

Transcript 1: Ms. Abley, Chief People Office (CPO) and Pat's primary executive

Ms. Abley:	Pat, that you for reworking your schedule to get me in today. I really need your services. We have been asked improve Turmeric & Spice's leadership to make our world-wide leadership more diverse and reflective of our world-wide clientele, customers, employees, and vendors. In addition, we need to position T&S leaders as world-class, worldwide. Can you do this?
Pat:	As I'm sure you know, Ms. Abley, there are a wide variety of ways to improve leadership. We currently have both a diversity program and a leadership program in place. Obviously, they are not meeting a perceived need. What can you tell me about the way this request came to you?
Ms. Abley:	Well, as you know Ms. Spice, our CEO spent the last six months traveling to our far east, middle eastern, African, Caribbean, and Meso-American spice importers. She found a number of our front-line leaders to be very promising... and number who she feels should be replaced. None of these front-line leaders has every attended our leadership training or diversity training; it is just too expensive to bring them in and to provide translation services for them so that the material is in their native language. Therefore, we can not replace the ones who are not cutting it, because we can not prove that we have provided them with equal opportunity to receive training.
Pat:	Even though these people are in countries that do not have EEO or labor standards like those in the US, we are applying those standards across the board?
Ms. Abley:	Um. Good question. I don't know whether that was Ms. Spice's intent? I'll arrange for you to speak directly with her.
Pat:	That would be helpful. I appreciate your influence in getting me time on her calendar. Will you be joining me for that interview? I want to be sure that you and I are on the same page about what questions to ask, if we are doing this together.
Ms. Abley:	Yes, I would like to be part of that meeting. However, it may be that I can get you in at a time when I'm not available. Let's assume that you'll be doing this alone and reporting back to me.
Pat (nodding):	Alright, I can do that. Before we end this discussion, I would like to ask a couple more questions. Do you have time for that?
Ms. Abley:	(checks clock) I have about 15 minutes more. If that is not enough, we'll need to schedule another meeting.
Pat:	Thank you. Let's start with the 15 minutes that you have right now. From your perspective, what do you think the leadership issues are for this organization?
Ms. Abley:	You know that I have been trying to get succession planning moved up on the executive agenda. No one wants to deal with that. I feel that our underlying issue is lack of succession planning from our first transition into leadership. This might be a good example of why planning that transition is important.
Pat:	Umm, there are the additional issues of international assignments, moving people around the world to get experience in different aspects of the spice industry, international pay scales and employment laws... and, of course, language barriers. Have we considered how any of those impact our succession scenarios?
Ms. Abley:	No, I guess we have been hoping to deal with those once we start such a program.
Pat:	Perhaps, we can find out what the barriers to leadership development are before diving into succession planning as the best solution. If I were to interview one or two people other than Ms. Spice, who could tell me more about the international scene and the issues of working internationally for T&S.
Ms. Abley:	Mr. Turmeric, of course. As Chief Operating Officer (COO) and head of R&D he lives in India half the year, while also working out of our San Francisco labs the rest of the time. Also talk to Abdul Ahmadan, our Chief Importer. (phone rings). Sorry, Pat, I need to take this call. Set up another appointment with me next week.

Transcript 2: Ms. Spice, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Pat's boss' boss

