Humiliation Index Ideas

Who

My name is Lee Beaumont. I have a Master's Degree in Electrical Engineering from Purdue University. I retired after nearly 30 years at Bell Laboratories / Lucent Technologies. There I worked as a software development engineer, a Technical manager, a training department head, a quality management consultant, a new product development consultant, a systems engineer, and a system test manager.

Since retiring I have dedicated considerable time to studying Emotional Competency, and developing the site at: http://www.emotionalcompetency.com/ My background relevant to that work is described at: http://www.emotionalcompetency.com/author.htm

This summer I came across the HDHS website and have corresponded by email with Evelyn and a few members of the network. Two day's prior to the 10th workshop Evelyn copied me on an email discussing the index work. I offered a book chapter describing development of a corporate-wide metrics that I wrote in the mid 1990's See: http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/Beaumontmetricsid.pdf She placed me on the Thursday afternoon round table on the index.

Since then I have been logging my ideas on this project as they develop at: http://www.emotionalcompetency.com/hdi/

Standing on the Shoulders of Giants

When asked how he made so much progress so quickly, Isaac Newton famously answered: "If I have seen further than others it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." During the 1970's the emerging profession of software development was in chaos. A memorable quote that captured the dismay of the time was: "Scientists progress by standing on each other's shoulders. Software developers progress by trampling on each other's feet."

We face a choice. We too can stand on the shoulders of giants who have explored the topic of Humiliation before us. I suggest we learn all we can from the many contributions available to us. The best solution will synthesize all we can learn from that work.

I recommend we maintain a required reading list to help us all develop our core competencies around the topic. The list should begin with Linda's dissertation: http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/HartlingDoctoralDissertation.pdf

An Abundance of Ideas

I believe that the best decisions are made only after considering an abundance of ideas. This is a profound lesson for product developers and one I believe we can profitably adopt. Once a problem area is identified, it is not difficult to enumerate many different

approaches, solutions, and choices that could be fruitful. One idea leads to the next, and our thinking progresses rapidly. We gain new perspectives on the problem and its possible solutions. Our viewpoints evolve as we continue to seek the essential problem that we need to solve.

Thomas Edison tested thousands of substances before he found something that would work as the filament in his first electric light bulb.

Choosing Alternatives

At each development stage, the best alternatives are deliberately and explicitly chosen from an abundance of candidate ideas.

Step-Wise Refinement, Stage-Gate

The term *stepwise refinement*, also known as top down design, describes a natural progression from a vague idea to a final product or solution. Following this principle leads naturally to a staged approach to problem solving. (I have worked as a consultant on the application of Stage-Gate systems to development of large projects.)

With this approach we begin by exploring the problem space and defining high-level goals for the project. After a problem statement is selected ideas for solving the problem are explored. A high-level solution proposal is written based on a particular solution concept. Several of these proposals are considered before a single approach is selected. This begins the detailed specification stage followed by design, implementation, verification, launch, and operational experience.

So how does any of this engineering theory apply to us? I propose we proceed in a similar step-wise fashion with roughly these phases:

1) **Problem definition**. What problem are we working to solve by developing the index? What difference would it make? How would the world become a better place as a result? Who would measure what? Who would we share the results with? What change would result? How do we define humiliation? Do we focus on the victim, the perpetrator, or the observer? What are our goals? How will we know if they are met? Complete this sentence: I will know that the index is successful when . . .
2) **Solution Proposals**: A solution proposal is a brief high-level written description of one way the problem might be solved. It might be a few pages long and describe what is measured, who measures it, how the results are shared, how the results effect change, and how the problem and project goals are addressed. We need to create and consider an abundance of these proposals.
3) **Project Selection:** After considering several proposals, we select the few that we believe have the best chance of success. The selection is made considering a broad range of criteria, including the potential benefits of the solution and the resources we can dedicate to it.

4) **Implementation:** Once a project concept is selected, all the hard work of completing the design and implementation begin. This may include survey design, validation, refinement, data collection, analysis, and other tasks.
5) **Deployment:** With validated instruments or other products in hand, we are ready to begin measurement, reporting, and improving the measured system based on the results.
6) **Improvement:** The index can always be improved. This may involve refining instruments, surveying new areas, reaching new people, implementing other proposals that were deferred in step 3 above, and augmenting the original work as we continue to learn.

I'm not at all clear what stage we are now in.

Practical Application of Theory

The mark of an engineer is applying theory to solve practical problems. Research continues indefinitely while the talented engineer grabs relevant results to assemble some useful technology. The initial efforts are not often pretty, but breakthrough products emerge from this leap in focus.

I believe I can help the group by filling this role. I can propose many alternative solutions based on the existing research as I raise questions that require further study.

Making a Difference

I plan to assess the success of this project by the significance it has in making the world a better place. Reports are necessary but not sufficient to reduce the pain, suffering, retaliation, and other significant negative consequences of humiliation throughout the world. I challenge us to think big, and dare us to make the world a better place.

My Specific Ideas

Since joining this project I have described several ideas. Each of these could easily become a "Proposal" as described above:

The **UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights** is a profound document. Human rights violations are a major source of extreme humiliation throughout the world. We can leverage the prestige of the declaration by using it as a basis for assessing human rights violations, and the humiliation it causes.

The declaration can be used in two basic formats. One is a **report format** that organizations (e.g countries) are invited use to report on the status of human rights, as defined by the declaration. This report can then be assessed and the results fed back to the reporters. See: http://www.emotionalcompetency.com/hdi/hrguide.htm

This approach **leverages logistics** by allowing interested parties in the countries being studied to prepare the report. This also begins to solve the difficult problem of "**change agency**." Presumably those who prepare the report are interested in the results of the assessment.

An alternative approach is the **Questionnaire Format** for assessing attainment of human rights. Suggested items are now listed at: http://www.emotionalcompetency.com/hdi/hrq.htm It is most useful to use both the report and questionnaire formats as cross checks.

Two basic subscales reflect the core concepts in the Kano model of customer satisfaction. Satisfaction requires both the absence of deficit conditions and presence of exciting or inspiring conditions. The R-Scale measures the absence of deficit conditions and the E-Scale measures the presence of exciting conditions.

A **standard scale for estimating the humiliating impact of particular actions** can be developed. Publication of the Social Readjustment Rating Scale was a landmark event in the study of stress. An analogous scale, the Humiliation Impact Rating Scale, is proposed to help standardize comparisons of humiliating events.

What factors contribute to humiliation? What are the roles and contributions of the perpetrator, victim, and observer? How does a humiliated victim respond? These questions require further exploration. However, a **tentative integrated model** based on the defining characteristics of an "unjust insult that exposes powerlessness" is proposed here for further discussion.

The neurobiology of stress is described in Robert Sapolsky's book Why Zebras Don't Get Ulcers. The neurobiology of fear is described in Joseph E. Ledoux's book The Emotional Brain. Humiliation has such a powerful effect it seems likely that it also has a distinct **physiological and neurobiological signature**. Discovering that signature can help clarify and align our efforts. Perhaps that signature can be objectively measured.

Issues

Several basic issues face us as we begin this task. These include:

- Defining Humiliation,
- Measuring the impact of perpetrator actions, observer actions, victim characteristics, and victim responses.
- Problem Definition
- How we work together
- Change agency
- Scope
- Impact

Recommended Next Steps

I recommend we adopt the high-level model described in the "stepwise refinement" section above and proceed along those stages.