

Module 4 Critical Analysis Paper

Module 4 Critical Analysis Paper –
Ethical Action Plan and My Sphere of Influence

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“When I ask myself why this I so, the answer is in the mirror. I’m getting old! Age has robbed me of the energy required to fake it and also of the motivation. I feel less need to try and fool anyone about anything and more need to be here as myself for as much time as I may be granted. The days of when I feel this gift of age are days of great blessing, when I can stand in the world like that jack pine on its rocky point, with the simple integrity that comes from being who I am.” (Palmer, 2004)

Introduction – My Spheres of Influence

The above statement from Parker Palmer from “The third way: Nonviolence in everyday life” (Palmer, 2004) hit me hard as I read it. In the duration of this course, I do not think I have read anything that I agree with more than this statement. I am old (and it happened so, so fast!). I have had a thirty-year professional career at a handful of world class organizations. I have experienced ups in my career, and downs in my career. Through these ups and downs, I have survived. I have climbed the ladder of success and have taken a few steps back down the other side. Will a new ladder come that will allow further career growth, or will this ladder suffice? Can I take this pending Master’s in Organizational Leadership at Gonzaga and help in bigger ways either at my current employer (Clearwater Paper Corporation) or will I see a route to take this experience other places? Will the sunset of my career happen more than fifteen years from now – where I had planned it happening, or am I in it now? Though there are miles of road behind me on my journey, there are many miles ahead of me and in these questions, there is much uncertainty.

There are several key priorities in my life that underly all my past and future decisions. These priorities drive the direction of my career and life choices. My father, John S. Copley MD, passed away in 2010. He and my mother, who is still with us, are the single most important

drivers of who I am today, and what I believe. As a threshold of success, I strive to be the man and leader that my father was. He was a US Marine veteran, serving during the Korean Conflict. He was discharged in 1954, and through his amazing drive, found my fabulous mother, and started his education in Medicine at University of Nebraska – Lincoln. Year after year, he made the hard choices that generated both his degree in Medicine (1961) and a great little family of two twin girls and one boy. Soon after, another set of twins (me and my brother James) joined the family, finally capped off with a fourth boy, Daniel. Church and family were always top priorities for my Dad as he sacrificed the high paying medical doctor positions for lower paid positions that allowed him to be home with his family. His and my mother's present leadership and education of all six of us kids resulted in six society contributing adults. I miss my Dad every day, and I am thankful that my mother Mary is still with us. She continues the mantle of wise elder in our family, always willing to lend an ear and a word of advice for any given person. They were and are great influencers of my ethical journey that both has been and will be. My extended family is one of my top priorities.

It was the fall of 1984. I was in my freshman year at Northern Arizona University and I was a member of the NAU Marching Band. I fell for my wife. I literally fell for her. I had a marching band injury that required her and her car to deliver me to a dentist for reconstruction surgery. When she started driving me there, we were friends. When we finished, we were official. From those days to today, we have been together, united in mission and focus, and we have successfully raised three outstanding boys, and one amazing daughter. In the storms of life, including near death of my daughter as an infant to a kidney transplant from my eldest son to my beautiful daughter, we have managed well. Underlying our day to day, year to year life has been a focused faith in Jesus Christ as our savior and ever-present rock. My kids are now 26 years of

age down to 18 years old, and with the birth of my first grandson in January 2018, we entered grandparenthood. I am engaged in daily leadership with my wife in the continuing guidance and financial support of these adults as they find their footings in life. My immediate family is another one of my top priorities in the remaining years of my life.

