

THE LIFE AND CAREER OF A DIVISIONAL CEO: BOB JOHNSON AT HONEYWELL (A)

I'm not in a good place," said Bob Johnson. "I feel empty. Lonely. Alone. Sad." Johnson's casual, unusual cadence belied his status as an internationally respected business icon, and in this moment, seemed inconsistent with the very real malaise he was describing. "Never *been* lost," he said with a shrug. "I must figure out what to do: make some changes!" It was a sunny day in December 2005, and Johnson was "herding"¹ his Jaguar down an immaculate divided road in Scottsdale, Arizona. As the retiring CEO of Honeywell Aerospace division, he seemed to have everything. Yet he looked concerned. During the course of his career, Johnson had worked for, and with, industry icons Jack Welch and Larry Bossidy. He had amassed an unblemished record of 32 straight successful turn-around and managerial assignments, all of them over profit plan, under expense budget, and ahead of schedule. He'd invested wisely and capitalized on his management bonus plans to the point where he'd become independently wealthy. He'd been married for 32 years and raised three children. He'd played golf all over the world and at the best courses. He'd even been teamed with Tiger Woods and in the process finished second in a nationally recognized pro-am tournament after playing the round of his life. He'd owned the cars of his choice, including a Ferrari and a Mercedes SL500 sports car. What could be wrong with this picture?

A "Normal" Childhood and Youth

Robert Johnson grew up in Zanesville, Ohio, where his father worked for General Electric (GE). With a German mother and Swedish father, life in the Johnson family was marked by a sense of orderliness. Both fundamentalist Christians, Johnson's parents worked hard to raise their children with discipline and clear rewards and punishments.

¹ "Herding" was Johnson's term for driving while checking his Blackberry and listening to his cell phone voicemail.

By his own admission, Johnson was a difficult child who seemed to naturally disobey rules. At the time, the family was unaware that Johnson had Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), a condition characterized by the inability to maintain attention and a tendency toward impulsive behavior and blurting out, along with motor restlessness.² In addition, Johnson later discovered that he also had Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), a condition in which the brain locks onto something and finds it hard to let go. Growing up, Johnson continually questioned the family rules. He seemed fixated on knowing *why* a rule was a rule. The seemingly endless repetitions of his inquiries tired his parents. His mother, for example, would say, “It’s nap time,” and Johnson would resist. He constantly fidgeted, jiggling his arms, knees, his whole body— he just couldn’t sit still. Taking a nap was, in his words, impossible. His mother would send him to his room. Later, Johnson noted that he spent long, long, periods in his room alone struggling to figure out how to function in the world. That scenario went on until he was 15. As Johnson recalled:

If I objected, if I didn’t go along with this form of changing my behavior or discipline, I was whipped. I spent a lot of time in that room. And while in there, I developed a very strong will to escape, to leave the room, and to have a situation where I employed a different set of principles. That’s not to say my parents weren’t great. But our relationship was not a holding, loving, caring relationship.

In junior high, Johnson met Bill Stewart (now President and CEO of Stewart Glapat Corporation) in some of his classes and on the basketball court. Stewart described Johnson as everyone’s friend—he was fun to be around. Johnson was able to fit well with most groups and in various settings. He made people feel good about themselves—a talent Stewart credited as being a key to Johnson’s later leadership success.

When they reached high school, Stewart tried out for and made the varsity basketball team, and Johnson did not. Subsequently, Johnson organized a team of all the other players who failed to make the varsity team and entered them in the YMCA-sponsored league. They eventually won the state championship. Stewart recalled this team of what some called renegades:

I wouldn’t call them renegades but they were people who didn’t make the team because of discipline problems or maybe they smoked. Back then that meant something. They played a pretty rough brand of basketball. Maybe more like an NBA style— it was run and shoot—not much defense.

As player-coach, he took that team through the various stages of the tournament and won state champion. They just out-gunned the other teams and got a trophy for it. I never got to touch a state championship experience but Bob did—certainly in a different arena. So, Bob became legendary [in Zanesville] for having formed this state championship team.

² <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/adhd/> (accessed 21 March 2006).

Johnson did make the high school golf team, however, and he and Stewart played many rounds together. Stewart described him as an “optimistic” player. Johnson apparently hit some shots that would bring most players to tears and cause them to give up. But on the very next hole, Johnson would make a great shot and be right back in the game and on top of his spirits. “He always looked for the next opportunity and didn’t dwell on the past,” Stewart said. “Many of us have difficulty with that since we tend to remember our mistakes and can’t enjoy the moment.”

