



Navigating Workplace Challenges: Your Solutions Playbook

Introduction

Workplace challenges are inevitable, but what makes the biggest difference in outcome is how you solve them. From mergers to internal politics to leadership to employee morale to organizational growth, the approach you take to overcome these obstacles will heavily influence the success of your efforts. To provide context and helpful insight, we've curated a selection of some common workplace challenges along with examples for how to tackle them.

Workplace situations and solutions

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Groups in conflict

Conflict at work arises when differing perspectives, goals, or interests clash among employees. It can manifest as disagreements, misunderstandings, or even interpersonal tension, hindering effective communication and collaboration. If it goes unaddressed, workplace conflict can have major implications on productivity and morale.



Groups in conflict story

Like many insurance companies, Alliant National faced ongoing tension between managing risk and developing sales. Amidst an atmosphere of skepticism and mistrust, several attempts to reconcile the two sides of the business ultimately failed to solve their underlying issues.

After reading Arbinger's "The Anatomy of Peace," the company's leadership team had an "aha" moment, recognizing the deep-seated issue within the organization. Seeking a change, they partnered with Arbinger for conflict resolution. Through an immersive two-day workshop, Arbinger offered the team a suite of practical tools and prompted conversations that ultimately led the team to a shift in mindset.

The exercises helped leaders recognize their own roles in the

ongoing conflicts, giving them a newfound ability to address tensions head-on when they understood exactly how they were perpetuating them. The company even trained an internal facilitator to spread this transformative approach, and as they dove into strategic planning, they worked to align objectives aligned with stakeholders' needs. Personal work plans began to highlight broader impacts, shifting focus from personal to organizational contributions.

The results



Received “Great Place to Work” designation



Grew at nearly 2x the rate of competitors



Became one of the top ten title insurance underwriters in the United States



Get the full story of how Alliant National successfully implemented strategies to improve team performance and reduce conflicting objectives among employees.



Arbinger tip

Try focusing on solutions today rather than affixing blame.

A photograph of three men standing in a warehouse or construction site. They are all wearing orange safety vests with reflective white stripes. The man on the left is wearing a black t-shirt and has a tattoo on his right arm. The man in the middle is wearing a green t-shirt and jeans. The man on the right is wearing a grey hoodie and jeans. They are standing in front of a metal rack filled with various colored pipes (red, blue, yellow). The background is slightly blurred, emphasizing the workers.

Overcoming silos in business

Silos in business operations occur when divisions operate independently and avoid sharing information. This can result in stifling productivity, creating infighting, high turnover, and worst of all, risk the very survival of the organization.



Overcoming silos in business story

National steel distributor Tubular Steel was encumbered by politicking and infighting. With each department only communicating through the CEO, cross-department interaction was nearly non-existent.

Turnover rates were high, productivity was stifled, and the timing of this widespread dysfunction could not be worse as demand for Tubular's products was in decline. Despite engaging a high-profile change consultancy, the CEO's attempts to turn things around had faltered. Without a dramatic, fundamental change to break down departmental silos, Tubular Steel would fail.

Tubular's executive team began weekly training sessions with Arbinger, supplemented by one-on-one coaching sessions with members of management. This combination helped company

leaders reevaluate their mindsets. They began to understand their impact on each other, the toll it was having on organization, and reorient their work to account for that impact. These silos were able to come down by examining conflicts through a new lens. With the help of Arbinger principles and practices, teams began expanding the scope of their objectives and changing their definition of success to include the enablement of the other team's goals.

The results



Grew from \$30 million to over \$100 million



Was producing the best return on investment in industry within two years



3X profits



Learn more about how silos in business can halt growth—and how Tubular Steel addressed theirs to grow significantly in a time when their industry was declining.



Arbinger tip

See people as people who matter as we matter, not just as vehicles for what we want to achieve.



Ineffective leadership

Ineffective leadership can not only exacerbate workplace issues, but create new ones as well. This happens when leaders see everyone else as the problem instead of assessing how they may be perpetuating and actually contributing to long-standing issues.



