Part I – Analyzing Mental Models from a personal perspective

Prompt # 1: Quoted from Hutchens (page 65), please write up a response to either item (a) or item (b) below.

a. Think of a comment that a spouse, partner, or colleague has made about you that you found disturbing or frustrating. After reflecting on the comment, do you find that there is any truth in it? How hard was it initially for you to consider that the comment may be accurate? Describe the comment/situation clearly. Don’t ramble but do connect your reflective comments to concepts from the readings.

b. Have you ever known anyone with behaviors or traits that were very obvious to others, but seemingly invisible to that person? Why do you think this was so? Might you have similar blind spots about yourself, because they don’t match your self-perception? Describe the example clearly and connect your reflection to the concepts from the readings.

There have been many times that I have seen a behavior or trait in another person that they cannot see themselves. I’m sure I have the same blind spots about myself, because we often see what we want to see rather than the truth. One example would be with one of my coworkers who is often rude to fellow employees who are not a part of her team whom are asking for help with potential students. Although we have a lot of work to do for our own teams, there are many times that we are also required to help other teams. This specific employee is known for having an attitude when asked to help other teams, yet doesn’t realize how rude she is being. It could be that she is irritated having to do additional work, and doesn’t realize that she is not hiding her irritation. I’m sure every employee, including myself, has times that they fail to hide their true emotion and comes across as rude or irritated rather than simply accepting the additional work.

Prompt # 2: Quoted from Hutchens (page 66), please write up a response to either item (a) or item (b) below.

a. Think of a time (either personally or organizationally) when you did not get the results you wanted. What were the specific actions you took that led to those results, and what
was your thinking at the time that caused you to take those actions? (It may be easier to reflect on this with a friend, because it is often hard to see our own mental models.)

b. Think of a time when you, or a group you were associated with, excelled by adopting a new mental model. Explain the time clearly and connect to the readings.

As a finance team at work, we excelled as a group by adopting a new mental model. We decided to look at things differently, so instead of being overwhelmed by all the work we had to do, we instead worked together to help each other out. Our boss simply told us not to worry how much work we got done because he knew we were all working hard and could only do so much in a day. Instead of quickly completing the work (whether it was done correctly or incorrectly) we instead focused our attention on providing the best service possible to each individual we worked with. We no longer focused on multitasking constantly and rushing through the work to complete it, but rather focused on spending the time to ensure our work was of the highest quality and error free. At first, we were perhaps doing what looked better for the company, but instead decided to go with the more ethical approach of ensuring the quality of our work.

Prompt # 3: Quoted from Hutchens (page 66), please write up a response to either item (a) or item (b) below.

a. Think of a time when someone presented his or her mental model as if it were a fact. What kinds of responses did this elicit? Can you think of a time when you have done this? Clearly and succinctly describe this, connecting to the readings.

b. The next time you are personally offended or frustrated by someone’s comments, what questions could you ask to better understand the other person’s mental models? How could you help him or her do the same for you? Explain your answers.

The next time I am offended or frustrated by someone’s comments, I would want to ask how they came up with their concept or theory. I would want to ask what their background is on the subject, where they got their information from, how long they have been researching the topic. I would want to understand their perspective on the topic, so perhaps understanding their upbringing would help me to better understand their view on the topic. If I were the one presenting my mental model, I would want to explain where I got my information and how I decided on the mental model I chose. I would also want to share any background information I have on the topic so that other people can understand how I came to my decision.
Prompt # 4: Quoted from Hutchens (page 68), please write up a response to the following:

Consider the “different towers with different views” metaphor as it applies to your own life. What “towers” do you inhabit? To get your mind flowing, it may help you to think in terms of your beliefs about, for example, how organizations should be run, or beliefs about leadership and motivation, political ideology, theology, parenting style, etc.

Think through at least a few beliefs you hold. How has your tower view affected your life? Have you changed a view? Also, comment on how your beliefs have led to disagreements or impasses with others who inhabit “different towers with different views.”