After going their separate ways following high school, Johnson and Stewart remained acquaintances, meeting up occasionally at the five-year school reunions. Their mutual love for the game of golf brought them together periodically as they made plans to play various well-known courses. Their most recent excursion had been a two-week trip with six others in August 2005, playing the best courses in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, and England. Reflecting on his relationship with Johnson, Stewart noted:

I bet if you had asked my classmates who in our class would become a leader of industry and shake things up in the corporate world, I’d have been the one because I was going to the school that trained people [MIT].

I went to the Sloan School of Management, and I was a mechanical engineer. So by right and prediction, I should be the one that’s being interviewed as some corporate executive. But Bob had a different quality. That was, I think, he learned very early how to get the best out of people.

Earning a Higher Education

Johnson’s innate intelligence along with the discipline imposed on him as a youth served him well in school. He typically got mostly As in high school, and that record got him into Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, where he started out in the engineering school. After two years, he switched majors to business. Johnson graduated with an economics major in 1969. Although the then newly elected President Nixon promised peace in Vietnam, Johnson fully expected to get his draft number shortly after graduation. He attended campus recruiting hoping to find a job. “So if I did go to war,” Johnson said, “I had a place to come back to.”

The night before his second round of interviews with GE executives, Johnson was partying at a seniors’ fraternity event. He got in late and recalled setting his alarm clock but needed his fraternity brothers’ help to get him up and on his way to Cincinnati on time. The morning began with interviews with several different managers, and then the group headed to lunch. They drank “silver bullets” (very dry martinis) before Johnson returned for his afternoon interviews, first with the manager in charge of accounts payable. As he remembered:

I got the nods. And I was really just fighting to pay attention. As he asked questions, he was pounding a pencil on the desk [to keep me awake]. I finally said, “Look, I was studying for a test, and we celebrated afterward with this

party.” I just told him the truth. “Well, you know, the same thing happened to me when I was coming out of college,” he said, “When can you start?”

It’s interesting that he trusted that my value was there. [Later] I went to his retirement party and thanked him for taking a chance on me. And later on, I had some chances in my career to know somebody and observe that there was something, some event that was a little out of the norm. So, I stayed with some people [like he did with me] and it always turned out right.

Going to Work

Johnson began his professional career at GE Aircraft Engines (GEAE) working in financial analysis and accounting (see **Exhibit 1** for a timeline). He found the work, being in charge of the physical inventory for a \$6 billion business, interesting and instructive. Johnson progressed the next 12 years in various finance leadership positions. As he did, he came to believe the business side was easy to figure out, that the complexity of his position was managing the people and processes.

In 1972, Johnson met his future wife, Dede, while he was interviewing candidates at his alma mater. In time, she joined the company, where her father had worked for 36 years. (Johnson’s father had worked for GE for 32 years.) Johnson dropped by her office occasionally to see how she was doing, and their relationship blossomed. They were married in 1974. “In a subtle way, people at GE were telling me I should be married,” Johnson said. “I don’t think it was a rule, but I was one of the few people in the management learning process who wasn’t married.” Together, the Johnsons raised two daughters and one son.

Management Development

General Electric had developed a management development program for vice presidents that enrolled 25 executives each year. Johnson was picked to join the program in 1992. Part of the program was held in various overseas locations including Germany. The program included various GE executives talking about their experiences. Johnson recalled one lesson in particular:

We had a fellow come to visit us whose model had generated good results but whose behavior included killing gnats with sledgehammers. So, Jack [Welch] sent him off to see an executive coach to change his behavior. He talked [to us] about this and how important changing his behavior was. A number of people asked him questions, and I said, “Are you doing this because you were told to do it or because you want to do it?” In my mind, he gave the wrong answer when he said, “It doesn’t matter, does it?”

I thought, “Wow, how are you going to make a significant change in what is probably a deep-seated behavior if you first don’t recognize that a change is what you want to make?”

Part of the program included team projects analyzing three business problems. There were two teams of four working on each of the three issues. Each team presented their project findings to their business leader. After getting suggestions from their business leaders, the two competing teams on each project were then suddenly told that they had to work together and condense their two separate presentations into a joint five-slide presentation to deliver to the CEO, Jack Welch, and his team.

