



Spring 2018



Spotlight program:

“Think Straight—Talk Straight” . . . Guiding Principles for Leaders



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## Leadership and Ambiguity

by George Amidon



George Amidon CRPC  
Managing Partner

In my previous article in our last newsletter, I had written about Introspection and being exposed to the AJIL assessment in our Think Straight – Talk Straight program. I shared some insights I had taken away personally on a few of the factors or attributes that caught my attention. Based on numerous conversations I’ve had recently I thought it made sense to explore more of the factors and how they might impact our decisions or judgement.

The first factor is identified as Tolerance of Anxiety in the Presence of Ambiguity. Ambiguity or ambiguous is

defined in the Collins English Dictionary as something that is unclear or confusing. When something is unclear or confusing it can create a heightened level of anxiety. In AJIL, Dr. Daven Morrison defines Tolerance of Anxiety as the accuracy of perceptions when a person experiences something ambiguous.

Leaders that score high in this factor tend to have accurate perceptions and their thinking remains strong. This skill is important for planning, change management and navigating conflict. What they need to watch out for is that because they see the “gray areas” their point of

view will miss those who see only “black or white”. There is potential to miss nuances in work teams or aggressive situations or both that can cause a setback. Teams may feel abandoned and the boss may feel uniformed.

When things are unclear or confusing, structure can lower the anxiety level. For leaders that are comfortable in dealing with ambiguity, they don’t necessarily see the need for structure. In their mind they can cut **(continued on Page 3)**



The “Coach”  
James A. Morel  
President

## Dad's Therapy . . . A perspective from the family

by Marques and Jim Morel

I was recently asked by the JAM Consulting team to write a brief article about my dad, Jim Morel (founder of JAM), specifically regarding his side job as the quasi-roadie/manager/spiritual overseer of my band, “the peOple.” I don’t know if I can say it all in such few words, but here goes...

The band consists of myself and my wife, Brooke, as well as bassist Mike Gothard and lead guitarist Bo Coleman. We perform mostly original songs that myself or Brooke have written, and depending on the venue we occasionally throw in some old country and folk tunes that are recognizable to the general public. **(continued on page 4)**



## Stress and Structure

By Greg “Heff” Heffington



Greg “Heff” Heffington RCC.  
Managing Partner

I have been working with several coaching clients lately who seem to be a bit more “stressed” than usual both in their personal as well as their professional lives. I would love to tell you that there seems to be one thing that is causing it, but alas, such is not the case. There are a myriad of issues and concerns making contributions to the overall stress people are under. I feel like I could write a book on the variables and issues causing the feeling of being stressed (perhaps one day I will). But, for this article, I would rather spend a little time on the strategy most people are applying to limit if not eliminate the stress they have been experiencing lately.

George’s article in this issue talks about the ability of leaders to operate without a structure around them or a path to follow as measured by the [AJIL™](#) assessment from our Think Straight Talk Straight program. Interestingly, Tolerance of Ambiguity is not just an issue for leaderships to think about, it impacts everyone to very large degree. There is

no question that for some the lack of structure (i.e. Ambiguity) does not hinder their success but may in fact enhance it. Yet for some this lack of a defined path or process can be debilitating. In either case, stress can result from the demands of a goal or task combined with the pressure of the “right now” mentality of today’s sales culture, the difficulty in landing a “deal”, the uncertainty of the future, and expectations of leadership within many organizations.

From a behavioral standpoint, adding structure to your response to a given situation will reduce the anxiety these situations create and in turn reduce the stress you might be feeling (even if you score high in the ability to operate in ambiguity as measured by AJIL™). Having a structure to address challenges is not and end all do all resolve to the idea of limiting or eliminating stress, but it will help because of the way we as humans are wired. We like paths and maps. It is much easier to follow a path then to create one from scratch.

So, when an organization is demanding more productivity and thinking they are doing everyone a favor by leaving it up the individual to figure out how to deliver that, it can become problematic. In other words, “go get more sales we don’t care how if you don’t violate ethical standards”, can be a welcomed challenge for some, but a real problem for others.