Ineffective leadership story

Tensions were once so high between the police department of Kansas City, Missouri (KCPD), and the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) that both organizations hired attorneys, and the bargaining process was shaping up to be drawn-out and contentious.

After reading Arbinger's *Leadership and Self-Deception* and attending an Arbinger workshop, KCPD Chief of Police, James Corwin decided to bring Arbinger to police headquarters.

The training brought together department heads, members of the FOP, and a few other key leaders, and was geared toward law enforcement leadership development. Those present described the initial kick off as "icy and hostile." As the training continued, officers who had

not spoken to each other in years started conversing. A week after, Chief Corwin held a department-wide meeting to announce the mutual decision to forgo collective bargaining. The transformation from animosity to good-will was almost incomprehensible to outside observers. And the positive changes to the KCPD were just beginning. The KCPD extended their Arbinger training to their 1910 SWAT Squad, as well as firearms training.

The results



Earned a special unit citation



In the first 5 years, more illicit guns, drugs, and money was recovered than in the previous decade



In the first 5 years, only 20 first-time firearm qualification failures; all but one passed the test on their second try



Find out how KCPD avoided costly litigation through law enforcement leadership development.



Arbinger tip

How interested are we in really understanding others, in learning from others?

Listening is the only way for us to really see someone.



Accelerating collaboration through workplace culture

Organizational growth is exciting, but not without its own unique set of challenges. As a team expands, it can be difficult to maintain the cultural foundations that it was built on. Without the proper tools to effectively articulate your team dynamic, organizations can encounter difficulty scaling and replicating their special culture.



Accelerating collaboration through workplace culture story

Video game developer Outfit7 was created by Samo and Iza Login with the intention to “bring fun and entertainment to all”—including their employees. To support this mission, the founders consciously created a workplace culture characterized by fun, respect, and collaboration.

However, as the company enjoyed incredible success and growth, Samo and Iza began to worry about losing their unique culture and struggled to effectively scale it.

Outfit7 brought in an Arbinger facilitator to conduct a two-day workshop with its leadership team. Many members of the team were initially skeptical about the need to work differently, but the session helped them realize how they contributed to the growing cracks within the company culture. The team was so enthusiastic about

the results of the initial workshop, Arbinger trained five members of the leadership team to be internal facilitators. Each of Outfit7's 200 employees participated in Arbinger's workshops and implementation training. Outfit 7's own internal facilitators have trained over 90% of these employees.

The results



Headcount has more than doubled since working with Arbinger



Outfit7's Talking Friends app generated over 3 billion app downloads



More than 250 million active users each month generating more than 3.5 billion views on YouTube



Watch to see how Outfit7 worked with Arbinger to boost employee performance, improve relationships, and develop leaders.



Arbinger tip

Find something to like about each of your coworkers you encounter today—especially the difficult ones.



Business reorganization

Business reorganization is difficult—things like layoffs, relocation, increased workloads, and fewer resources often lead to job insecurity and a charged atmosphere among employees. If left unmanaged, the division can evolve into feuding, competition for limited resources, and conflicting objectives.



Business reorganization story

CenturyLink, a major telecommunications company, announced plans to undertake a massive business reorganization. The company's largest division had 25,000 employees, and its management was particularly concerned about the success of the business reorganization and its impact on employee morale.

To address this, virtually all of the division's 3,500 managers began training conducted jointly by Arbinger and internal company facilitators who had been trained by Arbinger. With this, they were provided with advanced training, teaching plans, workbooks, and videos to further drive collaboration within their teams.

Working with Arbinger, division managers reported significant process improvements in a wide variety of areas. They reported that the division was now moving

toward an environment of collaboration, resource sharing, and harmonized objectives. Managers began taking greater initiative and in an environment where the possibilities appeared limited, found creative ways to serve the division's customers. Employees rallied to support one another by sharing job postings, coaching each other on interviews, and providing managerial training. Many reported feeling more in control of their lives and better able to cope with the changes taking place in the company.

