Analysis of a Labor Union's Organizational Structure: Capturing the Synergies of Constructive Conflict in an Organizational Redesign

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Abstract

Closed rational design, the preferred organizational structure in the 1960s, is a top-down linear organization with formal goals, processes and structures (Scott & Davis, 2003) and does not allow for the real-time interfacing necessary in today's competitive environment. Current and future institutions have a need for reorganization because of the constantly increasing capabilities of Information technology (IT). Today, IT has made the world a much smaller place as we find ourselves communicating with people of varying ethics, morals and values, in a potpourri of cross-national cultural systems. These vast differences mean organizations can no longer operate autocratically in a closed system of rigid rational design, characteristic of tight and inflexible bureaucratic administration. I theorize that organizations that have failed to transition to more interactive open and natural designs force employees to subvert their organization's rigid rational designs by creating sub-structures to minimize otherwise debilitating conflict resultant of archaic design and subsequent limiting policies. This paper analyzes the structure and operation of a large independent commercial pilot union to determine if the original structure developed during the early 1960s is effective in today's competitive environment. This paper also seeks to determine if the structure between respective intra-union officer groups, the supporting national committees and support staff at union headquarters fosters a milieu of constructive or destructive conflict outcomes. The analysis strives to determine what changes could be made to transition current conflict resolution processes toward greater transparency and more fruitful conflict outcomes.

Organizational Design: A Rational System Perspective

Mankind has been exploring organizational change for more than a thousand years extending back in time to Plato's *Republic*, Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Thomas Moore's *Utopia* (Sherman, Rowley & Armandi, 2006; Rahim, 1992). Early in the history of the business model, Adam Smith focused on organizing people in order to maximize productivity and efficiency. Other early pioneers like Frederick Taylor, Mary Parker Follet, Henry Fayol and L. Urwick used time-motion studies to organize and maximize human performance from the bottom up; that is, minimize worker motion and maximize output of individuals at the lowest level of the organization. Labor was opposed to time-motion studies, particularly Taylor's work, claiming managements' implementation of time-motion activities undermined the collective bargaining process by limiting wages in lieu of traditional negotiations (Rahim, 1992). In other words, effective time-motion applications reduced the number of jobs required to yield the same amount of product; therefore, from labor's viewpoint, scientific studies undermined labor's attempt to create and protect jobs.

Taylor (1911), Fayol (1916: 1949), Urwick (1937), and Mooney and Reiley were all advocates of managerial functions (planning, organizing, command, coordination and control) as

a closed system (Davis & Scott, 2003; Rahim, 1992). Moreover, they collectively prescribed top-down control of a mechanistic nature with clear lines of authority and hierarchical structures that required a division of labor; theoretically the practice would encourage harmony and discourage conflict.

Weber (1929; 1947) was also an advocate of closed rational systems; however, he instituted increasing levels of control in the form of a tight system of bureaucratic administration. Weber strongly advocated that his bureaucratic systems would further reduce conflict, although he did admit there was some natural dysfunction of bureaucracy (Davis & Scott, 2003; Rahim, 1992).

Mary Parker Follett (1926), touted as being decades ahead of her peers, was also considered a classical organization theorist; however, Follett added two significant perspectives to the theory during the 1920s. First, she believed that within an organization, constructive conflict added to the value of the organization, an opinion not shared by her fellow theorists who believed conflict should be minimized. Second, Follett believed that suppression, avoidance, dominance and compromise was ineffective in dealing with conflict and instead strongly advocated for an integrative method of problem-solving by those in managerial authority (Rahim, 1992).

Modern organizational theorists began to focus on the absence of humanity in the organization. Concentration on the humanistic aspect of organizations attracted more social scientists. Subsequently, human relations theory began to grow and gain support from theorists such as Lewin (1948), Likert (1967) and Whyte (1951). Literer (1966), Whyte (1967) and others added to the model though a clearer understanding of tension and problem solving. Specifically Whyte (1967) stated:

> The objective should not be to build a harmonious organization, but to build an organization capable of recognizing the problems it faces and developing ways of solving these problems. Since conflicts are an inevitable part of organization life, it is important that conflict-resolution procedures be built into the designs of the organization (p. 25).

Nightingale (1974) wrote, "Conflict becomes an instrument of social change and influence rather than a symptom of a breakdown in social relationships" (p.175; Rahim, 1992, p. 9). Miles (1980) forcefully wrote,

> Although some theorists have regarded excess organizational conflict as the antithesis of "organization," others have begun to stress the function of conflict as a vital seed from which organizational processes, such as activation and motivation, feedback and control, power balance and coalition formation, growth and innovation, and even the institutions for channeling and resolving disputes, germinate. These functions and dysfunctions reveal both the centrality of conflict in organizational life and the complexity associated with its management. Both these features make it absolutely essential that managers and organizational designers understand the context in which organizational conflict occurs and the variety of techniques available for use in its management (p. 129).

