
----- WHAT'S UP, DOC? -----

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"Creating Leadership Solutions for Profit and Growth"

THIS MONTH'S THEME: LEADERSHIP IN THE FAMILY

One of the real pleasures of acting as a coach to someone over time is the ability to have an ever greater impact on a person's whole life as we get to know each other better. One of my coaching clients recently asked me how the principles and practices we work on together apply to family life, prompting a whole new area of conversation, and subsequently, this newsletter. While past editions of "What's Up, Doc?" have all been focused on topics that relate more directly to organizational and professional growth, I thought I would take a shot at a "Family Issue," and if it gets a good response, then I'll include related content more often – perhaps making some "Family Issue" an annual event. Let me know what you think by clicking [here](#) and jotting down your thoughts, once you've finished reviewing this month's edition.

IN THIS ISSUE:

1. WHAT IS THE "ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION" OF THE FAMILY?
2. HOW TO KEEP WORK ORGANIZATIONS FROM GETTING OFF TRACK
3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS
4. CHUCKLES
5. HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL
6. ABOUT DR. SCHULER
7. HOW TO SUBSCRIBE OR UNSUBSCRIBE
8. NEWSLETTER STATEMENT OF ETHICS

THIS MONTH'S QUOTES:

"Reality is the thing which, when you stop believing in it, doesn't go away." -- Phillip K. Dick

"Laughter is the shortest distance between two people." -- Victor Borge

"Sixty years ago I knew everything; now I know nothing; education is a progressive discovery of our own ignorance." -- Will Durant

1. THE “ORGANIZATIONAL MISSION” OF THE FAMILY

Let me start with a disclaimer: this point of view that I’m describing here is NOT meant to replace any person’s religious or other closely held conviction. Please take what you may useful in what’s here and discard the rest – I certainly mean no offense to anyone’s sensibilities or beliefs, and I understand that ideas of “the family” can be fraught with controversy, depending on one’s point if view.

THE PURPOSE OF A FAMILY IS TO SUPPORT THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF ITS MEMBERS

This is true for all family constellations, including traditional families of two biological parents and their offspring, as well as other varieties more common today. All members of the family should have their growth, development and health supported through the medium of the family, even the adults. Obviously, children have greater and more immediate needs, generally speaking, and it is best if adults choose to have children once they are mature and strong enough to defer their more personal, individual needs enough to attend to those of the children first. While all members have material needs that are likely to be met through the family – needs for food and shelter – all members also have personal and emotional needs to be met through the family as well – needs for understanding, support, encouragement and the development of individual talents among them.

LEADERSHIP IN THE FAMILY INVOLVES BALANCING THE NEEDS OF ALL MEMBERS AT THE SAME TIME

Note that this point of view explicitly includes provision for the needs of adults, while many ideas of the family speak as if the sole purpose of a family is to provide exclusively for the needs of children. But some families do not include children, either because all the children are now adults or due to other choices or circumstances. Those families are still families, and whether or not children are present, leadership in the family involves the exercise of some balance so that the needs of all members can be met as well and as creatively as possible at all times – that’s the hard part!

IN HEALTHY FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN, ADULTS GAIN SUPPORT FROM OTHER ADULTS AND NOT PRIMARILY FROM CHILDREN

Yes, it’s great when a child comes over to an adult after a particularly long day and says, “I love you, Mommy,” sensing perhaps that Mom needs a

hug. This is a great developmental exercise of empathy on the child's part, and a sign of healthy growth. But adult parents, ideally, should be able to support each other well enough personally to be able to draw on each other for support and strength so that children can feel secure in their environment. This is what creates the conditions for healthy child development, and adults make a potentially grave error when they garner too much personal support from their children, rather than from other adults or adult partners. It can be tough for single parents to find other adult support, but friends and other adult family members can play a positive, healthy role in supporting single parents and, by proxy, their children. No matter what the family type, leadership in the family means letting the kids be kids so that adult fears and tensions can be handled together by other adults.

