

SCENARIO ANALYSIS PACKET

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SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

" GOING BACK "

Karen, a wife and mother of two young children in her thirties, is considering going back to work. She has watched as her husband Jack, a busy professor, has taken on more and more work outside of his college to help provide his family a decent quality of life in the city. She sees how tired he is and hears his complaints of how he never has enough time with his family, how he's being pulled in so many different directions, and how he wished things would just slow down.

To ease the situation, Karen has interviewed for, and been offered, a full time job with a company in the suburbs. She intends to put the children into day care and commute back and forth each day to her work. She reckons that with the money her job brings into the home Jack will be able to give up many of his commitments outside of the college. This will give him more time with his family and reduce the pressures and tensions he feels. Overall, the family will be happier - their economic situation will be the same but the burden of producing income will be shared more fairly and Jack will be able to spend more time at home.

1. What assumptions - explicit and implicit - do you think Karen is operating under in this situation ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Karen check by simple research and inquiry ? How could she do this?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Karen would disagree with.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

GREEN ACRES

John and Mary, a college educated couple with a young daughter, have decided to move out of central Los Angeles to a community in the San Fernando Valley. They will both continue to work in the city but have decided that their daughter is being short changed in the quality of her life by being forced to grow up in L.A. Lately, they feel that the pressures of the city have been getting to them. There are more arguments between them, their daughter has begun wetting her bed, and much of their precious leisure time is spent on the expressway at the weekend trying to get out of the city.

More particularly, they feel that bringing their daughter up in a dangerous and dirty city is not good parenting and that sending her to public school will condemn her to an inferior education. To them, the suburban life style they see in the valley is more natural. There is more space, they can live in a house with a yard, their daughter can play in her neighborhood and they can send her to a local private school. They believe this move will improve their quality of life both environmentally and personally. Being away from the pressures of the city will help them build a stable, warm family life.

Assumptions Inventory

1. What assumptions do you think John and Mary are operating under in regard to their decision to relocate ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you have listed, which could John and Mary check by simple research and inquiry ? How could they do this?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think John and Mary would disagree with.

GREEN ACRES ASSUMPTIONS & SCENARIOS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. The San Fernando valley will improve their quality of life. There will be no corresponding pressures in commuting into the city, and there will be neighborhood safety in play.
2. Public schooling is inferior to private schooling
3. Bedwetting is caused by the pressures of the city and so will cease in the valley.
4. Marital arguments are caused by the pressures of the city and so will cease in the valley.

CHECKING

1. Find a couple who have already made the change and interview them about its effect on their, and their daughter's, lives.
2. Sub-let their L.A. apartment and rent a house in the valley for a year - view it as a trial run.
3. Do an economic audit of the costs of the move - factoring in private school fees, gas etc.
4. Arrange to see a counselor to check out the state of the marriage - maybe the arguments are unrelated to city pressures.
5. See a pediatrician / psychologist about the bedwetting - maybe it's unrelated to city pressures.

INTERPRETATIONS

1. The real problem is the lack of communication between John and Mary. The arguments and bedwetting are caused by that, not by city pressures.
2. Moving to the valley will increase the pressure. The commute will be horrendous and leave them tired and frustrated.
3. The pressures of private school education will add to the bedwetting problem. Moreover, their daughter will be educated in a school that does not look like the rest of Southern California.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

"JOB CHANGE"

Stephen, a manager in his forties working for a medium sized corporation in New York, is fed up in his work. Although financially not hurting in his present job, he feels that his employers do not recognize his talents. Most recently, he was insulted when an outside 'expert' - someone Stephen knows personally and for whom he has little regard - was called in to advise on a task where Stephen was proud of his expertise. He has decided to make a change and has applied for a number of jobs, without the knowledge of his current employers.

He has been offered a job in California which is a sideways move, both financially and in terms of his job responsibilities. At the interview he was flattered to find himself highly regarded by the person charged with appointing someone to the new position. Because of the interview experience he has decided to accept the job. He feels that it will be an improvement to work in an environment where his talents will be clearly recognized and rewarded.

Assumptions Inventory

1. What assumptions do you think Stephen is operating under in regard to his position in the organization ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Stephen check by simple research and inquiry ? How could he do this?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Stephen would disagree with.

