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BrendaCookPaper3
OGL 498 Pro-Seminar II
Assignment #3

Similar to the interviews I conducted as part of OGL: 220 Behavioral Dynamics in November 2013, I used the provided questions and included a question of my own: How could I support you better? I interviewed my husband again because it's been a couple years since the last interview. I was interested to learn more about myself through his eyes. Last time, I interviewed my best friend and mentor, Liz Merritt. For this exercise, I chose to interview a former manager and mentor, Thomas Gray. My objective for these interviews was to learn more about myself (most of which I already know). I am always interested to find out where I can improve. Now, I have always been one to focus on my strengths and to continually improve them and not so much on my weaknesses. However, I want to be aware of my weaknesses so that I can leverage someone who is better at a particular skill than me, or simply improve myself if it's in an area that will contribute to the betterment of me as a human being or contribute to the success of my career.

Interview exercises are fun for me because I enjoy asking people questions whether it is questions to solicit responses about myself or questions to learn more about someone else. It's a great way to build rapport, provoke conversation, establish and improve relationships – asking discovery questions demonstrates a sincere interest in someone else other than yourself. Lord knows, I ask a lot of questions in all aspects of my life. I want to be in the know – I have to be in the know.

I learned that I am a good person, but I truly already knew that about myself. I have great qualities that I am proud of. The need for improvement that stood out to me as a result of this exercise is being confident making decisions, which also came up when I took the Talent Today assessment. The Talent Today assessment indicated while I am high in work ethic, ambition, and determination, and high in leading, taking responsibility, organization; I can benefit by making quicker decisions to be more responsive. To rebut the results, I am quick to respond based on a situation or task at hand. If am able to respond quickly – I'm on it because I am a "doer" by nature. I am a no-nonsense, "get 'er done" type of person. If a decision requires a bit of research or diligence before responding, I will act accordingly, but not leave someone in waiting. I'll at least communicate that I need time to respond with the typical, "I don't know the answer, but I'll get it for you." Specifically, in a professional setting only I think the quicker

decision making result may be more about having the confidence to make a decision and go with it, which is what the interview with Thomas revealed. My lack of decision making confidence is much related to the stigma that I have grown up with in organizational environments -- bad decisions can result in career limiting decisions. I have also had encounters as a middle manager when I have made a decision, but my hands were slapped because the decision was not politically acceptable. While I have learned to "read the system" from a political standpoint, I am cautious and methodical with my decision making process, which I don't believe is a bad thing. Finally, I also know that decision-making in business is an area of improvement, which I talked about as part of Discussion Topic 1 for this course. I am more of an adviser than decision maker. The prompt and response is below.

Reference Prompt #3: Now consider the following questions also posed in the Drucker article. Give each one some thought, and provide a brief response to each. Do I produce results as a decision maker or as an advisor?

My response. I am an adviser not a decision-maker. That's not say I can't make a decision but I enjoy being a consultant, adviser, subject matter expert. I enjoy leading people down the right path but allowing them to make their own decisions. As per the Drucker article, I'd preferred to be the number two person to the top person in an organization. The top spot requires a decision maker and needs someone they can trust in the number two spot as their adviser – that is me!

It is also important to note, this area of weakness does not carry over into my personal life.

Thankfully, there were no surprises at all. I take a great deal of pride in knowing who I am – it took me many years to get here, but knowing my strengths and weaknesses is important to me because I am always striving to be a better person personally and professionally. One of my favorite quotes, "I am better today, than I was yesterday. I strive to be better tomorrow than I am today". I don't believe one can become better until they know thyself. Learning about yourself can sometimes be painful – it's about removing the blinders or the rose colored glasses; especially if you are making the same mistakes over and over again. Personally, my past relationships are a perfect example. I continued to choose the wrong guy and every one of them had an addiction of some kind or another and were emotionally unavailable. Finally, I got smart. I learned from my mistakes when I realized that as a care-giver by nature, I had a tendency to want to fix things including people. I would sacrifice what was important to me with the hope that I would be able to change that person. When I finally became self-aware, I

learned that people do not change because you will them to change; they only makes changes when they are ready. Today, when I serve others (in both personal and professional settings) it is only in a way that makes them self-sufficient, better, or more informed. I get joy from helping people that are motivated to change, to better themselves. In this area, I became a better person and my relationships with people improved drastically.

