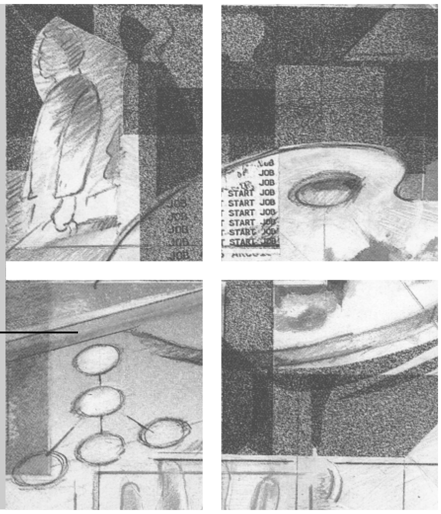
CHAPTER 1



Introduction

The Power of Reframing

"The World's Leading Company," the lobby banner proclaimed in the gleaming corporate headquarters in Houston, Texas. With some justification. For six years running, Enron had been voted the most innovative of *Fortune*'s "Most Admired Companies" (McLean, 2001, p. 60). In September 2001, with reported earnings of over $1 billion a year and an annual growth rate of 68 percent, it ranked thirtieth on *Fortune*'s list of America's hundred fastest growing companies. Small wonder that CEO Kenneth W. Lay was one of America's most powerful business leaders, sometimes mentioned in the same breath with Jack Welch, GE's legendary CEO. Lay had the added advantage of a long-term friendship with President George W. Bush. He cemented this personal tie by giving more than half a million dollars to Bush's presidential campaign (the biggest individual donor). What could be better than a big, innovative, fast-growing, profitable, politically connected company?

The trouble was the books had been cooked, and external auditors were asleep at the switch. In December 2001, Enron collapsed in what was at the time history's largest corporate bankruptcy. Its stock plunged from eighty dollars to eighty *cents* a share in the space of a year. Tens of billions of dollars in shareholder wealth evaporated. Many jobs and most of the retirement funds of Enron's employees disappeared.[1]

What went wrong? After the collapse, critics offered plenty of plausible explanations. Yet Enron's leadership seemed baffled by the abrupt free fall. Former CEO Jeffrey K.

Skilling, regarded as the primary architect of Enron's high-flying, take-no-prisoners culture, was among those caught off-guard. Associates described him as "the ultimate control freak. The sort of hands-on corporate leader who kept his fingers on all the pieces of the puzzle" (Schwartz, 2002, p. C-1). Skilling resigned for unexplained "personal reasons" only three months before Enron imploded; many wondered if he had jumped ship because he foresaw the iceberg dead ahead. But when asked about Enron's crash, he claimed, "I had no idea the company was in anything but excellent shape" (p. C-1).

Skilling and his boss, Lay, were both viewed as brilliant men, yet both found refuge in cluelessness. They insisted that they either didn't know about, or didn't understand, the financial maneuvers and management misjudgments that led to Enron's fall. The chief executive of Enron's auditor, Andersen Worldwide, made the same claim, even though Andersen partners in Chicago had debated whether to drop Enron as a client because the company's accounting was so aggressively pushing acceptable boundaries. Carl Bass, a senior partner sent in to monitor the Enron audit, strongly objected to some of the company's high-risk accounting practices. Andersen moved him off the case. Andersen's top executive, Joseph F. Berardino, claimed he didn't know about any of this, even though he had visited Enron's headquarters a few weeks before Bass was reassigned (Byrne, 2002b).

Berardino, Lay, and Skilling weren't the first or last corporate leaders seemingly clueless about a looming disaster. A decade earlier, following General Motors's market-share dive in the 1980s, GM's CEO, Roger Smith, was asked what had gone wrong. The only response he could muster was, "I don't know. It's a mysterious thing" (Loomis, 1993, p. 41). Smith had once been hailed as a bold visionary leader; down the road he admitted ruefully, "I'm not as smart as people said a few years ago, and not as dumb as they say now" (Smith, 1987, p. 26).

