Selecting an Effective Appraisal Style

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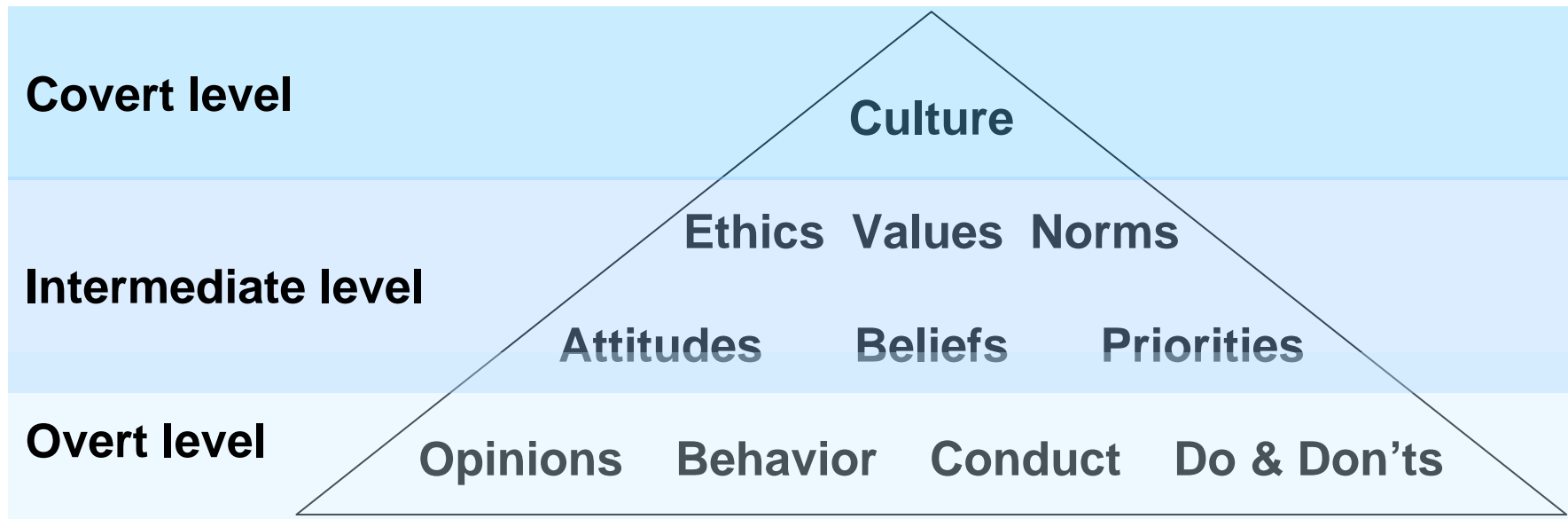Ralph Williams, Cooliemon, Inc.

Background

- **One of the tailoring choices to be made in conducting a CMMI appraisal is the choice of appraisal style, e.g.,**
  - Formal or informal?
  - Interview-focused or evidence-focused?
  - Educational or audit?
  - Cooperative or adversarial?

- **The appraisal style will greatly affect the appraisal effectiveness, accuracy, and especially the perceived value**

- **This presentation will explore choices that should be considered when planning an appraisal**

Selecting an Effective Appraisal Style, Hefner and Williams, 2008

Topics

- **Factors To Consider in Selecting A Style**

- **Style Choices**
  - Readiness Review
  - Appraisal Team Selection
  - Conducting Interviews
  - Appraisal Documentation
  - Findings Presentations

- **Expressing Style Preferences When Selecting A Lead Appraiser**

Factors to Consider in Selecting a Style

- ## An organization's culture
  - Guides decision making
  - Provides identity for members
  - Amplifies commitment
  - Guides employee behavior
  - Provides justification for actions

Covert level		Culture		
		Ethics	Values	Norms
Intermediate level		Attitudes	Beliefs	Priorities
Overt level	Opinions	Behavior	Conduct	Do & Don'ts

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Types of Cultures

The Clan Culture

A very friendly place to work where people share a lot of themselves. It is like an extended family.

The Hierarchy Culture

A very formalized structured place to work. Procedures govern what people do.

The Adhocracy Culture

A dynamic entrepreneurial, and creative place to work. People stick their necks out and take risks.

The Market Culture

A results oriented organization whose major concern is with getting the job done. People are competitive and goal-oriented.

How do these organizations react to… Being measured? Success? Failure?

Cameron, K., & Quinn, R., (1999). Diagnosing and Changing Organizational Culture. New York: Addison-Wesley.

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CBA IPI Styles and Why They Don't Work in SCAMPI

The old CBA IPI appraisal was designed for "discovery"

- Organization didn't understand the CMM model, hadn't tried to comply with it, didn't know if it had value

- Senior management wanted an outsider's assessment of where the organization stood

- Appraisers measure, prioritize, strategize, teach, motivate

The SCAMPI method is designed for "verification"

- Organization has learned about the model, thinks it has implemented it correctly, realized value and shortcomings

- Senior management wants an independent, expert assessment

- Appraisers verify, correct, encourage further improvement

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How Style is Manifested in the Choices of SCAMPI A, B, and C

These methods can form building blocks for a progression of appraisals – for example, starting with a SCAMPI C reviewing the process descriptions, then a SCAMPI B investigating their deployment to projects, finally leading to a formal benchmarking event focused on institutionalization of the practices across the organization.