What is most important to me is to find a way to get my work-life balance back. Or, find a company where I can do meaningful, challenging work as a Director or Manager that aligns with my passion, expertise, and experience and values family, quality relationships, loyalty, honesty, and work life balance. I enjoy my work so much more when I have balance. Over the past year, working a global model from 5AM to 9PM has taken a toll on me. I often miss my early AM workout times and dinner with my husband is usually interrupted with a business call. I've often declined meeting up with friends for happy hour or an evening paddle board during the week because of my work schedule. By the time the weekend arrives, I am exhausted and don't feel like doing much of anything other than relax. I have often heard that it gets lonelier at the top when you climb the corporate ladder because work takes over your life. I don't believe that in order to be successful as an executive -- you have no life; that you have to choose between work and having a life. Part of my problem is I have allowed work to take over and encroach upon my personal time. When you give an inch, people take a mile. If I take a call at 5AM once, then it is assumed I will take other calls at 5AM because I have established a behavior of being available early in the morning. I am responsible for the allocation of my time and I am responsible for adhering to the boundaries I have set between my personal integrity space and my work space. If the company I work for doesn't support what's important to me, then I am at the wrong company. That's not to say, I am not flexible and adaptable or willing to go the extra mile because that is not the case at all. However, in order to get the best of me and for me to be the best at my job, I need to re-establish boundaries and find a true balance between work and life.

INTERVIEW GUIDE SHEET

Interview #: 1

Person Interviewed: Steve Petrillo

Relationship: Spouse

Questions:

1. When you think about me, what are some adjectives or phrases that come to mind that are good descriptions?

Funny, beautiful, hardworking, passionate, loving, caring, helpful, giving. Brenda always gets the job done. You can always count on Brenda. Brenda likes to have fun and is always up for a challenge. She thrives on challenge.

2. What do you consider to be my greatest strengths?

There's many. Brenda is not afraid to try something new or complete a challenging task. Brenda is a great; a supportive wife; equal contributor; partner, teammate, best friend. You always want the best for me and other people. Brenda is an excellent listener, she is engaged and asks questions, she is great at guiding, giving solutions and answers. Brenda puts me first and she enjoys it when I ask for help. She enjoys providing and tending to my needs.

3. What do you consider to be my greatest weaknesses or areas for improvement?

Brenda has a tendency to over-commit; taking on too much which results in her being stressed. Brenda is always trying to prove something to herself, or sometimes has a tendency to want to prove herself to others when she doesn't need to. Brenda is an over-achiever and perfectionist; it is a great quality but can also be a weakness because Brenda will work tirelessly and without rest to get the job done.

4. How can I support you better?

You can't support me better. Brenda, as a wife possess all of the necessary and important qualities and adjectives that I mentioned earlier. You take care of the finances and keep everything in order. You help me with the books for our business. You give me advice and I am better person because of you. Your drive and determination makes me want to do better. Brenda always has my back and is my biggest fan and supporter. She always look out for me from making sure that I don't have holes in my underwear and making an amazing dinner and to making a doctor's appointment and planning our vacations. If I feel something is important, then you think it is equally as important. Brenda always checks in to see if there's anything she can do better.

5. Specific Core Competencies (on a scale of 1 to 10 – 10 being highest):
(Include something like this in your interview guide sheet if you like)

- a. Decision making / problem-solving skills. Rating: 10

Comments: You don't give up. You always achieve the outcome you desire. You think things through before making a decision. On your own, you make great

decisions. You are also a team player. In a group setting, you listen and take in all of the information and input and then, make an informed decision.

- b. Creativity and innovation. Rating: 10

Comments: Brenda is always thinking. Brenda is an idea-generator and is great at looking outside the box and is not close minded. Brenda is an excellent writer and doesn't give herself enough credit in this area.

