Determining the relationship between management style and culture poses a particular test in modern mass media. Competition and convergence, changes in technologies, evolving situational and motivational influences, demographic workforce changes, organizational goals and politics, as well as group and company structural elements are prompting mid-level editors and managers to think more deeply about their decision-making approach.

Culture, however, poses a unique challenge. Culture – the pattern of basic assumptions that a group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that has worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems (Schein, 1986) – is the other side of the same coin, style being the first side; understanding one without the other can be difficult (Schein 1985). So any study should take careful pains when approaching the style-culture link.

Newspapers seeking an effective approach – one that favors profit-making while simultaneously fostering good human relations – find increasing pressures because newspaper operations are not only labor-intensive, but time-sensitive and time-driven. And yet timing – i.e., synchronization, or the effective choice of time – usually is ignored because media managers either are results-oriented or people-focused. How well newspaper firms cater to demands, however, depends in large degree on timing (Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2002).

Facing the many changes listed above, the U.S. newspaper industry makes an interesting case study in culture and managerial style. Also, the industry’s recent completion of its own cultural analysis – combined with industry leaders’ emphasis on cultural change – make U.S. newspapers’ cultural evolution particularly worth watching. The current study argues that – as illustrated by recent problems of The New York Times’ with its credibility and internal management woes (popularly termed the Jayson Blair scandal) – newspapers can locate the type of leadership needed to engineer cultural change without damaging journalism. This study uses a case study to illustrate the degree to which culture and style interact as well as to ascertain the future of scholarly inquiry into news media culture.

Abstract

The author places newspaper decision-making models within a timing framework, using the infamous New York Times-Jayson Blair-plagiarism case to illustrate how the U.S. newspaper industry can feasibly and sincerely engineer the change in newspaper culture suggested by an earlier industry-commissioned study. Using arguments from timing theory, the author illustrates how the framework generates timing-related questions about management style that would not normally get asked. Ultimately, the argument challenges newspaper managers to reconsider the essence of the managerial control and, eventually, their own managerial style and culture. Cultural transformation, the author argues, does, indeed, start at the top but with management acknowledging that it has much to learn and that popular culture-enhancing management tools must be used only when managers consider the timing-induced paradoxes inherent in decision-making, where the “when” becomes just as important as the “what.”

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The few studies linking culture to leadership style have centered on charisma. In an organization’s early development, company founders often delegate increasing authority to “hybrid” managers able to maintain key old cultural assumptions yet add relevant new ones. Incoming “outsiders” are likely to find the culture entrenched, or non-adaptive – stressing order and efficiency, averse to change, innovation, and risk-taking. Charismatic leadership traits, on the other hand, correlate more readily with innovative change, especially during perceived crisis situations. Leaders who convey a radical vision also help to define the crisis as requiring radical solutions.

Adaptive cultures, on the other hand, have common values and behaviors that emphasize innovation, risk-taking, candid communication, integrity, teamwork, and enthusiasm. Such cultures have a greater tendency to allow charismatic leadership to emerge because they tolerate and encourage higher autonomy, intellectual incentives, and fresh solutions. Charismatic leadership likely develops and reinforces an adaptive organizational culture, which not only is more receptive to charismatic leaders but facilitates leaders’ task of reinforcing organizational values and identities, and using them as justifications for demanding and expecting members’ contributions to the collective mission (Schein, 1983; Trice and Beyer, 1993; and Yukl and Howell, 1999).

Even fewer mass communication studies address this issue, choosing instead a demographic approach pertaining to diversity and satisfaction or “professional” culture (Bramlett-Solomon, 1992; Pollard, 1995; and Phalen, 2000). As a result, the most recent research has come from industry, which diagnosed American newspaper cultures as two main types: aggressive-defensive, passive-defensive or a mixture thereof. In the first type, employees try to protect their status and security via perfectionist behavior to meet a limited set of goals. These employees tend to be conflict-prone and openly resistant in many respects. In the second type, employees tend to avoid conflict but still be resistant, albeit more covertly (Readership Institute, 2000).

**Culture and Change**

Culture has been identified as a barrier to change because culture is basically traditional – it is a blend of previous learning and revisions – and distinguished more by stability. Cultures self-perpetuate via members’ continuous communication and confirmation of shared knowledge (Radcliffe-Brown, 1952; Trice and Beyer, 1984; Bryant, 1989; Schein, 1989; Wilkins, 1989; and Kanter et al., 1992).