-- Handbook for Conducting Standard CMMI Appraisal Method for Process Improvement (SCAMPI) B and C Appraisals, Version 1.1

The SCAMPI C/B/A sequence may support adoption

SCAMPI C:	Do we understand the CMMI practices?
	Do we have the right emphasis?
SCAMPI B:	Are we moving in the right direction?
	What course corrections are needed?
SCAMPI A:	Have we met our goals?
	What's next?

Specific appraisal activities require additional style choices

Key Decision Factors

- **Formal or informal?**
  - How formal is information sharing in the organizational?
  - How does formality effect perceived accuracy? Fairness?

- **Interview-focused or evidence-focused?**
  - SCAMPI A is evidence focused
  - How distributed is decision making?

- **Educational or audit?**
  - How knowledgeable is the organization about model implementation?
  - How will misconceptions be perceived?

- **Cooperative or adversarial?**
  - How are external views perceived?
  - What value can an external view provide?

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Readiness Review

- **Shoulder 2 Shoulder (s2s) when data gathering (avoid bring me another rock syndrome)**

- **Readiness reviews conducted in conjunction with Lead Appraiser Site Visits with Programs**

- **Combine Readiness Reviews with process improvement institutionalization checkups on key activities:**
  - QPM understanding of stability versus capability
  - CAR triggers
  - Analytical Techniques used in analysis of ML 4 subprocesses

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Appraisal Team Selection

- **Ensure mini team selection and pairings leverage personalities and appraising styles, e.g.:**
  - Have a detailed and not so detailed person on the same mini team
  - Mix seasoned appraiser with "newbies"
  - Internal (Driver) and an External (added layer of objectivity) on a mini team.

- **Availability is not a skill**
  - Select team members that can play well with others (seems obvious)
  - It takes a certain mindset to appraise (vs. audit) and to follow the MDD

- **Think about succession planning - "new blood" to participate on Class A, B, C's.**
  - Having the same people on the teams can result in stale viewpoints
  - Some practitioners may view the appraisal team as the "in crowd" creating second class citizens

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Conducting Interviews

- **Friendly** *(Thanksgiving Family Style)* **vs. Taking a Test** *(being tortured).*

- **Ensure interviewees are relaxed and do not feel that they are in a pressure chamber**
  - Set the stage during the opening of the interview
  - "I do not know is perfectly fine"

- **Appraiser body language is important**
  - Smiling during introductions
  - Avoid folding arms and frowns

- **We have found that interviewees conducted in a warm friendly environment leads to more information that is naturally given**

- **Consider "Show and tell" during an interview where appropriate** *(This is an advanced strategy that needs planning and room setup)*

- **Note: Our job on appraisal teams is to provide an accurate picture of capability. This cannot be hindered when the interviewees are not relaxed to share – can stifle information/affirmation gathering.**

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Appraisal Documentation

> SCAMPI A allows great flexibility in formulating strategies to accomplish the necessary data collection. The relative emphasis of different data sources, as well as data types, can be tuned to support appraisal objectives relating to buy-in as well as coverage and rigor for important areas.
>
> *- SCAMPI MDD v1.2*

- **SCAMPI A focuses on direct evidence**
  - Indirect and affirmations simply confirm direct evidence

- **Results-oriented organizations may perceive indirect (intermediate) evidence as bureaucracy**

- **Informal organizations may perceive affirmations as more important than direct evidence**
  - "If you'd only have asked me to explain it..."

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Findings Presentations

- **Avoid CBA IPI "discovery" approaches**
  - The organization believes they understand and have satisfied the model – appraisers verify

- **Any gaps/weaknesses found are due to:**
  - Misunderstanding the model
  - Areas neglected in pre-appraisal review
  - "Blind-spot"

- **Presentation should focus on education**
  - Here's why this is a weakness... Here's what the model expects and why...
  - For buy-in, must have established expertise and independent of the appraisers

- **Draft findings should identify gaps in direct evidence <u>for each project</u>**
  - Avoid "Some projects do not perform..."
    (Note: This does NOT violate confidentiality, if done correctly)
  - No need for discussion, except to ensure findings are understood
  - Anyone who supplied evidence can participate, not just interviewees

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Expressing Style Preferences When Selecting A Lead Appraiser

- **Style must fit the organization's culture**

- **Good presentation skills (e.g., Toastmaster Trained)**

- **Friendly and good with people**

- **Can facilitate difficult people and difficult situations**
  - Even when we think we have selected the best team team members may have a certain soft spot for a practice
  - Team members maybe grid locked during full team. Q/How is that facilitated? How is that handled on your teams?

- **A good sense of humor** *(or at least does not have the appearance of being "stressed" by the appraisal process)*

- **A good understanding of the model and business improvement**
  - Able to explain value of each practice in that environment, suggest common implementations

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Summary

- **The appraisal style will greatly affect the appraisal effectiveness, accuracy, and especially the perceived value**

- **Appraisers should be capable of a variety of styles, and fit their style and approach to the situation**

- **Organizations should consider appraiser style in hiring a Lead Appraiser**