(WORKING PAPER SERIES - 157)

MANAGERIAL TRUST AND EMPOWERMENT:
THE CONDITIONS THAT PRODUCE TRUTH-TELLING
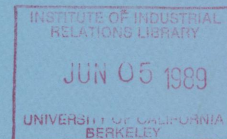
By

Samuel A. Culbert* and John J. McDonough**

*Samuel A. Culbert
Professor
Anderson Graduate School of Management
U.C.L.A.
Los Angeles, California 90024
213/825-7784

**John J. McDonough
Professor
Anderson Graduate School of Management
U.C.L.A.
Los Angeles, California 90024
213/825-1454

DRAFT: September 1988

Managerial Trust And Empowerment:

The Conditions That Produce Truth-Telling

Samuel A. Culbert and John J. McDonough

University of California, Los Angeles

What does truth-telling actually imply? How does one guage the crossover points where interpreting the facts, or not revealing some of the facts, becomes materially less than telling the truth? What is an acceptable deviation from the truth when one feels his or her first obligation is to work towards, or to preserve, some "higher order" end? White House press secretary Larry Speakes (1988) "manufactured" statements that he thought President Reagan should have made and intentionally represented them to the press as the truth. Secretary of State George Shultz (1987) asked us to look leniently on the mistruths and misleading statements Assistant Secretary of State for Latin America Elliot Abrams made in a closed meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in response to questions about the United States' involvement in Nicaragua. Bill McGowan, Chairman and CEO of MCI Communications Corporation, approved his deputies issuing innocuous and obscuring statements about his health when he took medical leave to undergo heart transplant surgury out of concern that speculators might overreact and drive down the price of the MCI stock (Bennett, 1988).

In theory truth-telling at work seems like a very straightforward issue: either someone tells the truth or he or she does not. In practice, however,

truth-telling is seldom simple. It is complex and it quickly takes on many dimensions and nuances. Everyone knows that people provide one another versions of the truth. Everyone knows that most straightforward statements of the truth are usually biased and self-serving. Everyone knows that there are degrees of truth and there are incomplete truths. But even though everyone knows and understands all of this, we find that people who are denied the truth react quite emotionally. They become indignant, moralistic, rageful, and even punitive and revengeful when they discern that either the truth was withheld or some other rendition was intentionally given. This is despite the fact that everyone also knows that all of the so-called truthful statements that others make must be scrutinized and interpreted for underlying meaning and motivation.

This paper examines some key issues that complicate truth-telling at work. It develops a model that can be used 1.) to promote truth-telling, 2.) to comprehend the type of truth-telling that is being promulgated, and 3.) to discern the conditions that are required for a valid discussion and exchange of "truths" from the conditions that lead directly to misrepresentation and deceit. Ultimately, the quality of truth-telling that is being exchanged relates to the level of trust that exists between the people who are transacting it. And ultimately, both the inclination to seek the truth and the willingness to tell the truth are related to the empowerment needs of the people who are interacting. Accordingly, we begin the explication of our truth-telling model by examining issues bearing on the basis of trusting relationships and the empowerment needs that individuals pursue.

Trust

In organizations there is a fundamental premise that relates trusting relationships to the effectiveness of people, to the effectiveness of work units, and to the effectiveness of entire systems. It's a premise in which we have always believed and, with more grey hair and experience, we maintain in our consciousness with increasing strength and conviction. In fact, we have gotten to the point where we now consider trusting relationships to be the most efficient tool known to modern management. We have seen countless instances where the presence of trusting relationships allowed flawed plans and imperfect systems to work out fine. We have also seen countless instances where the lack of trusting relationships caused the best formulated plans to go awry, and the best conceived systems to turn sour.

This is all quite straightforward. Get people to trust you, be worthy of their confidence, and they will believe in your guidance, they will give you the benefit of the doubt, they will cooperate with you, they will follow your lead, and they will stand behind you when your critics become destructively judgmental.