It is noteworthy to point out Miles' attention to "feedback and control." These are attributes of an open system versus the then-popular closed system organizational design. Moreover, Sherman et al., (2006), Scott and Davis (2003), and Scott (1981) labeled these closed rational models as *largely inaccurate systems* and not effective even though rational system designs

dominated the formulation and operation of most businesses early in the industrial age. The consequences of goal specificity and highly formalized processes seem to ossify strategic design and process efficiencies (Scott & Davis, 2003) in the absence of humanistic input. Even though people, i.e., employees and consumers, influence how organizations perform, perhaps more than any other factor, the value and potential of that competitive advantage (human capital) is often left in static form (Stewart, 1999) because it is not captured or optimized.

Natural and Open System Approaches

F. J. Roethisberger and Elton May theorized that imposing top-down work edicts would not result in collective gestalt work products as theorized by the advocates of closed rational designs (Rahim, 1992). Instead, Roethisberger and May studied organizations in their natural state to analyze the nature of work groups in organizations as a social system (Sherman et al., 2006). The researchers discovered that many sub-structuralized activities were ongoing outside of the regulated work process — issues of group dynamics, coalitions, friendships, power struggles (other than superior-subordinate relationships) and role / status — issues that required mangers to deal with emotion and irrationality outside of the normal management model of rational design (Sherman et al., 2006; Scott & Davis, 2003). Because this model did not include "external environmental" influences, and because the models attempted to describe rather than dictate management action, this new perspective on models was considered a natural *closed* system.

A rational system model was one in which managers could take resources (independent variables) and input into the system, transform them under management influences (dependent variable) to yield a predictable result. Managers needed a prescriptive theory; that is, one that dealt with principles and guidelines that could be applied consistently across boundaries — a closed rational system. In order to be transformational, the system or model needed feedback loops because each organization was unique and none of them operated in a vacuum. That means they all had to deal with environmental issues (competitors, substitutes, governmental factors, sociological factors, customers, suppliers, unions, local populations) in unique ways that no simple rational model could prescriptively address. Thus began the transition from closed to open systems in natural settings — settings unique to the natural environment of each organization (Sherman et al., 2006; Scott & Davis, 2003). Over time, surviving organizations learned to transition to natural *open* systems that interactively engaged with the environment of their unique settings. Those that did not have the foresight to transition to natural open systems models either struggled to survive or failed to achieve their original goals.

Natural and open system theorists also insist that when studying organizations, three levels of analysis should be studied: a) social psychological, b) organizational structural and c) ecological. For the purpose of this paper, the context of organizational theory will mean the examination of both the act of organizing and the actual structure of the organization's respective hierarchy as controlled by networks, policies, rules and sociological constructs.

Background History of the *The Pilots Union*

The Pilots Union is a pseudonym for the organized pilot labor group that was actually studied. *The Pilots Union* will henceforth be referred to as TPU. It is one of the largest independent commercial airline organized pilot labor groups in the world. The genesis of the TPU story begins with the birth of the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) on April Fools' Day

in 1931 (Lyons, 2011), the very first organized commercial airline pilot union. American Airways pilots were the first group of pilots to fully organize and negotiate a contract — 309 pilots had their first contract in May 1939. The last group of pilots from a major carrier, Pan Am, signed their first contract in 1945, a mere six years later (Lyons, 2011). By 1951, ALPA represented more than 50 different carriers. Problematic for ALPA at the time was the type of structure under which they organized — a heavy-handed, top-down closed rational system.

ALPA was responsible for representing all pilots during contract negotiations, yet each company negotiated pilot contracts under differing technological (advancement of piston driven engines, to turbo props, two-engine and four-engine aircraft, and then the advent of the jet), economic and city-pair route structure pressures unique to their respective companies. Strikes were common and pulled money from the communal ALPA treasury. Problematic union/management relationships resulted in some carriers striking more often than others, frequently leaving ALPA national funding too low for job actions by other pilot groups (Lyons, 2011).