The results



Work satisfaction among employees increased by 20%



Revenue grew by 17%



Customer satisfaction increased by 21%



Here's how CenturyLink worked with Arbinger to help with business reorganization and everything that comes with it.



Arbinger tip

Look for a coworker who is struggling and find a way to help them. Give information, resources, help, or support.

A photograph of two men in business suits engaged in a conversation. The man on the left is looking towards the man on the right, who is gesturing with his hands. The background is slightly blurred, showing an office environment. A large blue abstract graphic is on the left side of the image.

Organization restructuring

Business transformation is no easy feat. These massive changes involve tremendous scope and difficulty, often including large-scale layoffs and significant revisions of roles and responsibilities. With employees facing intense pressure and substantial uncertainty, a buildup of tremendous negative tension within the company can result.



Organization restructuring story

Staples is a globally recognized office supply retailer with more than 34,000 employees. When they announced a massive organization restructuring of its European operations, it was possibly the largest transformation endeavor in their industry.

For many Staples' employees, the proposed changes were so far-reaching that they were difficult to accept. The strain became so pronounced that the president of Staples Europe described it as being virtually "a state of warfare... where people were constantly barraging one another." Under these deteriorating conditions, very little business was being accomplished.

Staples Europe leadership turned to Arbinger for a fundamental shift in mindset to cultivate greater collaboration between team members and to inspire employee dedication to a new vision for

the company's future. Arbinger facilitators met with the leadership team every three to six months from June 2013 to January 2015, providing flexible, ongoing support adapted to the evolving needs of the transitioning division. Arbinger provided the leadership team with an overarching structural framework and workable vocabulary to facilitate a transformation in mindset. Team members learned to magnify their influence by taking greater responsibility for the impact of their work on various constituents.

The results



Successful organization restructuring



A strategic and sustained shift in mindset that improved communication and collaboration