The stories of Skilling, Lay, Berardino, and Smith are only a few examples of a ubiquitous leadership challenge: How do you know if you are seeing the real picture? It is a test that managers and leaders often fail. Cluelessness is an everyday fact of life, even for very smart people. The problem is not insufficient intellectual wattage but a lack of understanding of what they are up against and what remedies might work. If it was difficult to decipher clues and read signs in the past, it's even tougher now. The world is more turbulent and complex than it was fifty years ago; the stakes are higher, and challenges often outpace a leader's cognitive capabilities.

In the discussion that follows, we explore the origins and symptoms of cluelessness in organizations. Then we turn to "reframing"—the conceptual core of the book. Reframing requires an ability to understand and use multiple perspectives, to think about the same thing in more than one way. We introduce four frames: structural, human resource, political, and symbolic. Each is distinctive, each coherent and powerful in its own right. Together, they help capture a comprehensive picture of what's wrong and what might be done.

VIRTUES AND DRAWBACKS OF ORGANIZED ACTIVITY

The first humanlike primates appeared on earth about twelve million years ago. During most of human evolution, our ancestors were hunters and gatherers. Only the last ten or fifteen thousand years have seen the emergence of institutions more complex than small, simple, nomadic communities. Large organizations emerged to dominate the social landscape even more recently.

There was little need for professional managers when individuals managed their own affairs. Today, things are very different. The challenge of finding the right way to frame our world has become overwhelming in the twenty-first century's turbulent and roiling times. Forms of management and organization effective a few years ago are obsolete today. Sérieyx (1993) calls it the organizational big bang: "The information revolution, the globalization of economies, the proliferation of events that undermine all our certainties, the collapse of the grand ideologies, the arrival of the CNN society which transforms us into an immense, planetary village—all these shocks have overturned the rules of the game and suddenly turned yesterday's organizations into antiques" (pp. 14–15).

The proliferation of complex organizations has made most human activities collective endeavors. We grow up in and start families. We work in and rely on organizations for goods and services. We learn in schools and universities. We play sports in teams. We join clubs and associations. Many of us will grow old and die in hospitals or nursing homes. We build these human enterprises because of what they can do for us. They produce consumer goods, offer entertainment, provide social services and health care, and deliver the mail.

All too often, however, we experience the darker side. Organizations can frustrate and exploit people. Too often, products are flawed, families are dysfunctional, students fail to learn, patients stay sick, and policies make things worse instead of better. Many organizations infuse work with so little meaning that jobs have hardly any value beyond a paycheck. It's hard to find a company these days that doesn't aim officially to delight its customers, but a national survey found that customer satisfaction across industries mostly went downhill between 1995 and 2001 (American Customer Satisfaction Index, 2002). NASA, the same organization that put a man on the moon, launched America's ill-fated space shuttles *Challenger* and *Columbia.* Around the world, schools are blamed for social ills, universities are said to close more minds than they open, and government agencies are criticized for red tape and rigidity. The sarcastic phrase "good enough for government work" reflects widespread cynicism about the performance of public agencies. The private sector has its own problems. Automakers recall faulty cars, baby food producers apologize for adulterated fruit juice, and software companies deliver bugs and "vaporware." Industrial accidents dump chemicals, oil, toxic gas, and radioactive materials into the air and water. Too often, corporate greed and insensitivity create havoc for lives and communities. The bottom line: we are hard pressed to manage organizations so that benefits regularly exceed costs. The big question: Why should this be?

THE CURSE OF CLUELESSNESS

Year after year, the best and brightest managers maneuver or meander their way to the apex of great enterprises. Then they do really dumb things. How do bright people turn out so dim? One theory is that they're too smart for their own good. Feinberg and Tarrant (1995) label it the "self-destructive intelligence syndrome." They argue smart people act stupid because of personality flaws—things like pride, arrogance, and unconscious needs to fail. Lundin and Lundin (1998) came to a similar conclusion: "[Bosses'] dumb behavior is motivated by self-love and ego, which block the capacity for empathy."

It's true that psychic flaws have been apparent in such brilliantly self-destructive individuals as Adolph Hitler, Richard Nixon, and Bill Clinton. But on the whole, intellectually challenged people have as many psychological problems as the best and brightest. The real source of cluelessness is not personality or IQ. It's in *how we think and make sense of the world around us.* Regardless of intellectual wattage, we're out to lunch if we use the wrong ideas for the situation at hand. When you see a distorted picture, you react the wrong way. But you'll probably stick with erroneous ideas if they're all you have. The problem is they lead you into trouble and mask their flaws at the same time. You may be confident that everything is humming along. If not, at least it's not your fault.