My career has enabled me to take care of the preceding two priorities. From my first professional position as a financial analyst at a large defense contractor, to the position of Director of Finance at Kaiser Aluminum, to my current position as Senior Financial Planner for Clearwater Paper Corporation, they have enabled me to grow personally, to become more knowledgeable within my profession, to grow as a leader, and to engage with my community. I have applied the foundations of my ethical beliefs to my positions, and at each one, have become more knowledgeable of ethics in the workplace. From the 1990's when I launched my career in accounting / finance to today, the marketplace has changed dramatically, and so have the rules to engage in that marketplace. "Going to jail" was never a serious possibility for a finance person if mistakes are made. Today, that is always a consideration. Ethics and ethical communication are now a daily part of our professional lives, and daily interactions with each other are always of ethical considerations. It is a new day from the days I first started. Ensuring my lasting impact of our company, ethically, strategically, and tactically, is of utmost importance to me and my career at Clearwater Paper Corporation is therefore another of my top priorities.

The potential opportunities that participation and graduation from this Gonzaga School of Leadership Studies program will allow for me are the final top priorities in my ethical and career journey. Although certainly a benefit to me personally, it is unclear what career benefit or mobility I will achieve through this program. As a former director level employee now not at that level, my objective will be to grow my career back to that level or higher. The first priority will

be engaging with my current employer on my ethical journey, but a secondary priority for me is developing the opportunities outside of the current employer. It is unclear what those opportunities will be.

Core Beliefs and Their Origins

As discussed earlier, the foundation of my core beliefs is my faith in Christ, my relationship with the church and its people, and my upbringing by my parents and with my siblings. I have lived my life through the teachings of the bible and through the “Golden Rule”. I have learned, and the expectation is that I treat people as I would like to be treated. My core beliefs have not changed through years, they remain a constant in my life. Further education in ethics and their application to my life as been through education at current and former employers, and through the two leadership programs I have graduated from (Leadership Spokane and Gonzaga Emerging Leaders Program).

I am no longer in a role that is defined as a leadership position. But that does not mean that I can no longer influence the leadership of Clearwater Paper. I still have the full capacity to lead my fellow employees through our interactions and daily collaboration. I am approachable, friendly, consistent, and not too serious. I can laugh at myself and with others, and I take things “with a grain of salt” as my Dad used to say. I have my priorities established and do not seek or demand unreasonable actions from others. I have a collaborative spirit, and honor the knowledge, skills, and standpoints of others. I appreciate the value of cross-cultural interaction, and I understand the benefits that other viewpoints add to a decision. Leadership for me is not about myself, but more about the others under my leadership. I always strive, through my leadership, to make the next successful person, the next key leader in our (or somebody else’s) organization. This is who I am as an ethical leader.

My Spheres of Influence – How They Operate

Family and Extended Family

One of my highest priority ethical leadership opportunities is to be a leader within both my immediate and extended family. Within my network of family members, we have both formal and explicit values and codes. The most important of these codes is commitment to each other. We are a tightly bonded group of individuals, who commit to being there for one another, unconditionally. We listen and share, communicating often with each other, some more than others, but nobody ever excluded. We come together for advice, and we respectfully give it and take it depending on need. We are collaborative, with no overbearing individuals. We care for each other deeply and especially for the patriarch and matriarch of the family. “Our discourse never involves efforts to persuade or dissuade one another. Instead, each person speaks from his or her center to the center of the circle, where our exploration can take us to a deeper level as we hold the tension involved in weaving a “tapestry of truth”. (Palmer, 2009). Through these codes, and our circle, we are honoring our ancestors / departed loved ones, and holding close the tight knit family bonds through generations.

Inside this tightly knit family are informal codes and cultures. In our younger generations, we have seen testing of the boundaries of acceptability. Across each family, we have seen youth venture into unnerving territory, be it experimenting with drugs, or other out of boundary personal behavior. We have throughout these pushing of the boundaries relied on the formal structures of unconditional love and acceptance. For me personally, this has been rewarding because through this unconditional love, acceptance, and guidance, we have seen one of our youth come through turmoil. It has been rewarding to see the strength of this family bond encourage its member during both good times and bad. The formal and informal codes are not aligned, and this can

cause tension in the family. As seen in my example, this misalignment caused discomfort, but in the end got us to a place of alignment. In *Understanding the Diversity of Moral Beliefs*, it is said “Disagreement and difference are standard features of the moral landscape and can be sources of moral strength.” (Hinman, 2012) Disagreement or discomfort, and then the emerging alignment will make all of us stronger, in preparation for our next out of alignment period.