After completing the four-week development course, Johnson was promoted to be leader of the global field service engineering team. He was given 18 months to reduce service costs by 10%. “And in nine months, we made it 25% more efficient—customers were happy,” Johnson said. “I thought, wow, I know I can make this work inside GE, but what about outside the company?” It wasn’t long before he decided to give it a try.

Singapore

In 1983, Johnson was asked to move to Singapore to rejuvenate and run the GE aircraft engine technology repair business there. Johnson found himself in a very different culture in which half the people spoke Mandarin and in charge of a very technical business he knew very little about. His predecessor had established a norm that nothing in the business moved unless it had his personal approval. Johnson described his contrasting approach:

Some fellows had done massive homework and analysis. They came into the meeting [a few days after I arrived] with worksheets on top of worksheets. And they walked me through their logic, which all made perfect sense. At the end of their presentation they looked at me and said, “Bob, what do you want to do?” I said, “What do I want to do? You did all the work, what do you think we should do?”

“Well, what if we’re wrong?” one of them asked. So, I told them if we were wrong we would change it. We would do something else. At that point, if I had to make all the decisions, and they were the ones who knew everything, it wasn’t going to work. How would they ever grow? How big and successful could we be if I was the bottleneck? So, we made a different set of rules about what they could do and what I could do. But they always came in and told me what they wanted to do. They had to start with that.

Through a continuous improvement process of realigning the processes, timing the processes, and getting the bottlenecks out of the way, we went from little income or losses to [profits of] almost 50 cents on the dollar. We grew that business seven times.

Essentially we took a business and radically changed it inside itself. This wasn’t me doing this. This was a set of people who were the process owners, redesigning a business based upon the goals and needs of the customers. And we could do it

successfully inside its existing frame. We got all the people who had to do the work involved in implementing the changes.

Those four years were a wonderful experience for me and for my family. Every moment was a learning experience. Twenty years later there are people in that plant I know and continue to visit when I'm in Singapore.

Johnson reached the corporation's goals for the Singapore operation ahead of schedule and was then assigned to turn around an operation in central Kansas. The move from Singapore—a large, cosmopolitan city with low service-sector wage rates and extensive benefits for expatriates including housekeepers and babysitters—to Kansas, where none of that existed, was a big culture shock for the Johnsons. All of them struggled to make the change. Nevertheless, Johnson succeeded in his new assignment, once again faster and better than expected.

AAR Corporation

Johnson's success at GE and the repetitive nature of his experiences—new assignment, setting high goals, working through the talents of his people, succeeding ahead of schedule—encouraged him to consider other options. In June of 1993, he received and accepted an offer to join AAR Corporation, a family-owned company in Chicago, ending his 24- year career at GE. AAR was an aerospace company dealing in servicing, manufacturing, and trading. Johnson was vice president and general manager of manufacturing and services. During his 13 months at AAR, their earnings went from \$0.02 a share to \$0.49:

The process of making good decisions [at AAR] was comparable [to that at GE] but this was a small business with less resources. I was having fun but realized this company was only going to provide a limited opportunity for growth for me. It was a family-founded business and to be president was going to take quite a while. The phone started ringing from a headhunter who wanted me to go to Phoenix and work for some people who had left GE to go to another company, AlliedSignal. They wanted to reinvent this company.

AlliedSignal

Believing that he could make his established change process work in different businesses, Johnson thought it was the right time to return to a larger company. The difficult part was going to be persuading his family to move to Arizona. His two high school-age daughters had just established themselves in the Chicago school system, and the idea of moving again was not popular. Eventually, the family agreed, but for the first six months, they resented Johnson's decision:

The move from Chicago to Phoenix had a lot of pluses or I wouldn't have taken the phone call. It also overcame some roadblocks that I perceived were eventually going to happen in Chicago. The negotiations were interesting because on the one hand, I would die to be in Phoenix and have all those golf courses [nearby]. So, I had to emphasize areas of concern—and the company was broken. So, I had to take the risk of saying no and did so two or three times. They finally gave me the security I needed and made the commitment that my family would not have to relocate in the future.

AlliedSignal had started out in the chemical business producing ammonia in the early 1920s. With growth, the company introduced yarns, fabrics, tire material, oil and gas chemicals, eventually adding automotive and aerospace manufacturing. By the time Johnson joined them, AlliedSignal had, under the leadership of Larry Bossidy, another former lieutenant of Jack Welch's at GE, consolidated into three industry sectors: aerospace, engineered materials, and automotive. Johnson joined the aerospace sector, which had four businesses: engines, aircraft systems, electronics, and landing systems. Johnson formed a new business called services, which spanned all the product businesses.