American Airlines pilots were collaborative negotiators, but were forced by ALPA National decision-makers to go on strike in 1958 (Lyons, 2011) to further ALPA National's goals. Subsequently, squalid political intrigue resulted in the formulation of opposing coalitions that divided the ALPA controlling officers. Angry ALPA members were forced to create underground sub-organizations within their own network and hierarchies that operated autonomously from ALPA National. These coalitions turned into powerful political bodies and acted outside of ALPA's closed structure. As noted by Bolman and Deal (2008), all five propositions of the political frame came into play when a stewardess was elected to the ALPA Executive Committee instead of a member pilot. ALPA National's attempt to force a contract on the American Airlines pilots against their collective will escalated the conflict into action — American Airlines pilots voted on Nov. 26, 1963, to leave ALPA and adopt the first bylaws of the newly formed *The Pilots Union*, the first independent pilot union and the first splinter union from ALPA (Lyons, 2011).

During the week of Feb. 18, 1964, the first TPU National Officers were elected and the first national committees established (Lyons, 2011). The organization exists today almost exactly as it was formed in 1964 and continues to endure both internal and external political conflict. Unfortunately, American Airlines and its collective labor forces continue to experience confrontational relationships as American Airlines enters the early stages of chapter-11 bankruptcy processes (Poggi, 2011).

Methodology of Analysis

The TPU is a large organization with many substructures underlying the primary organizational design. Systematic case studies serve to identify both what is common and what is particular about the respective case, even if the organizational structure is complicated (Berg, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Berg (2009) maps out a case study process that is guided by grounded theory methodology, a highly regarded qualitative methodology. Due to the size of the organization, complexity of TPU's interwoven substructures, and extensive knowledge base experiences of the researcher, the rubrics of case study analysis were chosen for the research on TPU.

The purpose of this case study is to specifically and deliberately study TPU's organizational structure, identify inherent conflict resultant of structural design, and if viable, recommend

restructuring the organization to achieve greater levels of constructive conflict with the purpose of bringing value to the organization. The researcher shall strive to:

- Identify and examine the existing structure of the organization and then draw information from its participants,
- Monitor activities and functioning inherent to the nature of the case that identify particular conflict events, i.e., intra-personal, inter-personal, inter-group, intra-group and inter-organizational conflict that affect the nature of structural conflict.

The TPU Constitution and Bylaws, henceforth the C&B, states, "The governmental powers of the TPU shall be vested in the Board of Directors and the National Officers in accordance with the laws provided herein. The final control of the TPU shall be vested in the membership" (TPU, 2011, p.4). Based on the structure of the TPU governance, the central question for this study is:

- What endemic constraints are placed on the resolution of conflict events due to the organizational structure and sub-structures?

The substantive follow-on questions are:

- What types of restructuring can occur that fits the organization?
- What type of restructuring modifications will reduce destructive conflict?
- What restructuring changes will increase the opportunity for the participants to engage in constructive conflict processes that create greater value?
- What barriers exist that would prevent constructive restructuring changes?

The unit of analysis will be the organizational subcultures, i.e., the union's elected officials and their specific roles, the pilot membership, and the parties' respective intra-group interactions. The structure of the organization exists to provide a mechanism to execute and enforce the precepts of both the TPU C&B and the TPU Policy Manual. The preamble to the TPU C&B specifically states:

> This Constitution and Bylaws of the *The Pilots Union* [*sic pseudonym*] is hereinafter set forth to provide the mechanism where-by the collective and individual rights of the pilots in the TPU [*sic pseudonym*] are safeguarded through a formula for sound leadership and, at the same time, retention of control of the TPU by the membership (TPU, 2011, p. ii).

The TPU C&B does not set forth a specific structure to achieve the goals of the preamble other than stating:

1. This Constitution and Bylaws establishes TPU as a two-tiered labor organization consisting of individual domiciles and a national union (see Appendix B).
2. As set forth in, and only insofar as consistent with, this Constitution and Bylaws, the National Officers direct the day-to-day affairs of TPU,

3. The National Officers direct the day-to-day affairs of TPU subject to review and direction by the Board of Directors, which has the authority to alter, amend and add to this Constitution and Bylaws (p. 3), and
4. The Board of Directors shall approve a Policy Manual for the Allied Pilots Association which will provide the mechanism whereby the collective and individual rights of the pilots in the TPU are safeguarded through a formula for sound leadership and, at the same time, retention of control of the TPU by the membership (p. 4).

In keeping with the focus of the research, the purpose of the unit analyses of TPU's subcultures is twofold. First, the researcher will attempt to better understand the unintended conflict caused by structuring TPU governance in a two-tiered closed rational system. Second, if a more efficient system design exists, the researcher hopes to recommend an alternative form of governance that will more effectively achieve the goals of the TPU C&B preamble.

Data will be collected via multiple sources using semistandardized interviews (Berg, 2009) with officers, staff and pilots at large — all interviews will be confidential. Observations will be analyzed based on attendance as an observer and participant of board of director meetings, planning sessions, facilitated meetings and organizational meetings with American Airlines executives, which were collated over a seven-year period.

