a personal quality which makes it hard to formalize and communicate,” (p.16) was the knowledge that they gained by asking questions of each other and sharing viewpoints and opinions in relation to the book concepts. Nonaka said that workplaces which create interactive places for explicit and tacit knowledge to combine help this spiraling four part interaction to develop, which increases organizational knowing. The workplace book group was such a space.

Lovin (1992) also pointed out how significant workplace relationships were for learning. Lovin said when professionals share their informal learning experiences, they come away with a more holistic way of knowing, not only about the learning experience, but also about their interdependent role within the workplace. Cook and Brown (1999) argued that knowing is about the relationship between knowers and their interaction with the world. Because the book group created a place around which participants could gather, develop more significant relationships, share in an informal learning experience, the group members learned more about how truly linked they all were in that workplace. For example, when Mark discussed the application of the book concepts on quality, and

how he used those concepts to look at his departments manufacturing quality programs, such as their thirty minute burn test, he said that “reinvigorated” him to stick to his principles on quality. In sharing this information, Mark gave the other group members a little more depth to the book concepts and helped them to see how he was applying the book materials. There are so many instances in the workplace where employees do not ever know what or how the other people they work with are doing are thinking. This book group gave these participants the opportunity to find out just those sorts of things.

Succession planning was another area where the group visibly learned from each other and shared that they got a great deal out of those discussions. This facility is a manufacturing facility where large material handling equipment is made. The equipment is sold through dealerships that buy the equipment from them and then resale it to the end use consumer. Several of the groups’ participants dealt directly with these dealerships while others dealt with the internal aspects of the dealerships such as accounting or engineering. When they discussed the concepts of succession planning as related o their organization, it included how these leaders were preparing their own successors, how the company was preparing successors, and how they helped their dealerships to prepare successors. Because some individuals in the group only had dealings with succession planning internal to their organization, this interaction proved to be very enlightening and created a more holistic understanding of what the salespeople dealt with in insuring the future of their business. Both Johnny and Mike shared how they initiated conversations with the owners of these dealerships about appointing successors to insure longevity of their dealerships. Ricky shared an example of succession planning from a prior public accounting job he had where they taught small business owners ways to sell their business in pieces to have retirement income and

help the successor gain valuable ownership lessons. All of these interactions took place because the book group provided the opportunity and concepts around which new knowledge could form. It was such a safe environment to share in, and the participants readily expressed ideas and successes or questions to one another.

Joseph's application of the book concepts to his performance management plan (PMP) was another good example of how the interaction in the book group helped the others to know more about all of their interdependent roles. Joseph liked the author's position on customer satisfaction and customer focus; he said that as he read the book he would look at his performance objectives and decide which ones influenced the end-use consumer of their trucks. He said "I think you can take approaches or concepts or ideas that come out of the book and apply against your own objectives." Charlie liked that approach and commented that he had never looked at his PMP that way. The others agreed that Joseph's idea was a good one. By interacting around the concept of customer focus from the book, and their PMP and its relation to their customer focus, they came to know more about one another and the ways they operated. This is a good example of Cook and Brown's (1999) concept of knowing being about the relationship between the knower and their interaction with the world.

The audit discussion was another area where the group members learned from one another, as was governance. In Wenger and Snyder's definition of what workplace learning should look like, they said, "people learn in communities of other people working on the same things" (2002, para. 3). The audit affected all areas of this manufacturing facility, as did governance, so both were good examples of ways they learned from their community of practice. Governance, in the book, referred to the way a board of directors sets regulations and standards of compliance for itself. A board governs this workplace,

as well as some of the dealerships they do business with. Because of this, the interaction around these concepts from the book triggered discussions within this community of practice. When Robbie asked the other group members what they thought about governance, their answer corresponded to their position in the organization. These answers stimulated learning. For example, Mike and Charlie brought up the effects of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act (the public accounting reform investor act of 2002) and shared how they had been affected by it. Mike discussed how he felt their company could be doing things more like Medtronic, by challenging their co-workers to create excellence in manufacturing, which Charlie and Robbie agreed with. In Johnny's group discussion, he had just been appointed to a board; so in reading the chapter on governance, he brought new information to his group about what he thought he would do to make the particular board he would be serving on better. This allowed the other members in his group to ask questions about what a board was and learn from each other about ways to improve governance. They took the concept from the book, applied it to their world, and came away more knowledgeable within that community of learners.

As for the audit discussion, it became clear through their lengthy discussions that they all were very much affected by the new audit process that Joseph was very fond of. However, no one had as clear an understanding of the audit process and its value to their organization until after the lengthy discussion and questioning process. Charlie summed up the learning well when he said, "I never looked at it that way," meaning the audit process serving the end use customer and that it was a long-term process. This would not have made near as much sense to another community of practice as it did to these people who were all inexplicably linked together in similar processes to what the book was discussing.

Knowledge creation as Nonaka (1994) said comes from communities of interaction. This book group created such a great space around which to interact about concepts that were meaningful within this community, thereby increasing the organizational knowledge through the interactions. In communicating nuances of similarity or difference between their organization and the concepts from this book, both the explicit 'how-to' type knowledge was enhanced, as was the more difficult to define tacit knowledge. Through the discussions and interactions, a more thorough understanding of their places in the organization and the interdependent nature of their work was understood. It was a powerful learning forum for increasing organizational knowledge.

Construction of Meaning Leads to Transfer of Learning

The workplace book group participants created meaning for themselves in their world by taking concepts from the book and discussing the ways they were comparable or dissimilar from the book. In so doing, they created their own ways of transferring the materials to memory and functional knowledge at work. Tennant (1991) defined transfer of learning as using knowledge from one situation and applying it (or not) to another. By discussing the concepts from the book, the participants were able to create their own structure of meaning by applying it to their situation. In addition, Tennant said transfer was enhanced when learners can "engage in learning through communicating" and learners have "the capacity to be self-directed and control and regulate one's own learning" (p. 177). The WPBG created the space where the learners could communicate and were able to be self-directed as discussed in the earlier section. They also regulated their own learning through asking questions of one another on things they did not understand or needed to see another perspective on. For example, when I asked them

how they were taking the book concepts from reading to application, Ricky expressed frustration about the book being directed towards the CEO level. Kathy responded to Ricky's frustration saying that there were many things you could do about "understanding your employees and things you can do to interact with your employees to show leadership ... that anybody at any level could do." In addition Joseph added the piece about the performance management plan (PMP) that everyone was able to gain from. He said "I think you can take approaches or concepts or ideas that come out of the book and apply against your own objectives." As discussed in Chapter 4 as well, Kathy felt the book concepts were directly related to both the development function of leadership in the PMPs and some of the areas she was working on from the Assessment and Development Center. Ricky also said the book helped in areas he was working on from the Assessment and Development Center. Charlie shared the PMP attribute of quality versus the financials was one he had applied from the book. All of these examples show how by sharing information from the book the participants are able to help themselves find applications within their workplace, which helps to relate to the book concepts thereby helping the information to be transferred in the way that Tennant (1991) described in the literature.