Three years after Johnson's arrival, with a flourishing service business established, Bossidy told Johnson he needed him to go to Kansas City to run a new, but faltering, part of the company. Johnson explained the "no move" clause in his contract, to which Bossidy offered an alternative: Johnson would fly to Kansas City as late as he wanted on Sunday nights and return to Phoenix early each Friday afternoon. The company would provide Johnson a condo and car in Kansas City. Bossidy gave Johnson a two-year time frame for re-establishing the business. So, in the late summer of 1997, Johnson started his shuttle management lifestyle. And in typical fashion, he completed his turnaround effort, meeting Bossidy's goals after only 16 months:

For 60 straight weeks, I went back and forth. We closed some businesses, integrated others, and stopped the internal fighting. We took a business that was losing income, losing cash, and had no growth and turned it into one of the biggest cash and income generators of the company. People were now having fun there. Just a wonderful business that [later] became the basis for [analysis recommending] merging AlliedSignal and Honeywell.

Shortly after the Kansas City success and just before his return to work in Phoenix, Bossidy told Johnson he wanted him to go Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to run a connector business they were intending to acquire. There would be no flying back and forth on that assignment, so Johnson was expected to persuade his family to make the move. Fortunately for Johnson, the deal failed to go through, and the family stayed put in Phoenix.

By this time, in late 1998, Johnson had become president and CEO of AlliedSignal's aerospace marketing, sales, and service business. Together, Bossidy and his team had led a transformation of AlliedSignal that quintupled the market value of company shares. "The AlliedSignal opportunity gave me a bigger place to play and confirmed to me that I like to be

where things aren't right," Johnson said. "And after three or four years, we were successful at fixing the business."

Honeywell International

In June of 1999, AlliedSignal merged with Honeywell in a stock-swap to create a *Fortune* 50 company named Honeywell International. Honeywell had started business in 1906 manufacturing furnace regulators (thermostats) and had grown to develop several famous products such as the electronic autopilot. By 1986, the Honeywell aerospace business had become one of the world's leading integrators of avionics systems.

Larry Bossidy was made chairman of the new Honeywell International, but left the company four months later. Michael Bonsignore replaced him as chairman and CEO. Robert Johnson became CEO of the combined aerospace operations with headquarters in Phoenix.

The newly merged company wrestled with many issues—as mergers often do. At one point, there was even a subsequent highly publicized effort to merge Honeywell and GE. When this effort failed, Bonsignore left the firm, and Bossidy was asked, in July of 2001, to resume managing the company. Bossidy agreed to return only long enough to help the company get out of its crisis and until a good successor could be found. Johnson was interviewed for the job, but had reservations about his complete interest in the position as corporate chairman in New Jersey. He enjoyed the operational management much more than he would the lifestyle and challenges of the statesmanship role that chairmen had to play. Plus he really liked living in Phoenix, and the new job would take him to New Jersey headquarters. A year after Bossidy returned, the company named another former GE executive, to replace him as chairman, CEO, and president.

Johnson continued as divisional CEO of the Honeywell aerospace operations, now a \$10 billion business with key components on nearly every aircraft and space vehicle in the world. And then the 9/11 terrorist attacks changed the face of the industry. As the airline industry around the globe struggled to regain profitable operations, Johnson worked hard to lead the division through the difficult economic times. Long story short, divisional profits grew steadily until the time of his retirement in January 2006.

Shortly thereafter, Johnson was elected chairman of the Aerospace Industry Association. In his words, their annual meetings had become uninteresting and energy consuming affairs as they persisted in a time-proven format year after year. During his time leading the organization, Johnson was able to re-energize the meetings (in part, ironically, by having attendees play less golf). Executive members had asked for change and participated directly in creating it. Johnson was not surprised that the change was so easy, since all he'd done was what he'd been doing for years: asking people what they wanted to do and then letting it happen despite what had been done before. By the end of his administration at the Aerospace Industry Association (AIA), Johnson had become recognized by many as something close to an industry icon; he was even considered for Secretary of the Navy in 2005.

The Style that Produced Uninterrupted Professional Success

By the summer of 2005, Robert Johnson was one of the captains of the aerospace industry. He'd led numerous successful business turnarounds in a row, all of them ahead of goal and ahead of schedule. His personal goal had been consistently to meet target ahead of schedule. "The most important principle was not *Bob*," Johnson said. "This wasn't [about] me—this was a set of people who were the process owners redesigning a business based upon the goals and needs of the customer."