But how often does one find trusting relationships within organizations these days? In our experience the answer is "Not often enough." Instead of finding people involved in real trusting relationships, more often what one finds are "romantics". Some romantics are people with such a strong desire to trust that they can be easily deceived into thinking that others are trustworthy when they are not. Other romantics are people with such a strong

desire to be trusted that they can portray themselves as trustworthy, and look sincere, without producing the behavior that actually makes them trustworthy. People apparently have such a strong desire to form trusting relationships that they readily accept the affectations of trust in place of the real thing.

We have spent substantial time thinking about what makes people trustworthy. And we mean deservedly trustworthy, in contrast to the cosmetics of trust which are so prevalent in management circles these days. In fact, whenever we get a chance, we ask managers "Whom do you trust?" and then inquire into the character and basis of that trust by asking them "Why?"

In response to our questions, three trust topics repeatedly come into focus. First, people talk about trusting someone to do a job competently -- which ultimately translates into "I believe this other person will perform his or her job as I expect it to be performed, in a way that is good for me, without my having to constantly check up on him or her". Many people qualify their response by adding, "Of course, if I later find out that the job was not performed as I had reason to expect or in a way that was not good for me -- what was done either blocks me from being effective or appearing that way to others -- then I am going to have problems trusting that person any longer."

Second, people talk about trusting someone to look out for their interests -- which ultimately implies that a second individual understands enough about the conditions they need established in order to perform competently and to be professionally successful, organizationally secure, financially whole, and emotionally fulfilled and that this second individual is sufficiently committed to making sure that the needs and interests of the first person are

given fair consideration. Of course, unless the first individual feels that a second individual understands his or her goals, resources, sensitivities and interests well enough, then the first person is not going to trust that other person.

Third, people talk about trusting another person to tell them the truth -- which ultimately translates to "I trust you to truthfully answer the questions I ask and to tell me what I need to know, whether or not I think to ask the right question." Of course, if a second individual doesn't comprehend enough about what a first individual needs to know and why he or she needs to hear it straight, then that second individual is going to have major difficulties providing the information that the first person is actually seeking.

Each of these responses has a common core. People want to be seen realistically as they actually are, not as someone else wants them to be, and that they want others to respect their needs and interests, and to look out for them even when they are looking out for their own. Thus, we find that people trust those individuals who make it possible for them to succeed, not just in ways that fit with those other individuals' special interests, but in ways that fit with what they see as their personal inclinations and special talents and capacities.

Empowerment

Unlike the niche-seekers of the past, we find that in today's organizations

almost everyone seeks a position of personal and organizational empowerment. By empowerment we mean that people seek a unique work orientation that 1.) utilizes what they see as their strengths and best abilities; 2.) is based on a definition of the job that they see as both personally meaningful and organizationally relevant; and, 3.) is accurately perceived, respected, and valued by others in their organization. People who feel empowered function with feelings of high energy and spirited commitment because in their minds they are working in personally meaningful ways producing product that is important to the organization. What's more, they believe others are going to see what they are accomplishing and appreciate them for doing so.

In organizations, people trust those whose own ways of behaving and interacting with them leave them feeling empowered. Conversely, people distrust and resent those others whose own ways of seeing things and being effective clash with their ways of performing well and feeling competent. That is, people distrust those whose ways of being empowered appear competitive with their own. For instance, managers who feel secure with tight controls often distrust peers and subordinates whose natural ways of operating produce loose structures and flexible operating plans. Likewise, people who are uncomfortable with conflict often distrust those whose ways of operating and achieving conceptual clarity entails taking adversarial stands.

Given that people want to function with feelings of empowerment, then its easy to identify the specific types of behavior that produce trust. People trust those who inquire into who they are individually, understand what they want to accomplish and who they hope to become, comprehend the special and

unique resources they possess and how they plan to use those resources in getting from where they are today to where they hope to go, and who demonstrate respect for them and their right to seek what they are trying to achieve by telling them the truth. In this context, telling the "truth" involves substantially more than merely providing an honest response to the questions asked. It entails making a response that reflects insight into who the other person is and what that person him or her self wants to know and demonstrates respect for that individual's right to access the information he or she is seeking.

