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INTERVIEWER:

I like today's question, "if your organization was running absolutely perfectly, how would you know?" What were some of the things you took away from today?

FRAMIÑÁN:

What I found interesting was how I came into this with different ideas than some of the other participants. When you think about what is the perfect organization it's interesting to see that just the way each of us thought about a perfect organization reflects some of the challenges that we have as we address the question and then look at organizational performance. For example, some folks thought of what it meant to them as a leader. What does a leadership role look like in a perfect organization? Others thought about perfection in terms of the delivery to their constituents, whether it might be members or their stakeholders. And then for others it was a little more academic in the sense of performance of the organization for measurements like financial results and smooth operating statistics. That was the first thing that was very interesting.

What I take away from today is thinking through the definition of the perfect organization as one that is not static, cannot be static, and therefore there is no "the" definition. Rather, how do you create an organization that is going to be able to smoothly adjust and modify, whether it's to maintain the good place that you enjoy as an organization or to change or grow? If your aspirations are to do more of the same and continue to do it well, how do you deal with disruptions like the recession? And if your aspirations are to change or grow, to be able to address that is then your definition of the perfect organization.

INTERVIEWER:

What sort of experiences have you had in running a company, trying to drive towards perfection – or even just higher performance – and the balance between the stability and the innovation?

FRAMIÑÁN:

It's interesting because one of the things that I think I have done well is to create a very good and accurate profile of the talent that I need at TPO to be successful in our work with companies and organizations. What's interesting though, is that from the operational perspective, in an effort to make sure I could measure certain things like quality and customer satisfaction, I built in some processes that in fact were in direct contradiction to those ideal characteristics I had outlined for the talent. So after recognizing that I was preventing people from doing the great work that I hired them to do by putting things in place that were important measurements to me but were not in fact particularly valuable for what we were delivering to our customers, and certainly wasn't particularly valuable to some of the consultants that we had working for us, that I really began to reflect on what we needed to get rid of, and what was important and what wasn't.

INTERVIEWER:

Everybody so far today has talked about getting rid of some unimportant things. But that can't mean that certain measurements that you require can't be put in place.

FRAMIÑÁN:

Absolutely not. There are some very important things to measure but I think it's more how you measure them. Certain processes and specific details are not really necessary to understanding the information that allows us to know when we are doing a good job or not. For example, if it's important to know that we're being successful with our clients, that they realize that the human capital perspective in fact really does make a difference as to how they accomplish their business and their goals. Then they demonstrate that by not

only wanting to continue to work with TPO but perhaps even increasing the amount of time that we work for them in a given month. That's important information and something that I think, like any business, I want to know, whether I've got same-store sales, if you will, or what my client retention is. However, to put a process in place that asks the wrong people to collect the data, makes how you collect the data get in the way. If you're looking for strong independent consultants that are very creative in seeing the links between a client's strategy and their human capital practices, these are not necessarily the right people to ask to sit down at a computer and fill in forms for me when we have other ways that we can collect that made a lot more sense. I wouldn't say that I got rid of them. I changed the way I was collecting that information.

INTERVIEWER: You changed the way you collected that data?

FRAMIÑÁN: That's right. We need to be able to track how we're doing as an organization; including things that are important, like are we keeping the companies happy? How do they demonstrate that? By doing more work, referring other people to you, staying with you year over year. Those are all things that are valuable pieces of information for me to know. The question is, who do you have collect that? While I think of independent consultants as people that really have the judgment, who understand the right things to do, have the freedom to go out and do them every day – their not necessarily the right people to ask to capture data like that and report it to me. We found other ways to have that data input through management systems and reports as well as investing more in TPO's infrastructure internally to be able to get that kind of management information without taking time away from the TPO consultants and their focus, which is really to make sure that our client's companies are accomplishing their business objectives.

INTERVIEWER: It's one thing to say that didn't work and it's another thing to then step back and say how do we do it differently, and should we even be doing this? And then further, how does this effort impact the client company?

FRAMIÑÁN: Yes, and the way I look at it is, that profile of who I need to be effective in this role means that they are motivated to do the right things and to work hard because that's what they enjoy. They're able to recognize that they're making a difference in the companies that they're working with on a daily basis, not that they lose sight that they work for TPO, but in fact their focus is for those client companies. If I have the right people doing that, they need feedback on how they're doing in that work. As an automatic following, then the loyalty to TPO and continuity of TPO's business follows from their staying focused on the customer. Giving them information and feedback on how their organizations are doing provides the motivation for them to keep doing more and that then gives me the information that I need for our business to thrive, which is keeping clients, doing the right things for clients. It's almost as if you take care of the customers, the profits follow instead of focusing on your internal metrics only and losing sight of what was important to those client companies, that would have been the inverse approach. Asking the consultants to spend time away from what their key and primary focus is to do TPO internal administrative work was creating a tension where they felt pulled from what they really were there to do, what they were motivated to do. And so to be able to free them up from that in fact means they're giving more time and energy to those client companies who then turn around, reap the benefits, see the results of having us engaged and keep us engaged.

INTERVIEWER: You're not reaping benefits of having all these smart people since there's no chance for the collegial, bonding, serendipitous conversations that spark new ideas for TPO because all the brainpower is now distributed out to other companies. How do you manage around that?