Strengthened working relationships

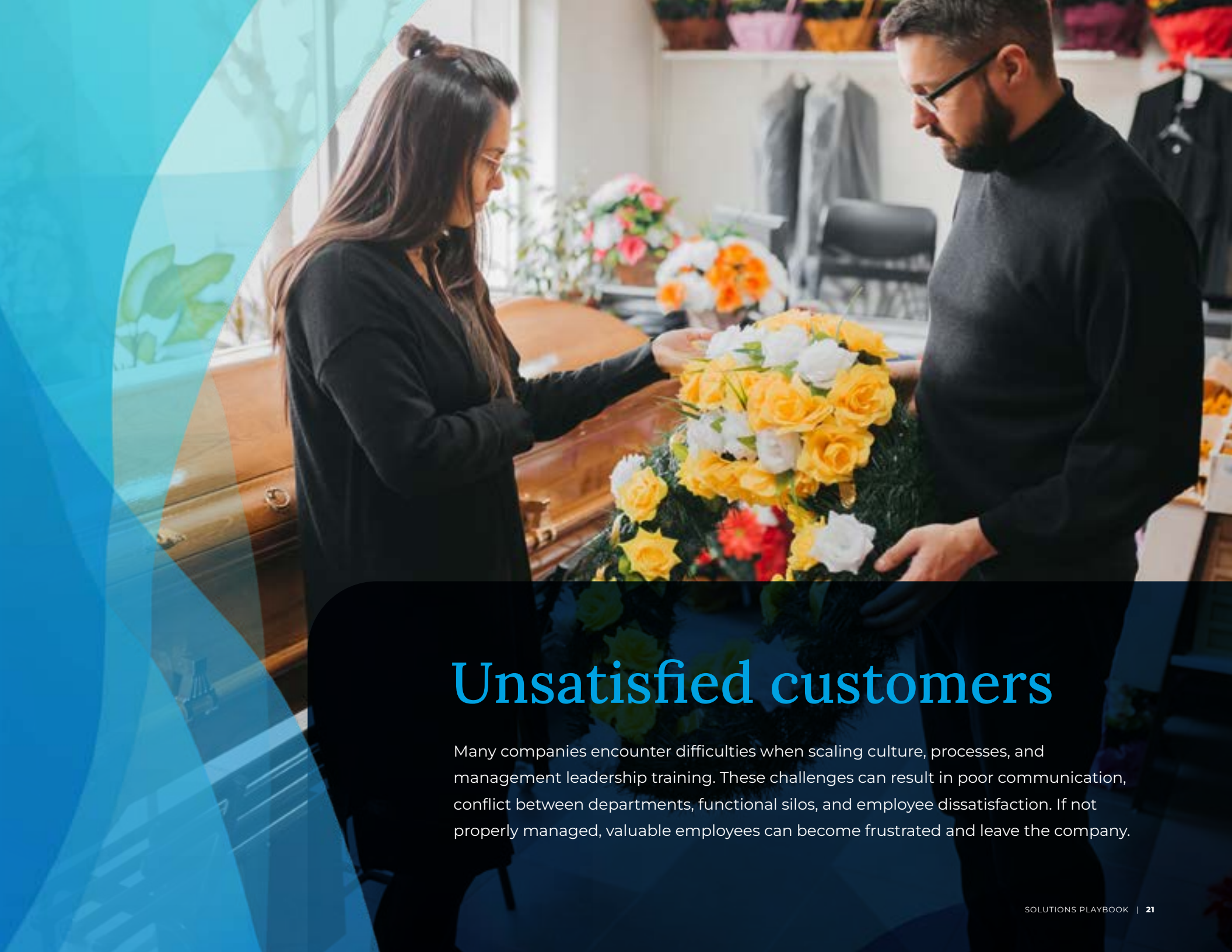


Learn how Staples' senior leadership was able to strengthen their working relationships and reduce tension.



Arbinger tip

When you start to feel aggravated by a coworker, try to remember a time when you have done something similar.

A woman with long dark hair and a man with a beard and glasses are working together in a flower shop. They are standing behind a wooden counter, carefully arranging a large, lush bouquet of yellow and white roses. The bouquet is decorated with greenery and small red and white flowers. In the background, there are shelves with various potted plants and flowers, and a mannequin wearing a grey jacket. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. A large blue abstract graphic is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Unsatisfied customers

Many companies encounter difficulties when scaling culture, processes, and management leadership training. These challenges can result in poor communication, conflict between departments, functional silos, and employee dissatisfaction. If not properly managed, valuable employees can become frustrated and leave the company.



Unsatisfied customers story

Horan & McConaty (H&M) funeral home leveraged their strong reputation and grew from two locations to seven serving the Denver area. As H&M opened new locations and hired additional employees, it encountered difficulties in scaling processes and management.

The conflict came to a head, when funeral directors, scheduling and operations stopped working effectively with each other, and hurt the quality of H&M's service. This impacted customer satisfaction, and resulted in rising costs and falling profitability.

Realizing the high stakes of their predicament, H&M's leadership turned to Arbinger for help. After conducting exploratory work to assess the situation, Arbinger proposed an initial two-day workshop, after which, two H&M's leaders were selected to become internal facilitators who would

train and support the rest of H&M's employees. These tools helped them re-examine the persistent conflict among scheduling, operations, and the funeral directors. Leaders in each function began to ask themselves how they might be contributing to the problem and to start looking for ways that they could better support each other.

The results



Clients' ranking of H&M's support and follow-up improved by 10%



H&M's Net Promoter Score (NPS) showed an increase of 10%



Employee satisfaction and engagement improved while overtime and employee turnover were significantly reduced