Truth-telling

We find that people take tremendous "liberties" and grant themselves wide latitudes in truth-telling when they don't respect a truth-seeker, when they don't know much about that individual and the needs that underlie the specific questions he or she is asking, or when they fear that telling the truth will place themselves or their projects at risk. This is even the case for people who pride themselves on having the highest integrity.

In thinking about what one has the right to expect from prospective truth-tellers the issues of trust and empowerment stand out. If a trusting relationship is not a possibility — if an individual sees his or her needs for empowerment and those of another person as irreconcilably competitive — then he or she probably expects very little. On the other hand, when a trusting relationship is desired and being sought, the expectations for

receiving the truth can run very high. In business settings this brings up a
very interesting practical issue: Are people who desire trusting
relationships necessarily on the hook to be honest and forthright even when
doing so places them and/or their projects in jeopardy? If your answer to
this question is "No", then under what conditions is someone within his or her
rights to withhold, bend, or fake the truth without severe costs to his or her
credibility or to his or her relationship with you?

Thus, when it comes to building trusting relationships, the big truth-
telling issues become: "Given the concerns and special interests that
underlie my professional pursuits and organizational commitments and the
unique talents, strengths and limitations I possess, and given the
inevitability that this other person's interests, commitments, talents,
limitations, perceptions of situations and judgments regarding them will be
different from mine, then 1. how much of the truth can I expect this person
to tell me? and 2. under what conditions will this individual feel justified
in not telling me the truth?" In our minds these are pragmatic questions, not
necessarily moral ones, and are questions that need answering before a manager
can comprehend the quality of truth-telling and the type of truth-slipping
that he or she can expect to receive.

The Stakes

Telling the truth is something that's easy to do when the personal costs
for doing so are low, when the credibility costs of not telling the truth are
high, or when telling the truth produces a relationship gain such as
establishing oneself as a truth-teller in someone else's eyes. However, when

the costs of telling the truth are high, then telling and volunteering the truth becomes much more difficult to do. Once again keep in mind that we think truth-telling entails substantially more than giving a direct response to a literal interpretation of the question asked.

In work settings, what people see as the costs of telling the truth are too numerous for a finite listing. Some are obvious such as threat to a project and ammunition for the opposition, financial risks, personal security, increases in anxiety, losing one's competitive advantage, loss of control over the course events are taking, and even one's credibility with the other people who are counting on your support in shaping the truth a particular way. Many people have had the experience of hearing one associate tell another, "You weren't crazy enough to tell him that, were you?!" On the other hand, there are many non-obvious idiosyncratic costs to telling the truth which are impossible to comprehend before one knows a great deal about the specific people involved and what they have at stake in a particular situation.

What Is The Truth

In theory there are at least four versions of the truth. First, there is "the truth as I know it". Second, there is "the truth as I decide you need to know it". Third, there is "the truth as you want to hear it". And fourth, there is "the truth as I decide to tell it". In practice these truth versions are intermingled so that, in organizations, no one can ever be sure of which truth version they are receiving or even which one they are giving. In fact, we believe that internal political considerations make it very difficult for anyone to ever be 100% confident that they are telling their most honest

version of the truth. People often report having someone look them square in
the eyes and speak sincerely implying that, to the best of his or her
abilities, he or she is telling them the "truth" while they are convinced that
they are not hearing the "truth" as they need to hear it told.

Is it ever possible for someone to tell you the whole truth and, if that
can't be done, then how are you ever going to hear the truth as you need to
hear it told? These questions are particularly relevant in organizations
where managers take pride in being people of action. Telling the whole truth
is inefficient, it entails too much detail and often requires too much time.
Even if one were so inclined, he or she could not be confident of supplying
all the information that the question-asker was seeking. Unintentionally a
person might overlook stating something essential merely because that fact
plays no significant role in the unique way he or she orients to work events
or him or her self seeks personal and organizational empowerment.

In organizations, most people are reconciled to seeking the "truth" as they
think they need to know it. They do so by asking precise and focused
questions seeking to elicit information which they believe exists. Of course,
by definition, this way of proceeding has built in biases and limitations.
One seldom learns more than what he or she is shrewd enough, in advance of the
answer, to inquire about. And what is learned usually gets arrayed in a
preconceived framework steeped in personal biases and self-interested
distortions.