Marsick (1987) defined transfer of learning as "the way in which people construct meaning in their personal and shared organizational lives" (p.4) and further added that daily interactions and experiences build learning in an individual and lead to learning in organizations. This WPBG allowed the participants many opportunities for construction of meaning in their shared organizational lives. Their discussion of the customer service approach taken by the book in comparison to their customer approach was one such example documented in Chapter IV. Joseph's example of going back to his PMP to see

whether it was inward focused or outward focused was one such example. He looked at the concepts in the book, compared them to what he did in his work, and shared that with the other members of the group. Charlie related to this saying, “that ain’t a bad thought process.” Later in the focus group, he commented, “I like the process, you know, the comment that Joseph made, I never sat down and looked at my to-do list like that.” The entire group then was able to transfer that piece of information to apply it to how they operated. Also, the lengthy and repeated referrals to the audit attack were another example of taking the book concepts and transferring that knowledge to their workplace.

Another important part of transfer of learning was stated by Danielson and Wiggernhorn (2002). They said learning should contribute to the competitive sustainable advantage an organization needs to survive. Learning must align with the organizational objectives, performance objectives, and must be embedded in organizational processes that “spark innovation, and future oriented thinking” (2002, p. 37). The WPBG at this organization offered learning in alignment with organizational objectives, performance objectives and processes. In addition, because of the Assessment and Development Center that this group had participated in, many of the book concepts were ideas this group was familiar with and working on. This contributed greatly to this group’s ability to take the concepts from mere ideas in a book and relate them to knowledge that was supported by the organization. Several times the book group members made references to the objectives of the Assessment and Development center, saying how many of the concepts in the book were things they were working on. For example Kathy, Ricky, Mark, Stephen and Robbie all made reference to “balance” of work life issues. Balance was a key concept in the book as well as a foundation point from the Assessment and Development center. Customer focus was another critical area represented in the book

and the group. There was much discussion comparing NACCO's customer focus to the book's customer focus ideas. Because this group had a good foundation in what the company's value system was, were well educated on what they were working on and why from an organizational perspective, this book made a positive impact and was easy for them to relate to, hence increasing their ability to transfer the information.

Transfer of learning is also increased, according to Haskell (2001), when the learners have a broad base of understanding upon which to base their new knowledge. Haskell also recommends a supportive transfer climate, incubation time, and learners being motivated to learn. This particular group was prepared and interested participating in the book group. They came to the WPBG on their own accord (see email invitation Appendix B), and were upper-level managers with a broad base of leadership experience to relate the concepts from the book to. The book group created a supportive environment for transfer, and because there was time between reading the book, discussing the materials and then meeting again, the members had incubation time. Any organization could take a group of people and use a book related to their area of knowledge but also capable of stretching them to learn a little more, and get the results we achieved in this group.

Reflective Self-Report Instrument

The reflective self-report instrument sought to determine the learners' knowledge after completing the book. Although this instrument did not measure quantitatively the degree of learning that occurred in the book group, it did provide rich qualitative data in the participants' own words about what they gained from the book concepts. The assessment instrument for this book (Appendix G) consisted of four reflective self-report essay questions about the book concepts which the book group participants took right

after completing the book and then again in thirty days. This reflective self-report instrument (RSRI) was not to determine rote memorization of concepts. This RSRI sought to establish the application of the book concepts in relation to the participants' workplace and issues they raised during discussion of the materials. By looking for those sorts of outcomes in what they said in the RSRI, the recorded focus group and book group data, a richer degree of what was transferred in the words of the participants' is gained. Chapter IV's analysis of the information contained in four of the RSRI's substantiates that the participants had gained valuable information by participating in this book group. However, going back and asking these same questions six-months after the book group concluded would provide richer documentation of transfer of learning than the immediate and thirty day RSRI was able to; this is discussed in the recommendations for further research section.

The four reflective self-report instruments did provide rich data containing key concepts taken from the book and applied to each individual or their job. For example, both Robbie and Mark mention a litmus test for ethical behavior in their answers to question four (see Appendix G for these questions). I think this is a good example of transfer as they took a book concept related question, and then used their own words and frame of reference to explain it. Both Tennant (1999) and Marsick (1987) wrote about using knowledge from one situation and applying it to another or constructing meaning in a person's personal life is transfer of learning.

On Johnny's thirty-day RSRI, he also added more scope and depth on his questions as well. He kept many key words on both RSRI's and then added other key concepts from his work like "key performance indicators must continue to be measured to capture financial and operational trends." He also added things he was going to

implement on the thirty day RSRI that were not on the immediate one, also showing how he had deepened his understanding of the book in relation to his work-life.

Charlie spoke of leadership as the capacity to manage processes. Managing processes meant he insured there were good systems in place and processes well documented so anyone could assume his leadership role if they understood procedures. Because Charlie is a process-oriented leader, and controls financial deliverables within the company, his answers were reflective of his position. He also added depth to his thirty-day answers. He added balancing resources as being key to leadership on the thirty-day RSRI while keeping the many of the other key words he had used on the first RSRI. The thirty-day RSRI also included more about his role in achieving leadership goals and helping his team to move forward through their understanding of, and working towards a common goal. His second RSRI included more about his staff being included and things he would do to help them achieve goals. Charlie also demonstrated good comprehension of the concepts of the book and at the thirty-day RSRI, much more depth.

The RSRI was a tool which helped establish what learning transferred from the book concepts, discussions around these concepts, and was then applied to their world of work. These book group participants had many of the foundations Haskell (2001) says are required to successfully transfer learning: the broad base of existing knowledge, the motivation to learn, supportive climate, understanding of the underlying theory of leadership, and incubation time. In addition, they were also self-directed in their approach to the book and getting answers to questions, which also helped them to remember the materials. As Marsick (1987) stated, they were able to construct meaning in their world and met Tennant's (1999) criteria of applying the new knowledge

specifically to their jobs. Weimer (2002) wrote that assessments should further the learning of the student by having them reflect once again on the content learned and the contents' meaning to them (pp. 125-130). This reflective self-report instrument and the richness and depth of the answers in the participants' own words, demonstrate effective transfer of learning of the concepts of this book to these participant's workplace and lives.