Some people are delighted in the flexibility of the challenge represented in that much flexibility but could still benefit from having some structure around the decisions and options being considered. If nothing else, just to keep track of what works and what doesn’t. For others, it become essential to have a solid plan laid out describing the step by step process they will need to follow to achieve the objective. Either way, having a plan or “structure” in your approach to any goal will benefit you. Of course, there are those that fall squarely in between

**(continued on page 3)**

## TRUST

By Kaleen Barbera



Kaleen Barbera CPC  
Managing Partner

Number one question from people we work with is this: how do I build a relationship with my key clients? If you’re in a repeat-sales or account executive position, is this a question you are constantly seeking an answer to as well? Probably. The solution is straightforward, but anything but easy. First, think back to times when the roles were reversed, and you were not the salesperson, BDO, CRM, or AE, but instead YOU



were the client. Do you recall the process you followed to choose the service provider you ultimately decided to work with? **(continued on page 5)**

## Leadership and Ambiguity (continued from page 1)

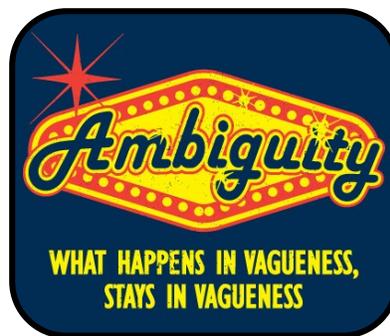
through the clutter so to speak and form a clear picture of the situation. The challenge is that quite often their team doesn't feel as comfortable with ambiguity and therefore requires more structure to help gain a clearer picture of the situation.

I've seen this happen time and again when change is taking place. The leader, comfortable with ambiguity and has developed a clear picture of the situation in his/her mind begins to move their organization into this change only to have push back, increased skepticism and a lack of engagement. Because they can see the picture they assume that the rest of the organization sees it just as they do. What's quite often missing is that there was little or no structure utilized to help their teams/employees more clearly understand where the organization was going helping to create a clearer picture for all. Without structure you begin to see a paralysis a delay in action within the organization, individuals not sure what they should do or why they should do it creating a passive

ownership in the change taking place.

A key behavioral science principle is that change causes stress/anxiety which can cause chaos within an organization and how you can lower that stress/anxiety is by providing structure to those affected.

So why do I bring this up? The AJIL assessment utilized in Think Straight – Talk Straight identifies 13 factors or attributes. Each one of these can be a strength or a saboteur and the better you understand yourself the more effective you can be as a leader and the better your judgement and decision making will be whether professionally or personally.



To learn more about Think Straight – Talk Straight use this link to view the program: <http://jamconsultinggroup.com/think-straight-talk-straight/>

As always – Good Luck and Good Selling!

George

*Because they can see the picture they assume that the rest of the organization sees it just as they do. What's quite often missing is that there was little or no structure utilized to help their teams.*

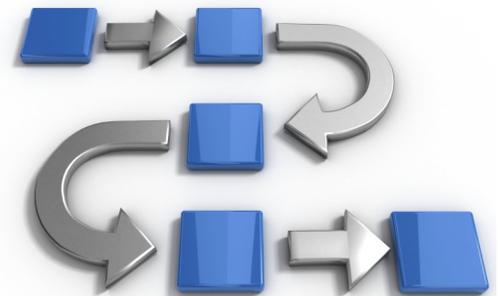
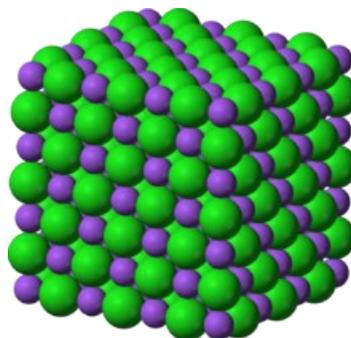
## Stress and Structure (continued from page 2)

these two as well. Everyone must build it out for themselves. What works for one might work for another, but it is likely small tweaks here and there will make all the difference in both reducing stress and achieving the desired results. We can help!

If you find yourself stressed about the challenges in front of you, or just want to learn more about our Think Straight - Talk Straight program and the AJIL™ Assessment, let us know. We are here to help.

<http://jamconsultinggroup.com/think-straight-talk-straight/>

Heff



## Dad's Therapy . . . A perspective from the family (continued from page 1)



Dad calls our music his “therapy” and being present at our shows really does seem to sustain and nourish a deeper essential part of him. There is rarely a gig that he misses. Even if we are playing 1,500 miles away in nowhere New Mexico he will most likely show up unless he has prior engagements with JAM. Even after he’d been rear ended at a dead stop by a car traveling at 60 mph and was plagued by cracked ribs, a broken nose, a fractured cheek bone, etc., all on top of having the flu, he still drove an hour out of his way the next day to attend every moment of our three hour gig. He even stayed afterwards to break down the performance with us- a new song he liked (he especially likes songs with strong humanistic messages), an observation of our performance, or an idea about a song or story we should add to our show.