If asking precise and focused questions isn't a fail safe way to learn the truth, then is there a better way? The only better way is for the potential truth-teller to know enough about you, your work orientation, your professional objectives, and the political realities you face to comprehend the underlying issues your questions are aimed at uncovering and to respect you and your right to know. Only after you provide another individual sufficient insight into your personal orientation and goals does that person have the potential to efficiently truth-tell. If that other person knows very little about you, your orientation, and the needs which underlie your questions, then it is unrealistic to expect his or her answers to be more than statements of the truth as he or she decides you need to know it, given his or her personal and organizational objectives. And since his or her self-interests, personal resources, and organizational interests are all but guaranteed to be different from your own, then the "truth" you receive is not necessarily going to be the truth that you want to hear.

This means that as a truth-seeker it is your responsibility either to ask precisely the right questions or to give a comprehensive personal background statement and trust the so-called "truth-teller" to address the spirit behind your questions. Of course, whether or not you are inclined to reveal enough about your underlying motives to adequately cue a potential truth-teller depends on the level of trust that already exists in your relationship with that person. Thus truth-telling and trust are interactive. Truth-telling produces trust, and trust produces the capacity for truth-telling.

As truth-seeker, the onus is on you to ante up first. If there is a
trusting relationship and you are inclined to provide sufficient background
information, then the other person is in a position to assume substantial
responsibility for providing the version of the truth that corresponds to your
needs in seeking it. Then perspective and information that you never thought
to inquire about can be volunteered without a specific question.

However, we find that most people are involved in work relationships where
trust is more a possibility than a reality and feel too vulnerable divulging
much background information. Consequently they assume the tact of extracting
the truth. Unfortunately, this way of proceeding can prove self-defeating
since the skills for extracting the truth often entail skepticism, cunning,
and asking disarming and pointed questions which often infuses a relationship
with distrust.

Thus, for us, the possibility of others telling you the truth depends on
their having sufficient understanding of your empowerment needs and the
context within which you see yourself operating. It entails their knowing
enough about what you want to understand so that they can accurately judge
what is essential for them to relate. Depending on their relationship with
you, truth-telling should even entail their volunteering information that you
did not ask for merely because the truth-teller understands enough about your
needs to independently comprehend what he or she must tell you. We have seen
too many instances of people feeling betrayed and distrustful after
discovering that some set of undisclosed facts, important to them, were known
by someone whom they thought they could "trust", but who later claimed that he

or she did not comprehend the issue that the questions which were being asked were intended to divulge, to limit truth-telling to a criterion of merely providing an honest answer to the literal question asked.

Lies

Is it ever okay for someone to lie to you? To misrepresent? To intentionally provide you an altered version of the truth that was constructed to be good for them but not so good for you? In our experience there is a type of institutional double-think that strikes people who work in large organizations. People always expect the truth, feel justified in punishing those who do not give it completely, and yet also admit that no one in his or her right mind is going to truthfully tell me this or that and give me that much power at their own expense. In fact we find people openly admitting to thinking this way without perceiving any inconsistency.

Within any organization the ethic is absolute. It is <u>never</u> okay to lie! And because people, especially managers, see themselves under an obligation to tell the truth most are careful to maintain the cosmetics of truth-telling even in moments when they consciously communicate "disinformation" — information that selected others will use to draw erroneous conclusions — in acts that are basically self-serving or protectionistic. This is why, in organizations, people seldom get caught telling a blatant lie. You merely observe them making <u>objective</u> interpretations that you see as excessively self-convenient, omitting <u>non-essential</u> elements of the story that you think are essential, or embroiled in <u>misunderstandings</u>, failing to recognize what the underlying issue or question actually was despite the fact that you think

such a lack of recognition is impossible. And the recipients of this type of
treatment are careful not to say that someone lied. In organizations,
everyone expects the other guy to fight fire with fire; no one expects another
person to automatically knuckle under to his or her power just because he or
she was shrewd enough or quick enough to frame a truth-disclosing question.