Discussion of Knowledge Creation Model

The Knowledge Creation Model (Figure 1) depicts the process through which the book group participants spiraled to greater knowing as they went through the book group process. First, they read the concepts and applied them to their world saying things like "that is how we do that" or "that is not like us". Then through interaction with one-another in the weekly book group sessions, they increased their understanding of the book concepts in relation to their work. A good example of this is Ricky saying to Johnny "I was waiting to hear you" in talking about succession planning or Kathy's remarks about Mark saying "he has a lot of good ideas ... and he seemed to be wise and true to some of the things that were in the book". Finally, they came to a greater understanding of their interdependent roles within their organization. Examples include Charlie saying of Johnny's use of his PMP "I never looked at it like that" or the 'audit attack' in which everyone really discussed their role at NACCO and better understood how each played a role in customer service. What follows is the graphic representation of this process in the Knowledge Creation Model, Figure 2.

Organizational Knowledge Creation

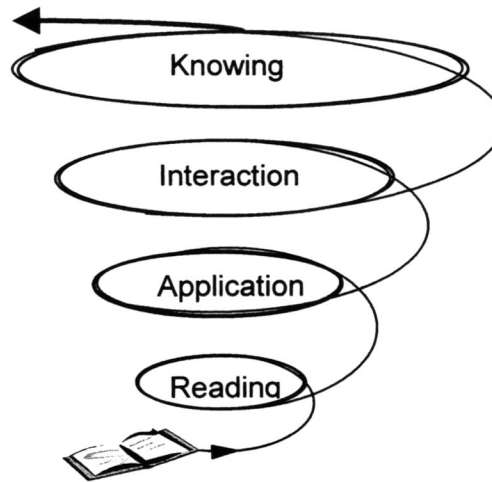


Figure 2. Knowledge Creation Model

So what exactly does this mean? Nonaka's (1994) Spiral of Organizational Knowledge Creation (Figure 3) and Haskell's (2001) depiction of transfer of learning as the spiraling logarithmic whorls of a mollusk shell, (Figure 4, <http://www.math.tamu.edu/~dallen/digitalcam/images/nautilus2.jpg>) were inspirations for the Knowledge Creation Model (Figure 2) used to explain workplace book groups.

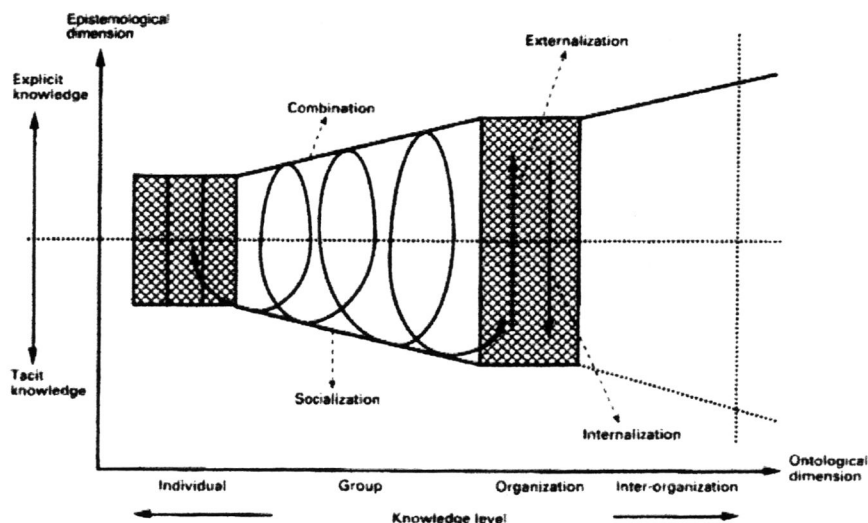


Figure 3: Nonaka's Spiral of Organizational Knowledge Creation (1994)

In Figure 3, Nonaka's Spiral of Organizational Knowledge Creation (1994), where tacit and explicit knowledge combine, shows where the organizational knowledge level increases to what is called in this diagram, inter-organization knowledge on the axis of an ontological dimension. What Nonaka is saying in essence is that, through spiraling interaction within the workplace, more organizational knowledge will emerge. Data from this book group support Nonaka's concept. The WPBG created the space for the group members to interact, expressing both tacit and explicit knowledge, either just the essence of their positions, or position specific knowledge, never previously analyzed in a normal business day. They knew and understood each other in new ways when the book group concluded.

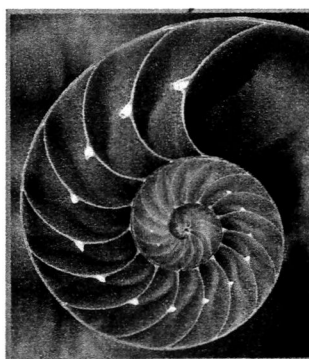


Figure 4: Nautilus shell

According to Haskell, (2001) transfer of learning is like a mollusk shell in that each "successive level of a harmonic like spiral grows out of and is a higher order exponent of its base level" (p. 210). Knowledge can grow exponentially when built upon a base. The book was the WPBG base, and out of its concepts, the interaction around them, new knowledge was built. As I wrote earlier, it was important that the people involved in this book group had a good base upon which to build the new knowledge. They understood and had been trained on leadership and management prior to reading

this book. They had a good base of knowledge on many of the accounting concepts, laws and regulations, governance and boards as well that the book talked about. Upon this foundation, they were able to apply what they knew, and stretch their minds around similar concepts, creating the transfer I wrote about earlier. From that application, with further interaction with each other in the sessions, and incubation time in between, they learned even more about their interdependent roles within the organization. This continual interaction and incubation time added 'spirals' to the nautilus shell, building new knowledge onto old. Then, the learning from this point mirrors Nonaka's Organizational Knowledge Creation spiral (Figure 3).

So the Knowledge Creation Model (Figure 2) captures essential elements of the Organizational Knowledge Creation Model (Figure 3) depicted by Nonaka and the transfer model depicted by Haskell as a nautilus shell (Figure 4) while at the same time representing what occurred in this workplace book group. The WPBG took concepts from a book wherein the participants were self-directed in their approach to learning, assessed their own knowledge and what further information they needed to know, applied these concepts to their workplace as they saw the need. Then through interacting with the other participants in the book group sessions, they came to understand more both tacitly and explicitly about the book concepts, others positions, and how they were all holistically linked within that organization. This added to their basic knowledge base, and helped create new organizational knowledge. It was a spiraling process through which they gained on a weekly basis, and I think would continue to build upon over time were the book group to continue. The next section will discuss these findings in relation to the best method for conducting a workplace book group.

Best Method for Conducting a Workplace Book Group in Practice

These best methods for conducting a workplace book group (WPBG) in practice is based on the findings discussed in Chapter 4, my experience as a corporate trainer who used books in practice, and the sparse literature on the subject presented in Chapter 2. Successful administration of WPBGs depends on many factors such as Human Resource's support and employee motivation, but facilitation of the group and application of the content are two areas this research showed were important to this program's success. These attributes are discussed in the following sections.