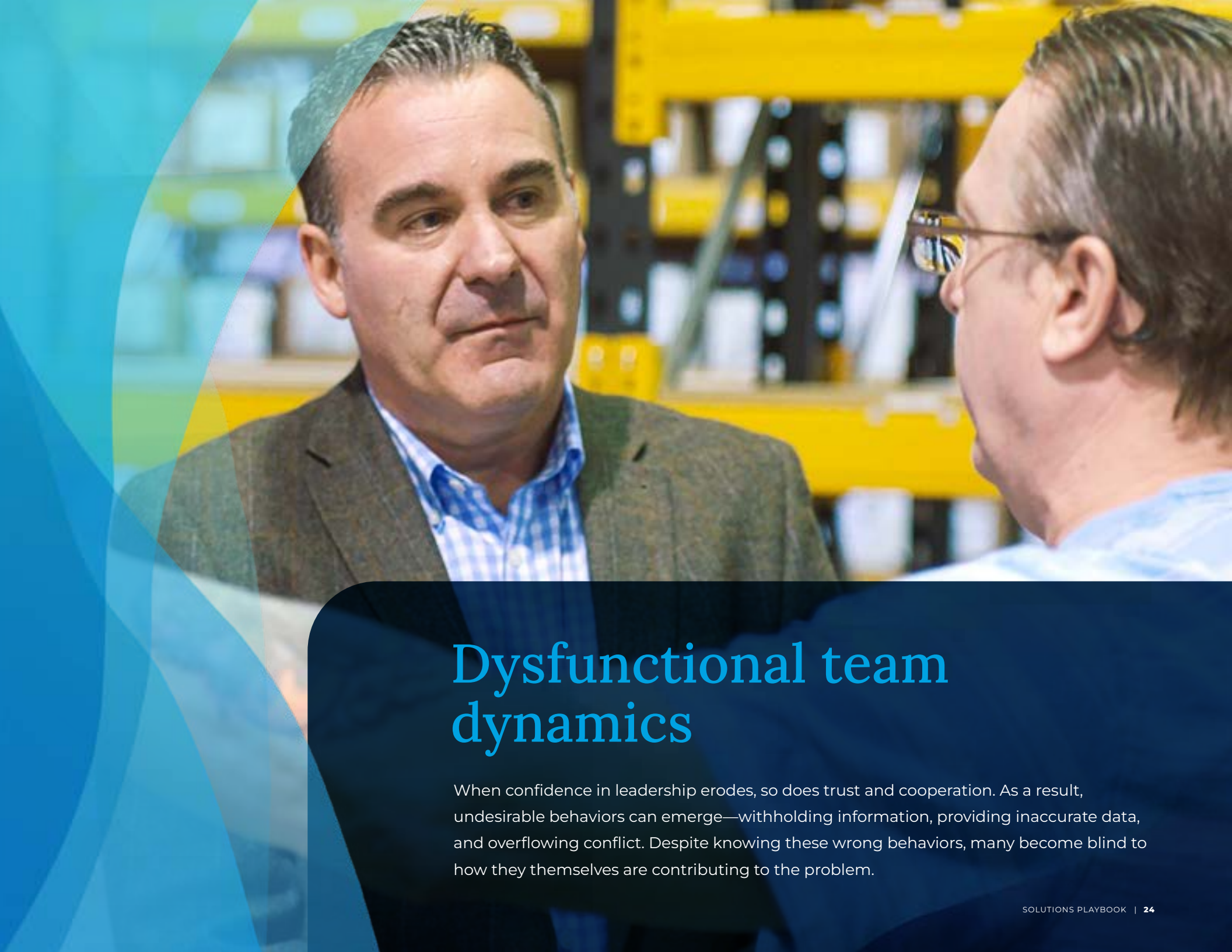


Here's more on how Arbinger helped Horan & McConaty increase collaboration and reduced costs with improved team performance management.



Arbinger tip

Learn the names of three people today, call them by name, and learn something about them that is memorable.



Dysfunctional team dynamics

When confidence in leadership erodes, so does trust and cooperation. As a result, undesirable behaviors can emerge—withholding information, providing inaccurate data, and overflowing conflict. Despite knowing these wrong behaviors, many become blind to how they themselves are contributing to the problem.



Dysfunctional team dynamics story

The leadership team of Spandex, the European subsidiary of an American multinational company, was burdened by dysfunctional team dynamics in an adversarial relationship between the manufacturing division.