Mis-truths

"Mistruths" is the label we have given to the versions of the truth told by
people who, in their own minds, are "truth-tellers" but who find themselves in
situations where their needs for empowerment, and their needs to avoid
disempowerment, allow them to rationalize not telling the "entire" truth.
They might reason, self-conveniently, that you didn't want or need to hear
everything, that there is no good reason to make themselves vulnerable or to
put their projects in jeopardy, or that their withholding the entire truth
will cause you to act in an organizationally constructive way which they
reason is in line with a higher set of values.

In theory it is very difficult to distinguish between a conscious and
deliberate misrepresentation of the facts to accomplish a self-convenient end
-- commonly called a lie -- and versions of the truth that are literally true
but are manipulative in that they aren't sufficient to allow the "truth"-
seeker to conclude as he or she would have concluded with the information
giver's access to the facts -- "mis-truths." Yet in practical day-to-day
organizational dealings we find that every manager makes this distinction.
People with the highest values and strongest personal commitments to integrity

are able to rationalize mis-truths on the grounds of preserving and establishing their personal and organizational empowerment.

We have already mentioned many of the ways that people communicate mis-truths. The three most popular ones are intentionally self-convenient portrayals of the "truth", calculatedly timed disclosure of selected elements of the truth, and the intentional fainting of agreement when the discloser's private sentiments are in opposition. Elsewhere (Culbert & McDonough, 1980) we have termed these three forms of mis-truths "framing", "fragmenting" and "playing-it-both-ways." Each are commonly used mechanisms which everyone who works in an organization, especially middle- and upper-level managers, count on for their daily survival and engage in with little apprehension that they are telling a lie. In organizations, people mislead one another all the time. They do so with few pangs of conscience believing that the success of their unit's projects and their personal image and survival depend on their ability to manipulate others and to manage their relationships with them.

Role Generated Mis-truths

In most organizations there are numerous daily instances of people believing that they are in a situation that requires them not to tell the truth as they know it, or as they know the information-seeker desires to hear it, that get justified on the "higher" grounds of performing one's job well. These are role generated mis-truths. Examples include: the salesman who embellishes the merits of a $129.00 item without divulging that this item will be reduced to $64.50 when the store-wide half price sale begins in two days; the boss who plans to dismiss an employee in three months and who, in order to

avoid that person leaving early, converses with that employee as if his or her job will last forever; and the politician who earnestly advances a position that he or she does not inwardly embrace believing that such a public endorsement is necessary to achieve the voter support he or she needs. Within organizations, people are ever seeking to manage the news in an effort to create the images and impressions that will allow them to perform competently and experience personal and project success. And they often do this feeling fully justified because, in their minds, they are following the institutional prescription for doing their job well and getting ahead.

<u>Unconscious Mis-truths</u>

Only occasionally can someone tell you more of the truth than they themselves consciously realize. And the only way they can do this is by providing sufficient facts to allow you to piece together an enlightened interpretation yourself. Thus, when you engage someone whom you feel has failed to thoroughly enough think through issues on their own to provide you a valid perspective, or someone whom you believe has misconcluded, or someone who, for reasons of personality, is unable to face up to the reality of the facts, you have no alternative but to search for the truth yourself. Often you can do this by asking numerous questions which meticulously piece together the information you are searching out. However, proceeding this way communicates a lack of trust which puts more pressure on the relationship. The point here is that it is much easier to form trusting and truth-telling relationships with people who are self-reflective, conscious, and informed.

On the other hand, you may misperceive a situation by thinking that you are encountering an unconscious mis-truth when in fact the other person is aware of sufficient "truth" and, for one reason or another, has decided to selectively withhold it while giving the impression that he or she is telling everything. In such situations, your questioning and search for the truth and the other person's desire to withhold it produce a chess match of wits.

The Truth-seeker's Obligation

To this point some readers may have gotten the impression that we think that truth-telling is primarily the responsibility either of the truth-teller or the truth-seeker. This is not how we see it. We believe that the relationship between the truth-teller and the truth-seeker produces the version of the truth that is told and the version of the truth that is heard.

