

## Anderson & Rust

### Spiral Dynamics Case Study

The theory of Spiral Dynamics (*which describes the evolution of culture / consciousness through levels that are color coded by Beige, Purple, Red, Blue, Orange, Green and Turquoise*) was used to understand the communications challenges between European parent organizations and their U.S. affiliate. In the language of Spiral Dynamics, one culture is not better than another, but certain cultures/consciousness are better able to handle certain challenges. More specifically, effectively handling the complex challenge of managing a global organization requires a “Green” level of consciousness such that collaboration happens easily, there is flexibility with thought-processes, and shared goals are created that facilitate conflict resolution and the leveraging of diverse assets. The evolution to Green is the automatic result of A&R's **Etcetera! Goal Acceleration** program.

- The European Parents, in three cases (Swiss/German/French), were a “Blue” culture as evidenced by a focus on broader “big picture” issues, processes, clear lines of authority, data, procedures, guidelines, and doing what’s right, as they perceive it.
- The U.S. organization in all three cases were an "Orange" culture, as evidenced by a focus on achieving results autonomously (meaning a competitive attitude), creativity, and focusing on the size / importance of the U.S. marketplace as an overwhelmingly important influence.
- The conflict or sandpapering between these two cultures unfolded as follows:
  - Orange is focused on results – and believes they know how to achieve the result. Orange wants to assert their personal autonomy and feels they should be trusted and left alone to just do it.
  - Blue has the bigger picture / context that Orange doesn’t understand (and doesn’t know they don’t understand). Blue believes that since they know what is right, without their involvement and ability to control the process, things will go array. In addition, since there is a process in place and a line of authority that works for them (decisions are made at the top and people gladly accept authoritarianism for the common good), straying from this would not be the right thing to do. Evidence and data is collected to support these positions.
  - When communication takes place, and agreements are made, Orange focuses on the result and filters out information that is relationship or process oriented (information that they perceive is not relevant to achieving their result). Blue is focused on discipline, order and what is needed to have the process work properly. Blue is typically not always explicit about thought-processes since this is implicit to their understanding. This can lead to misunderstanding about what information is required by whom.
  - As Blue demands proof that processes are followed and the big picture considered, Orange feels “crowded” and disrespected in being told what to do as if they are not competent; they are concerned about being “controlled,” and further distance is created in the relationship.
  - When Blue doesn’t get the information they need to feel that the process being followed is properly controlled, and they are not consulted in the way they would like about the big picture; they interpret this as Orange going their own way (implicitly falling back on what is comfortable for Orange, which is being independent), and they impose even more explicit rules and processes in an attempt to control this and get back on a proven track, not seeing that rules / process is similarly implicit behavior for Blue.
  - Orange feels that there are inappropriate boundary violations, with Blue imposing processes that were not agreed to and that adversely affect them and their ability

## Anderson & Rust

to achieve results, but does not know how to manage these challenges effectively and feels that these relationship challenges are a distraction from pursuing their goals.

- Sandpapering along these lines continues creating greater and greater distance in relationships. While issues can be worked through individually, it takes a great deal of time, resources and stress to do so
  
- A&R's approach to this challenge involved execution of the **Etcetera! Goal Acceleration** through which a number of advanced communication and conflict management skills are elevated through experiential developmental work in the context of a specific goal. Elements include:
  - A shared goal – what's possible for us that can only be achieved by working effectively together, that we both passionately care about, must be discovered through dialogue and articulated in a way that engages both Blue and Orange. As commitment to the goal increases, it initiates the shift to a Green consciousness (a shared goal that we work together to achieve), a shift from individual achievement to group / team oriented goals. A shared goal is not so much a formal goal establishment process or words on paper as it is an alignment of the spirit and passion of individuals, capturing their hopes and wishes.
  - Rules, processes and procedures that help us achieve this goal are set in place; if rules, processes and procedures are seen as making the goal more difficult, they are adjusted such through specific processes such that they are experienced as supportive in the context of the broader goal.
  - Blue begins to recognize that forcing orange into compliance is counterproductive in the context of the bigger goal. Their valuable experience and excellent data to assist in discovering what best will enable the goal to be reached is recognized. Blue learns to stay open to other approaches that may work even better and understand that what they believe is right may not always work best. Blue comes to understand the best / right answer will incorporate multiple perspectives and learns to strengthen relationships, essential to keeping everyone engaged productivity toward the bigger (Green) goal. This represents the emerging Green consciousness.
  - Orange learns to recognize that in order to reach their goals, they need to collaborate with Blue as partners and stay in productive relationship because Blue has important information and a broader perspective that is relevant. Autonomy takes on a different meaning when we are part of a WE, and the WE is key to accomplishing the bigger result. Orange learns to proactively solicit Blue's perspective, while getting better at holding boundaries and delivering feedback. This represents the emerging Green culture.
  - Both Blue and Orange come to understand that through the conflict with one another, they are both actually being supported in moving toward a Green consciousness, which is needed to manage the complexity of a multi-cultured global business. Both come to understand that inherent in the tension is the opportunity to evolve what is needed faster than would be possible separately (without the conflict). A Green consciousness not only makes every result easier to achieve, it is required to effectively operate global organizations as the pace of change continues to evolve. Embedded in the conflict between Blue and Orange, then, is the need for change, which in the end, will facilitate even greater success going forward.