Effective change-agents, in contrast, are open, responsive, innovative, trustworthy, and sincere; they have administrative abilities, relationship and leadership skills, and expertise. Within a culture, change-agents seem to have influential and vivid character traits. In newspapers, they make new approaches, assets and arrangements that then serve as messages that the newspaper has a plan of change (Gentry, 1993; Lewis and Seibold, 1998; and Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2002). But newspaper managers have not always succeeded in communicating change nor have they been as adept at engineering change (Gentry, 1997; and Gade, 1999).

One reason might be the many environmental influences on newspapers. For example, newspapers face convergent impulses; e.g., the U.S. government continues to ponder changing rules on broadcast ownership, which may prompt many newspaper conglomerates to enter broadcasting and foster potential mergers of cultures across industries as well as across organizations. Meanwhile, technological convergence constantly forces newspapers to adapt, creating uncertain ‘defensive’ cultures while the Internet’s increasing influence makes ‘defensiveness’ more likely (Russial, 1994; Hansen et al., 1998; Singer, Tharp and Haruta, 1999; Wicks et al., 2003; and Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2002).

Too, organizational and functional differences exist within newspapers, so much so that change often is slow and limited. Some departments tend to be more likely than other departments to use high-performance managerial practices that encourage change. And as American society becomes more diverse, newspapers feel increasing pressure to reflect that change. Pure numerical differences between cultures within the newsroom provide a substantial barrier to recruiting and retaining diverse cultures, as well as blocking their ability to learn from each other (Lewis, 1995; Sylvie, 1996; Gentry, 1997; Gade, 1999; TeBoul, 1999; Gade, 2000; Readership Institute, 2000; and Weaver et al., 2002). As a result, the American newspaper industry has begun to campaign for change.

Tackling such challenges while navigating unknown, changing markets will present a stern test. Many managers approaching change try to surmount and outwit resistance to it, creating resistant employees who threaten the organization’s long-term performance, lifespan, and flexibility as well as employees constituting the “constructive” culture. So approach requires careful thought; many team efforts still get categorized as managerial control efforts, rather than exercises in interdependence. Journalists – because of culturally based notions of how journal- ism should be performed – resist change, seeing it as either disruptive or inefficient. They also, after a short time of openness and anticipation, fail to grasp management’s message (Argyris, 1967; Neuzil et al., 1999; Readership Institute, 2000; Daniels and Hollifield, 2002; Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2002; and Gade & Perry, 2003).
The Case for Timing

So managing U.S. newspaper cultural change may require managers to re-examine their values, styles and reliance on structure as a change tool. Journalism encompasses all three: It is a prime value of newsroom employees and it helps to determine a large part of how the newspaper operates. Embedded in that operation of journalism is the structural element of time – routines of newsgathering and editing, production deadlines and the definition of news itself.

Management scholars have studied timing since the late 1970s, discovering that the mechanisms groups use to pace their work may critically influence their collective incentive to change. Timing is a function of context, or “plot” and individuals behave in accordance with the meaning and requirements of the changing moment. In addition, “ideal types” of change-agent managerial styles exist and assume a “temporal capability” on the part of the manager/change-agent. This change-agent must know what situation demands which approach (Gersick, 1989; Albert, 1995; and Huy, 2001).

These multiple conceptions of time include clock time (employees’ work routines), inner time (their psychological comfort), and social time (the quality of their relationships). For example, when The Dallas Morning News adopted its current pagination system, managers ensured that daily copy-editing wasn’t unreasonably disrupted by the training; employees were given ample time, training, and motivation to learn the new system. But other dimensions of time also demand attention: sequencing (the order in which events unfold), timing (the moment an event happens or is planned to happen in a sequence of related events), pacing (the rate or rhythm at which change occurs), and a combination of the three (Huy, 2001; and Sylvie and Witherspoon, 2002). Although this idea is untested, it focuses attention on time as a new, insightful variable in organizational behavior research.