We believe that there are internal and external limitations on the brand of truth a potential truth-teller can tell and that a truth-seeker should consider these limitations and compensate for them when listening for the "truth". Learning what those needs and limitations are is the responsibility of the truth-seeker.

We also believe that a truth-teller who seriously desires to tell the truth has a responsibility to learn a great deal about the needs and orientation of the truth-seeker, otherwise the brand of truth he or she tells is likely to be rooted more in his or her needs and orientation than in those of the truth-seeker.

Thus we believe that, in an organization, there is a great deal that the truth-seeker needs to comprehend and superimpose on the information he or she receives to compensate for the truth-teller's personal limitations, professional biases, organizational commitments, and what that person sees as the political realities with which he or she must deal in order to be effective. Conversely, we believe that there is a great deal that a potential truth-teller needs to learn about the personal, professional, and organizational commitments of the so-called truth-seeker before he or she can know which facts are essential to that person. And we believe that both individuals' abilities to understand the background and situational factors underlying the other person's needs for empowerment will directly determine the extent to which the two are able to form a trusting relationship.

The Decision To Tell The Truth

To this point we may have surprised some readers by describing issues that seem to justify an individual sometimes not telling the truth. To the contrary, our viewpoint has always been that personal and organizational effectiveness depends on trusting relationships and that trusting relationships depend on people telling one another the truth. But we also see some practical issues that cause otherwise high integrity people to get taken in by situational factors and to slip telling one another the truth, to get taken in by the words that are spoken and to slip hearing the truth, and, on

both parts, to self-justify their truth-slipping actions. We see people, who don't speak the truth, self-justifying their actions on grounds of their own personal effectiveness and getting the organization's job done; we see people, who aren't able to elicit the truth, not recognizing the practical and personal effectiveness issues faced by the other person and justifying their subsequent indignation on the grounds of what that other person said that misled them.

Our major point has been that truth-telling and truth-interpreting does not reach its potential because so many people who set out to tell and hear the truth get confused by what is actually involved in doing so. They get confused by moral imperatives to tell the truth which mislead them to think that they are telling the truth even when are they slipping it. They get confused by the practical issues entailed in being a success and functioning with empowerment which allow them to put a relativity factor into their telling the truth. And they get confused by the fact that telling the truth and one's life involvements are intertwined and that the "brand" of truth one is telling, or is being told, is impacted by at least three different systems simultaneously. The brand of truth one tells, and the brand of truth one seeks, is impacted by one's organizational and system responsibilities, by one's personal and political needs, and by one's relationships with the people who are seeking to be informed. And we find that most people suspect as much based on the questions they ask themselves when they are a potential truth-teller on the receiving end of a truth-seeker's questions.

The first thing a potential truth-teller thinks of when faced with a question of consequence is "Who wants to know and why is this person asking me?" The second thing is "How will the answer I am inclined to give affect me personally?" and, we would add, "politically?" And the third is "How will the answer I am inclined to give affect my relationship with that person as well as with others who are also important to me?"

The question "Who wants to know and why is this person asking?" bears on what the potential truth-teller sees as the legitimacy of the inquiry being directed towards him or her. The potential truth-teller scrutinizes the organizational reasons for giving a complete answer and addressing not just the question but the spirit behind the question which, incidently, almost always includes the empowerment motives of the truth-seeker. Despite countless and noteworthy examples to the contrary, we find that most people want to take their organizational responsibilities seriously and would like to provide others with the information they request and usually do so when given the organizational effectiveness reasons embedded in the truth-seeker's request. Of course when it comes to telling the truth, one's organizational responsibilities become a double-edged sword. People self-conveniently cite organizational responsibilities to justify giving versions of the truth that mislead.

The question "How does the answer I am inclined to give affect me personally and politically?" relates to an individual's need to function with competence and to succeed on terms that are both personally and

organizationally meaningful. One's perceptions of what is the truth and his or her decisions of how to portray and communicate what he or she sees as the truth are always colored by that individual's needs for self- and organizational empowerment.