Observations and analysis will be made of ongoing practices at the TPU headquarters and through review of the union's C&B and the operating Policy Manual — the governing documents of the organization. Analysis of the collective data through a description of case and emerging themes will take form of a written analysis, to include a cross-case analysis of sub-structure interactions. Seven years of personal notes and more than 1,000 written documents by the author form the basis of this analysis.

Note: The researcher made a purposed attempt to remain unbiased throughout the analysis, discussion and recommendations, thereby approaching the project from an academic and theoretical perspective. Additionally, the researcher has no personal relationship with any of the current TPU officials, is not a member of any local or national committees and owns no AMR stock. Any critical observations or recommendations will not personally affect the researcher.

Structure of TPU's National Officers, Board of Directors, Members and Staff

Note: The forthcoming material is intentionally concise so as not to distract from the case study discussion and recommendations.

National Officers

There are three national officers elected by a majority of voting members from the entire pilot electorate. The national officer positions include the president, vice president and secretary-treasurer; they serve a three-year term and are not members of the board of directors. Even though the national officers are responsible for the joint governance of the TPU (TPU, 2011), none are voting members of the policy setting body. The national officers do not report to the board of directors. In other words, there is no hierarchical link between the national officers and the board of directors, yet both serve the pilot membership, often from different political camps.

Key Attributes of the Offices of the National Officers

- **President**: The president's job is to enforce the TPU C&B on a daily basis. The president is also responsible for hiring and terminating office staff members (TPU, 2011).
- **Vice President (VP)**: The VP's role is to serve at the pleasure of the president and assist the president in completing presidential duties.
- **Secretary-Treasurer (ST)**: The ST assists the president in constructing the annual budget. Otherwise, the ST has no other reporting hierarchy commanded by the C&B, which suggests that the ST works autonomously in executing the "governmental powers of the TPU" (TPU, 2011).

TPU Board of Directors

The TPU board of directors, henceforth the BOD, is comprised of the 18 independent domicile officers that act as representatives of the nine pilot crew bases. When the BOD is sitting as a collective body, it possesses its full policy setting authority, thereby acquiring enforcement powers of the C&B and the Policy Manual. As a sitting body, the BOD has the power to alter, amend and add to the C&B or the TPU Policy Manual. The board is required to meet for at least one week each quarter. Once the meeting is adjourned, the board is no longer functional as an authoritative body.

Structure of Pilot Domiciles

The TPU membership is comprised of all active pilots counted on the TPU seniority lists that are members in good standing (see Appendix C). American Airlines currently has nine pilot crew (domicile) bases across the United States. Each domicile has two independently elected and autonomously operating domicile officers: chairman and vice chairman, who serve for two-year terms. Domicile officers run the day-to-day union business of their respective domiciles; e.g., grievances, discipline, contract issues/violations and general support of pilots' life issues. There are no formal feedback channels for pilot members to domicile officer other than volunteer means of communication such as phone calls and e-mails.

National Committees

Five national committees are board-elected by secret ballot (TPU, 2011). The board also elects the Communications and Strike Preparedness committee chairmen; however, the president appoints the respective committee members. The TPU president appoints the remaining 25 committees (see Appendix A). Problematic in this design is the fact that while the board is not in session, there is no oversight of the board-elected committees or their respective members. Moreover, there are no procedures that prioritize committee tasking of TPU staff support. The staff is left in a quandary as to who to serve with what priority, often creating uncomfortable conflict situations. There is no hierarchically structured interface between the staff, the officers, national committees and the membership at large. Moreover, there are no meaningful disciplinary procedures that any TPU officer can use to enforce the C&B or documented policies of the organization when a committee person acts out of turn.

Subculture Groups

There are several sub-groups that operate outside the realm of the official structure of the TPU. One such group is Pilots Defending the Profession, a grassroots organization, operating through www.TPUPDP.org. Even though the title implies that the TPU sanctions the forum, this dissenting political faction challenges incumbent officers on a variety of issues without accountability — in fact, most of the creators and editors of PDP documents hide behind a mask of secrecy and that preserves their identity and fosters a milieu of no accountability. The PDP has its own infrastructure, funding and resources, and is a powerful social group (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Godwyn & Hoffer-Gittell, 2010) working autonomously in a way that continuously undermines the normal TPU structure. The core group of the PDP has operated subversively since the late 1990s.