Facilitation is a key attribute of a well run WPBG. As presented in the findings, the facilitated book group felt an outside facilitator was key to having a good book group. They felt the facilitator brought in a much-needed outside perspective to their workplace. The self-facilitated group however, felt that a book group could be well run without an outside facilitator. They felt the benefits to an inside facilitator was that such a person would be more likely to ask "tough questions" that only an insider would know. The self-facilitated group felt that an outside facilitator would keep them from being "bogged down" on information they already knew. The best method would be to have both: An outside facilitator who would rotate with the internal facilitators to keep both perspectives. In addition, by having an outside facilitator, group members would be more compelled to attend each session. The research also suggested that over time and with continued interaction in the group, relationships would develop further. This would serve to facilitate deeper questioning of the participants by fellow participants about the content, so knowledge would increase.

Another area of importance to WPBG operation is how to get the most out of application. These book group participants suggested approaches ranging from Socratic

method to just expecting that everyone would come prepared to discuss the book if they signed up for the book group. From experience, both in this book group and in prior work encounters, a best practice somewhere in between the Socratic method and merely expecting group members to be prepared is revealed. This research has suggested that rotating facilitators who know which week and chapter they are in charge of facilitating works best. In addition, having an outside facilitator insures the group stays focused. This research also suggests that thought provoking, content-rich questions be distributed to the learners before and after each session to build on the learning that happened in the sessions. This technique not only brings absent members up to date, it also helps the participants present by reminding them of what content was covered. As Weimer (2002) stated, by allowing learners more time with the content, in this case the book concepts, learners gain more and become even more familiar with the new knowledge.

This workplace book group was an effective means of transfer of learning in this manufacturing environment. It increased organizational knowing, and utilized the participants' self-directedness to achieve success. When asked if they would participate in another book group, these nine participants assuredly responded "yes!" Many workplaces could easily place a workplace book group in their facility, and by following the recommendations for best practice in operating a book group, achieve the success this one did. The next section discusses recommendations for future research.

Recommendations for Future Research

This workplace book group was successful in that it has contributed significantly to scholarly research. However, now that the work has begun, there are other areas that could be enhanced by further research. Of interest are four particular areas: longer running book group, WPBGs in different industries, comparison of knowledge creation,

and exploring facilitated versus non-facilitated book groups. These areas are covered in the following sections.

Following a Book Group for a Greater Length of Time

This book group met four times to discuss the book over six weeks. Further research which followed a group over several different books for a minimum of a year would reveal more data on transfer of learning, increased organizational knowledge, and self-directedness of the learners. Research on a longer running group might reveal intricacies of relationships that form over time and discover how this aided organizational knowing. Research data on the interactions in each session might show more richness developing as the participants became more comfortable with the method of learning in a book group as well as each other. In this research, the participants were knowledgeable enough of each other's area of expertise to ask position-specific questions. Gathering more information from the participants about the ways they read the book and what they did with the material after a greater length of time would also add to the literature not only on self-directedness, but also on transfer of learning. The participants shared perspectives that showed their application of the book materials, which was one form of transfer; however, to discover more about their self-directedness between sessions, further questioning might have revealed more ways they were directing their own learning between sessions. Research over a greater length of time would help to distinguish these differences. Researching these relationships and questioning for a longer time period would perhaps show deeper networks which would add to organizational knowing, and also contribute to greater transfer of learning.

Workplace Book Groups in Different Industries

This study was limited to nine people within a manufacturing environment. Replicating this study in other workplaces would further validate these findings. By studying WPBG in several different industries, more would be known about the efficacy of book groups for learning in more than a manufacturing environment. By looking at different industries results from a book group, more could be known about the three major areas of study in this project; Self-directedness of the learners, organizational knowing, and transfer of learning. Research comparing a WPBG in a care giving industry such as a hospital to one in a manufacturing environment might show differences as to how the material was transferred or how the participants interacted. This research could also compare and contrast the same book in a leisure book group as a workplace book group. Researching this way would help determine if either group transferred anything differently or if the leisure participants brought any of the details with them to their workplaces. There are many industries that would benefit from a WPBG. By studying learning transfer, increases in organizational knowledge, and learner's self-directedness in these industries, more can be known about the efficacy of WPBGs for transfer of learning.

Comparison of Knowledge Creation

This group that participated in this research study was homogenous in race, educational attainment, and organizational level. All had completed a course of study called the Assessment and Development Center, and served the organization in supervisory roles. Future research could study whether knowledge creation was the same between less uniform groups of people. Future studies could compare demographic data, literacy levels, educational attainment, organizational levels, and

even learning styles in comparison to transfer and organizational knowing to see if there were any correlations present in what participants take away from the book group compared to where they are in their life. Looking at adult developmental levels in comparison to what participants remember six months after a book is closed would also produce rich data. Learning style contrasts might produce interesting data in relation to the ways the participants learned and interacted in the book groups. By administering a learning style inventory to participants, perhaps a correlation between the two could be established. If it was found that all the participants in a study favored a particular learning style, HR could use that as a future predictor of participation in book groups. Comparing novice workers to experienced workers is another area that would produce rich data. Haskell (2001) noted that transfer of learning requires a broad base of pre-existing knowledge. The group in this research had very similar backgrounds, educational attainment and work experiences to draw on, which aided their discussions of this book. It would be advantageous to explore if a group with less work experience and training could draw on life experiences as their broad educational base the same way this group drew on work experiences. The comparison of the data on knowledge creation between these two differently experienced groups would add to scholarly research on transfer of learning data.

Exploring Facilitated Versus Non-facilitated Book Groups

Similar to exploring a book group in different industries, further research on the role of the facilitator would also add more knowledge about workplace book groups. As the role model in facilitation, I brought a certain level of expectation of learning to this book group as well as serving as the example of how to prepare for a book group. Using

this research methodology while exploring the role of facilitation in the outcomes of a book group would further guide the use of this method in workplace learning.

There are many ways to compare and contrast learning in a book group. One can look at different industries, differently educated people, diverse lengths of time to gather data, or the role of the facilitator. However, the findings will likely continue to show that there is learning happening within a workplace book group. The final section will conclude this research project.

Conclusion

The workplace has changed. Globalization, world economies, job off-shoring, political unrest and instability, along with longer work weeks and shifting job requirements no longer offer human resource departments (HRD) the luxury of time or the flexibility once afforded to them by a more loyal and captive work force. HRD must come up with innovative ways to help learners capitalize on their own self-directedness and ability to learn. By creating networks, or webs of interaction, people can learn from each other, and organizational knowing will be increased. HRD can no longer afford to offer one-time training opportunities as the only way for employees to learn. Learning can happen anytime people come together, and organizations can capitalize on this by offering creative ways for employees to come together. Learning initiatives need to capitalize on growing the learners' ability to think and learn on their own as well as learning from co-workers who may be more experienced or differently experienced than them. Successful HR departments will create training that offers these opportunities, and workplace book groups are one way to do this.