FRAMIÑÁN: They're not near each other, but we do provide lots of opportunities for them to get together. I think this is an important point because we certainly are not unique. Whether you're a government contractor with people at contract sites or you've got a

telecommuting option because you can only find the best talent in Ohio and you're based in DC – whatever your reasons are, it's not unusual. We have a couple of things. First of all, I think it's important that our team feels connected to TPO because we have an obligation to them to make sure that they don't have a lot of barriers to doing great work. We provide the right technology and tools for them to do that, including a lot of intellectual property that facilitates their job rather than having them create things in a vacuum. Along with that is a regular and highly-encouraged utilized way for them to connect all of the time through technology. They're constantly working with each other as peers on client-related issues to keep themselves connected. They reap the benefits of the knowledge and intellectual property of the whole, as well as then they get some satisfaction from contributing to that as well, and able to share their professional experiences and wisdom with their peers when asked. Besides providing the updated education on regulatory compliance, state of the art technology, and best practices in our fields, we do create the opportunities for them to get together, both professionally, regularly – we do it once a month – as well as opportunities to get together socially. And so, the technology that we have in place to afford them that connection on an ongoing basis, on a daily basis, gets reinforced by that human connectivity periodically so that they actually engage, take advantage of it, contribute to it and we all benefit.

INTERVIEWER:

What are some of the core human infrastructure principles that any company should be using to make sure that they're getting the most out of their employees, even if they're not virtual?

FRAMIÑÁN:

As leaders we need to create opportunities for people to engage and have them do it in a way that is meaningful. In HR, I can't tell you how many times I've heard, "Is this another Kumbaya moment?" It has to be an opportunity for some kind of really meaningful exchange. I think it does depend on your workforce, the right ways to do it. I don't think there is a simple one size fit all, other than to say that as leaders we do need to create those opportunities and have it founded in an organization need. It should be supporting your overall strategic plan, your mission, supporting your values and principles as an organization. You can't simply throw a pizza out there and think that you've satisfied this need that you have organizationally to encourage this, and certainly not for the team out there. Remember, they're looking for a way to connect. They want to be able to do their jobs well, and I think that people like to know that they've got that team and the resources behind them from their colleagues as well as their leaders.

INTERVIEWER:

Something real to work on, not some contrived, "Let's all get together" is what you're saying?

FRAMIÑÁN:

That's right. I think, again, we have to create the experience. When we talk about culture in an organization – it's a good example. You can put whatever phrase you want up on the wall. You can state what your culture is in a handbook. But it's what people see and feel every day in the workplace that is your culture. Everybody has a culture. And if you think about how easy or hard is it to do your job, whether you feel welcomed or appreciated and recognized at work, whether you have the opportunity to spend a little bit of time thinking more broadly about your job than sitting under the thumb of tactical day-to-day without an opportunity to ever think a little bit more broadly about your work, all of those things are the culture of the organization, how people feel about what they see and what they do at work. Whether you're virtual or all co-located, the leadership, our jobs as leaders, is to create that environment that promotes the culture you want that allows people do their best work.

INTERVIEWER:

The culture attracts a certain kind of person. If you have a particularly exemplary culture you're going to attract particularly exemplary people.

FRAMIÑÁN:

Right, and another way to look at it is to say, if you have a really strong culture, people will quickly opt in or opt out, because one of the things that can hurt a company is when you've got people hanging around that really are not fully engaged because for whatever reason, they aren't in the right organization. If you're working in an

environment that you don't find engaging and motivating then you're not going to be giving as much to that employer as you could somewhere else where you really felt more a part of the overall organization. The sooner you know it, and the sooner you make that decision in or out, the better. I think everybody who's ever managed people have had the unfortunate situation of whether you want to call it retiring in place or a complacent organization. It's awful. It's really a difficult situation for both that employee as well as the manager. A strong culture can help people self-select in or out.

INTERVIEWER: In or out?

FRAMIÑÁN: I don't know what the current culture is like at Nike, but Just Do It described their culture as well. It was a very hard-driving, competitive environment. The turnover in the first 12 or 18 months of employment at Nike was extraordinarily high. After 18 months, it was virtually nil. You were in or out.

INTERVIEWER: What are some thoughts, ideas, or things that you might want to try and do differently yourself?

FRAMIÑÁN: I'm sure I'm not the only person today who has said, "What do you need to say no to?" I'd like to expand that a little bit further to ask myself two questions. The first is what would I say no to in terms of, is this going to have the biggest impact and therefore should be my focus for today. And the second is, of all of those things that we ask people to do that are not directly linked to what we're trying to do as an organization – getting great HR to every company that wants it – then is it something we should be doing? That's definitely one thing that I would be looking at. I think concurrent with that is refining – not just for me but everyone in the organization – that big filter at the top of the funnel. All of the possible things we can or could be doing to have even greater autonomy and independence in making decisions as to whether it's the right thing to do or worth doing at this point in time for the organization. Being able to go out there with that more clearly articulated than we have in the past so that the team can have even a greater impact in the work that we do.

INTERVIEWER: No you're not the first one. In fact, every single person so far has mentioned the shedding concept of getting rid of things that are no longer necessary or are counterproductive.

FRAMIÑÁN: Exactly. And along with that, frankly, is making sure that if you're going to go ahead and give people this big filter, to say, if it makes it through the filter, then this is something we should all be doing, then you have to really let them do it. And trust that they're going to do the right thing and that it's an opportunity for us to learn if it is imperfect when they do it, but still let people go out there and do the jobs that we've asked them to do. I bring in very talented people, very experienced professionals, and this is another way for me to get out of their way and yet have me feel comfortable that I can be out of their way and let them do their best work.