One aspect concerns timing norms: shared, expected patterns of paced activity (e.g., newspaper deadlines) that regulate many organizational activities. There’s an event timeline, which is paced, and a norm. Some norms emerge through social interaction (e.g., coffee breaks), some are imposed or formally scheduled (e.g., planning retreats). Some timing norms are the result of coordination (e.g., news budget meetings), while others are institutionalized (e.g., employee evaluations). Obviously, timing norms can be found throughout an organization’s activities, programs and events (Ancona et al., 2001).

Examining timing norms, then, provides a chance to explain and predict organizational (especially newspaper) behavior and change. The newspaper industry believes that if it is to continue to grow and prosper, organizational cultures will need changing. But changes take time. Money allows time, but also proves commitment and willingness to go beyond the norm and to change it. But money becomes a troublesome issue because competing interests within the newspaper make it desirable for newspapers to use additional income to augment changes. To develop this income, newspapers will have to develop new ideas or re-direct funds: in essence, change priorities until additional income is generated or when newspapers begin to significantly grow. So, timing is of the essence.

Temporal leadership will be required and managers will have to adjust the pace or cycle of activity with others – a process called “entrainment” – if newspapers are to adjust. Top management will have to match pace and cycle of the cultural change to the newspaper’s competitive and technological cycles. The scholarly literature shows that successful entrainment must be proactive as well, which does not bode well for newspapers, given the inherent, conservative stance many cultures take toward change and given U.S. newsrooms’ defensive culture (Ancona and Chong, 1996: Readership Institute, 2000; and Rosenbloom, 2000). All of which leads to several questions:

1. What are the temporal capabilities of a newspaper?
2. Can a newspaper’s culture be managed? If so, with what management style?
3. What role does timing play?

Methods

This analysis uses the case study method, which provides a unique ability to qualitatively, closely investigate management style. It helps scholars discern patterns, nuances, and variables difficult to measure quantitatively, such as timing norms and culture. By focusing on detail, case studies permit discussion of new concepts, as well as allowing wide framing of subjects (Yin, 1993). In addition, there’s the data: Case studies try to understand the nature of the research problem – allowing the scholar to ponder, create and change meanings and frameworks of the managerial subject under study (Merriam, 1988). The case study particularly is flexible enough to allow sequence analysis, which allows the use of event timelines as units of analyses. These event sequences can be considered stories, which are inherent in case studies, where often the unit of analysis is a narrative. Case studies permit inspection of details, procedures, roles and organizational changes (Marshall and Rossman, 1990). The method especially helps research that studies contextual relationships of organizations (Foster, 1991).

Finally, the case study allows the scholar to study whether people perceive each event or the entire event timeline and, thus, understand its sig-
This analysis chose to examine The New York Times and the events surrounding the Jayson Blair/Rick Bragg/fraud scandal in late spring 2003. Several reasons justified this choice. The Times provides a barometer of the newspaper industry; it is considered the best U.S. newspaper on many levels, not the least of which is management and managerial decision-making. It is the standard by which many people judge and trust other newspapers. Because of that trust, The Times has fashioned itself as an institution not above the standards it employs, leaving it open to public scrutiny.

One aspect of that trust was the Siegal report. The Times conducted a management audit related to the scandal; the audit was headed by Al Siegal, a Times editor. The Times released the report to the news media; a copy was obtained for this study’s interpretation. The report consists of an introductory summary, a response to the reports’ various recommendations, the 58-page report of the committee (officially titled The Committee on Safeguarding the Integrity of Our Journalism), and separate reports from four additional employee groups: The Working Group on Training and Performance Management, and three groups charged with examining the newsroom’s vertical communications, horizontal communications, and communications mechanisms, respectively.

Such openness – present and past – and the resulting level of trust, inspire other newspapers to emulate The Times’ style, content, and approach. Times decisions have a ripple impact within the industry, making it important; so The Times represents an extreme or unique case (Yin, 1984). Too, The Times has demonstrated itself as an innovative pioneer in many areas; it has a history of adapting well to change without compromising standards. This made the Blair incident all the more valuable for case study.

The Case

New York Times reporter Jayson Blair resigned after editors discovered he had plagiarized a front-page article on April 26, 2003 about a missing Army mechanic. The story has passages similar to those in The San Antonio Express-News. Blair resigned May 1st. The Times said in a statement Blair had resigned after being questioned about the article. The Times apologized to readers.