When I think about where I am in life, and the impact I can have, along with my siblings, in the care of and guidance of the younger generation, I am excited about the possibility. As each young one emerges to adulthood, and creates a family unit for themselves, our leadership and guidance of the family through dialog and experience will continue to make us stronger. Eventually, like has happened generation after generation, the young will take over for the old, and the old will depart as God wills. The teachings laid behind us, both formal and informal, will guide the generations and they each learn to manage life. Our example in our family for generations to come is the end goal. Reliance on each other, always, with unconditional love and assistance will be a legacy of our present leadership. It is encouraging to think about that reward.

Current and Future Employer

Secondary to my family is the continued development of my career. Although I have taken a step back from day to day leadership having accepted a lower level position at Clearwater Paper, I aspire to be back in a leadership position within the next two years. If this advancement does not happen at Clearwater Paper, then it will become clear to me that I will need to move elsewhere. Since I am where I am now, I will explore the formal and informal culture, and stakeholders there. I will address the aspects of a new employer only minimally, since I am not there yet.

The formal values and codes at Clearwater Paper Corporation are clear to every employee. We will operate the business with upmost integrity and transparency, with the highest ethical code. As a finance employee, we are expected to comply to all established rules for a publicly traded company (Sarbanes Oxley, GAAP and other standard regulations), and we sign off on that expectation in our annual code of conduct training. We are expected to perform at our highest level and achieve established goals and objectives and we strive to make our business better each day. I started this position on May 21st of 2018, and from that day to this day, I have been instructed on the formal code of conduct, values, and expectations. They are very clear to every employee in the organization.

Clearwater Paper has been through a troublesome two years, with the loss of a major customer. The company has had to respond to this loss and this has impacted individuals across the organization. From my first day, it was clear these impacts have negatively impacted the morale of the organization, and informal values and codes have appeared. Most notably to me was relaxed time and attendance of the salaried employees. As discussed in my Module 3 paper, these informal codes have spread across the organization, and although most employees still are performance oriented, their dedication level has been reduced. Questioning why this was the case I discussed this aspect of Clearwater employee life with a long-term employee. His statement back was “People are staying a lot later than they used to stay! When the reductions were first announced, people would leave after only four hours!”. Quarter after quarter, the business seems to be recovering from this loss, and as time rolls on, I expect the level of dedication to return.

Clearwater Paper is structurally aligned around two division. These division are distinct, and the business is very siloed. Another informal code or culture is the lack of interaction between these two divisions. There is a lack of cross-cultural (divisional) collaboration. This creates an

“us vs. them” mentality and does not help to advance the cause of the corporation. Soon, due to office moves, that siloed organization will get worse as the business is aligning the two divisions to be physically located with only themselves. This physical separation will not help the cultural separation and can impact the success of the entire corporation. These formal and informal cultures and codes are not aligned. Attention from leadership will be necessary to analyze the misalignment and alleviate the divergent codes and values. If this is not done, the good people will leave for better opportunities, and the success of Clearwater Paper will be in jeopardy.

