

## CONTROLLING ENTROPY

Help! Stop undesirable or unwanted entropy! Look around—everything changes, and nothing stays the same. Entropy means erosion, dispersion, randomness, decay, and unacceptable and uncontrollable change. Entropy occurs to *everything in the universe—even in a business where you are the leader!* It is the same with human relationships, our existence, world affairs, and everything else. It requires leadership to keep the organization under control as it was intended or you want it to continue to be. Consistent stability managed by the leader's behavior in an organization is important. When adverse dispersion/change of organizational requirements are noted and not desired, it is past time to understand this physics thermodynamic construct. So—move quickly—because organizational entropy is your enemy!

There are obviously things in an organization under the leader's direction that need to be controlled to prevent entropy. Consider carefully the basic maintenance of organizational standards (philosophy/beliefs, mission statement, purpose, long-term goals, short-term objectives to meet the goals). Also, such common and changing activities of scheduling employees, hiring new employees, and positive or negative employee performance outcomes maintain or change entropy dynamics. Having an employee list what they do as a part of "their job" helps solidify employee stability and evidence of conforming to their performance standards. In-service meetings, equipment upkeep, and consumer satisfaction surveys might also be important in curtailing entropy. These basic organizational happenings help to hold constant the direction of a corporation. If the determined efforts of curtailing entropy are not in place, random and unwanted change naturally occurs, and the organization's original intent disintegrates.

The process of forgetting the basic organizational standards of the organization occurs exponentially along a curve. The fastest loss of memory recall by employees regarding organizational standards occurs within the first few days of introduction and then tapers off, after that, to a slower rate. Also, the process of entropy (forgetfulness) is increased by stress! Therefore, job performance reminders and *reduction of stressful* situations maximize learning and curtail progressive entropy. Positive reinforcement (positive feedback) by recognizing an employee's remembrance to perform presented or reviewed job expectations will help curtail entropy.

It is important to remind employees of the expected organizational standards. An optimum way to encourage remembering by employees is to have them use all their appropriate senses—verbal recall, job practice/demonstration, which demonstrates their understanding of the organizational standards. Teaching other employees about organizational standards is helpful. A group discussion and employee reiteration of job performance expectations related to organizational standards help employees better understand the collective understanding and commitment to shared organizational standards.

Suppose other reinforcements are needed to prevent organizational entropy--such as touch, product manipulation, or mental problem-solving. In other words—use as many senses as possible to increase employee understanding, therefore, attaining long-term performance compliance. Such employee involvement allows the leader to continually measure the current success, accuracy, and clarity regarding what the organization represents.

Controlling and leading an organization is like holding a ship steady in a stormy sea. Life's happenings—especially in an organization—make the organizational ship unsteady; hence, we expect to see entropy. There will always be impermanence in everything, and learning to control impermanence is a test of leadership finesse.

How can you effectively and incrementally establish desired organizational standards without employees “jumping ship”? Read next week's Leadership Corner about THE BOILING FROG EFFECT.

By the way--Isn't there a cowboy song entitled “Time Changes Everything?” Yes, Sir—we could call it the “Entropy Song.”

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