- c. Sense of humor. Rating: 10

Comments: Growing up she had to have a sense of humor because of all she endured. There was a time during her thirties when she was in bad relationship that stifled her sense of humor and stole her spirit. When we first met - it took Brenda a while to get her spirit back. Now, she's just back to her normal funny self.

- d. Interpersonal skills and teamwork abilities. Rating: 10

Comments: Brenda is a chameleon and can work well autonomously as well as a group setting. In our marriage, you are a great team player. It's never one-sided. Brenda is great at adapting to any situation. You are great with people at all levels, ages, etc. – you do not judge or discriminate. You are approachable, friendly, and supportive and communicate well. You also take an interest in people and what they have to say. You are always asking people about “their story”.

- e. Positive attitude. Rating: 10

Comments: Brenda is the epitome of positivity. Brenda sees the good in everyone and every situation even if it is bad. She always looks for the silver lining and doesn't dwell on the negative. You don't sweat the small stuff.

- f. Intuition. Rating: 8

Comments: Brenda has great intuition; however, she often second guesses it.

- g. Communicate and present ideas (in writing). Rating: 10

Comments: Brenda presents ideas with a positive twist and respectfully is open to other ideas. From a writing standpoint, Brenda presents ideas in a way that tells a story, which makes her a great writer.

- h. Persuasive skills. Rating: 10

Comments: Brenda persuades in a non-threatening and nonjudgmental way to that makes the other person comfortable with going along with her idea or request. Before you know it; you are following her and what she wants.

- i. Drive and motivation. Rating: 9

Comments: Brenda is over-driven at times. Brenda is a competitor against others and within herself, which is part of her motivation and drive to be the best. You want to succeed and failure is not an option in all aspects. The “kid with the most toys

wins”.

- j. Flexibility and adaptability. Rating: 10

Comments: Brenda goes with the flow and is easy going. She is great at seeing both sides of a story. Brenda is great at adapting to changing situations. She is willing to see the “gray” between black and white.

- k. Planning and organization skills. Rating: 10

Comments: Brenda is very organized. She thrives on planning and carrying out and completion of all tasks in all aspects of her life.

- l. Sense of confidence. Rating: 9

Comments: Brenda is an extremely self-confident woman. She portrays her self-confidence in front of people, but when it just her and I; she questions her ability professionally and personally, but I think that is normal. Brenda is not narcissistic or egotistical at all.

6. If you could suggest three things I could do to improve my professional abilities, what would they be?

- a. Complete organizational leadership program at ASU.
- b. You love to learn; I think you would enjoy going on to get your master’s degree as a means for continued development and improvement of professional skills.
- c. You need to continue stretch yourself and ensure you are in challenging roles for job satisfaction but without sacrificing your values of quality relationships, loyalty, and honesty, family and work life balance.

7. If you could suggest three things I could do to increase my sense of fulfillment in my work or personal life, what would they be?

- a. Brenda needs to stay true to her personal integrity space; she allows work to take over her schedule during times that are important to her. She needs more work-life balance.
- b. Brenda feels most fulfilled when she is able to work out in the early mornings from 4:30 6:30 – it gives her energy and confidence, but often times her schedule due to the global nature of her job takes priority.

INTERVIEW GUIDE SHEET

Interview #: 2

Person Interviewed: Thomas Gray

Relationship: Former Manager, Mentor

Questions:

1. When you think about me, what are some adjectives or phrases that come to mind that are good descriptions?

In the nutshell, you are goal-oriented and performance driven. You are a doer, positive, dynamic leadership style, excellent communicator, creative problem solver, customer-oriented, organized.

2. What do you consider to be my greatest strengths?

Tom described me as having a professional presence. Brenda is well organized and always makes herself available without hesitation. She's proactive and has a positive attitude. Brenda has strong internal and external customer focus and does an exceptional job managing customer expectations. She was regularly requested by internal customers for complex, trouble, or at risk projects based on her collaborative and inclusive approach. Brenda exceeded her ability to foster teamwork and diversity. Brenda's employees always praised her management style during skip level reviews; specifically, strong listener, willing to act on feedback, provides escalation support and follows through with commitments. Brenda always took the initiative to improve her function, team, and herself.