Pat:	Ms. Spice, thank you for seeing me today. Ms. Abley has told me a little about your insights from your recent tour and has asked that I get started on your project right away. I need to hear your stories directly from you so that I don't miss any key points. I'm hoping that you will spend our time together describing your key findings on your tour. Does that fit with your expectations for this meeting?
Ms. Spice:	I was hoping that you could set up a new leadership development program for our international heads of regional offices. We aren't doing enough for these people and don't know enough about their actual performance.
Pat: (nodding)	I understand that, in last six months, you travelled to our far east, middle eastern, African, Caribbean, and Meso-American spice importers. At each location who did you visit with? I'm interested in the roles of the people you met rather than their names. This will give me a feel for what levels of the organization you experienced and where our issues and opportunities may lie.
Ms. Spice:	Yes, well, I meet with the Regional Division Heads, the financial manager at each regional office, the head spice connoisseur, several of the long-term vendors that we have used for generations of spices, and a few of our larger local customers... the folks who want our custom blends for their proprietary uses... canning operations, wine operations, buyers from international grocery producers... that kind of customer.
Pat:	What commonalities did you find among these roles in any one location versus those found across locations? That is, when you think about the people and roles you met at the Haiti office where are the commonalities among them that are unique to Haiti? Then, are there commonalities between... say Haiti, Columbia, Cuba and Mexico City that are unique to that geographic area?
Ms. Spice:	Other than the obvious geographic ones, you mean? (Pat nods agreement). That's an interesting question. Well, I suppose we could group offices by a primary language other than English. That would be one commonality. Is that what you mean?
Pat:	That is a good example. Any others that you can think of? Cultural ones, perhaps?
Ms. Spice:	Well, the middle eastern offices tend to be heavily male-dominated. They did have difficulty answering my questions. I don't know whether that was a language barrier or a cultural one. They were very polite and also somewhat vague in their responses to my questions but voluble – in Arabic – to the Abu Dubai Regional Manager.
Pat:	What other cultural aspects did you notice that were important differences between regions or even within regions?
Ms. Spice:	We have several regions that appear to have leadership with fifteen plus years of experience in that same role. This is a problem, as far as I am concerned.
Pat:	How does longevity in one role impact their ability to do the work?
Ms. Spice:	They seem to be doing a good enough job. In fact, many of them are well respected by vendors, customers and employees. However, from a business perspective this means that we are not getting any young leadership talent out of that region – it is all in a logjam behind these individuals. That's not good.
Pat:	Umm. That is interesting. Where could I find data about which field offices our managers and executives have experienced?
Ms. Spice:	Doesn't HR have that?
Pat:	Possibly. However, it is probably buried in resumes rather than tracked in specific measurements for the organization. I'll look into it. (Jots a note.) It sounds to me as though you were impressed with the quality of young leaders you saw and less impressed with the quality of the more experienced leaders. Is that a reasonable insight?
Ms. Spice:	I can understand where you might get that idea from what I've said. However, overall, I was not impressed with any of the leaders. Most of them are still doing business the same way it was done in 1850. There's little technology and less innovation.
Pat:	I know that we have put major resources into our R&D program's technology and innovation strategies. What would you expect to see regionally that is different from our corporate technology and R&D strategies?

Ms. Spice:	They need to feed ideas into corporate programs. We can't be getting anything new while they continue to use out-dated business practices.
Pat:	Out-dated business practices? I have not had the opportunity to travel as widely as you just did. What out-dated business practices did you see that concerned you?
Ms. Spice:	<p>Oh, you know. Sitting around the brazier trading stories about crops, visiting the spice fields, storing spices in traditional storage containers, processing spices the traditional way. We will probably need to continue to sit around the brazier telling stories and will continue to need to visit the spice fields. However, storage could be cheaper and processing technologies could be faster, more efficient, lower labor costs (even when labor is very inexpensive), decrease storage time, increase flavor profiles, and decrease waste.</p> <p>(Ms. Spice's Administrative Assistant taps on the door.)</p> <p>Yes, Mildred.</p>
Mildred:	Dr. Pratinakavyk is on the line. He said something about a board issue about which you wish to consult with him, ma'am.
Ms. Spice:	<p>Thank you, Mildred. Give me two minutes. Then transfer the call, please.</p> <p>Pat, it's been great to talk with you. I must apologize that our meeting has to end at this point. If you need more from me, please set up another appointment with Mildred. I must catch Dr. Pratinakavyk when he is available.</p>
Pat:	Thank you for your time and for all the useful information. Ms. Abley and I will be getting back to you.