FAMILIES CAN GET OFF TRACK WHEN THE NEEDS OF AT LEAST ONE ADULT BEGIN TO DOMINATE THOSE OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

At any given moment in time, one family member's needs might dominate, for example, when someone is ill and requiring immediate medical care. But generally speaking, healthy, functioning families maintain a balance, while problem families do not. Literature is replete with examples of families that get off track. I'm suddenly thinking of an older movie with Harrison Ford, called "Mosquito Coast," where the father's ideal of living a certain kind of ideologically inspired, reclusive life blinded him to the needs of his children to grow socially and interact with non-family members. Sometimes the needs of adults to have their families adhere to a preconceived ideal, however worthy, can interfere with a child's (particularly an adolescent's) need to go out into the world and learn some things on their own, mistakes and all. Leadership in the family involves, sometimes, knowing when to let go, while it also requires that we teach children when to defer to the needs of others, including their siblings, no matter what their immediate wants may be. This is part of the role of families with children to prepare those children for adult membership in civil society.

FAMILIES CAN ALSO GET OFF TRACK WHEN THE NEEDS OF ONE CHILD OR OF ALL CHILDREN BEGIN TO DOMINATE THOSE OF OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS

This can occur, for example, when one child in the family has special needs or developmental disabilities that require special care and attention, as in the film "What's Eating Gilbert Grape?" (which also, come to think of it, represents an example of a family with an adult member whose needs begin to dominate those of other members, as in the discussion above). When a family with a special needs child struggles to maintain a healthy balance, outside resources and supports may be needed, as long as those supports are well chosen (these are always hard choices, and can include

extended family members, of course, as part of the solution). But the point I want to make here is to say that there are times when the adult leader or leaders of a family need their own time. Adult partner/parents need time for each other to continue to get to know and understand each other outside of the context of their roles as parents, to renew and keep their relationships alive, in order to meet their own mutual growth and support needs, and also to provide the kind of strong foundation that allows for healthy child growth and development. Not to take such time, through whatever form it may take, is to fail in the family leadership role. The balancing act of family leadership requires attention to all members, and not just to children. How often have we seen married partners become strangers to each other over the years as children grow, so that the relationship founders or ends when the nest becomes empty – or even sooner?

HAVING A WIDER MISSION OR PURPOSE CAN BE AN AID TO HEALTHY FAMILY LIFE

Purely from my own observation, I find that families of all kinds tend to do better when they are animated by some purpose greater than themselves, without sacrificing their own essential growth needs. I've seen couples without children do very well when their relationships are animated by some common purpose, set of values or shared enterprise – for example, the owning and running of a bed and breakfast that provides hospitality and comfort to guests, and a medium for the expression of both partners' talents, while also paying the couple's bills, etc. Healthy intimate, partnered relationships may begin well through the usual (or unexpected!) attractions and desires, but they often are helped to last over time when they are founded on some shared sense of purpose that transcends the couple.

For many couples, the raising of children provides that purpose – sometimes a bit sooner than they may have planned! But for childless couples, too, some other jointly shared creative enterprise, mission or activity can help keep both partners growing together, challenging each other, discovering each other, etc. Even families with children fare better when children are raised with some set of values that transcends mere self-interest. While religious identity or conviction can often supply this ingredient, from my observations, non-religious, altruistic or creative endeavors can also perform the same function. (Note: I am not here trying to make any judgments, or political or religious statements, pro or con – I'm just trying to offer some of what I believe I see as an observer of families as organizations, speaking also as a trained psychologist.)

Often, these “wider missions” can emerge organically from the relationship of the two intimate/married partners involved, whether they are recognized or not. But I sometimes wonder how much leadership in

the family might be helped at times by articulating, or trying to make explicit, what those wider values or missions might be, in answer to the questions, “What are we about? What do we believe in?” The answers to such questions can be helpful guideposts for all involved in the family, as long as the answers do not become rigid clubs used in the end to stifle the continuing growth and development of all family members. Values statements, like a good mission statement for a corporation, should be relevant enough to add meaning and context in specific situations while broad enough to remain applicable through changing times and circumstances.

2. HOW TO KEEP WORK ORGANIZATIONS FROM GETTING OFF TRACK

In this newsletter, I am treating “the family” as one variety of organization, where all families share the common purpose to promote the growth and development of each member. But what does all this tell us about our other organizations, and how they might sometimes get off track?