In organizations people readily agree on objectives but the resources people have, and the means they must use in order to address those objectives with self- and organizational empowerment, are as different as their thumb prints. People with different ways of being competent see organizational situations differently and vie to get organizational events framed in ways that provide them the required context for their personal success. This, incidentally, is the basis for organizational politics, a topic we have dealt with extensively (Culbert & McDonough, 1985, 1986, 1988). Organizational politics are the conversations and manipulations that take place as people with different self-interests, who see the same organizational events differently, attempt to frame those events consistently with their needs for empowerment and to gain organizational acceptance for their particular framing.

The question "How will the answer I am inclined to give affect my relationship with this person as well as with others who also are important to me?" is both a political and an interpersonally oriented one. While every organizational transaction has an immediate outcome dimension, other, often times more critical, dimensions are also at stake. At stake are an individual's organizational image and credibility with on-lookers as well as his or her enduring relationship with the person asking the questions. In

fact, sometimes others who are invisible to the immediate situation are the most important influences to recognize in understanding the brand of truth the so-called truth-teller decides to give. Most managers eventually comprehend the importance of these other dimensions and give them serious consideration before transacting on even the seemingly simplest and most straight-forward of organizational communications.

In many organizations the interpersonal fabric is quite thick and people actively contemplate the pleasure and meaning they derive from relationships, even with people with whom they have no need to socialize outside of work. Nevertheles, few managers suspend thinking about their image and credibility and the roles others play in their success. They think about how others see them, what others are inclined to do for them, and how they have to treat others to insure that they get what they need. All of these factors become major considerations in how people conduct themselves when seeking and telling the truth.

Conclusion

If, in an organization, there were an absolute obligation to tell the truth, for every individual to have to tell the truth to anyone who asked him or her a question, then people would experience themselves as powerless. They could never count on controlling a situation long enough to operate with empowerment in it. On the other hand, if people were without the standard

expectation that every question they ask would receive a truthful response, then people would also experience themselves as powerless. They could not rationally reason through a situation because at any point some critical "fact" might turn out to be a false one.

In today's organizations, we find that most people manipulate in seeking and telling the truth. They feel they must do so in order to operate with sufficient power to be effective. They put energy into phrasing questions that they hope will force the truth from people who are not necessarily inclined to reveal it to them. They put energy into phrasing answers which shade what they know as the truth in directions that prove personally and organizationally empowering to them.

On the other hand, most people also work hard to build relationships and to develop the conditions that allow them, progressively, to operate with more and more candor. They find out more about the other person's needs for the "truth" and they find out more about the built-in biases and ways of perceiving the world that the other person superimposes on what he or she thinks is the truth.

Thus, we see truth-telling as a process in which <u>both</u> the truth-teller and the truth-seeker have responsibilities. We see the needs of both frustrated as long as situations are structured so that one person's seeking of the truth and the other's telling of it comes at a disadvantage to the empowerment of either. In contrast, relationships that are mutually empowering to the truth-

seeker and the truth-teller build an atmosphere of trust that make absolute statements of the truth -- one's that simultaneously relate to the needs of the seeker and the perceptions of the teller -- more possible.

References

Bennett, Amanda. "When the boss is bedridden". <u>The Wall Street Journal</u>, April 22, 1988, pp 15R-18R.

Culbert, S.A. & McDonough, J.J. "Organizational Alignments, Schisms, and High Integrity Managerial Behavior" in S. Srivastva (Ed.) <u>The Functioning Of Executive Integrity</u>. San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1988.

Culbert, S.A. & McDonough, J.J. "The Politics Of Trust and Organization Empowerment". <u>Public Administration Quarterly</u> 10 (2), 1986, pp 171-189.

Culbert, S.A. & McDonough, J.J. <u>Radical Management: Power, Politics, and The Pursuit of Trust</u>. New York: The Free Press, 1985.

Culbert, S.A. & McDonough, J.J. <u>The Invisible War: Pursuing Self-Interests At Work</u>. New York: John Wiley, 1980.

Shultz, George. Testimony presented to The Select Committee Of The House And Senate Investigating The Iran-Contra Affair. June, 1987.

Speakes, L. <u>Speaking Out</u>. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, pp 135-136, 1988.