Vaughan (1995), in trying to explain the *Challenger* space shuttle disaster, underscored how hard it is for people to surrender their ingrained mental models: "They puzzle over contradictory evidence, but usually succeed in pushing it aside—until they come across a piece of evidence too fascinating to ignore, too clear to misperceive, too painful to deny, which makes vivid still other signals they do not want to see, forcing them to alter and surrender the world-view they have so meticulously constructed" (p. 235).

Charan and Useem (2002) found that this tendency to see no evil is a common problem in organizational disasters. Cisco Systems, for example, had one of the most sophisticated forecasting systems in the business. The system worked superbly during ten years of phenomenal growth in the 1990s but misfired once demand started going downhill. Cisco's leadership had trouble believing that the bottom was really falling out.

> Customers began going bankrupt. Suppliers warned of a coming drop in demand. Even Wall Street wondered if the Internet equipment market was coming apart. "I have never been more optimistic about the future of our industry as a whole or of Cisco," CEO John Chambers declared in December 2000, still projecting 50 percent growth. For the perpetually sunny Chambers, [the critical piece of evidence] did not come until April 2001, when cratering sales forced Cisco to write down $2.5 billion in excess inventory and lay off 8,500 employees. Chambers may have been operating in real time, but he wasn't operating in the real world. (Charan and Useem, 2002, p. 54)

Floyd Norris wrote about Enron's former CEO: "There were no problems at Enron while Jeffrey K. Skilling was running the company. Or at least, none that he noticed: [in his testimony to Congress] Mr. Skilling may not have persuaded many listeners. But he did make it clear to those who are investigating Enron at the Justice Department and the S.E.C. that they will have to work to prove he was aware of anything at all during the period he was running one of America's largest companies" (Norris, 2002, p. C-1).

Too often, psychic prisons prevent managers and leaders from seeing old problems in a new light or finding more promising ways to work on perennial challenges. When they don't know what to do, they do more of what they know. This helps explain a number of unsettling reports from the managerial front lines:

- In 2000, the United States was again the world's strongest economy, yet corporate America set a new record for failure: 176 public companies with $95 billion in assets went bankrupt. Aided by a business downturn, it got worse the following year, as 257 companies with $258 billion in assets went under (Charan and Useem, 2002). Charan and

Useem traced all that failure back to a single source: "Most companies founder for one reason: managerial error" (p. 52).

- The annual value of corporate mergers grew a hundredfold between 1980 and 2000 (Renner, 2000), even though a recent study found that "83 percent of mergers were unsuccessful in producing any business benefit as regards shareholder value" (KPMG, 2000). Mergers typically benefit shareholders of the acquired firm but harm almost everyone else—customers, employees, and the acquiring firm (Tichy, forthcoming). Despite this dismal record, the vast majority of the managers who engineered mergers believed they were successful (KPMG, 2000).
- Hogan, Curphy, and Hogan (1994) estimate that one-half to three-quarters of all American managers are incompetent. The authors didn't study managers in other countries, but, given America's comparative economic success, the results are probably no better elsewhere.
- A study by CSC Index (cited in Gertz and Baptista, 1995) found that fewer than one-third of reengineering initiatives met or exceeded their goals. The same could be said for almost any other popular business improvement scheme, including total quality management and strategic planning.

Small wonder that so many corporate veterans nod assent to Scott Adams's admittedly unscientific "Dilbert principle": "the most ineffective workers are systematically moved the place where they can do the least damage—management" (1996, p. 14).

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONS: THE TRACK RECORD

We have certainly tried to improve organizations. Legions of managers go to work every day with that hope in mind. Authors and consultants spin out a steady flow of new answers and promising solutions. Policy makers develop laws and regulations to guide organizations on a more correct path.

The most common strategy aims at improving management. Modern mythology promises organizations will work splendidly if well managed. Managers are supposed to have the big picture and look out for their organization's overall health and productivity.

Unfortunately, they have not always been equal to the task, even when armed with computers, information systems, flowcharts, quality programs, and a panoply of other tools and techniques. They go forth with this rational arsenal to try to tame our wild and primitive workplace. Yet in the end, irrational forces most often prevail.

