

## **THE PEEVES ANALYSIS IN VALUE MANAGEMENT STUDIES**

by

**R S White**

### **Synopsis**

There are occasions when the participants in a Value Management study avoid participation due to pent up feelings that their concerns are not being considered adequately. These concerns are very often the reasons for the problem under review, but established routines of investigation often by-pass or miss them entirely.

The Peeves Analysis is another way to get to the heart of the problem employing full group participation. It enables, as well, the true cause of the problem to be identified which is generally quite different from the peeve or problem as originally understood. Knowing the basic cause which is at the heart of the problem, can lead often to 100% savings by eliminating the offending cause. Examples are given of the use of the Peeves Analysis approach for major facilities, systems and product design.

### **The Author**

Bob White BE (Mech), has been practising as a Management consultant for just over 30 years. He has been specialising in VA/VE and Value Management for the last 15 years. He was trained in this area by Dusty Fowlkes of VA Inc. USA and with Eric Adam in Australia. He has conducted a wide range of in-house studies to industry, commerce and Government instrumentalities in Australia and overseas. The Peeves Analysis, as a tool to incorporate in Value Management studies has been developed by Bob over the last few years.



## 1. Introduction

How often have we conducted or participated in a Value Management study and felt that there is a 'hidden agenda' lurking behind the group conduct? It is as though we are purposely kept skirting around the periphery of the problem and we cannot get to the heart of it.

We can carry out all the Information stage processes, which includes definition of user needs, scope, cost visibility, function analysis and function costing, performance analysis, selection criteria and weighting and Pareto Analysis of the high cost functions. What is often missing is access to that special source of information which is transmitted to and fro on the organisation grapevine, or as it is known nowadays, the 'corporate network'.

This information is usually expressed in the tribal language of the corridors and lunchrooms, but is seldom used at formal company sponsored meetings. Try and tap this information in a formal session and the participants just clam up. How often have we heard people say to their colleagues after a meeting "could I have told them a thing or two about what is going on in this place, but if they don't know what's going on, I'm certainly not going to tell them." And so, the truth of the matter is not volunteered.

PEEVES are those heart felt matters which management tribes suffer dearly, but are helpless to correct. This is because the fault lies in the area of another Management tribe. Few members of a Management group have the status or authority to enter the work area of another and make corrections to allow their own jobs to become more effective. This is seen as territorial invasion and it is the basis of many wars.

How can the real information be obtained? The following chart outlines a typical set of inter-organisational relationships.

It can be seen that at the centre of the functional groupings or tribal enclaves there is a communications zone which is in "no man's land".

If the study participants can be encouraged to enter this zone under conditions of a truce, then it would be possible to tap into the tribal folklore with its particular type of communications. The Peeves Analysis is used to provide this route. The technique is uncomplicated and easily applied in group working. It provides startling results when utilised as an integral part of the Value Management Information Phase.

It would be stated at the beginning of a VM study that such an analysis is going to be conducted, to make the participants aware that they can have their say later on, but firstly it would be necessary to obtain costs, derive function etc. Without this conventional preparation, the team participants would not have a full appreciation of the problem, in all of its complexity and detail.

## 2. The steps in a Peeves Analysis

### 2.1 The peeves listing

Each participant or group representative is given the opportunity to list as many peeves as they wish, provided they can allocate an effect in some measurable form to each. The effect measurement is to be requested as each peeve is nominated. It is only after the participant has listed quite a few peeves that the really meaningful ones are generally volunteered. No restraint must be imposed to

volunteer a Peeve, regardless of its apparent sensitivity. Often the real truth hurts and this will be addressed later in the study.

## 2.2 Obtaining the effects in measurable terms

For each peeve, the effect, in measurable terms can be for time or money lost, wastage in other forms, such as space lost, materials and/or equipment under utilised, wastage in human resources, etc. If an effect cannot be attributed to the peeve, then it is just a personal opinion, a gripe of no consequence and must be neglected diplomatically. To encourage any meaningless vendettas can ruin the whole impact of this type of study. For information on costs, resort can be made to the earlier cost visibility and function costing. Obtaining a measure of the effect in other terms usually requires access to the organisation's informal network. This might not have been available from conventional VM processes of information gathering.