JOB CHANGE ASSUMPTIONS & ALTERNATIVE SCENARIOS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. The use of an outside expert was a deliberate and studied attempt to show a lack of respect for Stephen's talents and abilities.
2. His interview experience in California will be paralleled in the work conditions of the new job.
3. He is unacknowledged in his present job. People are not noticing his contribution and don't value what he's doing.

CHECKING

1. Go to his department head and find out why the expert was brought in and what the head feels about Stephen's performance.
2. Talk to employees in California about their work lives - make a special effort to contact the person whose position he will be filling and ask him/her about what work was like and why he/she left.
3. Ask for an unpaid leave of absence so he can test out the California job experience without totally committing himself.

INTERPRETATIONS

1. The outside expert was called in for political reasons. It was not possible to use an in-house expert for this evaluation.
2. Stephen is highly regarded in his present job. Without any indication of dissatisfaction on his part his employers assume all is well with him.
3. He is slacking and in a rut and his employers have accurately realized his lack of interest and unwillingness to update his skills and knowledge.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

ORIENTING NEW STAFF

Sue, R.N., is the Orientation Co-ordinator on a unit that is expecting five new hires in the first week of June. This will be the first orientation to occur in 2 years. The new hires will include 1 new ADN grad, 2 RN's with experience from other specialties, and 2 Nursing Assistants. In addition, a commitment was made earlier in the year to sponsor a nurse extern - a baccalaureate nursing student who has completed the third year of matriculation and will have an eight week work experience on the unit.

Sue is excited about having new employees again. However, she believes this will be a challenge for the unit which has historically been very busy in the summer. She has decided to prepare for the new employees arrival by revising the unit's orientation program. A review of evaluations completed by participants in previous orientations has led Sue to think that she can shorten the orientation process by one week. She believes that the shorter orientation period is more focused and that it permits earlier integration of the new staff members into the regular staffing pattern. Feedback from a regulatory visit suggested that the hospital could improve the documentation of employee competency. Therefore Sue has increased the number of validations that are to be documented by the preceptors.

Sue has recruited 5 colleagues to become new preceptors. She knows that preceptors usually need to work with the orientation program a few times before they feel confident about the process and documentation. Consequently, she has concerns about their inexperience. Therefore, in addition to her other preparations Sue has sent a letter to the staffing office to insist that the 5 preceptors be scheduled for the one day workshop "Precepting the Adult Learner" that is to be held in 2 weeks. This workshop has always served successfully as the orientation for new preceptors.

- 1. What assumptions do you think Sue is operating under as she prepares this orientation? List as many as you can.*
- 2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Sue check by simple research and inquiry? How could he do this?*
- 3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Sue would disagree with.*

Developed by Carmen Hall, Mae McWeeny & Stephen Brookfield

ORIENTING NEW STAFF

ASSUMPTIONS & ALTERNATE INTERPRETATIONS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. The orientation program needs redesigning because it's been 2 years since it was last used and much has changed
2. The length of the orientation needs shortening in order to provide more focus & integrate new staff into staffing patterns more quickly
3. The orientation process needs more validations to provide more consistency in staff performance
4. The unit needs more preceptors because of staff turnover & the increased number of staff
5. New preceptors must attend the 1 Day Workshop so that they can be oriented & prepare for preceptor roles & duties
6. Staffing (hours) can be adjusted to accommodate preceptors' attendance at the workshop
7. Workshops are the only way to prepare preceptors
8. There must be a prescribed number of preceptors because a 1:1 ration has always existed in the past
9. New preceptors are not prepared to serve in this role without training

CHECKING

1. Talk to the new preceptors about their past experiences as teachers and preceptors, & their knowledge of adult learning principles and practices
2. Check with other units that have used shorter orientation periods to find out their advantages & disadvantages
3. Check with other units to find out about different ways they have prepared preceptors

4. Talk to staffing or the unit's head nurse to find out her judgment of the preceptors attending the workshop
5. Check with Education Services about alternative resources or events that could be adapted for preceptor preparation
6. Check with Education Services about (i) their recommendations for dealing with the requirements of the regulatory agency, (ii) orienting this # of new staff during the busy summer months, & (iii) preparing preceptors under these conditions.

ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

1. Preceptors can be prepared using other approaches - perhaps by tracking (following around & observing) a preceptor on another unit engaged in this process.
2. The 1 day workshop is a poor method for preparing preceptors because it offers a pre-determined selection of content that doesn't respond to the varied needs and experiences of the individuals. It is also a long day & many participants find it hard to take in all they need to know in such a compressed format.
3. A 1:1 ratio between preceptors and learners is not essential if alternative ways of making assignments and validating skills can be found
4. A shorter orientation period may not be cost effective because the practitioners will not be fully prepared to practice safely and autonomously at the end of the orientation period.
5. An increase in the number of validations does not guarantee immediate application in practice - it is merely an observed simulation that lacks the contextual reality of actual practice
6. An increase in the number of validations creates busy work for the preceptors by requiring them to observe more and more simulations instead of focusing on actual practice
7. An increase in the number of validations is rigid and denies the knowledge and past experience of the orientee who is denied the opportunity to demonstrate her already acquired knowledge and skills in actual practice.

Developed by Carmen Hall, Mae McWeeny & Stephen Brookfield

SCENARIO ANALYSIS EXERCISE

"GIVING FEEDBACK"

Eileen, an instructor in an interpersonal skills workshop, is troubled by the behavior of one of the workshop participants named Geoffrey. She feels that Geoffrey - a manager who is technically competent but seems unable to keep his staff team together for more than 3 months at a time - needs to see himself as his team members see him. Over the three meetings the course has had so far, Eileen notices that Geoffrey lounges in his chair with a bored expression on his face without contributing to any of the discussions. At times he has taken out USA TODAY and read the sports pages while Eileen is speaking. To Eileen, this indicates an arrogance and hostility that will be severely dysfunctional for Geoffrey as he moves about the organization.

Eileen decides to write a memo to Geoffrey pointing out the effect his non-participation is having on the group. In the memo she picks out the specific behaviors of Geoffrey's that bother her (reading the newspaper, looking bored, not bothering to contribute) and points out their negative effect. She asks him to work on reducing these behaviors over the next two meetings and points out that if he can eliminate these tendencies his power and prestige in the organization will grow.

1. What assumptions - explicit and implicit - do you think Eileen is operating under in this situation ? List as many as you can.
2. Of the assumptions you've listed, which ones could Eileen check by simple research and inquiry ? How could she do this ?
3. Give an alternate interpretation of this scenario. A version of what's happening that is consistent with the events described but that you think Eileen would disagree with.

GIVING FEEDBACK ASSUMPTIONS & ALTERNATIVE INTERPRETATIONS

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Geoffrey's behavior is a deliberate and studied attempt to show disrespect to Eileen.
2. The short time Geoffrey's teams stay together is because of his lack of communication skills.
3. Others in the group are bothered by Geoffrey's actions.
4. Geoffrey's actions will harm his organizational career.
5. Eileen has created ample opportunities for people to contribute and Geoffrey has chosen not to avail himself of them.
6. The relevance of the workshop is clear to participants.
7. Eileen has accurately diagnosed the meaning of Geoffrey's behavior.
8. A written memo is a good way to give feedback on non-verbal behavior.

CHECKING

1. Ask group members (using an anonymous & private form of data collection) how they feel the group is going and what problems they see emerging
2. Talk to Geoffrey about how she feels about his behavior and ask him how he feels about the class.
3. Ask Geoffrey's supervisors why his teams stay in place for such a short time
4. Ask Geoffrey's ex-team members why they left and how they felt about their time in his team
5. Study the characteristics of the most successful members of the organization

INTERPRETATIONS

1. Geoffrey's behavior is caused by shyness
2. Eileen has created a cold climate in the group that makes participation difficult.
3. The members of the group have been forced to show up. They have complained to Geoffrey and he has volunteered to show Eileen how stupid the whole course is.
4. Geoffrey is so good at his job that the company uses his team as a training ground. People are moved out after three months so that new people can benefit from his expertise.

