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MANAGEMENT PERSPECTIVES

Scripts

From the Editor

One wag observed that meetings are places where you take minutes but waste hours. We have all been in those types of meetings and, as a result, have found ways to either tune out or do two things at once. Not the wisest, but we all do it.

I had just started a mental vacation when I was pulled back to reality with a simple statement made by one of the participants. "Speaking well is not as good as doing well."

Zowie! Ain't it the truth. Too many speeches and not enough action is a syndrome that we all get caught in. We labour at finding the right words when we should be labouring. Why not Just Do It? Then I caught myself. We need both — reflection and action. The trick is finding the balance.

At LIVE Consultants we help individuals, teams, and organizations find the balance. We work with them to develop useable strategies and plans and then help them through to execution.

Marilyn Baetz, editor

About the Author and the Article

So what's your story? What scripts have you picked up and continued to use?

In the article, Stephen Baetz challenges you to look at the life scripts you use. He observes, "People pick up scripts, learn the lines, and then live the lines so well they become the script." Obviously, the scripts you use shape the results you get as you work with others.

As you read the article, you will have a chance to evaluate whether or not you are using unhealthy scripts.

Stephen Baetz is a principal of LIVE Consultants Inc., the organization sponsoring this publication.



Stephen Baetz

Life Scripts

The rule, as I remember it, was one Shakespearean play a year. *As You Like It*, and *Much Ado About Nothing* were gentle introductions to the Bard from Avon. Senior grades were tragedies — *Hamlet*, *MacBeth*, and *Romeo and Juliet*.

We memorized lines and then took to the stage the next day as budding Douglas Campbells. “Is this a dagger which I see before me/The handle toward my hand ... Alas poor Yorick/I knew him Horatio ... What light from yonder window breaks ... What a piece of work is a man!/How noble in reason!/How infinite in faculty.” Today the soliloquies tumble together as pieces in a kaleidoscope. Each an insight.

Too many years have passed to remember the exact source; but I think these are the lines.

All the world's a stage/All the men and women merely players/We have our entrances and our exits. At the time, I thought it was an interesting simile but not an outstanding one. Today, I marvel at Will's insight. Life is play. People pick up scripts, learn the lines, and then live the lines so well they become the script. Some people never learn more than one script. They seem to know it so well, no other lines are possible. They depend on others to provide the prompts and if they aren't there, they can't go on.

So what scripts have you learned? Have you chosen and learned scripts which are personally healthful or have you chosen scripts which discourage and defeat you?

Test yourself against these scripts.

Unhealthful Script #1: Victims

You've probably heard their lines, “See what you made me do?”, “See how you made me feel?”, or “You'd feel this way too if you were faced with the same circumstances.” Life's outcomes are beyond their control. If they feel like they shouldn't blame people, they blame the organization or the system. They can tell you in endless and boring detail how terrible things are for them. They have been *done unto*.

They are tragic characters. Murphy is their mentor ... they know what can go wrong and they are sure that they will be on the losing end. Part of the tragic nature of the script is that these characters rarely have insight into what is causing their outcomes. They fail to realize that we are all self made people.

They have a tremendous capacity to gather the attention of others. The victims assemble at the wailing wall and tell us about their pain. Some do it openly and announce to anyone who will listen how tragedy can only happen to them. Others bleed in silence or anger and try to get others to guess their pain. Victims hold firmly to the belief that they are the only ones who are challenged by events and circumstances.

Where two or three are gathered together, there is a pity party where a rousing game of Gee-Ain't-It-Awful gets played.

Unhealthful Script #2: Rescuers

These people play opposite the victim. Starting with a well-intentioned line like, “Let me help you,” rescuers work to make everything seem all right. They smooth. They bandage. They deliver aid. They give fish.

So zealous is the rescuer they will set their own agenda and work aside to serve the victims. They check regularly to make sure that everything is okay and at the slightest tinge of anxiety, they move in to deliver aid.

What is so ironic about this script is that although their intention is to help, the net effect of their action is that they rarely do. Rescuers have a way of increasing dependency having never taught anybody how to fish. The victim never learns to stand on their own two feet and they always return to the rescuer for help.

It is hard to be put out with a rescuer. After all, they appear to be nurturing, supportive, and caring; people who are willing to help out. To get angry with them would be like railing against motherhood.

Why do people pick up this script? To meet their own need to feel worthwhile and be liked. Sometimes the script provides them with a

haven from having to do their own work or carry out their own responsibilities — it seems so much easier to help someone else than to help themselves.

Unhealthy Script #3: Know-It-Alls

They are insufferable. They believe that they have seen it all and that there is really nothing new under the sun. These Cliff Clavens of the world are often fountains of trivia ... a tactic they use to keep the crowd amazed and unquestioning. It feels like there is nothing they haven't seen and nothing they haven't experienced.

The impact of their communication is, "Boy are you ever stupid. Anybody — and I mean anybody — knows that." They might as well have said, "You fool."

Those new to a drama can be impressed by their apparent sense of knowing. Happily, the wise can see beyond the intellectual arrogance.

These too are tragic players because at the moment you think you know it all you stop creativity and innovation. They are people with little imagination, limited by their knowledge.

Unhealthy Script #4: Empty-Baggers

These individuals are convinced that they have nothing to offer. The empty-bagger depends on others to do their thinking, to set the direction, and to make all the decisions. To minimize the frustration that others might have with them, they describe themselves as good followers.

Unfortunately they rarely initiate or grab hold because they fear they may not be doing the right thing. Some empty-baggers try to enrich their scripts by being "cute". The tactic sometimes is humour; other times they flutter their psychological eyes at the Know-It-Alls and seduce them into giving direction.

You've heard the lines, "You're so much better at that than I am", "I could never figure that out", or "Where do you come up with that stuff?" As a consequence, the behaviours of the Know-It-All are reinforced.

A Healthful Script

These characters take full responsibility for the outcomes that they achieve. They step up to the challenges that are in front of them and they seek solutions that create wins both for themselves and for others.

The people who play out these scripts

- teach without creating dependency,
- ask questions to stimulate thinking,
- respect diversity,
- offer what they know,
- ask for feedback and use it,
- are clear about what contribution they want to make, and
- have a sense of humour which helps put the events of their lives into perspective.

Have Script Wits

Of course, where you decide to play your part is as important as the script you choose.

Where are you playing your parts? Perhaps in sitcoms — where a series of inconsequential relationships are punctuated by three commercial breaks for the good life. Perhaps in soaps — where an endless string of shallow relationships and tragic complications meander aimlessly forever. Perhaps in action suspense dramas — where thought surrenders to action and the toughest always win. Perhaps in improv — where spur of the moment inspiration is allowed to play at what feels good.

Or, are you choosing situations and circumstances that are productive and healthful?

Choose wisely because our scripts, in total, become our life story.

The Final Check

Your focus is back in perspective. You have started to develop a plan for making those growth and development opportunities available to the people within the organization. You have a myriad of questions.

When developing an educational plan, think about the following. In combination, the points listed below will lead to success. The more “yes” options you can check, the greater the chance for plan effectiveness.

Read over the points carefully.

Does my education plan ...	YES	NO	DON'T KNOW
1. consider current and emerging goals, values, and strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. mesh with the attitudes, skills, and knowledge the organization wants to develop?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. identify all the populations that can benefit from development opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. meet the needs of the target groups as they have been assessed and detailed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. include a variety of learning strategies?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. have a set of standards for all the growth and development opportunities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. have a practical focus to decrease the gap between information and application?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. have an overall theme that will link the ideas and build continuity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. contain content and delivery techniques geared to the level of each target group?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. have a built-in evaluation process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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