When managers cannot solve problems, they hire consultants. Today, the number and variety of advice givers is overwhelming. Most have a specialty: reengineering, quality, mergers and acquisitions, strategy, human resource management, information technology, executive search, outplacement, training, organization development, and many more. For every managerial question or issue, there is a consultant willing to offer assistance—at a premium price.

For all their sage advice and remarkable fees, consultants have yet to make a significant dent in pressing problems plaguing businesses, public agencies, military services, hospitals, or schools. Sometimes the consultants are more hindrance than help. More than a few managers wish that consultants, like physicians, were bound by the oath "Above all else, do no harm." Meanwhile, consultants grouse about clients' failure to implement their insights. McKinsey & Co., "the high priest of high-level consulting" (Byrne, 2002a, p. 66) worked so closely with Enron that managing partner Rajat Gupta sent his chief lawyer down to Houston after Enron's collapse to see if the consulting company might be in legal trouble. The lawyer reported that McKinsey was safe, and Gupta insisted bravely, "We stand by all the work we did. Beyond that, we can only empathize with the trouble they are going through. It's a sad thing to see" (Byrne, 2002a, p. 68). Clients can be confident that, no matter how bad the results, they are responsible if anything goes wrong. But at least they'll get empathy.

When managers and consultants fail, government frequently jumps in with legislation, policies, and regulations. Constituents badger elected officials to "do something" about a variety of ills: pollution, dangerous products, hazardous working conditions, and chaotic schools, to name a few. Governing bodies respond by making "policy." But policies regularly go awry while meandering from the legislative floor to the targeted problems. A sizable body of research records a continuing saga of perverse ways in which policy implementation distorts policy makers' intentions (Bardach, 1977; Elmore, 1978; Freudenberg and Gramling, 1994; Peters, 1999; Pressman and Wildavsky, 1973).

Difficulties surrounding each strategy for improving organizations are well documented. Exemplary intentions produce more costs than benefits. Problems outlast solutions. It is as if tens of thousands of hard-working, highly motivated pioneers keep hacking away at a swamp that continues to produce new growth faster than the old can be cleared.

There are reasons for optimism. Organizations have changed about as much in the past decade or two as in the previous century. To survive, they had to. Revolutionary changes in technology, the rise of the global economy, and shortened product life cycles have spawned a flurry of activity to design more fluid and more flexible organizational forms. These efforts have engendered a bewildering variety of labels: networks (Chaize, 1992), virtual organizations, adhocracies (Mintzberg, 1979), atomized organizations (Deal and Kennedy, 1982), spider plants (Morgan, 1993), PALs (Kanter, 1989), and many others. These new forms can be seen in network organizations such as the French packaging giant Carnaud et Metal Box. CEO Jean-Marie Descarpentries said his approach to management was simple: "You catalyze toward the future, you trust people, and they discover things you never would have thought of" (Aubrey and Tilliette, 1990, p. 142).

New organization models also flourish in companies such as Pret à Manger (the U.K.'s socially conscious sandwich shops), Saturn (the automobile producer with a soul), and Novo-Nordisk (the Danish pharmaceutical company that includes environmental and social metrics in its bottom line). All three are passionate about core values and create familylike bonds among employees and customers. The information technology revolution has bred an array of innovative forms visible in such firms as eBay, the phenomenally successful Internet auction company, and software innovator SAS Institute. Despite such successes, there are still too many failures. How can leaders and managers improve the odds for themselves as well as their organizations?

THEORY BASE

Managers, consultants, and policy makers draw, formally or otherwise, on a variety of theories in an effort to change or improve organizations. Yet only in the past few decades have social scientists devoted much time or attention to developing ideas about how organizations work (or why they often fail). In the social sciences, several major schools of thought have evolved. Each has its own concepts and assumptions and espouses a view of how to bring social collectives under control.

Each tradition claims a scientific foundation. But theories easily become theologies, preaching a single, parochial scripture. Competing gospels present limited versions of reality but expanded prophetic visions of what the future holds, along with a definite set of strategies for reaching the Promised Land. Modern managers trying to get on top of things encounter a cacophony of voices and visions.