There is also a TPU-sponsored forum, Challenge and Response (C & R), where union members can discuss any issue. This forum is not monitored or censored by union officials; instead, it is a forum where pilots can vet ideas and vent frustrations. Political factions also exist on this forum, with pilots attacking one another in interpersonal and intergroup dialogues of a destructive nature (Bolman & Deal, 2008). There are no value chains or code of ethics to shape the behavior of the participants. Since the site is not monitored for content, there are no enforcement polices that require professionalism or ethical behavior, thus no consequences to those who behave irrationally, irresponsibly or unprofessionally. Those participants exerting the greatest coercive power control the dialogue context and focus. Frequently the site turns into a mean-spirited intergroup turf war focused on personalities instead of problem-solving (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Hofstede, 1998; Rahim, 1992). Pilots have had their employment terminated because of their irresponsible dialogue and rhetoric on this internal union online forum.

Discussion

Synthesizing Blackard & Gibson (2002), Lipsky, Seeber, & Fincher (2003) and Rahim's (1992) perspectives on organizational conflict, for the purpose of this paper, organizational conflict is defined as "A process of social interaction whereby individuals and or groups compete for limited common resources, power, and social status, using their own system of ethics, beliefs, values, and cultures." The context of the ensuing discussion is shaped through the aforementioned lens on organizational conflict in concert with the collective perspectives of the researcher (based on the researcher's experiences and case study observations), and the collected perspectives of current union officials. Consideration is also given to the influences of financial costs to the organization; however, in this case study, cost savings is a benefit versus a driver of organizational change recommendations. Finally, according to Jones's (1983) theory on bureaucratic culture, the TPU is examined from a bureaucratic operation focusing on the rights and obligations of the role holder specific to formal areas of authority and procedures of organizational members (Hofstede, 1998). The following commentary is based on the Bolman & Deal (2008) reframing precepts of structural, human resource, political and symbolic factors.

Structural

The current two-tiered structure isolates the national officers and the board of directors instead of enjoining them as a collective body from the membership they are to serve. The board

is given oversight responsibility of the daily activities of the national officers, yet the board is not given the tools to do so under the current TPU C&B and Policy Manual. The national officers are required to enforce rules and regulations, yet are left to interpret them without oversight or guidance from a body that is constantly changing perspectives due to short two-year terms (TPU, 2011). The two parallel bodies of governance are set up for operating on the destructive side of the conflict continuum, given the natural differences of their respective Jungian behavior types and communicative styles (Thompson, 1997; Myers, McCaulley, Quenk, & Hammer, 2003).

There are no processes established by the TPU C&B or Policy Manual to settle conflicts, disputes or differing perspectives other than through the use of positional and political power (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This creates a powerful frame for negative political dynamics through organizational coalitions that exasperate enduring differences (Bolman & Deal, 2008). The ensuing dynamisms set the stage for a focus on differences instead of commonalities, as each political body seeks to achieve its own goals without regard for the interests of others (Fisher, Ury, & Patton, 1991). Moreover, the C&B gives the pilot membership vested final control of the TPU organization, yet provides no realistic means for the collective pilot group to do so. While there is an espoused hierarchy among the pilot membership, the national officers, the board of directors and the domicile officers, there is no functional connection that allows the full force of any body to actively engage on a regular basis. The only recourse for the membership is to recall an TPU officer and that is done through a voting ballot that requires a 50 percent vote of all respective members of a domicile in a local recall or at least a majority agreement of all TPU members in a national petition for recall. There has never been a successful recall vote in TPU history, largely because 50 percent of the membership does not vote on any agenda item.

Human Resource

Over the course of time, fewer and fewer pilot members have participated in union voting activities. It is theorized that this is largely due to pilot members feeling disempowered. In other words, their voices are not heard, so they just do not participate in voting activities until they know those activities will affect their life directly. This inference is drawn from dozens of personal conversations with fellow pilots, the case study survey and the percentage of pilot members who actually vote in national and local domicile elections. Validation of the apathy inference would require a separate research project beyond the scope of this project.

Currently there are no formal double-looped feedback processes established within the TPU operation. There is an e-mail system called Soundoff, which gives pilots the capability to send a message to the entire board and all national officers, but there is no requirement for officers to read the e-mails or respond. During this research project, the researcher sent several Soundoff messages and did not receive a single response from any TPU official.

Political

As previously mentioned, there are no limitations in the TPU C&B or Policy Manual that prohibit the formulation of unofficial subcultures or grassroots organizations that undermine the precepts of the mother organization. Moreover, there is no code of ethics that are part of the TPU C&B; therefore, there is no standard of practice required of union officers other than the loosely worded edict that "All Association officers, committee members, agents, and employees are obligated to be aware of, understand, and conduct themselves consistent with the policies

contained herein" (TPU, 2011, p. 4). It is worthy to note that the verbiage to comply with the founding documents does not include the individual pilot member; therefore, there is no means to enforce non-compliant members, which in turn allows broad latitudes in political activities outside of official channels.