In a follow-up report May 3, 2003, The Times detailed Blair’s extensive lying and plagiarism (36 of 73 articles dating from October 2002), pleading for people to come forward with any suspicions about Blair’s articles in the previous four years. Publisher Arthur O. Sulzberger Jr. initially blamed Blair alone, but the investigation (Barry et al., 2003) revealed: failed communication among senior editors, few complaints from the subjects of Blair’s articles, Blair’s ability to cover his misdeeds, and the absence of management oversight.

Reports about internal memoranda show Sulzberger, Executive Editor Howell Raines and Managing Editor Gerald Boyd later admitted responsibility for the incident. The Times said it would conduct a management analysis to suggest improvements. Sulzberger called Sunday’s report a “first step” and wrote, “The second step will be to conduct a management analysis that will lead to recommendations for improvement.” The analysis was to be done by an independent committee (headed by Siegal) with its own agenda and included non-Times personnel. Editors also intended to consult newsroom staff groups, desk editors and their staff. But Raines canceled the smaller meetings, inviting the entire staff to “a town hall meeting” May 14th (Rutten, 2003).

Soon, criticism of Raines surfaced. Although praised the previous year for rejuvenating The Times by instigating more aggressive news coverage, Raines was said to foster an un-collaborative environment in the newsroom, devoting too much time and money to cover a few stories, leaving other topics lightly covered. (Madore, 2003a).

“This sense of ‘flooding the zone,’ as Howell calls it, was sort of like a children’s soccer game where everybody was chasing the ball instead of playing their positions,” a former Times reporter said. Raines took the editor’s job in September 2001. The Times won a record seven Pulitzer Prizes for coverage of the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and other events. But the Blair case was the peak of a series of negative incidents: A freelance writer for The New York Times Sunday magazine overstated a story about a boy working on a West African farm; a photographer staged a picture; two sports columns were cancelled – because they criticized Times editorialists about the Augusta National Golf Club’s anti-women admissions rules – and then, under pressure, published. Newsroom staff anonymously charged that Raines’ management style favored a few star writers, ignored other editors’ ideas and over-focused on a few issues (Madore, 2003a).

The criticisms surfaced at the two-hour “town meeting,” where Raines spent most of the time defending his management style and acknowledging that he was feared and that employees felt bullied; Sulzberger said Raines had his full support, and Raines said he would not resign (Steinberg, 2003a). Meanwhile, the review committee was charged to examine hiring and recruiting, error detection and prevention, ethical concerns, and The Times’ response to story complaints (Johnson, 2003). One result was the suspension and subsequent resignation of Times Pulitzer-winning writer Rick Bragg, who quit May 28th after investigations.
by the committee into his use of freelance stringers and his lackadaisical approach toward story dateline policies. About a week later, the newspaper announced the resignations of Raines and Boyd and the next month hired a new executive editor, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Bill Keller. On July 30, The Times released the Siegal Committee report.

**Findings**

**Culture and Style**

Raines, who had made The Times editorial page more combative for liberal issues, had had conflict with his predecessor, Joseph Lelyveld. “This is like Bush coming in after Clinton – a different outlook and a different view [from Lelyveld] and they’re not friends. You’re going to see things in the paper that would not happen under Joe’s regime, for better or worse,” an anonymous Times staffer said of the transition (Kurtz, 2001). Lelyveld’s style was known within the context of Raines – that he was “more reserved” than Raines (Grimes and Harding, 2001), “calm and reassuring” (Powell, 2003), and “a beloved figure” (Weiss, 2003). He reminded staff members of his predecessor, Max Frankel. The fact that Lelyveld was seen as a steady influence implies that Raines was a change for those with considerable tenure at The Times. The stated priorities (Jurkowitz, 2003) of Raines’ successor, Bill Keller, included “getting the newsroom fully focused on its work and returning a lot of authority to editors on the front lines,” which seemed antithetical of what critics saw as Raines’ journalistic micromanaging and centralized decision-making.