Consider an executive browsing in the management section of her local bookstore on a brisk winter day early in 2003. She is worried about her company's flagging performance and about the chance that her job might soon disappear. She spots the black-on-white spine of *The Six Sigma Way: How GE, Motorola, and Other Top Companies Are Honing Their Performance* (Pande, Neuman, and Cavanagh, 2000). She's not exactly sure what six sigma is, but she knows a lot of her peers are talking about it. Scanning the book, she is drawn to phrases such as "a flexible system for improved business leadership and performance," and "a new formula for 21st-century business success." Jumping to chapter two, she encounters, "In Figure 2.2 you see a model of a company as seen from a process-flow perspective. On the far left are the inputs to the process (or system); in the middle is the organization or process itself (depicted as a process map or flowchart). Finally, on the far-right, are the all-important customer, end products and (let's hope) profits."

"This stuff may be terrific," the executive tells herself, "but it seems a little dry."

Then she spots *Primal Leadership: Realizing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Goleman, McKee, and Boyatzis, 2002). The authors talk about how leaders can cultivate good feelings by developing the "four domains of emotional intelligence": self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management.

"Nice," she mumbles, "but a little squishy. Let's look for something a little more down to earth."

She finds *What Would Machiavelli Do? The Ends Justify the Meanness* (Bing, 2000). She ponders the book's basic premise: those who get ahead in business aren't necessarily smarter, just meaner. She reads, "A simple, detailed plan for those with the courage to leave kindness and decency behind, to seize the future by the throat and make it cough up money, power, and superior office space."

"He can't be serious, can he?" she wonders. "Anyway, it's too cynical. Isn't there something more uplifting?"

She spots *From Worst to First: Behind the Scenes of Continental's Remarkable Comeback* (Bethune and Huler, 1999). She glances at some of the chapter titles: "The Last Suppers, or Whose Problem Is It?" "Fly to Win, or You Can Make Pizza So Cheap No One Wants to Eat It." "Crop Duster's Son." She reads that Gordon Bethune's first official act when he took charge of Continental was to unlock the executive suite doors to show employees he wasn't trying to shut them out. He also gathered a group of employees in the company's parking lot to burn the old restrictive policy manuals.

"Bonfires in my company?" she muses. "I don't think so."

FRAMES AND REFRAMING

Had the executive visited another store in another year, she might have encountered other works but a similar range of opinions. Our purpose in this book is to sort through multiple voices competing for managers' attention. In doing so, we consolidate major schools of organizational thought into four perspectives.[2] There are many ways to label such outlooks—mental models, maps, mind-sets, schema, and cognitive lenses, to name a few. We have chosen the label *frames.* In describing frames, we deliberately mix metaphors, referring to them as windows, maps, tools, lenses, orientations, and perspectives because all of those images capture part of the ecumenical idea we want to convey.

As a mental map, a frame is a set of ideas or assumptions you carry in your head. It helps you understand and negotiate a particular "territory." The territory isn't necessarily defined by geography. It could be a sport, an art form, an academic subject, or anything else you care about. Suppose you like to cook and particularly enjoy Chinese food. You might develop an extensive stock of knowledge and concepts about Chinese cuisine. Eventually your understanding of subtle regional differences in spicing and ingredients might enable you to pinpoint which part of China a dish came from. Someone else trying to identify the same dish might not be sure whether it came from Beijing or Bombay. As the example indicates, the better your map, the easier it is to negotiate a terrain. But every map is bounded. A map of New York won't be of much help trying to navigate San Francisco. Modern automobiles often come with computerized navigation systems that tell you where you are and guide you turn-by-turn to your destination. It would be a big help if organizations could provide the same thing to managers. Unfortunately, to avoid getting lost, managers still need to develop and carry accurate maps in their heads.

Our purpose in this book is to present lenses, or frames, that help you understand and find your way around. Frames are windows on the world of leadership and management.

A good frame makes it easier to know what you are up against and what you can do about it. Goran Carstedt, the talented executive who led the turnaround of Volvo's French division in the 1980s, put it this way: "The world simply can't be made sense of, facts can't be organized, unless you have a mental model to begin with. That theory does not have to be the right one, because you can alter it along the way as information comes in. But you can't begin to learn without some concept that gives you expectations or hypotheses" (Hampden-Turner, 1992, p. 167).