Dialogue 3: Abdul Ahmadan, our Chief Importer

Pat:	Mr. Ahmadan, thank you for meeting with me. You realize, of course, that while it is nine o'clock in the morning in Abu Dubai, where you are, it is nine o'clock at night for me. Is this a good time for you?
Mr. A:	(heavy dialect) Yes, is fine. You are working over time to make this call happen, yes?
Pat:	A little. However, it is very important to me to hear what you have to say. I am very excited to get a chance to talk to someone literally on the other side of the world. I am one of those rare individuals in our business that seldom travels.
Mr. A:	You do not like to travel?
Pat:	Actually, I do like to travel? My job is one that keeps me pretty close to the headquarters office.
Mr. A:	You are missing much. The spices of the world lose their flavor when not experienced in the field.
Pat:	While I like using spices in my foods, I can not say that I "the nose" for spice.
Mr. A:	You may never know that for sure, unless you visit places where those spices grow. Unless you know how the green plants smell as they grow in different soils, in rain, in heat, in cold, in damp... only then can you know a spice.
Pat:	I see your point. I will think about it. However, today, I would like to ask you about leadership at T&S.
Mr. A:	Leadership, yes. It is a spice with its own flavors.
Pat:	Tell me about your role in the company. How did you get started with us, what roles have you had, where did you get your training, how did you find out about each new role as you moved up.
Mr. A:	You know that I am this past seven years T&S's Chief Importer. Before that I was Pepper Importer for fifteen years. I started with as a spice grower. My parents were pepper and turmeric growers. My brothers still run the family business. I speak many languages, so I became their... what is word... representative? That was when I was young and still in school. However, I have the nose as well as gift of tongues. Mr. Spice offered me a job as Pepper Importer because I can grade pepper while still in the field.
Pat:	Impressive! Do we still hire pepper importers, and other spice importers, based on their nose? Is the ability with languages still important?
Mr. A:	Sadly, no. T&S hires anyone who can haggle in the appropriate language. That is why I am being promoted to Chief Importer. This way, T&S can send me to places where the local importer is a haggler but not a nose. I can test the product before we buy it and can advise on whether to offer more or less for the crop.
Pat:	I see. It sounds to me as though, the company is very dependant upon a few people who have "the nose".
Mr. A:	Yes. Is true. Most people do not use their nose. Even fewer can grade strong spices accurately.
Pat:	How do we identify and train someone with a nose?
Mr. A:	I just know. When I watch someone cup the fruits of a crop, I can tell whether they can sense the flavonoids. Often, even before we get into the field, the person with a good nose is sniffing the air. He tests the damp. Then he picks up the soil and feels it, crumbles it, smells it. He picks a leaf and a stem. Sniffs them. Rolls them between his fingers, sniffs again and tastes. Then he does the same thing with the fruits. If he is young... and they all are nowadays... then he often finds something he does not know and will continue testing trying to find out what he is missing. This is good.
Pat:	Do you know of any women with these skills?
Mr. A:	The French woman, she may have it. Other women only smell perfumes to try on.
Pat:	I think I understand. Now, if you have someone who is a nose and you feel they are ready to move up in the company, where would you recommend that they go? What skills would you recommend that they develop before they go? Languages? Travel to other parts of country? Experience with more spices?
Mr. A:	I would contact my friend, Mr. Turmeric at R&D. I tell him, "Mr. T., I have a nose for you. He is a good nose this and this and this spice but no good at that other spice." Them Mr. T arranges for him to move to R&D.
Pat:	Thank you. That's clear. What about the people who are not noses? How do they move into leadership roles?
Mr. A:	If they are good with numbers, they move up. They good at showing quarterly growth or saving or whatever. Then they move up.
Pat:	What do you know about T&S's leadership programs and how effective they are?

Mr. A:	Those programs are for the American leaders or for those did okay at regional office but like playing games in America. They take any job in America and get into leadership training programs because they have been in the field and can do numbers.
Pat:	That was helpful, Mr. Ahmadan. If there was one thing you would change about the leadership programs at T&S, what would that be?
Mr. A:	That they learn how to respect the nose. Without noses, there will be bad decisions and, someday, no business at all.
Pat:	Umm, so, in your opinion, who in the executive suite has a nose and who respects noses?
Mr. A:	Mr. T. of course. Dr. Pratinakavyk, too, has a nose. Mrs. Spice, she values noses but rely on Mr. T. for assurance that a nose is a nose.
Pat:	Thank you. Mr. Ahmadan. You have given me much food for thought. I appreciate your time and thoughtful responses.