THE PURPOSE OF A WORK ORGANIZATION IS NOT THE SAME AS THE PURPOSE OF A FAMILY – SO KEEP THE TWO DISTINCT
And let me tell you, as obvious as this may seem, people forget this ALL THE TIME! Whatever organization you belong to in order to make a living, it has its own purpose and mission statement, or should, and it is not to support the growth and development of all its members. It may be to provide a particular product or service while adhering to certain values, but the organization does not exist merely for its member. If leadership in the family means balancing the needs of all members for health, growth and support, then leading an organization means balancing the needs of shareholders/owners, customers and employees all at the same time. This is true for profit, non-profit and public organizations alike.

RESIST THE PRESSURE PEOPLE SOMETIMES PUT ON THEIR WORK ORGANIZATIONS TO MEET THEIR FAMILY NEEDS
Don’t misunderstand me – I’m all for happy, productive work environments, and I do a lot in my professional work to promote them, not for their own sake, but to help working organizations accomplish their essential missions. And strong work organizations do attempt to help their members learn and grow, though not at the expense of meeting the needs of shareholders and customers. As desirable as close relations are in a working environment, people set themselves up for frustration and failure

when they implicitly expect managers or leaders to be like “ideal parents.” By doing so, they place themselves in the position of dependent children waiting for someone else to solve their problems or meet their needs, and some paternalistic organizations actually fall into the trap of treating their employees this way (sometimes with good intentions). But the results tend to stifle creativity and autonomy throughout the organization, while promoting petty resentments among employees who find that their needs and desires are not perfectly met by the organization as a whole. Business is business. When family needs or expectations are not met at home, they should not be transferred to the work environment - though people inadvertently do this all the time, whether they realize it or not.

REMEMBER: NON-PROFIT AND PUBLIC ORGANIZATIONS ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO LOSING SIGHT OF THEIR MISSIONS THAN FOR-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS ARE

For-profit organizations have a regular scorecard to tell them how well they are meeting their missions: the profit/loss column. When the numbers are bad, by definition these organizations need to work hard to fulfill their missions and get back on track, or ultimately cease to exist. But public and non-profit organizations often lack such a clear and consistent scorecard, so that “softer” issues and the political agendas of internal factions can begin to supersede the genuine missions of these organizations (for-profit companies are not immune to these pressures, but they don’t usually survive as long when they get off track). This is why we see long stewing and simmering resentments or factions build up within some organizations – because people get caught up in other agendas or expectations, based perhaps on past slights (real or imagined) occurring at work or even in people’s family lives. When these organizations begin to resemble dysfunctional families, you know they have gotten away from their core missions, and it takes strong leadership to bring them back to a rigorous focus on their actual organizational purposes. Public and non-profit organizations have outside constituents whose needs they serve. While customers and markets communicate with for-profit organizations through dollars, sometimes other organizations (particularly public ones) must make extra efforts to get direct feedback – through surveys or other means – from their outside constituents. If you’re the leader of a non-profit or public organization, you’ll have to take extra steps to keep your organization focused on its mission, because human nature will conspire to try to pull you off track.

WHAT EMOTIONAL/GROWTH NEEDS SHOULD WORK ORGANIZATIONS SEEK TO MEET FOR INDIVIDUALS?

Everyone needs to be compensated fairly and work in a physically safe environment. Laws governing employment relationships must be honored. Above that, all people want to feel that their work and contributions have significance, so it is in the enlightened self-interest of

work organizations to recognize and reward members' efforts, in order to promote future effort, promote retention and enhance efforts to recruit new talent into the organization. It is also often in the interests of work organizations to support the training and learning of organization members when that learning helps the organization accomplish its wider mission. But it is not the responsibility of a work organization to make all its members "feel good." I place that responsibility on individuals and on work teams themselves. Organizations can foster positive work environments as ways to promote productivity and their own interests (especially by supporting positive, one-on-one relationships between supervisors/managers and workers), and organizations that fail to do a reasonable job of this will lose good people and ultimately fail to compete. In short, work organizations are collections of adults engaged in a shared, common enterprise whose accomplishment hinges on the fulfillment of the needs of others outside the organization, and work organizations get derailed when they fail to keep this in focus. While the mission of a family is to meet the growth and development needs of its own members, work organizations are distinctly different. Sometimes people inadvertently blur the lines between the two, yielding negative results.