Tremendous mistrust had built up, and both parties would withhold important information that would have helped the other unit operate more effectively.

Spandex President Rod Larson was familiar with Arbinger's approach and engaged them to train and support the leadership team. This training focused on building trust and cooperation and resulted in a year-long partnership consisting of ongoing implementation support and executive coaching in order to help team members. According to Rod, the initial training had an immediate and tangible impact

on the dynamics of the team. With time, members saw their team transform into a substantially more productive and honest team. The implementation support and executive coaching work ensured that the impact of the Arbinger training remained just as intense as it had been immediately after the initial session.

The results



Leadership transformation



Heightened individual accountability resulting in improved collaboration



Increase in productivity and performance



Watch to see how the team at Spandex transformed business operations and resolved conflicts using a conflict resolution model.



Arbinger tip

What could you learn from someone in the organization to better fulfill your responsibilities?

A man with a goatee and safety glasses, wearing a white lab coat, is focused on a task in a laboratory or industrial setting. He is holding a small purple object. The background shows industrial equipment and a blue geometric overlay on the left side of the image.

Transforming culture following multiple mergers

Company mergers are a multifaceted challenge. Not only do you have the immediate expansion of your organization, but the added difficulty of clashing organizational cultures. Without working to create a harmonious, unified culture, you run the risk of employees feeling unrepresented, unrewarded, and unseen.



Transforming culture following multiple mergers story

Following the acquisition of General Dynamics (GD) and its 8000+ employees, Hughes Missile Systems (HMS) was in disarray. The situation was further inflamed when HMS was acquired by major defense contractor Raytheon and renamed Raytheon Missile Systems (RMS).

Integrating employees from three different companies proved an immense obstacle. Its leaders recognized the threat that infighting posed to the company's future and needed to unite the organization.

After evaluating nearly 40 different consulting firms, RMS chose Arbinger because of its unique approach—equipping RMS with the guidance and tools that would allow the division to solve issues on its own. This approach centered around empowering each employee, enabling them to

both understand their individual contribution to problems, hold themselves accountable and work collaboratively. RMS felt that Arbinger principles were the right solution, and decided that all 17,000 of the division's employees would be trained. Employees began to look beyond the narrow confines of their own individual roles and started instead to focus on the needs of their colleagues and the organization at large.

The results



Finding \$7 million in savings on the first day of the project



Sales skyrocketed from \$1.9 billion to \$5 billion



Today, RMS is the world's largest producer of its sophisticated products and the largest division within Raytheon



See how Raytheon transformed from a collection of 12,000 disparate employees into a unified organization with strong corporate culture.



Arbinger tip

Think of a way you are contributing to a workplace problem and take responsibility.



Accelerating growth in a scalable way

Accelerated growth requires a replicable approach. That means a reliable way of building the type of people-centric cultures upon which every successful business hinges. Without a structured, replicable approach, you risk a fragmented and unharmonious growth path.



Accelerating growth in a scalable way story

Plum Healthcare set out to create a company centered on the acquisition and transformation of dysfunctional long-term care and rehabilitation facilities.

These facilities were often saddled with significant clinical and financial challenges. But with each new acquisition, company management tried to refine ways of solving the complex challenges. However, Plum knew that accelerated growth would require a replicable approach.

Because Arbinger's healthcare consulting had helped other reputable organizations in the industry, Plum turned to Arbinger for support. They needed to develop a leadership model, a cultural framework, and front-line staff tools

that would enable each new facility to transition successfully. As a result of this initial work, the executive team was able to develop policies and implement collaborative work practices that would serve as the footings of positive and productive culture. Through ongoing coaching sessions, Arbinger worked to equip executive leaders with the skills to grow and develop every facility administrator throughout the company.

The results



Increased number of facilities and employees by almost 500%



Clinical Quality Measures improved 37%



Federal citations were 34% less than the average of competitor companies.