Dialogue 4: Mr. Turmeric (COO) and Head of R&D

Pat:	Mr. Turmeric, thank you for talking with me today. I feel very lucky to reach you while you are in the US.
Mr. T:	I am also available by phone and web conferencing, wherever I may be in the world.
Pat:	Yes, and that's a great starting point. I am sure that you are aware of Ms. Spice's recent world tour and her concerns about our international leadership... and our ability to be seen as world leader. Tell me about your perspective.
Mr. T:	We have ever so many outstanding people around the world. We need a better way to help them move into decision-making roles at T&S. All too often, we choose American candidates for leadership roles when they do not know how differences in cultures, economics, growing conditions, and so on affect our work, our people and our products.
Pat:	Am I to understand that you believe our leadership is too heavily balanced toward North American candidates and not balanced equitably among our constituents?
Mr. T:	Well put. Yes, we are missing the new wave of emerging international leaders.
Pat:	Why do you think that is? I mean, is it just parochial blindness of people who have never left the US or is there something else at work?
Mr. T:	(Steeple's fingers and studies desk). I do not know. (shrugs) Perhaps, it is a kind of blindness. We do not know what we really want to see from our leaders at each level and we do not know how that should be different in different regions, countries and even languages.
Pat:	Do you think this about training people or about selecting people?
Mr. T:	Probably both. First, we must select the right people and then train them. This we do not do.
Pat:	We do have a leadership development program with a series of courses required of leaders. Are you familiar with it?
Mr. T:	Yes, I am familiar with it. I teach two courses in the program. One is on research and development and its role in the company. The other is on decision-making in with cultural differences.
Pat:	And, what are your thoughts about the program.
Mr. T:	I enjoy teaching the courses very much. I like to believe that they are doing good for the people we have already appointed to leadership positions.
Pat:	It sounds as though you may have some concerns.
Mr. T:	Yes, I suppose that I do. Perhaps, my concern is that we do not know whether we are doing the right things. The courses are good, the people are good. Is that good enough?
Pat:	What would help you know whether a program like that was working the way it was intended to work?
Mr. T:	(Steeple's hands and thinks again). That is the hard one, isn't it? If I knew the answer to that one, we would have that metric on our dashboard.

Pat:	<p>I agree. Just thought I'd check to see if you had any insights that had not been captured.</p> <p>However, on a slightly different note. I talked with Mr. Ahmadan the other day. He was educating me about the value of noses in our business. Do you think that we are handling these valuable players correctly? Do we have the right career path for them?</p>
Mr. T:	<p>Well, at this point, Ahmad and I mostly move them into specific spice importer roles and then into R&D as fast as we can. However, I now have a lab full of noses who have no career path and another twenty or so years of employment.</p> <p>You realize, of course, that as people age their sense of smell changes. They become less and less effective. When this time is varies with each individual. It may be about genetics but is also about life style. My dear friend, Ahmad, is one of those who take very good care of himself and his nose... and has good genes when it comes to being able parse scents... as do his brothers?</p>
Pat:	<p>It sounds as though we may have a pool for leadership... or not. Would people who have been in R&D make it as leaders in other parts of the company?</p>
Mr. T:	<p>Maybe. We would need to be very careful with that transition. These people have been very, very valuable to us. We need to show them that they are cared for even when their nose is no longer their greatest asset. If we do not protect them, then the people we have in labs and in the field using their noses for us will feel less valued as well. This is why I have left well-enough alone for now.</p>
Pat:	<p>Thank you. I'll keep that in mind.</p> <p>While we are on the topic of protecting classes of people. In the US we have laws about equal employment opportunity that have made many traditional all-male roles open to women and many roles not previously open to people of color open to them. Such laws do not exist in other countries. Tell me about the issues and barriers that women and people of color experience in our regional offices and in our specialty fields such as noses.</p>
Mr. T:	<p>In many countries where we buy spices, women are not seen in business places. They do not cut deals. Sometimes, the best and brightest might make it into business or into a field like perfumes where noses are needed.</p>
Pat:	<p>How many female noses do we have on staff? Do you know?</p>
Mr. T:	<p>I was hoping you would not ask. We have none. In part, this is because we buy strong spices and women find it difficult to master these. They are often better with milder scents.</p>
Pat:	<p>But there are strong scents in perfumes, as well, and I understand that many women work in this field.</p>
Mr. T:	<p>Correction: some women excel in that field. Even then, only a small percentage of the people in the field are women.</p> <p>However, only a small percentage of all the people we hire will ever have what it takes to be a nose. That brings me to other point, we need a way to move people into leadership regardless of whether they are a nose or not and again when and if their nose begins to fail. I believe that our biggest problem is selecting the right people.</p> <p>To compound the problem, we are now beginning to see significant advances in sciences and technology that are impacting methods for spice production, the quality of spices produces (and seldom is that for the better), the ways that we store and produce spices. T&S has innovated some in the storage and processing area but we are lagging in the biological sciences impacting genetics of spices. We could be creating new blended spices on the vine, if we could improve technology and add scientists. However, there are some thorny issues in this arena. We need leaders who can make scientific and technology decisions not just buy-sell, and produce decisions. We need a whole new breed of leaders.</p>
Someone knocks on the door.	
Pat:	<p>What does that new breed look like?</p>
Mr. T:	<p>I need to think about that a bit. Right now it appears that I am needed in a financial meeting. How about if I send you an email with my thoughts on the new breed of leaders? Good. Thank you for coming. (Ends meeting)</p>