As seen in Haskell's (2001) depiction of transfer as a nautilus shell (Figure 4), Nonaka's Organizational Knowledge Creation Model (Figure 3), and the new Knowledge

Creation Model (Figure 2), conceptualized from this research, organizational learning and transfer of learning require organizations to present opportunities for interaction in order to increase knowledge production. Knowledge production is the basis for growth in learning organizations as Peter Senge, in *The Fifth Discipline* (1990) stated, “the organizations that truly excel in the future will be the organizations that discover how to tap people’s commitment, and capacity to learn at all levels in an organization” (p. 4). How better to build a learning organization than by going back to learning in book circles like the ones that were foundations of learning in our country at the turn of the century. Books allow readers the opportunity for reflection upon what they do know and what they do not know so far. A book circle allows participants opportunities to interact, further questioning their knowledge about themselves and about the organization. A workplace book group creates the “space” for learning interaction to occur where individuals can move towards greater and greater understanding of their holistic role within that organization. Workplace book groups add to participants’ existing knowledge, and build new knowledge. By creating these interlocking networks of individuals working on the similar issues, such as customer care or quality as this book group was, stronger teams develop, and learning is driven to a deeper level. Workplace book groups have low start-up costs and are easily facilitated with little contact from HR while achieving great results.

Yes, the workplace has changed, and Human Resource Departments must meet the needs of these new learners and the challenges of a global economy in times of rapid change. However, there is a simple solution that creates exponential results with far-reaching outcomes: Workplace Book Groups.

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APPENDIX A: LETTER OF PERMISSION

NACCO has given permission to be identified as the location in which Jeannine Lanoux conducted research for her graduate thesis: Exploring the Efficacy of Workplace Book Groups as a Learning Method in a Manufacturing Facility.

Manager, Human Resources and Development

NACCO Materials Handling Group, Inc.

APPENDIX B: EMAIL INVITE

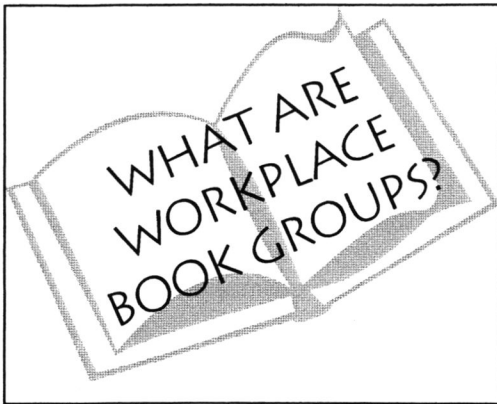
Subject: Opportunity for Continued Development

As a Greenville-based past participant of the NMHG Assessment and Development Center, I would like to offer you an opportunity for continued development. Attached is a brief presentation describing the program. Please let me know if you are interested in participating and I will proceed with book selection and scheduling.

Thank you,

Manager, Human Resources and Development
NACCO Materials Handling Group, Inc.

APPENDIX C: POWERPOINT EXPLANATION OF WORKPLACE BOOK GROUP



WORKPLACE BOOK GROUPS...

- Share great published business ideas
- Stimulate group learning
- Broaden horizons
- Build trust
- Cultivate teamwork, interpersonal skills
- Build communication skills
- Create new networks
- Inspire learning
- Open minds

HOW DO THEY OPERATE?

- 5 to 12 people meet regularly at a set time
- Meetings last 45 minutes to 1 hour
- Book chapters are read in advance of meeting
- A different person facilitates each time
- The facilitator writes questions in advance
- The group discusses the reading material based on facilitators guidance

WHO WILL HELP US?

Jeannine Lanoux, with 12 years of leadership training experience will lead this first book circle as part of her graduate thesis work at ECU.

The only cost to NACCO will be the cost of the books!

WHO USES BOOK GROUPS?

Companies like...

- Unilever – maker of Lipton, Hellmann's, Breyers
- AT & T – the telecommunication company
- Institute of Cancer Research – research & education
- Orange Co. – UK telecommunications company
- Marks & Spencer's - UK's leading retailer

WHEN DO WE START?

January

APPENDIX D: INSTRUCTIONS FOR BOOK GROUP OPERATION

Congratulations! You are about to embark on an inspiring learning opportunity!

We have selected, "Authentic Leadership, Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value" for our book group. We will run two groups somewhat simultaneously to allow for some flexibility with your schedules.

Each group will meet for six weeks. During the six-week period, there will be four discussion sessions and two focus group opportunities. Below is an outline:

Week One – Discuss Part One: Becoming an Authentic Leader

Week Two – Discuss Part Two: Building an Authentic Company

Week Three – Focus Group

Week Four – Discuss Part Three: In the Crucible of the Market

Week Five – Discuss Part Four: Beyond the Bottom Line

Week Six – Focus Group

I will schedule each discussion session using MS Outlook and your book will arrive through interoffice mail in the next day or two. You need to read part one prior to your first discussion session...relax, part one is only 45 pages!

Thank you,

Manager, Human Resources and Development

NACCO Materials Handling Group, Inc.

APPENDIX E: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Title of Research Study: Exploring The Efficacy of Workplace Book Groups Learning Method in a Manufacturing Environment

Principal Investigator: Jeannine Lanoux, Graduate Student, Department of Counselor & Adult Education, College of Education, East Carolina University

Institution: East Carolina University

Address: East Fifth Street, Greenville, NC 27858-4353

Telephone #: 252.328.6131

This consent form document may contain words that you do not understand. You should ask the study coordinator to explain any words or information in this consent form that you do not understand.

INTRODUCTION

You have been asked to participate in a research study being conducted by Jeannine Lanoux, Graduate Candidate at East Carolina University. This research study is to explore the efficacy of workplace book groups for transfer of learning in a manufacturing environment. The outcome of this study is to add to participants' knowledge of this learning method and add to current literature on useful workplace learning techniques.

PLAN AND PROCEDURES

This research will be conducted through four workplace book group sessions of one hour each, and two focus group meetings of one-hour duration and possibly individual interviews. During these sessions, data will be collected through audio-cassette recordings, written researcher field notes, and audio-taped researcher notes after the sessions.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS (risks should be qualitatively described)
There are no foreseeable risks or potential discomforts associated with this study.

POTENTIAL RELATED RISKS TO SUBJECT
There are no known risks associated with this study.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS

Participants in this research study will have the opportunity to contribute new information about a workplace learning method, as well as participate in a workplace book group and learn through discussions with co-workers.