Artistic managers such as Carstedt learn fluidly because they are able to frame and reframe experience, sorting through the tangled underbrush to find solutions to problems. A critic once commented to Cézanne, "That doesn't look anything like a sunset." Pondering his painting, Cézanne responded, "Then you don't see sunsets the way I do." Like Cézanne, leaders have to find new ways to see things. They must also articulate and communicate their vision so others can learn to shift perspectives when needed.

Like maps, frames are both windows on a territory and tools for navigation. Every tool has distinctive strengths and limitations. The right tool makes a job easier, but the wrong one just gets in the way. One or two tools may suffice for simple jobs, but not for more complex undertakings. Managers who master the hammer and expect all problems to behave like nails find organizational life confusing and frustrating. The wise manager, like a skilled carpenter or a professional chef, wants at hand a diverse collection of high-quality implements. Experienced managers also understand the difference between possessing a tool and knowing how to use it. Only experience and practice bring the skill and wisdom to size up a situation and use tools well.

Our goal is usable knowledge. We have sought ideas powerful enough to capture the subtlety and complexity of life in organizations yet simple enough to be useful. Our distillation has drawn much from the social sciences—particularly from sociology, psychology, political science, and anthropology. Thousands of managers and scores of organizations have also been our mentors. They helped us sift through social science research to identify ideas that work in practice. We have sorted insights drawn from both research and practice into four major frames, used by academics and practitioners alike to make sense of organizations. The four frames that we first described in the early 1980s—structural, human resource, political, and symbolic (Bolman and Deal, 1984)—have since been explored and adapted by other organizational scholars (including Bergquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 1988, 1992; and Dunford, 1992). The worried executive earlier in the chapter, seeking revelation in a bookstore, rediscovered the same four perspectives.

The first book she stumbled on, *The Six Sigma Way,* extends a long tradition that treats an organization as a factory. Drawing from sociology and management science, the *structural frame* emphasizes goals, specialized roles, and formal relationships. Structures—commonly depicted by organization charts—are designed to fit an organization's environment and technology. Organizations allocate responsibilities to participants ("division of labor"). They then create rules, policies, procedures, and hierarchies to coordinate diverse activities into a unified strategy. Problems arise when structure is poorly aligned with current circumstances. At that point, some form of reorganization or redesign is needed to remedy the mismatch.

A simple but fateful example: Riebling (2002) documents the long history of conflict and head butting between America's two intelligence agencies, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Central Intelligence Agency. Both are charged to combat espionage and terrorism, but the FBI's writ runs within the United States, while the CIA's mandate is everywhere else. Structurally, the FBI is housed in the Department of Justice and reports to the Attorney General, while the CIA reports through the Director of Central Intelligence to the president. At a number of major junctures in American history (including the assassination of President John F. Kennedy, the Iran-Contra scandal, and the September 11 terrorist attack), each agency held pieces of a larger puzzle, but coordination snafus made it hard for anyone to identify the individual pieces, much less to put them together.

Our executive next encountered *Primal Leadership*, with its focus on an organization's human side. The *human resource frame,* based particularly on ideas from psychology, sees an organization as much like an extended family, made up of individuals with needs, feelings, prejudices, skills, and limitations. People have a great capacity to learn and often an even greater capacity to defend old attitudes and beliefs. From a human resource perspective, the key challenge is to tailor organizations to individuals—to find a way for people to get the job done while feeling good about what they are doing. The conflict between the FBI and the CIA, for example, was fueled in part by a long-running feud between the agencies' two patron saints, J. Edgar Hoover and "Wild Bill" Donovan. When he first became FBI director in the 1920s, Hoover reported to Donovan, who tried to get him fired. When World War II broke out, Hoover wanted the FBI to become the nation's worldwide intelligence agency. He fumed when President Franklin D. Roosevelt instead created a new agency and made Donovan its director.

What Would Machiavelli Do? is a contemporary application of the *political frame,* rooted in the work of political scientists. It sees organizations as arenas, contests, or jungles.

Parochial interests compete for power and scarce resources. Conflict is rampant because of enduring differences in needs, perspectives, and lifestyles among competing individuals and groups. Bargaining, negotiation, coercion, and compromise are a normal part of everyday life. Coalitions form around specific interests and change as issues come and go. Problems arise when power is concentrated in the wrong places or is so broadly dispersed that nothing gets done. Solutions arise from political skill and acumen—as Machiavelli suggested centuries ago in *The Prince* ([1514] 1961). Conflict between the FBI and the CIA was exacerbated by competition for support and funding from Congress and the White House.