3. What do you consider to be my greatest weaknesses or areas for improvement?

Brenda has difficulty making decisions in the face of uncertainty or ambiguity. Brenda needs to have self confidence and trust in her decision making without the need seek advice from others. She needs work to improve her understanding on what decisions she can make and what may need additional approvals or input from others. Brenda is not comfortable with conflict and has a tendency to defer to others to avoid a difficult conversation. Brenda needs to learn to be more direct with her co-workers.

4. How can I (or could have) supported you better?

Tom emphatically said, "No". He stated that I always exceed expectations; going above and beyond; working hard and always having the customer in mind. Tom indicated that I made his job easier because I was strong in project management and was able to effectively direct a team of project managers ensuring they delivered project and business outcomes within scope, cost and schedule commitments. Tom reminded me that I was always receiving positive feedback and kudos from my stakeholders and customers on my professional leadership skills, communication and collaboration, and drive to achieve quality results.

5. Specific Core Competencies (on a scale of 1 to 10 – 10 being highest):
(Include something like this in your interview guide sheet if you like)

- a. Decision making / problem-solving skills. Rating: 7

Comments: Need to be confident in decision-making skills.

- b. Creativity and innovation. Rating: 10

Comments: You were always looking at ways to improve processes, procedures, tools and templates such as the cost tracking tool you developed for the project managers.

- c. Sense of humor. Rating: 9

Comments: You have a positive attitude, energy, and are easy going. The reason for the 9 rating is because you had a tendency to make jokes, make light of a situation or laugh when uncomfortable. This can come across as unprofessional when executives or leaders are present.

- d. Interpersonal skills and teamwork abilities. Rating: 10

Comments: You have great interpersonal skills and teamwork abilities. You are a strong listener and ask good follow-up questions. You take the time to build relationships, you're sincere, transparent, and supportive. You have a collaborative work style that has served you well in your career.

- e. Positive attitude. Rating: 10

Comments: You always have a positive attitude, a smile on your face, and always willing to roll up your sleeves – without hesitation. You are a pleasure to be around and work with.

- f. Intuition. Rating: 8

Comments: You need to get better at “reading the system” from a political standpoint, which will help you as an organizational leader to become more aware and mindful.

- g. Communicate and present ideas (in writing). Rating: 10

Comments: You have excellent communication skills all around both verbal and written. Your messages are clear, concise, and fact based. You are good about leaving out emotion. Whenever you encountered a problem, you always provided a couple solutions. You are also a great at presenting to a larger group and focus on not reading the slides but summarizing your points.

- h. Persuasive skills. Rating: 9

Comments: You are good at looking outside the box and influencing others to ensure your team was able to meet their objectives whether it was motivation by

monetary award, shifting a resources priorities, offering resources for assistance, or emphasizes the benefits of a course of action.

- i. Drive and motivation. Rating: 10

Comments: You are determined and driven to get the job done. You were extremely productive working autonomously but also collaboratively. You have no problem wearing multiple hats and rolling up your sleeves to deliver quality services to the customer ensuring desired critical measures were achieved.

- j. Flexibility and adaptability. Rating: 10

Comments: You are a champion for change because you thrive in a fast-paced environment. You were always proactively contributing to organizational effectiveness, improvement, and development.

- k. Planning and organization skills. Rating: 10

Comments: You have excellent planning and organization as well as keen time management skills.

- l. Sense of confidence. Rating: 9

Comments: You know you are great at what you do without being overly confident. You exude confidence when interacting with people at all levels. I would work on your decision making confidence.

6. If you could suggest three things I could do to improve my professional abilities, what would they be?
- a. Complete your ASU degree.
 - b. Continue learning by taking leadership classes, finding additional mentors, or additional college classes.
 - c. Extend yourself by volunteering in the community or for a non-profit organization supporting a cause that is important to you.
7. If you could suggest three things I could do to increase my sense of fulfillment in my work or personal life, what would they be?
- a. Tom indicated that based on what I told him to find work life balance.