SUBJECT PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

The company hosting the workplace book group has given permission to be identified in the research findings. Participants will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity in written publications, and/or presentations. All audio-tapes, transcriptions, and confidential records will be kept by the researcher in a locked file cabinet while research is being conducted. Once research has concluded, all identifying documents and tapes will be destroyed.

TERMINATION OF PARTICIPATION

You may withdraw from this study at any time without any risk of penalty.

COSTS OF PARTICIPATION

There are no costs for participants in this study.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

Participating in this study is voluntary. If you decide not to be in this study after it has already started, you may stop at any time.

PERSONS TO CONTACT WITH QUESTIONS

The investigators will be available to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the investigator, Jeannine Lanoux at 252-756-5815 or by email at lanouxj@mail.ecu.edu, or her academic advisor at East Carolina University, Dr. Vivian Mott, at phone number 252-328-6177 or email mottv@mail.ecu.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, you may call the Chair of the University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board at phone number 252-744-2914 (days) and/or the hospital Risk Management Office at 252-847-5592.

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

I have read all of the above information, asked questions and have received satisfactory answers in areas I did not understand. (A copy of this signed and dated consent form will be given to the person signing this form as the participant or as the participant authorized representative.)

Participant's Name (PRINT)	Signature	Date
Principal Investigator's (PRINT)	Signature	Date

**University and Medical Center Institutional Review Board**

East Carolina University

Ed Warren Life Sciences Building • 600 Moye Boulevard • LSB 104 • Greenville, NC 27834

Office 252-744-2914 • Fax 252-744-2284 • www.ecu.edu/irb

Chair and Director of Biomedical IRB: Charles W. Daeschner, III, MD

Chair and Director of Behavioral and Social Science IRB: Susan L. McCammon, PhD

TO: Jeannine Lanoux, Graduate Student, College of Education, ECU

FROM: UMCIRB *JB*

DATE: February 6, 2004

RE: Expedited Category Research Study

TITLE: "The Efficacy of Workplace Book Groups for Transfer of Learning in a Manufacturing Environment"

UMCIRB #04-0043

This research study has undergone review and approval using expedited review on 02-03-04. This research study is eligible for review under an expedited category because it is a collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes. Dr. S. McCammon deemed this unfunded study **no more than minimal risk** requiring a continuous review in **12 months**.

The above referenced research study has been given approval for the period of **02-03-04** to **02-02-05**. The approval includes the following items:

- Internal Processing Form dated 01-31-04
- E-mail invitation for workplace book group
- Powerpoint explanation of workplace book groups
- Informed consent document
- Focus group interview questions
- Learning assessment
- One-on-one interview questions
- Letter of support

Dr. S. McCammon does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

The UMCIRB complies with 45 CFR 46, 21 CFR 50, 21 CFR 56, ICH Guidelines, UMCIRB operating policies and procedures, institutional policies and other applicable federal regulations.

APPENDIX G: REFLECTIVE SELF-REPORT INSTRUMENT

This assessment has been drawn from key concepts in *Authentic Leadership* by Bill George.

Directions: Please read each question carefully and answer as fully as possible. Please be succinct, yet thorough using between 50 and 200 words.

1. In today's intensely competitive global markets, how can you serve as an authentic leader and still meet the profitability demands of your organization, the customer demands for satisfaction, employees needs for an authentic leader and still effectively manage your area?
2. Do you agree with George's premise that mission-driven companies create more value in the long run than financially driven companies? As a leader in your area, how do you and how will you continue to build the NACCO Mission to create value for your stakeholders?
3. What are the factors that cause well-intentioned, otherwise ethical leaders to get caught up in the quest for money and power? Is this inevitable, or are there things that leaders can do to stay true to their purpose?
4. If faced with an ethical dilemma in your work area, moral, legal or personal, from what will you draw on to make the right decision? How will you know when your decision is the right one?

APPENDIX H: FIRST FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What have you liked/disliked so far about the WPBG?
2. Describe what you have learned thus far in the WPBG
3. Tell me about your role in the discussion groups
4. Describe your actions in the week between reading and meeting in regards to the reading material.
5. Explain the discussions during the WPBG.
6. Describe how you read the book prior to meeting with the group
7. Describe your feelings about the application of what you read and discuss to your work area
8. Was this book applicable to your work?
9. Was this book applicable to what you all are working on in your PDP?
10. What aspects of the facilitated group do you like?
11. What aspects of the self-facilitated group do you like?
12. What difference would it have made to your reading or participating if you had chosen the book?
13. Do you think you would read differently if your manager had selected the book for you?
14. How would you take the book from concept/reading to application?
15. Are there other ways of taking the book materials and making sure you read and apply them?
16. What aspects of being facilitated by a fellow-worker did you like?
17. What aspects of being facilitated by a fellow-worker did you not like?
18. Would you use book group discussions in your work area in the future?

APPENDIX I: NACCO PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Performance Management Process

Personal Learning Plan

Employee Name:

What development objectives do you have for your current position or a future position at NMHG, Inc.?

How do you expect to achieve these objectives?

What is the timing of the development activity?

To be completed by employee, reviewed and agreed to by supervisor			To be completed by employee and supervisor, with input from Human Resources/Training & Development when necessary.				
What are my Development Objectives (knowledge, skills, or abilities I need to improve or something new I would like to try)?	Is this for a Current or Future Position?	If Future Position enter Title here.	What type of objective (short term, intermediate, or long term)?	What is the priority (High, Medium, Low) and timing?	How (course, task, instruction, or test) will I achieve this objective?	Hours	Status
Sample: Improve leadership skills	Future Position	Sr. Technical Writer	Short Term (0-6 months)	High - Complete by Q1 2002	Attend a leadership training course or volunteer as the leader?	16 hours	Completed On:
1							
2							
3							
4							
5							
6							

Employee Signature:

Date:

Supervisor Signature:

Date:

Employee Name:

Position:

Performance Management Process

Behavior Standards (This section represents 20% of your review)

1	2	3	4	5
Exceptional: Employee <u>always exceeds</u> requirements.	Commendable: Employee <u>usually exceeds</u> requirements.	Successful: Employee <u>usually meets</u> and sometimes exceeds requirements.	Needs Improvement: Employee <u>sometimes meets</u> requirements. Goals and plans need to be developed to correct the situation in the short-term.	Unsatisfactory: Employee <u>does not meet</u> the requirements. Actions need to be taken to correct the situation immediately.

