

Sample Charging Memorandum: PCAN—Defining the Problem

To: Action Learning Executive Development Program Participants

From: The CFAR Team

Subject: Defining the Problem

Each of your teams has been assigned one or more questions to be answered this week. We suggest you begin by creating a clear problem statement upon which your entire team agrees. The following steps will help you produce the statement:

1. State the Underlying Problem or Challenges

Start with your assigned question or questions. Brainstorm ideas, first individually, and then as a team, as to the underlying problem or challenges prompting the questions. Come to agreement on the reasons why the questions are important. Keep in mind that tonight you are not looking for solutions. For now, you simply want to agree on why you are considering your assigned questions. Obviously it will be difficult to find answers if team members are working with different assumptions.

2. Contextualize the Questions

Identify prior attempts at your organization, if there have been any, to answer the following questions. Why haven't earlier answers been sufficient? Why is it important that you address these questions now (or again)? Who is especially interested in the answer? Who will be affected by your eventual recommendations, and how?

3. Produce a Problem Statement

In light of your discussion so far, are there aspects of your questions that you now see more clearly? If so, discuss these aspects. Finally, complete this evening's work by explaining, in two or three short sentences, why it is important to answer your assigned questions *at this time*. Please put your group's explanation on a flip chart and bring it to tomorrow's opening session.