Assessing Local Needs

Tracy is a consultant for Educate the World, an international nongovernmental organization based in Washington D.C. that receives most of its funding from the U.S. government. Tracy is sent on a one-week mission to Honduras to conduct a needs assessment in a particular region of the country to prepare for a new Girls' Education project. The funding of the project is contingent on the results of this assessment. Since the region suffers from a high level of absence and drop-out of girls in primary school, her goal is to find out about the obstacles preventing girls from attending school. As part of her needs assessment, she plans to meet with mothers from a rural community.

Tracy spends her first few days in the capital meeting with Ministry of Education officials and reviewing documents. On her fourth day, she goes to the small rural town of Santa Rosita to meet with Esteban Gonzales, the leader of the town's Community Council. Tracy's understanding is that he will convene the focus group of mothers to meet with her on this day. She arrives at the community center and waits thirty minutes before Esteban arrives, becoming increasingly frustrated at the lost time. When Esteban finally appears, Tracy briefly introduces herself and then, wanting to get down to business, asks when she will be meeting with the mothers. Esteban apologizes and explains that he is not able to convene the women on such short notice, but that he could organize the focus group for a week later.

Since Tracy has to leave the country in a few days, she is frustrated by this change in plans. To make the best of the situation, she decides to ask Esteban about his perspective on the barriers preventing girls from attending and remaining in school in Santa Rosita. Esteban says that some families keep their daughters at home to do the housework and take care of their younger siblings; some parents choose to invest in their son's rather than their daughter's education; and some parents are concerned about their daughters walking to school alone. As an afterthought, he mentions that a few parents have complained about male teachers making insinuations towards girls at the school, but he dismisses these rumors as complaints from overprotective mothers. Tracy wants to ask him more questions about this last point, but Esteban is in a hurry to finish the meeting.

Upon returning to her hotel in the capital city, Tracy calls her supervisor at Educate the World and informs her about the meeting. In order to meet with the mothers in Santa Rosita and finish the needs assessment, Tracy asks to stay in Honduras for an extra week. Her supervisor says an extension is not possible because the donor agency needs the assessment within the original timeframe in order to guarantee their project funding. The supervisor says that Esteban's assessment of the problem is probably on target, and that Tracy should just write the report. Tracy brings up Esteban's allusion to male teachers making insinuations towards the girls, and voices her concern about possible sexual abuse in the schools. Her supervisor responds that pursuing this issue would complicate the project too much, and instructs Tracy to focus her energy on writing up the assessment as quickly as possible. Tracy follows the advice of her supervisor, writes up the report on schedule and returns to Washington.

- 1) What assumptions do you think Tracy is operating under in this situation?
- 2) How could Tracy check these assumptions?
- 3) Give an alternative interpretation of this scenario, a version that is consistent with the events described, but with which Tracy would disagree.

Developed by Kristin Rosenkrans & Katherine Shields (Harvard University Graduate School of Education)

Assessing Local Needs

Assumptions and Alternative Interpretations

1. To gather information about local needs, it is best to first consult the Ministry of Education officials and review documents in the city and then go to the communities that will benefit from the project.
2. Esteban does not have a good reason for being late.
3. The time waiting for Esteban is “lost time” – she is not able to use this time to learn useful things about the community.
4. Esteban knew that he was supposed to convene the meeting for that day and time.
5. It is OK to jump in and “get down to business”, or to the point, upon meeting somebody in this cultural.
6. Esteban knows what problems girls in the community face in terms of their education.
7. There is validity to everything that Esteban mentioned to her.
8. By staying another week she will be able to meet with the mothers.
9. She will lose her job if she does not simply follow her supervisors’ advice.
10. It is true that by not getting the report in within the original timeframe could cause them to lose the funding.

Checking the Assumptions

1. Get the assessment of the community of their problems and compare those with the Ministries opinion.
2. Ask Esteban if everything is OK or if he has some situation he must attend to.