## 2.3 The cause

This is where a whole change in approach is required. Up until now, the information has been gathered shooting straight from the hip, from the tribal perspective. To identify the cause requires the participants to enter the organisational "no man's land" and search for the reason why the peeve or problem arose in the first place. Maybe a past decision which is now obsolete, a misunderstanding has occurred in an instruction, maybe the origins of the peeve came about because of a 'common wrong belief'. The Peeves Approach shows where the true cause is generally the result of human action (or inaction), whereas so often in conventional problem solving, the fault is attributed to a machine, a system or some failing in technology. Once the true cause has been identified it is amazing how the team finds, to their relief, that the problem is common to most of the activities in the organisation and is not in any way threatening to their own security or professionalism.

The following story is a classic example of problem solving using the Peeves Analysis type of approach. For over 120 years, a soldier in the UK had to march out to guard a specific bench in a London park. This bench was in direct line of sight of Buckingham Palace. The soldier had to stand to attention all day, in full regalia, with rifle at the ready at all times. Due to the need to make all possible military economies, a study team was assigned to 'find a better way' than this apparent wasteful utilisation of a trained soldier. Applying the Peeves Analysis approach, members of each group affected were asked for their peeves, which resulted in the following responses.

THE SOLDIER'S PEEVES	EFFECT	MEASURE OF PEEVE
Boring job	Lowering of morale	Could resign from forces, \$... waste of training
Can't leave the site for personal needs	Discomfort on the job	As above
Subject to ridicule	Lowering of morale	As above
Target for pigeons	Spilt uniform	Cost \$... in cleaning
Nothing happens	Waste of training	Soldier's annual pay
<b>THE MILITARY AUTHORITIES</b>		
Waste of a soldier on an apparently non-essential task	Annual cost of pay and waste of training	\$....
The onerous need to do police work when other sites require surveillance as well	Inefficient coverage to solve problem - requires at least 10 more soldiers	\$....
<b>THE PARK GARDENERS</b>		
Seem to be spying on them	Lowering on morale	Could resign, \$.... required to replace gardener
Can't mow with soldier standing in one place	Inefficient working	Need to come back later, \$....
<b>THE PUBLIC</b>		
No privacy on the seat	Need to look elsewhere for empty seat	Waste of park seat and time lost looking for another seat
Perceived waste of a soldier's training	Government inefficiency	Soldier's annual pay and training \$....

To adopt the above responses as a full investigation, just from the participants' point of view, would be inadequate. To solve the problem properly there has to be a reason, the cause behind the soldier standing there for all those years.

The enthusiast in the study team tried to recreate the original intent of the procedure and observed that the bench was in direct rifle line with the palace balcony. So his solution was to install a video camera nearby to spot any likely sharpshooters, with a direct line to the police to take immediate action when the situation demanded.

The savings over one year would be 35%, which exceeded the target of the VM team for project savings. However, the Peeves Analysis technique requires as a starting point, a savings of 100%, compromising down to, say, 80% savings where necessary. The team just had to do more investigation and this needed searching through files, enlisting the co-operation of members of the unofficial network. There was such a person who had always wondered why no one asked him for the true reason (or cause) for such an apparently silly guard procedure.

It seemed that 120 years ago, the park bench was painted.

To warn visitors to the park of this potential hazard to their finery, a soldier was posted by the bench for the day. Nobody cancelled the order, so for 120 years ... !

Needless to say, the procedure was stopped immediately, with 100% savings, effective straightaway. When a 30% change is sought, it is so often found, rightly or wrongly, requiring project management and the attendant cost of change. Using the Peeves Analysis, and its very powerful requirement to identify the basic cause, the result can lead to the magic 100% saving, first off.

#### 2.4 Ways to overcome the basic cause

This fourth segment of the Peeves Analysis, is really reserved for the Speculation Phase of the VM study. As it was shown in the example of the park bench, the team not only had to see beyond the obvious, but it required imagination and resourcefulness to arrive at the basic cause and its true reason. Not all investigations are like this. How often is the most innovative or the most sensible solution contrary to the management style prevailing in the organisation.

Creative solutions are needed therefore which will let those originally involved, whether in error or not, see that no one is made a fool of and that alibis are preserved. This requires innovation in the solution presented, otherwise the whole proposal will be thrown out. Thus the compromise down to lower figures than 100%.