Finally, our executive encountered *From Worst to First*, with its emphasis on cultural change as the key to organizational transformation. The *symbolic frame,* drawing on social and cultural anthropology, treats organizations as tribes, theaters, or carnivals. It abandons assumptions of rationality more prominent in other frames. It sees organizations as cultures, propelled more by rituals, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths than by rules, policies, and managerial authority. Organization is also theater: actors play their roles in the organizational drama while audiences form impressions from what is seen onstage. Problems arise when actors blow their parts, when symbols lose their meaning, or when ceremonies and rituals lose their potency. We rebuild the expressive or spiritual side of organizations through the use of symbol, myth, and magic. The FBI, which built its image with the dramatic capture or killing of notorious gang leaders, bank robbers and foreign agents, liked to pounce quickly and publicly on suspects. The CIA preferred to work in the shadows, believing that patience and secrecy were a better route to its long-term goal of collecting intelligence and rooting out foreign spies.

The overview of the four-frame model in Table 1.1 shows that each of the frames has its own image of reality. You may be drawn to one or two frames and repelled by others. Some frames may seem clear and straightforward, while others seem puzzling. But learning to apply all four deepens your appreciation and understanding of organizations. Galileo discovered this when he devised the first telescope. Each lens he added contributed to a more accurate image of the heavens. Successful managers take advantage of the same truth. They reframe until they understand the situation at hand. They do this by using more than one frame, or perspective, to develop both a diagnosis of what they are up against and strategies for moving forward.

This claim has stimulated a growing body of research. Dunford and Palmer (1995) found that management courses teaching multiple frames had significant positive effects

TABLE 1.1. Overview of the Four-Frame Model.

	Frame			
	Structural	Human Resource	Political	Symbolic
Metaphor for organization	Factory or machine	Family	Jungle	Carnival, temple, theatre
Central concepts	Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment	Needs, skills, relationships	Power, conflict, competition, organizational politics	Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes
Image of leadership	Social architecture	Empowerment	Advocacy	Inspiration
Basic leadership challenge	Attune structure to task, technology, environment	Align organizational and human needs	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, beauty, meaning

over both the short run and the long—in fact, 98 percent of their respondents rated reframing as helpful or very helpful, and about 90 percent felt it gave them a competitive advantage. Another series of studies has shown that the ability to use multiple frames is associated with greater effectiveness for managers and leaders (Bensimon, 1989, 1990; Birnbaum, 1992; Bolman and Deal, 1991, 1992a, 1992b; Heimovics, Herman, and Jurkiewicz Coughlin, 1993, 1995; Wimpelberg, 1987).

Multiframe thinking requires elastic movement beyond narrow and mechanical approaches for understanding organizations. Table 1.2 presents two distinctive ways of approaching management and leadership. One is a rational-technical approach emphasizing certainty and control. The other is a more expressive, artistic conception encouraging flexibility, creativity, and interpretation. The first sees managers as technicians; the second sees them as leaders and artists.

We cannot count the number of times managers have told us that they handled some problem the "only way" it could be done. Such statements betray a failure of both imagi-

TABLE 1.2. Expanding Managerial Thinking.

How Managers Think	How Managers Might Think
They often have a limited view of organizations (for example, attributing almost all problems to individuals' flaws and errors).	They need a holistic framework that encourages inquiry into a range of significant issues: people, power, structure, and symbols.
Regardless of a problem's source, managers often choose rational and structural solutions: facts, logic, restructuring.	They need a palette that offers an array of options: bargaining as well as training, celebration as well as reorganization.
Managers often value certainty, rationality, and control while fearing ambiguity, paradox, and "going with the flow."	They need to develop creativity, risk taking, and playfulness in responses to life's dilemmas and paradoxes, focusing as much on finding the right question as the right answer, on finding meaning and faith amid clutter and confusion.
Leaders often rely on the "one right answer" and the "one best way"; they are stunned at the turmoil and resistance they generate.	Leaders need passionate, unwavering commitment to principle, combined with flexibility in understanding and responding to events.

nation and courage. It may be comforting to think that failure was unavoidable and we did all we could. But it can be enormously liberating to realize there is *always* more than one way to respond to any problem or dilemma. Those who master the ability to reframe report a liberating sense of choice and power. Managers are imprisoned only to the extent that their palette of ideas is impoverished.