3. While she is waiting for Esteban, try to speak with other people or look around in order to learn about the community.
4. Ask Esteban if he knew that he was supposed to convene the meeting for that day.
5. Talk to somebody who knows the culture, or a Honduran that she feels comfortable with, about cultural norms around meeting somebody for the first time in a work context.
6. Ask a mother (even if it is just one) about the problems faced by girls and also about Esteban's involvement in understanding or helping to solve these problems.
7. Same as above.
8. Try to return to the community, or communicate with somebody in the community, a few days before the meeting to make sure the mothers know about the meeting and are planning on attending.
9. Call a colleague who has worked at the Educate the World longer than she is (or who has a good understanding of the workings/politics of the organizations) and check with her/him if it is a valid concern that she could lose her job.
10. Contact someone from the donor organization, or a colleague who may have the information, about the feasibility of turning in the assessment a week later but not losing the funding opportunity.

Alternative Interpretations

1. To truly understand the situation of the community, it would be best to spend about three days there and spend the last day or two in the capital city talking to Ministry Official and checking documents to complement the first-hand information with some second-hand data and interpretation of the situation.
2. Esteban has an urgent situation in his family to attend to which is why he arrived late and must leave early, but he does not feel comfortable telling that to Tracy.
3. Tracy could learn a lot from looking around the community and randomly speaking to people; she may even be able to speak directly to some girls about their problems in attending schools.
4. Esteban never received notification to convene the meeting for that day.
5. Esteban felt offended that Tracy disregarded him as a person and simply directly jumped into work matters such as the meeting and getting information from him, and as a result he was skeptical of her and less willing to collaborate.
6. Esteban has no interest in a project of this type in his community, as he believes that girls should learn to attend to house and family matters, not school.

7. Esteban is very involved in trying to understand and solve the problems that girls face in attending school, and he did not want to mention directly the problem of the male teachers insinuating towards the girls because he felt embarrassed to talk about this or afraid that the male teachers might know he had mentioned this.
8. Esteban has no intention of helping Tracy to speak with the mothers at any point, or the mothers have no intention of attending a meeting at any point, so Tracy staying in the country longer will not help her to obtain better information.
9. Tracy is more concerned with keeping her job than she is about truly trying to work with the community to improve their situation.
10. Tracy is truly concerned about losing the funding and plans to try to influence the project in the implementation stage to address the real issues.

ASSUMPTIONS

1. Jack's workaholicism is due to externally imposed financial pressures (causal)
2. With more money coming in Jack will work less (causal)
3. Karen can take on these responsibilities without jeopardizing her relationships with Jack and the children (causal)
4. Family happiness is linked to Jack's state of mind (paradigmatic/causal)
5. It's Karen's duty to help out fix family problems (prescriptive/paradigmatic)
6. Jack is speaking the truth & voicing a genuine complaint (paradigmatic)
7. This economic situation has one response
8. Day care will benefit the children's emotional health (causal)

CHECKING

1. Do a life history analysis of Jack's behavior, particularly before he was in demand. Did he spend more time at home, take things easier ?
2. Try the job on a part-time or temporary basis. Or just drive out to the job location for a week to see how it feels.
3. Ask Jack to talk about his complaints
4. Do an economic audit of family finances. Is Karen working the only response ? Could things be budgeted differently ?
5. Speak to other couples in the same situation who made the change Karen is contemplating - experiential pioneers - and ask them what happened to them.
6. Hire a Private Detective to follow Jack
7. Go to marriage counselor/family therapy

INTERPRETATIONS

1. Karen wants to take on the role of independent worker outside the family. For some reason she is unwilling to confront Jack, or herself, with her wishes. Jack's situation is a convenient rationalization of her desires.
2. Jack's workaholicism is due to his personality. If Karen works Jack will not slow down. They will have less time together and the time they do spend together will be time when they're both tired.
3. Jack is having an affair.

Assumptions of Power

1. The problem is Karen's to solve (by her getting a job). Her taking a job will reduce familial tension, decrease the pressure Jack feels and will therefore help the situation
2. It's Karen's responsibility to find and fund day care and to find good paying work

Assumptions of Hegemony

1. Money is the cause of the family's stress
2. Money is the solution to the family's problems
3. The only way for this situation to be resolved is for Karen to find a job
4. Karen's job will provide more money, and therefore more family happiness

Why hegemonic? - it's accepted as 'common sense', it works against our interests, it serves the interests of others (producers of goods we consume).