Symbolic

Pilotage of commercial aircraft has a long history of romanticism and high publicly held stature. Belonging to such a group brings meaningful and shared symbology (history, ceremony and ritual) (Bolman & Deal, 2008). Yet the travesties of Sept. 11, 2001 and the resultant demise of the profession due to the large number of bankruptcy filings have resulted in financial pressures on parent companies that subsequently reduced the pilots' careers to a mere job, with some compensation so low that pilots qualify for food stamps. The American Airlines pilot workforce was operating at 1992 wages until May 2013, which in turn forces many pilots to engage in second jobs to maintain their previous standard of living. Pilots no longer have discretionary time to engage in voluntary union activities. The reduction in the group's cultural status resulted in rampant apathy amongst the pilot group to such a low point that many TPU board positions are filled uncontested — the end result is a dramatic decrease of excellence, skill and caring amongst the group of volunteer leaders (Bolman & Deal, 2008). It is noteworthy that the TPU is a volunteer organization where no officer is on a fixed salary. The only compensation pilot union officials receive is for missed trips resultant of union work; only the president receives a fixed salary.

Summary and Recommendations

The initial structure of the Allied Pilots Association is a typical vertical rational design fashioned after a military-like structure with relatively clear lines of hierarchy; it is a closed system that does not seek an active relationship with its environment (members, government, public or management). Unfortunately, there is a parallel hierarchy between national officers and board members without connections that sets up naturally opposing political factions.

The power of political coalitions completely undermines the otherwise tight fit of a rational design with strict bureaucratic administration within TPU. What the TPU founding fathers did not foresee was the eventual formulation of ensuing political coalitions and their ability to communicate in real time using commonplace information technology. Closed rational design, the preferred organizational structure in the 1960s, is a top-down linear organization with formal goals, processes and structures (Scott & Davis, 2003) and does not allow for the real-time interfacing necessary in today's world between elected union officials, the membership and company executives. The effects of a closed rational design can result in a sub-culture's attempted to hijack the authority of the tightly controlled bureaucratic administration when there is a dysfunctional structure with a disconnected hierarchy (Bolman & Deal, 2008).

Demographically the TPU pilot group is heterogeneous and bifurcated into two distinct groups of captains and first officers. It is noteworthy that TPU has a disproportionate number of pilots who have been in the first officer seat for more than 18 years and will not be able to move to the captain seat until more senior pilots retire, which represents significant career stagnation and diminished earnings. Fostered by career stagnation, less prestige and what seems to be inequitable compensation dynamics from the first officers' perspectives, it is theorized that

stagnation and rights-based power dynamics (Bolman & Deal, 2008; Blackard & Gibson, 2002) promote apathy, resulting in limited pilot participation in union activities, especially election of union officials. Moreover, the political frame is complicated by a rights dispute versus an interest dispute (Lipsky, et al, 2003) and is further exasperated by a protracted ongoing contract negotiation of more than seven years and a recent bankruptcy filing. Further research of union member activity correlated to career progression is needed.

TPU officials will first need to recognize there are problems ***and*** solutions. They should then strive to learn heuristically about the problems and opportunities. A group of national officers and an open-minded board of directors will need to hold a constitution and bylaws symposium focused on reframing and restructuring the organization into a trim and highly functional governance that empowers and homogenizes the pilot membership in real time. After much observation, participation, active-listening engagement and reflection, the following recommendations are made to help TPU officers transition to an open natural design:

1. Combine the officers into a single tier as a board of directors headed up by a chairman elected from the represented domiciles. Each board member receives one vote, including the chairperson.

    a. Dispense with the indentured vice president and the secretary treasurer.
    b. Instead, allow a professional employee entitled *director of finance* to fulfill the role of the secretary treasurer – the current staff director of finance already does most of the work. Moreover, there is no requirement for elected secretary treasure to have any financial expertise, thus the position is based on popularity versus skill and talent. The TPU already uses a recording secretary to generate board-meeting minutes. An Executive Administrator can oversee the distribution of meeting minutes to the membership.
    c. Hire a professional non-pilot executive assistant to assist the president in daily administrative routines; somewhat like a chief-of-staff.
    d. Retain the services of a professional executive administrator to oversee the daily tasking and operation of the TPU staff – freeing the president for presidential duties.
    e. The vice president shall be elected by one person-one vote criteria by the board of directors. The VP's duties will be to represent the board while they are in a dormant state and to assist the president in the execution of board policy. The VP shall report directly to the board, much like an Ombudsman, yet shall assist the president in running the organization while the board is not in session.

