PART A

Reading consulting theories and discussing them in the cohort is beneficial, but actually experiencing it with a real client like Arbonne helped solidify the concepts and phases in my mind. The translation of book knowledge to practical application helps me better understand concepts based on years of experience from other consultants.

We contracted with Arbonne to help them become an employer of choice by providing action steps that would have the greatest impact towards this goal. They are in the midst of multiple challenges that are magnified because of their inability to attract and retain top-level talent. Based on the presentation we gave to them of our findings, I think they are in a better position to act, but my intuition tells me they will not act and continue to face the same challenges we were tasked with addressing. This perception is based on how they responded in our presentation and the personality styles of the people they have placed in key positions within the company. Many people in the room during the presentation did not give off the impression that they would be willing to stand up and champion this project. They seemed like “yes” women who were trying to keep their job amidst rapid change. When the key person in the room provided an excuse, the rest of the people agreed with her even if their body language before seemed positive.

With this assumption, it helps be better understand what it takes to be an effective consultant. At the end of the day, I cannot change their actions. All I can do is help them to the extent they are willing to accept help. This is peaceful and comforting while still leaving me with a longing to do more.

My role in the group experience was unlike any other group I have been a part of in my life. I truly felt like I was on a team where I could rely on the other members. We were better as a group than what any of us would be individually. This feeling is hard to put into words, but it frees up a piece of my mind that allowed me to specialize on narrowing our focus to provide a distinct deliverable. I also was the primary presenter on the final day. This was a role that the team selected for me. I felt honored and humbled to be selected by the group for that role, and I feel like the final presentation was something we were all proud of.

The consulting experience lined up with many aspects of the theories we were presented. The one major area of disagreement I have with the theories is they seem utopic in nature. I see them as a great guide and filled with tremendous principles that I will follow, but the specific stages and relationship types may not fit in every situation. While I would love to work with each client using process consultation, I realize there are times when I may not have that option and must utilize the doctor/patient relationship. This idea was touched on within the cohort, but I still feel like I was unclear on if this is a viewpoint shared by others.

If “assessments” in this context is relating to personality assessments, I think they can be helpful in the right environment, but I did not find the FIRO-B to be helpful for me. It did not change how I acted or provide additional insights into the way I interacted with others. Self-reflection through purposeful activities and discussions with trusted friends is more beneficial to me. If “assessments” in this context is relating to experiential learning, I thoroughly enjoy the opportunity to try the theories out in live settings. The way that I learn best is by doing and testing.

PART B

I enjoy learning by doing, and there is not a better way to learn the intricacies of group dynamics than by doing. The Learning Group formation process was eye opening for me. I watched as different personalities and ways of thinking quickly took charge of the group. I was part of a lab that acted out norms, psychological safety, and many other concepts of group dynamics. Seeing them in action and reflecting on them was more beneficial to me than solely reading about them.

A prevailing phrase that came up often in discussions was the idea that every process is perfectly designed to achieve the results it gets. This framework has helped me reevaluate some of my work actions and personal habits. The areas that I am most frustrated with are often the ones where I have a bad process that leads to that result. When I change the process to better align with the desired outcome, the likelihood of the better result is increased. A great example of that in my daily life is my to-do list. I constantly loaded it up with more items than I knew were possible to complete. I have sense changed how I view the list. I do not automatically carry over the past days list into today. I start each morning with a fresh look at the priorities and cut as needed. The freedom to say that I will not do something is very liberating to me. I did not feel like I had that freedom before because of the process I created for myself.

Through the process of Learning Group formation, I learned that until trust is tested, you only have assumed trust. Ruthie brought up this point, and it has stuck with me as an explanation of how the group dynamics unfolded. Until trust was truly tested through this experience, we did not have a true sense of what it meant to trust each other. The same principles carry over into organizations. We like to give others the benefit of the doubt and expect that we would trust them, but until an opportunity arises where trust is tested, we do not have a real sense of trust in our relationship with them.

The biggest breakthrough of the entire experience for me was seeing the difference and importance of task and relationships as they interact with group dynamics. Task and relationship do not have to be in conflict with each other. I learned how I can neglect relationships by elevating the task to the upmost importance. The end result of that type of action is a fractured or weakened relationship. When I push forward on the task for personal desires, it will negatively impact my interactions and authenticity with relationships. It can lead to me railroading others to get what I want. In the past two weeks as I have reflected on this concept, I have noticed myself making conscious decisions that help me value relationships higher when that is what I feel is best for the situation.

A comment was made in the fishbowl conversation that stuck out to me, “A consultant brings into the experience a series of moments. These moments shift the direction of the group or organization.” Our role as consultants is to provide shifts in the experience. Our collective experience and intuition help us determine when those moments arise and what to say or do.

The importance of closing and the emphasis on making sure that happens for each person in a group was impactful for me. Closing is extremely important. This is true with the client as well as in my life at work and at home. Unfinished conversations, projects, and thoughts that are short-circuited increase my level of stress and keep me from performing at an optimal level. This is an area that I will give additional focus to because I see the ways it helps me be a better and more effective person.

Part of what can help me close better is by choosing better. I say yes to way too many things. A concept came up in our Learning Group discussion that has stayed in the front of my mind. Say no until I am ready to say yes. What that means to me is guarding your time and energy by not committing to things out of a sense of obligation or fear. When I commit to things and can truly give it the effort and attention it needs, I feel better and the end result is better for all parties involved.

Overall, this intensive was very powerful for me. I learned more in 10 days about how I relate with others that I have learned in 25 years. I am already seeing changes in my thoughts and actions that reflect what I have learned. It makes me very excited to continue on this journey.