This lack of imagination—Langer (1989) calls it "mindlessness"—is a major cause of the shortfall between the reach and the grasp of so many organizations—the empty chasm between dreams and reality, between noble aspirations and disappointing results. The gap is painfully acute in a world in which organizations dominate so much of our lives.

Akira Kurosawa's film *Rashomon* recounts the same event through the eyes of several witnesses. Each tells a very different story. Organizations are filled with people who have their own interpretations of what is and should be happening. Each version contains a glimmer of truth, but each is a product of the prejudices and blind spots of its maker.

No single story is comprehensive enough to make an organization truly understandable or manageable. Effective managers need multiple tools, the skill to use each of them, and the wisdom to match frames to situations.[3]

Artistry is neither exact nor precise. Artists interpret experience and express it in forms that can be felt, understood, and appreciated by others. Art embraces emotion, subtlety, ambiguity. An artist reframes the world so others can see new possibilities. Modern organizations often rely too much on engineering and too little on art in searching for attributes such as quality, commitment, and creativity. Art is not a replacement for engineering but an enhancement. Artistic leaders and managers help us see beyond today's reality to new forms that release untapped individual energies and improve collective performance. The leader as artist relies on images as well as memos, poetry as well as policy, reflection as well as command, and reframing as well as refitting.

CONCLUSION

As organizations have become pervasive and dominant, they have also become formidably difficult to understand and manage. The result is that managers are often nearly as clueless as the Dilberts of the world think they are. The consequences of myopic management and leadership show up every day, sometimes in small and subtle ways, sometimes in catastrophes like the collapse of Enron or WorldCom. Our basic premise is that a primary cause of managerial failure is faulty thinking rooted in inadequate ideas. Managers and those who try to help them too often rely on narrow models that capture only part of the realities of organizational life.

Learning multiple perspectives, or frames, is a defense against cluelessness. Frames serve multiple functions. They are maps that aid navigation, and tools for solving problems and getting things done. This book is organized around four frames that are rooted in both managerial practice and social science research. The *structural frame* focuses on the architecture of organization—the design of units and subunits, rules and roles, goals and policies—that shape and channel decisions and activities. The *human resource frame* emphasizes an understanding of people, with their strengths and foibles, reason and emotion, desires and fears. The *political frame* sees organizations as competitive arenas characterized by scarce resources, competing interests, and struggles for power and advantage.

Finally, the *symbolic frame* focuses on issues of meaning and faith. It puts ritual, ceremony, story, play, and culture at the heart of organizational life.

Each of the frames is both powerful and coherent. Collectively, they make it possible to reframe, viewing the same thing from multiple perspectives. When the world seems hopelessly confusing and nothing is working, reframing is a powerful tool for gaining clarity, generating new options, and finding strategies that work.

NOTES

1. Enron's reign as history's greatest corporate catastrophe was brief. An even bigger behemoth, WorldCom, with assets of more than $100 billion, thundered into Chapter 11 seven months later in July 2002. Stock worth more than forty-five dollars a share two years earlier fell to nine cents.
2. Among the possible ways of talking about frames are schemata or schema theory (Fiedler, 1982; Fiske and Dyer, 1985; Lord and Foti, 1986), representations (Frensch and Sternberg, 1991; Lesgold and Lajoie, 1991; Voss, Wolfe, Lawrence, and Engle, 1991), cognitive maps (Weick and Bougon, 1986), paradigms (Gregory, 1983; Kuhn, 1970), social categorizations (Cronshaw, 1987), implicit theories (Brief and Downey, 1983), mental models (Senge, 1990), and root metaphors. We follow Goffman (1974) in using the term *frame.*
3. A number of management scholars (including Allison, 1971; Bergquist, 1992; Birnbaum, 1988; Elmore, 1978; Morgan, 1986; Perrow, 1986; Quinn, 1988; Quinn, Faerman, Thompson, and McGrath, 1996; and Scott, 1981) have made similar arguments for a multiframe approach to organizations.