3. RECOMMENDED BOOKS AND FILMS

BOOK: "Mapping Human History: Genes, Race and Our Common Origins," by Steve Olsen, Houghton Mifflin, New York, 2002.

My ethnicity, as far as I can trace it, includes to following: I'm German, Irish and English on my father's side, and the most recent immigrant I can find to the United States on my father's side is my great grandmother, who came from Ireland. On my mother's side, both of my grandparents came from outside the U. S. mainland, and on that side, I'm Puerto Rican, Spanish, French, Peruvian and Native South American. On top of all that, I grew up in the environs of New York City, among many second generation Italian American kids, and among many Jewish kids whose families had come primarily from Eastern Europe. And so, by a kind of cultural immersion or osmosis, I consider myself to share some of those heritages as well, and in fact, many people take me for either Jewish or Italian in origin when they first meet me (could it be some lingering New Yawk accent? Nah, fuhgeddaboutit!). But if we really want to get down to it, my people came from Africa – and so did yours, if the fossil and genetic records we have through science are to be believed (and I believe them). For those of you whose world views include an acceptance of genetic and evolutionary science, this is a terrific, fascinating, readable

book about what the newly mapped human genome, and other kinds of evidence, tell us about the migratory patterns of the human species and human origins. I find it a terrific and helpful way to understand how much we are all, literally, much more alike than we are different, and how human “races” are in fact cultural fictions and not genuine realities. I highly recommend this book to those of you who have an interest in these areas.

FILM: Take Your Pick . . .

Regular readers will have noticed that, in the two most recent issues, I had recommended movies I had not yet seen – an odd thing to do. Those moves were “Winged Migration,” a visual masterpiece that follows migrating birds through the seasons, and “Finding Nemo,” an animated Pixar Studios release that’s fun for adults and kids alike. The good news is that I have now seen both movies and can still just as happily recommend them, though “Winged Migration” does not appear in very many theaters. The bad news is that I have not seen anything else, and nothing else in the theaters these days has me very interested. I see there’s been a remake of the old Alan Arkin, Peter Falk comedy “The In-Laws” from some 200 or so years ago, and I remember having a great time with that silly, fun film when it came out, though I was just a kid. Most people may not remember it, and the remake with Albert Brooks and Michael Douglas does not interest me a whole lot, but if you’re hard up for a rental and want to see something funny (if a little dated), see if you can find the original. Be warned, though: I saw it when I was maybe ten years old – I’m not sure how well it would hold up to an adult viewing today, though both my parents liked it at the time (a feat in an of itself – they’re married 43 years this month, despite differing tastes in many things, including movies!). In the end, though, I have no real movie recommendations for you this month – maybe it’s time for a vacation and a summer novel instead.

4. CHUCKLES

Speaking of my Italian American childhood friends, I had the pleasure of seeing my best friend from junior high and high school as he visited Washington, D. C. with his family this past week. I joined him, his wife and his four children for dinner the other night, and his eldest (a ten year old), told the following joke:

A duck walks into a bar and says to the bartender, “Got any grapes?” The

bartender says, "No, this is a bar, we don't have grapes," and the duck leaves.

The next day, the duck comes back to the bar and asks the bartender, "Got any grapes?" and the bartender replies, "No, I told you yesterday, we don't have grapes. Now get on out of here!" and so the duck leaves.

The next day the duck comes back again and asks the bartender, "Got any grapes?" and the bartender gets really mad and says, "No! We don't have grapes, and if you ask me that one more time, I'm going to nail your beak to the bar!" and so the duck leaves.

But the next day the duck comes back. He walks up the bar and says to the bartender, "Got any nails?" The bartender says, "No," and so the duck says, "Good! Got any grapes?"

(Okay, okay, maybe you had to be there. After all, the kid was just ten years old! Maybe you'll like this next one a little better . . .)

A guy had told all of his friends about the great steak he'd eaten downtown the day before. A group of them decided to head down and see if was really as large and delicious as he was making it out to be.