Employee Name:

	Employee Rating	Supervisor Rating
Customer Focused: Is dedicated to delighting internal and/or external customers.	0	0
Communications: Displays behaviors that show skills in listening, informing, written and verbal communication. Can communicate ideas and information using the appropriate medium and levels for various situations and audiences.	0	0
Leadership: Has a high degree of integrity. Demonstrates the ability to set direction, inspire, motivate, and persuade. Takes the initiative to improve things. Manages efficiently and effectively. Has strong decision-making abilities. Leads by example.	0	0
Teamwork: Works in harmony with members of the team to achieve positive results. Exhibits positive human relations skills to work as a productive team member. Treats fellow employees with fairness and respect. Is able to develop rapport with teammates. Manages conflict effectively. Demonstrates facilitation and negotiation skills.	0	0
Results Oriented: All his/her efforts are focused on accomplishing objectives while being guided by the Company Values.	0	0
Constructive Change: Relentlessly pursues improved performance in all aspects of his/her work.	0	0

Employee Comments	Supervisor Comments

APPENDIX J: SECOND FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. If you were conducting a WPBG, how would you run it?
2. What would be the best number of people for a WPBG?
3. Who are the right team members to have around this table to read a book together?
4. Would you use book group discussions in your work area in the future?
5. After participating in the first 2 sessions and then the focus group, did your behavior change in the way you contributed in the next 2 sessions of book group meetings?
6. Those of you who facilitated sessions, describe what you did to prepare for facilitation? What impact do you think facilitating had on your retention of the materials?
7. What impact do you think being facilitated by a co-worker had on your retention of the material?
8. What impact do you think being facilitated by an outsider had on your retention of the materials?
9. What would having a different person facilitate each chapter instead of each section have done for the group discussions?
10. If you had received questions from the chapter in advance, would you have read outside those questions?
11. Describe ways you have applied what you have read and discussed to your work area
12. Some of you mentioned in the first FG that you read the book at one level for the book group and then things happened that made you read at a deeper level. For those of you to whom this happened, can you explain? Did reading deeper change the ways you took notes or highlighted or otherwise studied and applied the materials? How could a WPBG facilitator get all participants to read at that level?
13. In the last FG I asked if you would have read differently if you had picked the book and many of you shared that you would have worked hard to get everyone to agree or see what a great book it was like you did, so as not to feel "rejected". You all also spoke about how great the book group was for exposing each of us to different opinions, points of views, and sides of the business. How as a learner would you bring those 2 together? You select the book, try to get everyone to see how great it is, yet learn from differing views?
14. Some of you spoke about enjoying challenging each others perspectives. Why is that so?

15. Some of you mentioned “lobbing out tough questions” that were NMHG related, or functional work area related as a way to help you learn more. What questions would you like to have asked that didn’t get asked?
16. Some of you mentioned that having an outside facilitator brought in fresh perspective. How could you marry the fresh perspective to the inside tough questions?
17. Some of you talked about action items that you wrote down to work on at the last FG. Have you added any action items since we finished the book or talked about action items in the last focus group?
18. Some of you mentioned going back and looking at your PMP, or assessment and development plan and seeing ways to apply this book to what you were working on. In looking back at those things, what were your findings?
19. What have you liked about the WPBG?
20. Would you participate in a WPBG again? Why /not?
21. How many books had you read besides this one in the last 12 months?

APPENDIX K: AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword by Warren Bennis.	
Preface: A New Generation of Leaders.	
Introduction: Where Have All the Leaders Gone?	
Part One: Becoming an Authentic Leader.	
Leadership Is Authenticity, Not Style.	
The Transformation of Leaders.	
Leading a Balanced Life.	
Part Two: Building an Authentic Company.	
Missions Motivate, Dollars Don't.	
Values Don't Lie.	
It's the Customer, Stupid!	
It's Not Just the CEO.	
Whose Bottom Line: Customers or Shareholders?	
Part Three: In the Crucible of the Market.	
Seven Deadly Sins: Pitfalls to Growth.	
Overcoming Obstacles: Nothing Can Stand in Your Way.	
Ethical Dilemmas: When in Rome, Don't Follow the Romans.	
Innovations from the Heart.	
Acquisitions Aren't Just About Money.	
Shareholders Come Third.	
Part Four: Beyond the Bottom Line.	
Governance Is Governance.	
Sticking Your Neck Out.	
Preparing for Succession . . . and Moving On.	
Epilogue: If Not Me, Then Who? If Not Now, When?	
Medtronic Financial Results.	

APPENDIX L: RESEARCHER'S FIRST BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

<u>Page</u>	<u>Question</u>
2	How many of you are embarrassed to say you are a businessman or leader?
3	Who are NACCO's shareholders?
6	Questions?
11 – 12	What do you think about styles versus being yourself? shortcomings? Lead with purpose/meaning/values? Consistent/self-disciplined? natural abilities
15	you get more familiar with your weaknesses?
16	Concentric circles
17	What test do you use to insure you are being authentic?
19	Purpose – have you examined your purpose at NACCO? Servant to the people? Difference between adopting someone else's purpose and aligning behind common goals?
21	How many of you reflect on why you believe what you do?
22	Do you think we are moving into the day/age where employees to be engaged for them to work well?
24	Self- disciplines – how do you read this?
27	What is a crucible? Do you agree that a crucible is necessary to becoming a great leader?
28	Golden boys/girls?
30	Middle managers can be plain vanilla but not top managers? Are you plain vanilla and how would you know?
30 –34	Hitting the wall
36	Passion for purpose – can this be fulfilled outside of work?
40	To be recognized for qualities of the heart – what do you think?
42	Health?
46 – 48	Balance
53	Mentoring relationship?
55	Community service essential part of being an authentic leader

APPENDIX M: MIKE'S BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

<u>Page</u>	<u>Question</u>
62	Do employees have to believe in the company's mission to be motivated?
63	Chicken or egg.....Focus on Increased customer satisfaction or maximizing shareholder value
65	Figure 4.1 – Do you agree?
70	Last paragraph.....is this true
71	How important are "VALUES" to the success of a company? Do successful organizations need to discuss their successes & failures?
71	Are authentic / successful companies democratic and collaborative?
71	How important is consistency to an organization?
72	How should values be communicated within a company? Is practicing better than preaching? (pg 75)
76	Operating Norms.....how important are they to an organization? (Accountability, conflict management, commitment, trust, results focus)
82	How important is being customer focused? Are we? How do you keep from having a rift between the sales organization and the rest of the company?
92	Is the team approach correct? How important is diversity?
102	Are all stakeholders equal in value?

APPENDIX N: RESEARCHER'S SECOND BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

<u>Page</u>	<u>Question</u>
62	Agree? Real Value? Does maximizing shareholder value carry any weight to you? Do you play a part in figure 4.1 How do you keep your employees highly motivated and committed? Forklifts aren't pacemakers so can you create the same buy-in?
71 – 75	how do you inculcate NACCO's values with your employees? How has NACCO done the same for you?
76	Passionate commitment to performance standards
77-79	Dealing with conflict – raising the bar and empowerment with responsibilities?
87	Focus on customer
92	Who complements you in your team or who are you a complement of?
95	Poison
96	Trust
98	Diversity Growth companies have to upgrade continually
102	Stakeholders model
104	No conflict

APPENDIX O: JOSEPH'S BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

Chapter 9:

Do we as a company remain authentic in the face of competitive pressure from investment community?