2. The board shall be comprised of pilots elected by a majority vote of ***all*** pilot members from each respective domicile. This action re-engages the pilot membership and gives them a true voice in their union matters. The silent majority now matters.
3. Mandate that in order for a domicile to be represented at the board of director level, a domicile must elect its official by a 50 percent majority of ***all*** eligible voting members, not just 50 percent of those voting. This action disenfranchises illegitimate surrogate political parties, re-engages and energizes an apathetic pilot group, and empowers the broad-based membership. The membership will now regain control of the union through active participation.
4. Allow the board of directors to elect its own chairperson as the full-time board spokesperson. This person could be the president, the vice president or a formal chairperson. The structure

would be like that of CEO and president of the union. This action keeps the chairperson election from being a popularity contest and may raise the level of quality of those running for office at the domicile level. It is theorized that actively engaged pilot members at the local domicile level would be more careful about the quality of official they elect. Also, recall of officers now becomes a realistic event because pilots will not assume that someone else will vote. To be represented at least 50 percent of the domicile members must participate in elections and recalls alike.

a. Give the board the power to recall the chairperson based on a 2/3s vote on a one-person, one-vote protocol. This action minimizes the effect of political alliances and empowers the board to work as a team instead of as opposing political powers.
b. Allow domiciles with more than 750 pilots to have two representatives at the board table. Domiciles with fewer than 750 pilots shall have one board representative.
c. Dispense with roll call voting and require all actions be passed by a 2/3s vote on a one-person, one-vote protocol. Again, this action minimizes influencing political activities and forces the BOD to act as a bipartisan body instead of political factions.

5. Require all Constitution and Bylaws changes be approved by a 3/4 vote by the board and allow the entire pilot membership to override board action by a 2/3 pilot membership vote. Since 1964, there have been 66 C&B changes – 58 since 1987. A true C&B should rarely be changed and instead should be a stalwart document (general counsel).
6. Hire an attorney and rewrite the C&B and Policy Manual to ensure that each document is properly worded, structured and contains matters that pertain to the correct respective document.
7. Develop a meaningful disciplinary system that gives the board the means to effectively apply discipline to members who knowingly and willingly violate the C&B and Policy Manual.
8. Set up a double-looped feedback system to ensure that pilot members are given a timely response to their inputs that fosters a symbiotic relationship within the TPU (Miller, 1993).

Conclusion

Kurt Lewin (1948) sought to learn how to manage group conflict through modification of social behavior. Lewin also theorized that ethical and humanist approaches needing change were key to durable transformations in a group's behavior. Finally, Lewin realized that Field Theory, Group Dynamics, Action Research and his 3-Step model (unfreezing, moving, embracing) were mutually inclusive processes that, when properly managed, could collectively bring about gestalt and effective change (Burnes, 2004). The TPU is currently stuck in a frozen mode, which is inhibiting constructive change. The TPU must become a learning organization if it is to survive as a meaningful organization going forward.

How then will TPU successfully manage change? First it must prepare by forming a team that will psychologically and physically engage in and embrace meaningful and productive change. Second, it needs to purposefully implement the design with the ideology that change is ongoing, therefore the TPU must convert to an open natural design. Finally, union officials and pilot members must embrace participative engagement in transparent and schematic processes that simultaneously solicit double-looped feedback. The group must remain flexible and expect readjustments as necessary to realize an eloquent and durable solution that addresses the mutual

interests of the collective parties (Fisher, et al., 1991). To achieve these recommended changes, the use of a professional third-party neutral (facilitator and/or mediator) will be required to manage developmental activities. The sooner TPU officials embrace the need for change, the sooner effective change will occur such that TPU can better achieve successful outcomes in the newly ongoing bankruptcy process.

Future research on union structures should focus on the effects of competing theories such as: leadership bounded rationality, causal ambiguity, agency theory, effects of behavior type/traits, emotional intelligence factors, conflict theories, and the various effects of leadership styles. Follow on research could also investigate how all of these varying concepts and theories affect the gestalt synergies of their combined influences in a manner that fosters constructive conflict and minimized destructive conflict events.

Note: Comments and questions should be directed to the author at manageconflict@me.com.