The towers I inhabit don’t always allow me to see things as other people would, through their perspective. In some cases it can be hard for me to understand how it may feel to be raised a certain way or to not experience the things I have. This can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or disagreements with my boyfriend because we had such different upbringings. These misunderstandings can be attributed to the resources that were available to us, or perhaps even the time our parent’s spent with us teaching us new things. It is very hard to understand why a parent would let their child do all the things he did, when I would never have gotten away with any of those things under my parent’s supervision.

Prompt # 5: Quoted from Hutchens (page 70), please write up a response to the following:

How can this self-reinforcing dynamic help in understanding, for example, racism? Generational conflicts? “Problem children” in a family full of achievers? Companies that don’t change, even though they’re losing customers?

The self-reinforcing dynamic helps us to understand some conflicts, such as racism, because some people are raised to believe something and are encouraged by all those around them to think the same way. Because they are surrounded by some much reinforcement that what they are doing is correct, they start to believe that they are doing the correct thing. After doing something for so long, whether it is right or not, you begin to believe that you are doing the right thing, reinforcing the behavior.

Part II – Analyzing Mental Models from an organizational perspective

Prompt # 6: Prompt 6 has five parts / sub-questions. First, identify the organization you are choosing for this assignment then write up a response to the following:
Bank of America

1) What are some mental models that your organization may hold about its role in the world?

Bank of America sees itself as a leader in the banking industry and therefore wants to be looked to as an innovator in banking practices and technology, but also as an ethical company.

2) How might you and your other organization members begin surfacing and testing some of your organization’s mental models.

I could begin testing the company’s mental models by comparing the technologies used by Bank of America to other leading banking companies. This is something any employee could do to determine if the technologies being used really are innovative, or rather just “old news”. The company’s ethics would also be something that any employee could look into because each employee has a different experience. Each employee would need to determine for themselves what they feel is ethical and then determine whether or not the company upholds those ideals.

3) What are some of your organization’s biggest challenges? How might untested mental models be contributing to the problem?

Some of the biggest challenges for Bank of America may be that they are in so many different countries. Each country has its own view on what is ethical or moral, and what may be acceptable in one country may not be in another. Surely they have not tested all mental models and therefore may be missing out on a better way of managing their business or a more efficient way to conduct business.

4) Cite an example or two of times that your organization has set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which the group’s belief in something actually made that something come true.

One example of a time Bank of America set in motion something the group believed in was when they decided to become more “green” in their banking centers by adopting more paperless options of doing things. Instead of employees having to keep track of a multitude
of receipts that are stored for years, they simply adopted electronic procedures for most transactions. This not only lead to helping the environment, but also contributed to a reduction in costs for the company.

5) Review the material on the Ladder of Inference (page 72 from the Neanderthal Debrief document in the Readings content area of Learning Module 2). Cite a recent conflict that took place in your organization in which someone hastily climbed up the ladder and “jumped” to conclusions about someone else. TRACE THE STEPS OF THE LADDER. That is, for this item, clearly demonstrate that you’ve tied your situation to the steps of the ladder...demonstrate you read and understood the steps and can apply them.

1. Sellers were not getting many new checking accounts.
2. There weren’t many new customers coming to the banking centers, so very few people were opening new accounts.
3. Managers assumed sellers did not know how to do their jobs correctly.
4. Managers concluded that sellers needed more training.
5. Without new checking accounts, the bank is not getting new customers to help the company grow.
6. The company had all sellers attend training classes to understand how to become more successful in their position.
7. The new sales approach (learned in the training class) brought a different view of the product making it easier to show customers how they can benefit from it, increasing the number of new checking accounts.

6) Review the guidelines for making your thinking explicit (the bullet points on pages 75-77 from the Neanderthal Debrief document in the Readings content area of Learning Module 2). With the conflict you identified in item 5 (above) write down the kinds of questions and the kinds of statements that would make your thinking about the conflict explicit. Stick with it, you can do it!

I would want to understand what other employees feel is the issue, or how they feel the problem can be solved. I would want examples of the objections they receive from customers to better understand why they do not want the company’s products. I would explain to the employees my reasoning just as I would want to understand theirs. I would also want to make sure that what I am interpreting from the data is the same as my manager and the same of other sellers.