

THE ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW PROCESS

Or

FROM CREAM FILLED DONUTS TO DOLLARS¹

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Jim and Harry had known each other for several years. They met as board members for the library. The Library Board met on Saturday morning and this Saturday Harry and Jim decided to meet at a local gourmet coffee shop to get some coffee and donuts and read the paper before the meeting.

Jim was the younger of the two and was fit and athletic. He had taken over his fathers insurance business and the company had grown steadily over the past two years. Harry was five years older than Jim and had some weight around the middle. He had started his own mortgage company and had grown the company into several successful companies. Harry was recognized as a very successful local entrepreneur.

Harry and Jim had been chatting about the weather and the up coming board meeting when Jim said “ Harry you are a successful businessman, do you ever worry that your business isn’t good enough?”

“I mean, the thing is...my business is doing great, we are busy and profitable but I think we could be better but I don’t know what I should do.”

Harry had picked up a donut and considered it and Jim before answering. “Jim, I think every good business person wants to make their company better.”

“The thing is”, said Jim “My managers are reasonably competent, the quality of our products seems to be good and our service levels appear to be adequate, but .”

“mmmmm...” Harry said chomping down on a cream filled donut.

Jim wasn’t sure whether Harry was commenting on the donut or his uncertainty.

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“I know our customers like our work” Jim continued “ and I am fairly confident that my employees like working for the company, but to be honest, I have never sat down and talked to either of them”

“Frankly” Jim said as he sipped some of his coffee “ We are so busy that I just haven’t found the time.”

“uhaaaa”....acknowledged, Harry, now half way through devouring the donut.

“I have invested in new equipment and we have established procedures but I am just not sure whether people are as productive as they could be.”

“I see” managed Harry, as he eyed another donut.

“I don’t really know whether our staff are trained as well as they need to be.”

“That’s interesting,” said Harry wiping crumbs from his shirt, “Could you pass me that pink donut.”

“And, another thing” continued Jim as he passed the pink donut to Harry, “Sometimes I think I am the only one who understands where we are trying to get.”

“What about your managers, Jim?” said Harry, while inspecting the pink donut.
“Shouldn’t they be helping you with the answers to these questions?”

“That’s certainly part of it Harry, replied Jim. “They should be, but they are so busy and when I talk to them about our future and our performance they just don’t say much.”

Harry paused for a moment and looked at his donut and then at Jim.

“Jim, sometimes I believe companies are like donuts...mmm...yes...said Harry,
“companies are like cream filled donuts to be exact.”

Jim glanced at Harry with a quizzical look and tried not to laugh.

“Harry, if we weren’t friends, I’d say that you’ve had a few too many donuts.”

“Well, think of it this way, Jim”, replied Harry. “You see this donut?”

Jim tried to look at the donut like it held the answers to his questions.

“It looks good on the outside doesn’t it? But it’s what’s going on inside the donut that’s important to me. Just looking at it, you can’t tell.” said Harry with the air of an eastern mystic.

“In fact, I don’t really have an opinion about a crème donut until I have taken several bites and worked my way into the center and tasted the crème.”

Harry took another bite and then turned the donut to face Jim. “By the time I reach the heart of the donut, I will have learned about its freshness, consistency, flavor, crispness, and most importantly, what is at the center.”

“I don’t exactly follow, Harry, but it does look like you know your donuts” said Jim looking at Harry’s middle and not the donut.

Harry squirmed in his seat and adjusted his shirt, but then said, “Bear with me, Jim. Your company, is a lot like this donut. It is made of different parts that all have to come together.”

Harry again looked at the half eaten donut.

“For the donut to be great all the parts have to be great, the cake, the frosting, the freshness, consistency, flavor, and the crispness they all have to work together. And, for me the most important part is the center, the crème. If any one of the parts is bad or just good, then the whole donut is just good.”

Jim hesitated and then said: “But, Harry, its one thing to make a great donut, but how do you make a great company?”

“Jim, obviously I don’t know what you should do, but I can tell you where we started,” said Jim.

Harry paused to look at the remaining donut. “Jim, what we did was complete an organizational review.

An organizational review” said Jim “what is an organizational review?”

“Let me explain,” said Harry. “An organizational review is a process designed to help you understand and evaluate your business. We completed just such a review three years ago, and it really made a difference.”

Jim put down his coffee and focused on what Harry was saying.

Harry continued: “An organizational review is a process developed by the consulting firm we used, Corporate Behavior Analysts, Ltd. The guys at CBA are psychologists and have worked with business like ours for more than ten years.”

“Sounds interesting”, said Jim, “could you pass me that final donut.”

Harry eyed the donut but made no move to pass it over.

“As they explained it, the organizational review helps owners and companies who are seeking information about the major issues and concerns facing their operations.

“The consultants at CBA, gathered information about how our company was performing from a number of sources including executives, managers, customers, and, perhaps most importantly, the people who are doing the work of the company.

“They also analyze workflow, study the internal environment, look at financial and operational data, and study the culture of the company.”

“In our case, the organizational review was quite comprehensive and enabled me to examine my company from several perspectives.

Harry picked up the last donut and spun it around his finger. “I learned things I never would have learned otherwise.”

“How is that?” said Jim.

“Well, the process included confidential interviews” said Harry.

“The employees who were interviewed, including managers, were encouraged to be frank and honest about how they felt about the company. They were told that their opinions would be held anonymous and that their names or direct quotes would not be used in any reporting.”

Jim looked puzzled for a moment and then took the donut from Harry’s hand.

“I have a question, Harry,” said Jim. “I may not like this donut, but that doesn’t necessarily mean that it is not a good one! After all, every company has employees who are dissatisfied but that doesn’t mean you have a bad company”

“That’s exactly right,” said Harry, “and that is what makes the organizational review process so valuable and unique.”

“How so?” said Jim.

“The opinions, observations and ideas of all the employees interviewed by the consultants are summarized, but the review focuses on the major view without ignoring any pockets of discontent” Harry replied and then added, “Are you going to eat that donut or just look at it?”

“Well, Harry,” replied Jim with a slight smile, “I think I would like to examine it more carefully, you know, look at and understand its components, get to its center.”

“It sounds like you are interested in the organizational review process, Jim.”

“Well, I would like to know more,” said Jim, “what did you do after your review?”

Harry went on: “CBA presented us with a report that summarized their observations and issues derived from the interviews. The report then put forth a set of recommendations.

In our case, the report looked at overall direction and focus, customer service, market planning, communications, management capability, management processes, staff capability, teamwork, morale, culture, and internal systems and workflow.

The CBA consultants met with the executive staff and me to review the final report and help the company develop an action-plan to implement the recommendations made.”

“I never knew donuts could have so many components, Harry,” laughed Jim taking a bite out of the donut!

“I know you are pulling my leg now, Jim, but I think you understand my point”

Harry paused and then looked at his friend

“Sometimes you need to take a fresh look at your company and it may be important for other people to ask some of the important questions.”

“But, Harry aren’t you just paying them to tell you what you already know?” said Jim now several bites into his donut.

“Sure, Jim” said Harry.” “To some extent they told us what we already knew, but CBA put all that information in a framework for action that we didn’t have. In our case they were able to give us an objective business perspective that compared us to other companies that were similar in size. They also told me about issues that I could not get from either my own analysis or from my managers.

“In the end, their recommendation and their involvement in implementing actions based on their recommendation significantly improved our productivity and helped to turn a good donut into a great donut.”

Jim nodded in agreement: “You know, Harry, I do like this donut and I like the idea of an organizational review. Let’s get some more coffee and perhaps you can tell me how to contact Corporate Behavior Analysts, Ltd!”