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Appendix A

The Pilots Union **National Committee List**

Aeromedical		International Alliance
*Appeal Board		Jumpseat
Benefits Review and Appeals Board		Membership/Furlough
CADC		*Negotiating
CAPA		Pension
Captain's Authority		Political Action
Check Airman		Professional Standards
**Communications		Safety
Contingency		Scholarship Fund
Contract Compliance		Scope
Family Awareness		Security
*Financial Audit		*Strategic Planning
Flight Time/Duty Time		**Strike
Government Affairs		*TASC
Hotel		Training
Information Technology		TUL/TECH Liaison

Board of directors appoint:

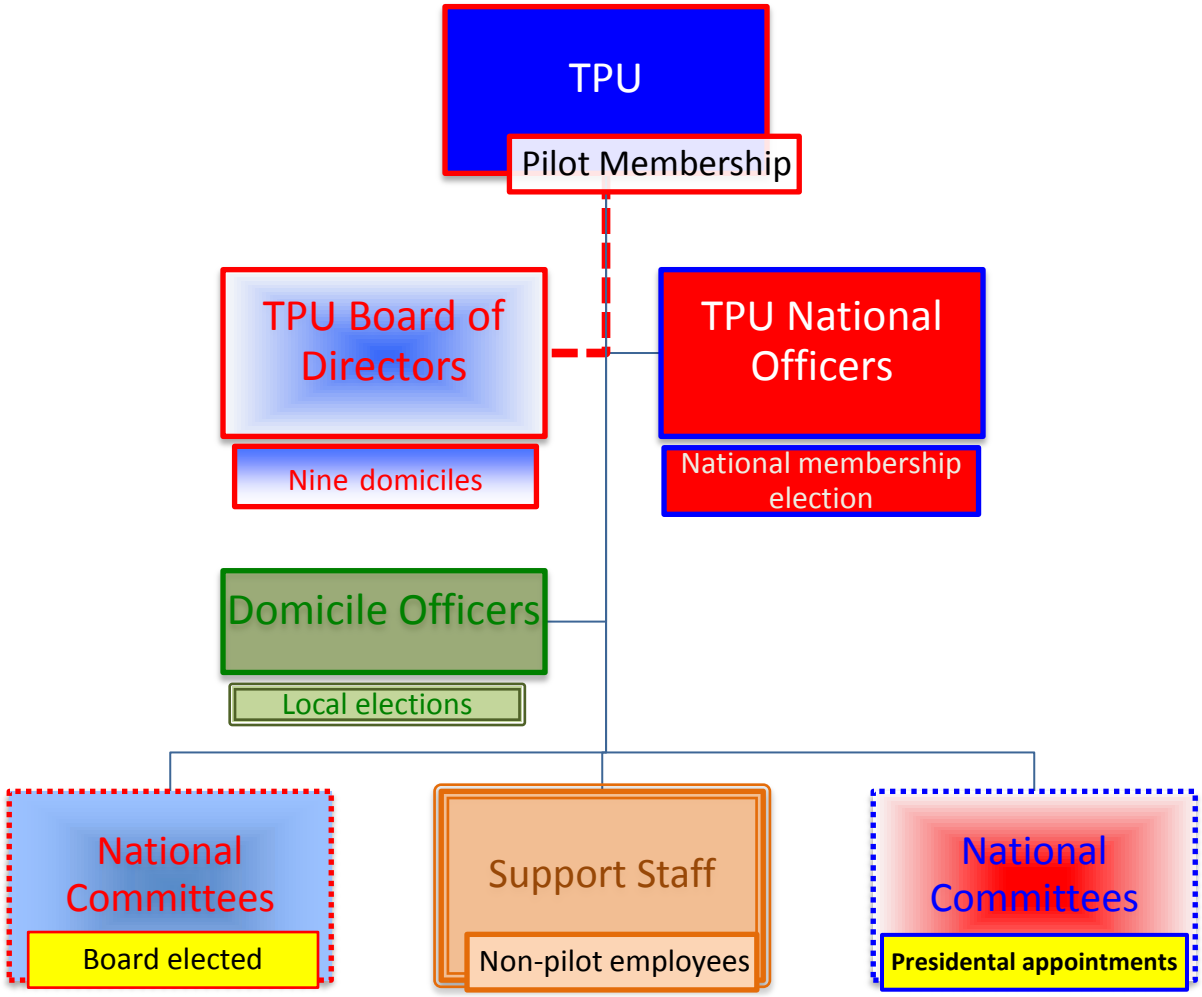
'*' committees in a secret ballot vote.

The president appoints all other committees and their respective chairs except as depicted by '**'

** The president appoints committee chairmen, but the board of directors appoints the remainder of the committee members.

Appendix B

The Pilots Union Organizational Chart with Sitting Board of Directors



Appendix C

TPU organizational chart centric to daily operation and pilot behavior