Watch to see how Plum has been able to grow at a remarkable rate while ensuring that each newly acquired facility is fully integrated within Plum's patient-centric culture.



Arbinger tip

Learn the objectives of three people that you affect at work.

A woman in a blue sari is looking upwards with a focused expression. In the background, other people are visible but out of focus. The image has a blue and green abstract overlay on the left side.

Improving team performance

Though change is necessary within every company to adapt and grow, it can cause instability. Friction between departments, broken organizational culture, lagging results and finger pointing can occur if not managed properly. Without adequate support, morale and motivation can quickly plummet.



Improving team performance story

Dr. Reddy's Foundation works to support India's most underprivileged youth in attaining sustainable livelihoods through its flagship program LABS—Livelihood Advancement Business School. Until recently, the program was free, supported by a sponsoring company.

Due to financial constraints, the foundation had to adopt a more sustainable business model and ask that participants contribute a nominal fee. As a result, the foundation could serve significantly more youth, but also required the foundation to become more lean and efficient in its operations. Reaching the necessary levels of efficiency started to seem impossible, and friction between internal departments caused a decline in the number of enrollments steadily and the quality of training.

To remedy the situation, the CEO and leadership team began an initial Arbinger facilitated work session. This provided a common language for the top 30 leaders that helped them heighten their self-awareness, provided tools for self-management, and opportunities to apply the tools in their work with each other. The foundation then instituted monthly meetings between the students and department leaders where feedback from the students was shared in real time, helping to make rapid improvements to team performance.

The results



Complaints have all but disappeared



Student enrollment and retention has dramatically improved



Interdepartmental blaming and resulting silos have ceased



Find out how Arbinger helped Dr. Reddy's Foundation increase student enrollment and retention rates by implementing strategies to improve team performance.



Arbinger tip

Think of and implement one change in the way you do your job that would increase your helpfulness to coworkers who are affected by what you do.



Measuring impact to improve effectiveness

Without effectively measuring impact, you cannot be sure the efforts you're making are successful. Although you may be certain that you're providing the right solution, you need to honestly and systematically assess the results. Without doing so, you risk misallocating precious time, effort, and funds.



Measuring impact to improve effectiveness story

Chantal Carr established Hope Arising, a nonprofit dedicated to delivering clean water to rural villages in Ethiopia. She was confident that clean water was a resource the villagers needed, and the organization worked diligently to provide access where it was previously unobtainable.

After encountering Arbinger's tools, however, Carr realized that Hope Arising was not yet measuring the impact of its humanitarian efforts. As the Hope Arising team began to assess what was happening on the ground, they encountered painful realizations: the buckets used to collect clean water were often contaminated, and sometimes the water did not make it to the villages at all. To truly succeed at their mission of helping the people of Ethiopia, they needed to find a new way to evaluate their efforts.

Eager to utilize the Arbinger process, Hope Arising began creating a new method for measuring the impact of

their efforts. A team member asked a very interesting question: "What impact do the people want? What are they hoping clean water will do for them?" With this in mind, the team started talking to villagers across the region, in response, they heard the same thing: "We need clean water because we need our kids to be able to go to school. If our kids don't get educated, they'll never escape this poverty." Armed with this new information, Hope Arising was able to better measure impact in nonprofit endeavors, the number of days children are in school, showing them the impact on what mattered most to the recipients of their services.

The results



A better way of measuring impact in nonprofit endeavors



Meeting the real needs of people in Ethiopia



Exploring and innovating additional ways to help



Here's how Arbinger helped Hope Arising keep their mission on track by measuring impact and incorporating professional skills while retaining the humanity of their mission.



Arbinger tip

Think about who is the primary customer of your work. Then ask yourself: how well served does this customer feel? Do something to improve this answer.



These are just a few of the situations Arbinger can help your organization solve.

From aligning leadership to improving team performance to transforming culture, Arbinger has solutions for any business challenge you face. Get in touch today to learn more about Arbinger's solutions that change mindsets and lead to exceptional organizational results.

[Chat with an Arbinger expert](#)