Naturally many systems or functions cannot be eliminated, but the Peeves Analysis serves as an excellent means to weed out the unnecessary costs which might not otherwise have been discovered.

### 3. Using the Pareto principle to cull the number of peeves

The Pareto principle says 'that in any series of elements to be controlled, a selected small fraction in terms of numbers of elements usually accounts for a large fraction in terms of effect.'

Where, say, 50 peeves are provided by each major participants group, which is not at all unusual once they become warmed up, then for 10 different groups this can yield 500 separate peeves. This list would be unmanageable to correct individually. However, it always happens that from the causes

identified, various themes emerge which have a common link to a large number of peeves. These are the topics which appear to reside in "no man's land".

Applying Pareto's 20:80 rule, 20% of the 500 peeves yield 100 causes only. A great reduction of matters to attend to. With the application again of the Pareto 20:80 rule to the 100 causes, this results in 20 of the causes which really control or influence the solution to the whole problem. It is within these 20 or so basic causes that a high degree of imagination is required, but so often it results in removing quite stupid, obsolete practices and procedures at relatively little cost.

#### 4. The Peeves Analysis in the design of buildings

When the members of any group of design professionals apply their skills to a major building, they work within their professional boundaries and no doubt do that well. However, there has to be an overlap of each professional's area of responsibility, yet little provision exists, in the normal scheme of things, for them to make suggestions across professional boundaries. The team needs rationale to encourage improved co-operation and, when funded by the client or relevant Authority, the Peeves Analysis can provide this forum.

A most important ingredient to the Peeves Analysis is the introduction of the users of the facility to the design team. These people always have very strong views as to the inadequacies from past experience, which can be projected into the facility under review. The inclusion of hospital staff onto the design team, via the Peeves Analysis has always been most illuminating (and often embarrassing) to the highly experienced design professionals within the design team. It is amazing as well, just how many peeves one discipline in the design #professions have against others when they are given an open go, all in the interest of the "best possible design". However, for purposes of illustration, using a city building as an example, the following peeves emerge which are but a very few of the many available:-

- \* can't park without hitting the columns
- \* get flu from the air conditioning
- \* get headaches from the lighting
- \* telephone and power outlets always in the wrong place
- \* visitors can't find their way to our office
- \* etc x 50-100 peeves

The effects of these peeves may be difficult to quantify in building cost terms, but can generally be reflected in high staff turnover and lessening of the attraction in letting the commercial office space. This economic factor is of great significance however, to the owners or investors. The cause behind these problems is generally that the design professionals do not have a provision in their fees to consult on an intra-professional basis, so that such matters raised in the Peeves Analysis are not attended to in that building. And so on to most buildings. At least the Peeves Analysis can provide the owners with the realities of the likely 'lemon' they are going to have on its completion.

Unfortunately this is always too late.

#### 5. The Peeves Analysis with systems and procedures

For non physical type projects, a relatively high degree of labour content exists and thus a similarly high degree of tribal interaction. The 'us and them' syndrome can be a great hindrance to making improvements, especially when the white collar management tribe wishes to have the blue

collar ones to lift their game. Carrying out a problem analysis, including meaningful costing and function analysis in working with both groups, is like taming a hungry shoal of piranhas. To break the ice and let the problems of all participants be seen for their true cost to the organisation, there is nothing like a Peeves Analysis as one of the earliest steps of the Investigation Phase. At least it allows the pent up frustrations to come out and then for the team to proceed to work together, to identify the global nature of the problem.

It is with systems and procedures particularly that the elimination approach to cost savings can be sought, as systems can be stopped without any materials to be run down or phased out. The staff numbers do not necessarily have to be reduced, which is unpalatable in most circumstances. Alternatively, output can be improved dramatically, not only due to the elimination of wasteful practices, but also from the harmony which emerges, as each work group has a much better appreciation of all others. The fact that so many of the problems have common causes is a salutary lesson for all, especially for senior management.

## 6. The Peeves Analysis with products

For products, whether a warship or a simple can opener, the designers so often do their own work without reference to others. For relatively complex products, a designer often specialises on one function and considers this as a matter of the greatest significance in the whole product. One person designs the timing gear, another the lifting mechanisms etc, mostly independent of the other functions and operations. In fact, it was this phenomenon in industry which gave Value Analysis, originally, the meat for its analytical sandwich.