Can you serve both and remain authentic

do we agree that customer satisfaction mission and values are the soft side?

Where as financial management. Layoffs, divestitures are the hard side? What do you think?

Can we compare the material handling industry (cyclical in nature) to high growth industries such as biotech, computer, hi-technology? Can cyclical be authentic and sustain growth? If not, what can we learn and apply?

Chapter 10

Seven Deadly sins –

No mission clarity

Depend on single product line

Changing strategy w/out changing culture

Outside core competency

Failing to anticipate market changes

Understanding core business

What is the most important action a company can do to sustain growth?

Overcoming obstacles – lost interest

Defibrillator market – FDA approval

One important lesson learned – never feel secure being market leader.

Why ethics important lesson?

Chapter 11

Ethical dilemmas – once recognized, what is important is the response of leaders. Ford explorer-firestone excellent examples, blamed each other instead of addressing loss of life.

Would you want your leader to focus on loss of life or in defense of company's product...by not defending company you could lose share, lose profit, reduce shareholder value, impact community through loss of jobs etc.

J&J took a different approach with Tylenol, but did they have that luxury.

Recalling a commodity item with minimal cost basis due to tampering is different than saying you have a design flaw.

Chapter 12

Innovations from the heart: Appeal to brain (knowledge) vs. passion in their work.

Tendency to control w/rules, processes and procedures in conflict with commitment to innovation. Can you have innovation and adequate controls in age of Sarbanes and Oxley, Enron, Tyco, etc.?

Near term, Intermediate, Long term } growth vehicles. Does NACCO look at growth this way? 1-8 ton is in what category? Do we have long term vehicles – high risk?

Does setting public growth goals present other issues for an organization?

Unacceptable risk?
 Accounting irregularities
 Profitability impact

Chapter 13

Acquisitions – key issue remains integration and synergy can complement organic growth

Does it make sense for a cyclical company in industry to acquire another cyclical company for growth?

Does Medtronic model work for a equipment manufacturer?

“Acquisitions fail because of cultural clashes”. This is only true if you stay within industry type. I don’t disagree but it needs a qualifier.

Companies are built with a mix of acquisitions, and organic growth. NACCO example of acquisition growth, but did we successfully integrate?

Chapter 14

Shareholders come third?

“Companies that put their customers first and empower employees to serve them will provide greater growth in shareholder value”. True statement?

Is market share the best measure of how well a customer is serving its customer?

Share increases help retain talent, higher profitability, increased R & D and market develop for sustainable growth.

Transparency in dealing with shareholders?

Can you really manage shareholder and not let them manage you?

APPENDIX P: RESEARCHER'S THIRD BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

Page Question

- 107 Mission, Values, vision empowerment and customer satisfaction – soft?
109 7 deadly sins – what did those mean to you all?
112 Cisco example
How can you constantly scan your environment to make sure deadly sin #
4 doesn't happen?
Core competency?
144 Overcoming obstacles – have you ever had a battle you fought as hard to
win as they did?
155 Agree/disagree?
158 Transparency – does knowing all these CEO angles help you understand
your CEO better?

APPENDIX Q: ROBBIE'S BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

Chapter 15: Governance is governance, balance of power. Sarbanes and Oxley – how are you affected?

Quiet boardrooms – IBM to \$8B loss in 2 years (emperor has no clothes)

How do we challenge our own company? Ourselves? Our reports? *connected relations?

Chapter 16: Sticking your neck out

What did you think of their approach facing confrontational people/obstacles?

-talk directly?

-bring other people?

-bring boss?

Are we forcing change in our own environment?

Chapter 17: Preparing for Succession and moving on.

How are you preparing for successor?

Darwinian struggles?

Without a year in advance notice (p. 191), can you make smooth transition?

How do you envision your last day?

How are you planning for the next thirty years?

Not promote-able if not replaceable, but do you think mgrs should pick replacements?

Epilogue: If not me, then who?

Front pew?

What is your unique calling? – ripple in pond

What is your biggest take-away from the book?

How do you plan to use it?

APPENDIX R: RESEARCHER'S FOURTH BOOK GROUP QUESTIONS

Overall experience of this section?

Page Question

165 Impossible to legislate good governance? Does all this make any sense?
Chapter 16: Comments? What did you highlight and why?
(Robbie's question) Are we forcing change in our own environment?

Chapter 17

Page Question

189 Succession failure? Serve 10 years? Why not company founders?
190 Preparing a successor – transition phase? What would your last day look like?
191 Key to being fulfilled? Is the key having something to move to? How many of you
do? How do you feel about his notes from the last day?

Epilogue

197 World needs your leadership today, what are you doing to prepare?
What will be your legacy? (Robbie's question)

Biggest take-away and how will you use it? (Robbie's question)

APPENDIX S: QUESTIONS DISTRIBUTED BETWEEN FIRST BOOK GROUP

MEETING AND SECOND

In our workplace book group (WPBG) discussion Wednesday, we covered the following topics:

Page 2 – Are you embarrassed to call yourself a businessperson or a leader like Andy Grove from Intel?

P. 3 – Who are your shareholders/stakeholders?

P. 6 – We discussed the questions – especially # 1, 7, 8

P. 11 – 12 - We discussed Leadership style VS natural abilities, shortcomings, leading with purpose, meaning, values, and being consistent and self-disciplined

P. 15 – We discussed how are employees voices are heard – how we give them voice?

P. 18 – 19 – We discussed purpose, how each person examines their purpose at NACCO, the role of the assessment/evaluation center and PMP for knowing goals and purpose in organization.

P. 24 – Self-discipline – it's role in being a leader

P. 27 – Crucible – what is one? Do you agree that you have to experience one to become a great leader?

P. 30 – Stopped here discussing vanilla managers, and the role of middle managers at NACCO

Next week: Pick up on page 30 and cover these specific points:

PP 30 – 34 hitting the wall – what does that mean to you?

P. 39 – Solid fit between your values and the organization's values

P. 40 connected relationships – and their importance – critical feedback – how do you do that?

PP. 46 – 48 Balance...how to achieve it, how do you know you have it, what is it for each of us.

AND - Any other salient points to the readers!

We will then move into Part 2, Chapters 4 – 8, to page 105. Please bring your highlighted book and thoughts on these chapters as pertaining to you as an authentic leader at NACCO and in your personal life.

Thanks for participating today! Jeannine