The group was seated in the back of the restaurant. After looking over the menu, they ordered and waited, hungrily, for their large, delicious pieces of gigantic steaks.

To their collective disappointment, the waiter brought out some of the smallest steaks they'd ever seen.

"Now see here," the very embarrassed guy said to the waiter. "Yesterday when I came down here you served me a BIG, juicy, steak. Today, though, when I have my friends invited, you serve small miniature steaks! What is the meaning of this?"

"Yes, sir," replied the waiter, "yesterday you were sitting by the window."

5. HOW TO MAKE A REFERRAL

The majority of you subscribers found this e-Newsletter through the Schuler Solutions web site, and have not been clients, though clients certainly do subscribe to "What's Up, Doc?"

Aside from clients, though, you subscribers are the people out there who “know” me and my work the best, and so you are in the best position to let others know about who I am and what I do, if you feel so inclined. If you’re willing, here’s what you can do:

GET MY NAME TO YOUR COMPANY’S HUMAN RESOURCE DIRECTOR

Tell him or her that you subscribe to my e-Newsletter and that I provide seminars to organizations, and that I might be a valuable resource for them to explore.

GET MY NAME TO YOUR CEO, COO OR OTHER SENIOR EXECUTIVE

My typical buyer for consulting services is often not the HR department but some senior executive who faces the need to reorganize operations or perhaps manage an acquisition. Even if your senior executive has no immediate need for my company’s services, he or she may appreciate having the contact information, just in case.

GET MY NAME TO YOUR ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT OR MEETING PLANNER

I don’t just provide consulting services – I provide entertaining, content rich presentations for conferences, either as a keynote presenter or as a breakout session presenter. Many or most of you belong to professional associations, and meeting planners are always looking for good presenters. Getting my name to your association presidents or to meeting planners will help them find good resources that they know will connect with their members. And you might not have to snooze through your next conference!

GET MY NAME TO YOUR COMPANY’S MEETING OR CONFERENCE PLANNER

Ditto the above. Corporations have meetings and conferences, on national and regional levels, throughout the year, and meeting planners need good content that will be relevant to organization members’ needs. Get my name to your company’s meeting or conference planner and maybe our paths may cross at your next off-site event!

GET MY NAME TO ANY MANAGER OR EXECUTIVE WHO WOULD LIKE MORE EXECUTIVE EDUCATION, BUT WHO LACKS THE TIME TO PURSUE IT

One friend and fellow Wharton alumnus said to me recently that he knows a lot of people who could benefit from my help, but he feels that recommending me would amount to a criticism of someone else! I understand his dilemma, though my coaching services really amount to a novel way to obtain executive education that is personalized, confidential

and convenient – no one needs to take time off from work, leave town or attend a special university program. I would call my “Personalized Executive Coaching (PEC)” work “Personalized Executive Education,” but the acronym is a little problematic . . . If you or someone you know is in a position to lead an organization or part of it, and would like to learn his or her options for getting better at what they do (learning in a few weeks what they might otherwise take years to learn or understand), then give them my name, and we can see together if I have a plan and program that might meet their needs.

THANK YOU!!

Your referrals really make a difference, both for me and my business, and for the people who take advantage of Schuler Solutions’ services. Thanks also to so many of you who wrote back to tell me how much they liked last month’s inclusion of the “Ten Rules for Working and Living,” which makes a terrific and popular subject for any general audience presentations I make at conferences. By the way, I still have some of those special-offer, wallet sized reminder cards of the “Ten Rules” available to you – up to ten per person. Just click [here](#) and include your mailing address to get yours.

6. ABOUT DR. SCHULER

A. J. Schuler, Psy. D., an expert on leadership and organizational change, provides consulting services, keynote presentations and seminars for clients companies. His trademark is highly personalized service that leads to measurable increases in productivity, profit and growth.

Dr. Schuler, President of Schuler Solutions, Inc., has served diverse organizations in the private and public sectors, including The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, Sony Development, Nomura Securities and the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

A graduate of the Wharton School of Business, Dr. Schuler has successfully led the profitable growth of a dynamic, international consulting firm while serving as Operations Director, and has successfully coached over five hundred CEO’s and corporate executives.

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“Make each day your masterpiece.” -- John Wooden

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