

FACILITIES & THE FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF

Derrick Van Mell (May 15, 2000)

As management consultants specializing in facilities, we often bring our clients face to face with large and frightening decisions.

Over the years, we've seen them hang on the precipice of a decision, suspended in place long after the logic and analysis and conclusions have been sanctified by the board. We eventually came to realize that reason was not the problem, but emotion. We realized, in fact, that our clients were experiencing the five stages of grief so well known to psychologists and other spiritual and emotional counselors.

So, here, for your benefit, is an articulation of facilities grief that may help those you care for progress safely to another plane:

Step #1: Denial

"No, no, no, we don't really need to add any more space. I know the company has grown 50% a year for the five years we've been here, but we can hold out at least another eighteen months. We're never going to grow like that again. These desks stack, after all."

Step #2: Anger

"Why is it I'm the only one who knows what I'm talking about? Why are you doing this to me? Why is God doing this to me? Everyone's out to get me,

just because I'm the one who has to make these decisions! I'm not moving!"

Step #3: Bargaining

"OK, look. Just to make you happy, we'll add 10,000 square feet, but accounting has to stay in the trailers. I don't care that I said we've got to be on LaSalle Street: I'm only going to pay \$10.50 per square foot. You make it happen—you're the expert!"

Step #4: Depression

"We're never going to survive this. The last time the company moved, we almost went under. You know what'll happen once we move: all of our customers will cancel all their orders and Alan Greenspan will raise interest rates 5%. It happens all the time. Look what happened to the White Sox when they left Comisky Park!"

Finally, Step #5: Acceptance

"We're going to go with Option A, the 125,000 square feet of new construction. Can you get it done in six months?"

Sad to say, after the CEO has gotten past acceptance, he usually puts the facilities experts through their own five stages of grief. But that's never going to happen to us again...