However, after all obvious cost reductions have been achieved using the Value Analysis technique to its fullest extent, where can manufacturers go next to make the product more saleable or acceptable? Naturally this avenue lies with performance, especially relative to the competition.

To illustrate this point, take the humble can opener. This product, which can be purchased world wide for approximately \$2.00 would surely have no design improvements available. Well, the designer with the Peeves Analysis at their disposal is able, to coin a phrase, to open up a whole can of worms concerning the design inadequacies. Such an analysis is shown, in which the pent up annoyance of the casual users was dramatic, even to the group itself.

### SIMPLE CAN OPENER PEEVES

SHARP CORNERS ON EACH EDGE  
LID DROPS INTO CONTENTS  
SLIPPERY TO HANDLE  
SWarf PRODUCED IN CUTTING SLOT  
BOTTLE OPENER HURTS  
RIGHT HANDED USE ONLY  
CUMBERSOME  
NO SAFETY INSTRUCTIONS  
CUTTING EDGE DIFFICULT TO REACH TO CLEAN  
UNSAFE FOR CHILDREN  
HARD TO PIERCE HOLE  
ARTHRITICS CAN'T USE IT  
HARD TO CUT SLOT  
CUTS ONE DIRECTION ONLY  
SLIPS WHILST CUTTING

ERGONOMICS POOR  
HARD TO KEEP OPENER ON CAN  
NEEDS TWO HANDS  
CAN'T CUT SHARP CORNERS  
PLATING COMES OFF - RUSTS  
SLOW TO OPERATE  
DIFFICULT TO MANUFACTURE  
NO INSTRUCTIONS  
SERRATED DISC WEARS QUICKLY  
NOT OBVIOUS HOW TO USE  
SHORT EFFECTIVE LIFE

On a recent television programme in which just such a manufacturer was interviewed concerning the steel slivers which drop into the cans of baby food, the slick answer was that all babies need a supplement of iron! For those wishing to gain competitive advantage, or to be sure of the product (as for military requirements) performs at its best, harnessing the users' peeves is a most valuable exercise.

Such is the perceptive ability of the Peeves Analysis that questions which should have been asked years ago emerge to allow macro product improvements and corresponding macro increases in product advantage. Examples which come to mind include the following, expressed as consumer peeves:-

- \* "if only car doors could be designed to prevent fingers being mutilated on the centre column when the doors are slammed shut unexpectedly"
- \* "if only all electric toasters were designed so that children didn't risk electrocution when putting their fingers into the loading slots"
- \* "if only the water supply didn't have that chlorine smell"
- \* "if only I could be assured that my electronic equipment would not be fried from lightning strikes during a thunderstorm"
- \* "if only food could be guaranteed to not allow moths from breeding in all my cereals, flour, packet mixes when the weather is humid"
- \* "if only my bank statement didn't have all those little extras included, hidden amongst the debits"
- \* "if only the light bulbs would last a lot longer"

On this last often stated peeve, it is interesting that recently designed compact fluorescent lights (which can fit into the bayonet light sockets) use one fifth the electricity of normal incandescent globes.

Manufacturers claim they last 8000 hours, which would well make up for their higher \$20 - \$40 initial cost. Of greater significance, US energy expert, Amory Lovins believes that an average USA electricity utility could afford to give away energy saving devices, such as these light globes and still be better off because it would need to generate so much less electricity.

One wonders what other macro savings could be unearthed when the depths of consumer dissatisfaction are sought and then analysed for the underlying cause, which could then be translated into unusual solutions of enormous savings potential. It is a matter of conjecture whether big or



small organisations do not wish to subject themselves to the scrutiny of their own staff or of consumers, for fear of just what embarrassing things they may find. This is not market research in the traditional sense, because market research is not briefed to identify the underlying malaise, nor to seek solutions, which is the express purpose of the Peeves Analysis.

#### 7. The Peeves Analysis and the Value Management study

The Peeves Analysis should not be considered as an alternative to the disciplines of a full Value Management study, with all of its investigative, creative, evaluative and reporting phases.

It does, however, provide a catalyst when the habits and behavioural patterns of individuals and groups get in the way of the improvement process.