In essence, Raines was unable or unwilling to become a “hybrid” manager who could maintain key old assumptions with relevant new ones. Instead, he attempted to be an engineer (changing work processes) and a teacher (changing beliefs), but apparently did not focus on approach and timing issues as he tried to initiate such changes. The quintessential outsider, Raines found an entrenched culture, making him a bad fit with The Times. But as a charismatic journalist and editor, Raines was able to partly engineer a radical vision of “flooding the zone.” Unwonted as the practice was, it clearly reaped benefits in terms of Pulitzer Prizes and the newspaper’s ability to mobilize resources for breaking news. The news events of 2001-2003, beginning with the terrorist attacks and ending with the war in Iraq, required such innovation.

Raines’ stepping down speaks to The Times newsroom’s inadaptability to innovation. In contrast, the newsroom seemed highly adaptive to the styles of Lelyveld and Raines’ replacement. One could argue that the newsroom was adaptive under both management styles; still, adaptive cultures depend on dedication and degree of trust, in relatively short supply for Raines. The leadership change indicated a certain oscillation, common where it concerns change. So comes the question: Why did the newsroom oscillate so easily? Two explanations arise: First, two years in a 152-year-old institution is not a significant period of time. The Times is commonly known as the prime “destination paper,” meaning it is the newspaper that journalists tend to see as their last career stop; so employee turnover is not likely to be high and one would expect newsroom patience when evaluating innovation. Second, Sulzberger, the publisher, has been publisher since 1992. He and his family have long viewed the newspaper as the corporate “crown jewel” and the basis for all their other business ventures, so they have an unwavering commitment to the journalistic product. With the newsroom viewing Sulzberger as the leader, then it becomes clear that there, indeed, was no apparent transition in managerial style: Raines’ reign was just another attempt to improve the product, thereby making it consistent with other Sulzberger actions. So, in a sense, The Times’ cultural leadership emerges in assorted ways with varying results. Similar, adaptive organizations alternate between crises requiring culture change and phases of comparative constancy (Tushman and Romanelli, 1985).

There’s also the matter of cultures. The Times newsroom certainly seemed to evoke the aggressive symptoms of perfectionist, conflict-prone, openly resistant behavior at its “town hall” meeting with Raines. But in the context of Sulzberger’s leadership, the culture has been largely non-defensive, especially considering the Siegal Committee’s (2003) sweeping purview and recommendations for better management and cultural understanding.

In sum, overall leadership never changed, and, in many ways, neither did the newsroom culture. Some innovation occurred at a very volatile time, albeit briefly. Leadership style fluctuated, but the culture reverted to – or, more accurately, became retrenched in – its core values. The next section examines how this occurred.

**Culture and Change**

As noted earlier, cultures self-perpetuate via members’ continuous communication and confirmation of shared knowledge. The change underway at The Times was not only a change in reporting methods but a threat to replace veterans with inexperienced but energetic “rising stars.” The old culture stressed The Times as the “destination paper,” where veterans had time to think, argue with editors, enjoy unparalleled autonomy and often write in-depth stories; Raines threatened that (Bennis, 2003). But people sharing their feelings of insecurity and uncertainty produce a collective knowledge that fosters a conservative and to some degree inert culture. Often then, culture equals order and continuity.
As many managers approaching change, Raines tried to surmount resistance by directly dealing with it (via the Siegel Committee, the “town hall,” and the initial story about Blair’s misdeeds). But instead he created resistant employees (especially at the “town hall”) and forced Sulzberger to acknowledge a leadership change was required. Times management found Raines’ innovation attempts made staff members unhappy and made them see change as obstructing their ability to do their jobs; there was a communication disconnect between management and employees.

But the disconnect was repaired quickly; the Siegel Committee’s five general recommendations – delivered July 28th – were accepted in principle two days later (2003). One chapter dealt specifically with newsroom culture and recommended the following (pp. 12-13):
1. Reward courtesy and collegiality and penalize rudeness – from recruitment through retirement (this would link treatment of employees to evaluations).
2. Encourage the setting of boundaries (this covered work hours, and balancing family-work commitments).
3. Make managers accessible (this called for breaking “the silo mentality,” i.e., establishing more avenues of communication).
4. Promote the right to appeal (this essentially would be an internal leadership check and provide a complaint process).

More importantly, the report revealed much about the newsroom’s culture and its attitude toward Raines. For example, “civility” is mentioned seven times in the report. The case was made that civility also would ensure a diversity policy (54), but would have to start with new, proposed criteria for assessing editors’ performance. To that end, editors should “embrace diversity” by understanding and appreciating workplace diversity and considering it in personnel decisions (Appendix A).