Dad cannot help but to be a coach, and I think that’s because he really wants people to be better tomorrow than they were today, to thrive, to triumph over their insufficiencies and accomplish great things, to be brave enough to risk failure in the interest of personal growth. I think part of the reason he is so fascinated with our music is because he understands that a band must truly be a team to be any good at all. The music is only as good as the relationship between its members. And as far as I can tell, that’s what JAM is all about: helping individuals become members of

a team that functions harmoniously. Then and only then can we participate in an experience that is greater than ourselves.

That’s about it for now, but stay tuned folks! “the peOPLE” are on the lookout for an accordion player, and though he might downplay his hidden talents, Jim Morel might just be the guy for the job.

### **Marques Morel**

I guess my kids have been paying attention to what we do at JAM after all.

**Lesson # 1** to be productive and remain healthy some form of therapy is needed. You may have found yours through other outside interests, hobbies, kids soccer teams, coaching etc. My therapy has been through music.

**Lesson # 2** it is true JAM takes pride in seeing our clients become better versions of themselves as professionals. A client was asked by a prospect recently ' What has JAM Consulting done for your organization? The response: "JAM has left us better off than we were before meeting them. "

**Finally,** I am not so sure about Marques recruiting me to play the accordion. I'll update you on that in our next newsletter. That may be more therapy than I need!

**Jim “Coach” Morel**



Marques Morel



The “Coach”  
James A. Morel  
President

## TRUST (continued from page 2)

Maybe you were selling your home and needed a realtor, or you were remodeling part of your home and needed a contractor. Chances are you made your decision based on 3 key criteria: are they good at the job (technical expertise), can I get along with them (likeable), and can I rely on them to have my best interest in mind (trustworthy)? I am constantly testing this exact theory, and it rings true again and again. I have yet to find a situation where those 3 attributes weren't the deciding factors. But is there one thing that is valued more than others in a long-term professional relationship?

Well, again, we should ask ourselves: what do I value most in my closest relationships with people? Is it the fact that they are fun? Is it that we have a lot in common? Those things are important, but it comes down to trust. We value trust among all things. If we felt that our friends were ill-intended and unreliable, in short, untrustworthy, then we simply would not invest our emotional capital in the relationship.

So, why is it that we always try to impress people with features of products and our

technical expertise? The point is this: in order to connect, we need to stop focusing simply on the small talk we make in their office and the features of our products. Instead, let's focus on trust. Rather than assuming that our clients are the ones who are difficult to connect with, instead ask yourself, 'what am I doing to demonstrate I can be trusted?' And how do we do that?

Trust is built on multiple levels and over a long period of time, but it begins with a solid foundation. Small details are where it starts. For example, are you making promises and then delivering on them? Even little things like when you'll follow up, what you'll send, and arriving on time for appointments. Additionally, do you really listen to what your clients say? How do they know they've been heard? Last, are you consistent in your behavior, or do you have an air of unpredictability? These are things that both build trust, and also happen to be totally within your control. They strengthen your brand of being a reliable, trustworthy individual.

Knowing from research that the three things we're judged on are technical expertise, likeability, and trustworthiness, it's impera-



tive we start off on the right foot and stay on the right foot. Considering that trust takes time to build, it must always be something that is reinforced in our thoughts, words, and actions. Once you are aware of the impact of your actions, you can also start to create more likeability. Likeability is a combination of attributes that believe it or not, can be learned. So rather than asking yourself how to build a relationship with your clients, ask yourself, 'how can I demonstrate that I'm worthy of someone building a relationship with me?' Check out our program Clout which brings those elements to light.

<http://jamconsultinggroup.com/clout/>

Kaleen



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### Why JAM Consulting?

*"Our clients say what they appreciate most is that we help them become the best version of themselves as professionals, creating greater success.*

*We believe in maximizing an individual's potential, which leads to both opportunity and differentiation in a highly competitive landscape.*

*We do that through coaching, developing, and delivering relevant and insightful programs specializing in executive presence, communication, sales, and leadership. Our extensive expertise in those areas and the additional resources we access provide a unique edge to our clients and separates us from the competition."*

[www.jamconsultinggroup.com](http://www.jamconsultinggroup.com)