Our primary stakeholder at Clearwater Paper is our shareholders. “Organizations today are expected to be profitable, efficient, technologically sophisticated, provide meaningful work, good wages, and maintain a good social and environmental record.” (Seeger, 1997) The formal codes and values protect our shareholder’s investment in us, attempts to protect their requirements, and ultimately protects the long-term viability of the company. The company is monitored closely by them, and quarterly conference calls show the alignment or not. The informal values and codes (those that I have listed) need to be resolved, but if the company is creating the return for the stakeholders, they may not be directly impacted. Those are of concern to leadership of Clearwater as resolution of them will only improve the working environment and employee participation in the shareholder results

The complexity of this organization is a challenge to me personally because I do not have any direct ability in my current position to impact the direction of the company. Demonstrated the other day in a meeting with my bosses’ boss when he said, “I’m open to suggestions on how we do this, but not really”. It was an astonishing statement to me from a leader because I have always sought to leverage the skills of people that work for me who are better than me. It was clear in this example that the abilities and values of others are not in his consideration. “Believe

that you can have an impact. Otherwise, you are probably not going to carry through when obstacles surface. Develop your skills so that you can better put your moral choices into action and master the context in which you operate.” (Crossan, 2013). What I can do in this role is be consistent and perform to the best of my ability – and believe that I can! Demonstrate my commitment to the business and leadership (in my single contributor role) to obtain the next promotional advancement. Then, I will go from there, applying what I have learned in my previous positions and education to protect Clearwater Paper for the next generation of leadership. If it does not happen at Clearwater, I will make it happen elsewhere.

Below is an action plan table for top priority circles of influence:

Action	Immediate Family	Extended Family	Current Employer	Future Employer
Roles & Responsibilities	Unconditional Love Respect Honor Listen	Unconditional Love Respect Honor Listen	Commitment Ethical Behavior Development Learning Patience	Be ever aware of opportunities
Timeline	Always – communication will always be key, both formal and informal. Never Ending – communication and guidance will be on-going – through generations if successful	Always – communication will always be key, both formal and informal. Never Ending – communication and guidance will be on-going – through generations if successful	1 to 2 years to dedicate myself to my roles & responsibilities. Determine path forward from 2 years out for opportunities outside if necessary for growth.	3-15 years – Chart path of greatest leadership impact – whether at current employer or future to be employer
Resources	Dedicated Time Phones Self-Focus Physical Presence	Dedicated Time Phones Self-Focus Physical Presence	Time MA ORGL	Time MA ORGL
Short-Term & Long-Term Indicators and Outcomes	Occurrence of Communication – both physical and verbal. Personal Satisfaction Member Satisfaction	Occurrence of Communication – both physical and verbal. Personal Satisfaction Member Satisfaction	Positional – Demonstrated Career Growth Personal Satisfaction	Positional – Demonstrated Career Growth Personal Satisfaction

Conclusion – Impact of Ethical Action Plan

This course has been eye opening for me. Most of my story has been written already. I am at the age with there is most likely less in front of me than behind. I have had a nearly thirty year career in the finance field, and have worked for a handful of world class organizations. My career came to a screeching turn earlier this year in a turn that was not in my control. My reaction was to embrace the turn and I leveraged my professional connections and quickly was blessed with a new position. This new position at Clearwater Paper is a single contributor position, with no direct leadership requirements. It is a step down into a cubicle environment, and that has been a hard pill for me to swallow. I have had to humble myself to be satisfied with the position while I complete this master's in organizational leadership degree. Then we will see what the future holds.

Over the next two years, I will strive to grow my position at Clearwater Paper, and if that does not come about, then I will move to where my talents lead me. Quoting Parker Palmer in the quote that opened this paper, I am too old to fake it and do not have the energy to do so. I have a strong desire to be authentic to my true-self, to be the man and leader that my past years have brought me to. I will celebrate my family, which is of utmost importance to me, and will lead them with unconditional love that I wrote about above. We will see what the future holds, and where my story will be written over the next fifteen years.

Thank you for the opportunity to learn and be exposed to standpoints that only have made me better. “When education stops, moral development stops.” (Crossan, 2013) and “Pursuing a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree can promote your moral development.” (Crossan, 2013) are quotes that struck me (highlighted and emphasized) in the early in this course reading material. I am glad to be taking part of this Gonzaga University experience,

where my moral development continues – even at 53. As with every course here at Gonzaga University, it has been a valuable time spent for me.

References:

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