Although the newspaper had a “hunger ... for greater clarity” in this area (5), the report insisted the Blair incident should not stigmatize – or create a newsroom backlash against – minority staff (14). This suggests that the newsroom culture felt excluded from the decision-making process but that management – not diversity – was the scapegoat. While the nod toward diversity suggests a type of political correctness, it also says that Times staffers felt the need to rid themselves of the demon of prejudice – which bespeaks a fear that such prejudice might exist and, thus, need official outlawing. For example, the report included a two-page statement by Roger Wilkins, a former journalist and lawyer who is black and has a legacy in U.S. public affairs and civil rights. Wilkins’ statement documented and defended the need for affirmative action. Minority retention was important “because The Times newsroom is an American place and is thus touched ... by our culture, including some remnants of hostility to minorities and women” (53).

The civility focus was aimed toward Raines’ methods and avoiding a “conspiracy of timidity or cynicism that lets malfeasance function” (13). Note that Raines, on the other hand, said he was authorized to change the newsroom’s culture from one of complacency to one of performance and meritocracy (Anonymous, 2003). However, merit issues permeate the Siegel Committee report as well. Its self-stated intent however, was to “demystify” the methods for determining merit (3), acknowledging Raines’ intent but deeming his methods inadequate. The report implied that change, indeed, was needed, but its basis should be objective, observable and recordable. In short, the argument was not one of change, but one of methods – of style.

But in this sense the Siegel Committee report carries certain irony: journalistic subordinates asking to be better managed. In fact, “management” is mentioned 71 times while “autonomy” isn’t even mentioned; “trust” has several mentions, but mostly in reference to staff trust in management. It’s ironic that the American newsroom with perhaps the greatest level of journalistic autonomy is asking for better management. After all, conventional journalistic wisdom suggests journalists thrive without corporate supervision (e.g., Underwood, 1993). So it’s possible that the focus on style as the problem may indeed be a symptom of cultural problems and that perhaps mismanagement is a psychological rationalization for resistance to cultural change. In other words, we may have one culture (subordinates) in conflict with another (management). Such an ideological impasse makes the timing analysis all the more important.

Timing

It could simply be argued the Blair episode – because it was extraordinary for The Times – provided a window for change of style of leadership. But “timing” suggests a kind of structure underlies time and creates such “opportunities.” Such “temporal structuring” (Orlikowski and Yates, 2002) shapes a temporal rhythm and form, but depends on point of view, as shaped by moment of observation.

So one can take the timing viewpoint of many newspaper structures, from editor selection processes, ranging from news events (controversy) to the general production cycle (deadlines). Temporal structures often are routine, taken for granted and can overlap. Assuming temporal structure played a role, then, means that inherent in cultural values is the shared experience and definition of timing, whether chronos (chronological, serial time measured by the clock and not by purpose) or kairos (a distinct point in time; event-centered; measured by purpose). The temporal capability to know when to know which structure needs attention apparently was evinced more by
Sulzberger than by Raines. Sulzberger, taken aback by the “town hall” reaction, acknowledged it was time for a change; Raines, committed to his task and seeing the vocal opposition as a mere communication obstacle, was not as aware.

This is partly because Raines – especially as an “engineering” change-agent – centered on redesigning work processes to improve the speed and quality of production (hence, “flooding the zone”). He showed a pacing style that was moderately fast – he said he was charged with changing the paper’s “competitive metabolism” (Anonymous, 2003) – but such a task normally takes time and analysis to implement and employees have to grow new work routines. Sulzberger, on the other hand, would be classified as a socializing change-agent. As less of an outsider than Raines and with experience at all organizational levels, he apparently saw a need for change. Too, it was not unknown that Sulzberger had long sought change (Auletta, 2002).

With the hiring and departure of Raines, Sulzberger successfully built a new social time structure – one emphasizing more management and more managerial control of the evaluation process, which may have been his initial intention in hiring Raines, with whom he had worked in the paper’s Washington bureau. Raines was interested in domestic issues, expected to “give these areas fresh ferocity” and seeing the vocal opposition as a mere communication obstacle, was not as aware.

Such a facile assessment requires examination of timing norms as well. To restate, norms are how an organization applies its values. Timing norms are always given meaning through social interaction and occur at the event (kairos) timeline level of analysis. Since Sulzberger seems to be the more dominant change-agent, this analysis should begin with events and context of his tenure. The fact he chose Keller to replace Raines is a key event. Consider that Keller also was a candidate for the editorship along with Raines in 2001. One could say that the Keller appointment is a reaction to the Raines appointment, especially considering, one, that Raines’ appointment was somewhat unexpected in terms of its timing (Lelyveld still had several months to go before his retirement) and two, that at the “town hall” Sulzberger said he would not accept Raines’ resignation, even if offered (Steinberg, 2003a). And yet he accepted it (although Raines said Sulzberger requested it); here, according to Sulzberger, is why (Steinberg, 2003b):

“This was a decision that Howell and Gerald (Boyd) made, that I sadly accepted,” he said. “It was not precipitated by any specific event. It happened over a period of time.”

“The morale of the newsroom is critical,” Mr. Sulzberger said earlier yesterday. The ability of reporters and editors “to perform depends on their feeling they are being treated in a collaborative and collegial fashion.”

Though it appears Keller was the logical choice, the question remains why Sulzberger would choose someone he eschewed two years prior. What was the message or the reason for hiring Raines? The concept of timing norms suggests that another event may have precipitated the hiring, but determining the event would be pure speculation.

In sum, the timing framework suggests that events at The Times conflicted with common sense or available evidence. The framework also shows that more questions need to be asked about the case (as borrowed from Albert (1999)):
Can newspaper culture be managed? With what leadership style? What role does timing play?

Timing concerns irony. For example, traditional managerial decision-making models usually suggest that a manager must give some thought to a situation prior to taking action. The timing model, however, shows the reverse often is true, i.e., action often precedes thought. *The Times*, in this case, didn’t have time to consider its approach to Blair’s actions or pattern of behavior until such time that it had reached crisis proportions. One could argue that *The Times* should have made time for such consideration, but given the normal routine of the newspaper and the typical operating assumptions of its editors, that doesn’t seem like a reasonable argument when one considers that it is not everyday that one has such a plagiarism episode at a paper the caliber of *The New York Times*.

So one might examine this in the context of a normal newspaper “crisis,” such as typical newspaper culture. As the newspaper becomes more “aggressive-defensive,” managerial intervention becomes more essential and more likely. But many publishers and editors would ask, “How do you control culture and simultaneously let go (as has been suggested here)?” Looking back, however, one can see that action can be opportunistic: *The Times* took control over the situation by revealing Blair’s deeds; its editors selected other reporters and said, in effect, “Go, do the right thing. Check Blair’s stories and correct them, if necessary.” Not only did they take back the ethical initiative, they also communicated that they were in control (and, in so doing, tentatively won back some trust). So editors can control employees simply by letting them go – with the employees’ knowledge and experience as their guides as to how best to put a newspaper together.

Simply put, the timing is right (in many newspapers) to manage employee culture by letting it flourish. This is not to say that managers will condone insubordination and relinquish ultimate authority to employees. Rather, this means that a manager must be sensitive to when is the right time to concede that he or she doesn’t know all the answers and that, perhaps, employees might. It also doesn’t mean that a manager shouldn’t have a Plan B; options are the gears that turn the wheels of decision-making. But every option has its window of opportunity.

It is easy to boil this down to the term “risk-taking” and to sound like the latest managerial fad. But managing newspaper culture is an impossible task without first acknowledging the culture knows itself better than the manager knows it. Such an acknowledgement is the first step in letting go. The next step is sincerely communicating this admission to the culture’s members. Sincerity implies lack of manipulation or intent thereof. As to how many newspaper managers will be so quick to make such admissions, it is likely that a combination of internal plots must occur beforehand. For many managers, the realization that they already have lost – or are about to lose – control will be the timing linchpin. Unfortunately, that is part of management culture.

**Summary**

Making management and employee cultures compatible will be a most difficult task. Because each culture sees reality differently, managers hoping to engineer change must first step outside their own culture and identify employee cultural values in order to clearly see the task ahead.

Even so, many managers often don’t consider using a timing-based approach. To become more time-sensitive, they must search for history, context, plots and the long-range view of change. They must start asking “when” in addition to “what.”

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