Dean Flatt, president of electronic aerospace systems, first met Johnson at an informal gathering while they were both at GE. Johnson, he said, seemed to live life large and bold. He apparently enjoyed telling stories and "holding court" in hotel lobbies. Flatt described Johnson as the James Joyce of business world.³ "When I first saw him, I wasn't sure what to make of him because he's not your standard buttoned-up type of business guy," Flatt said. "He's got a very different way of talking and dealing with people."

In Flatt's opinion, Johnson did three things very well as a leader. First, he helped people who worked for him get to places where they were uncomfortable—to know and overcome their discomfort zones. Second, he did a good job of bringing disparate groups together to make sure their work was successful. Third, he demanded the organization be customer conscious across the board.

In the Office: Executives in every merger struggle to learn the "other side's" way of doing things. This was also true in the Allied/Honeywell merger. Scott Starrett, vice president of military aircraft, was accustomed to the original Honeywell's "midwestern nature" and non-confrontational management style. According to Starrett, Johnson's meeting format was different, but consistent: he expected visuals and simplicity. Johnson would take something very complex, break it down into what were its most basic elements and find out what was important in the middle of those elements. He would then hammer repeatedly on the central key elements. Some managers had an apocryphal name for Johnson's methods for motivating senior executives, they called it "getting *Bobbed*." Starrett described the process:

If you took Bob somewhere he didn't want to go, you knew it right away. His verbal and body language changed. He's generally very intense and emotional—he doesn't buffer his feelings.⁴ If you present a story or bring five people into a meeting with you when what Bob really wants to hear is the important [central] detail, he will very actively *undress* you in that meeting if you are off the mark. If you go off point, he'll wait awhile for you to come back. If that doesn't happen he'll turn to whoever is sitting beside him and ask, "Can I get him now? Can I get him now? Is he done?" Bob will use [that kind of] humor, but he is really being serious.

³ James Joyce was an Irish novelist noted for his experimental use of language.

⁴ Another central characteristic of ADD.

Flatt offered an illustration of his own experience:

One of the first times that I worked for him, I was in the avionics business putting together an operating plan on the defense and space business. And it was tight. It was together. We knew what we were doing, and we knew where we were going. I got up there to pitch that—and it was probably one of the best pitches I’ve ever had in my life. But Bob kept interrupting and asking questions. Why didn’t I know where our customer came from? Didn’t I have any good ideas for growth? He let me know that I didn’t have anything that showed I understood what was going on with customers and markets. He said I couldn’t run a business very well if I didn’t know the customer better. It was just a tough, tough pitch. And I finally said, “Well, if that’s the way this is going to go, I’m done, I think we’re finished.” And I went and sat down.

Then a friend, a good friend and colleague of mine, got up to pitch, and he started talking about his business. He was a terrific product development guy who really knew his customers cold and probably developed one of the largest-selling products that this company has known—a \$2 billion product line called Enhanced Ground Proximity Warning Systems. He was presenting his annual operating report and budget. And Bob proceeded to slice and dice him. Why didn’t he know anything about cost? Bob said he didn’t know anything about where the inventory was, he didn’t know how to manage assets, and, in fact, he didn’t know how to do anything internally!

So, as Frank and I commiserated about the tough day we both had that night over dinner, we realized that he was hammering me on customers, on new product development, and on growth issues. I was very strong on cost and inventory. And cost and inventory was what he was hammering Frank on, and he was strong on customers, new product development, and growth. Once I got that equation, it was easy to see where Bob was trying to take people. We got the message and had great success.

In his own words Johnson described an example of “undressing” he used to encourage someone he highly valued to do better:

A very experienced, highly paid executive who had a strategy assignment specific to his area came into my office, and it was clear he didn’t have his head in the project. He gave me a [single] slide. I read it several times trying to find the value. All the words were spelled correctly, the grammar was proper, and I kept looking at it, and said, “Well, it doesn’t say anything.” He had spent time creating a *content-free* document well below his competence. And I thought I had to leave a message because this really should not happen again. So I got up, walked around the desk, dramatically threw the slide on the floor and started jumping up and down on it. While doing this I shouted, “This is *content-free*, and if you *ever*

come in here [again] with something that is content free—having spent energy creating it—then just don't come back!”

The next day he came back, had the message clear, and the strategy right. He probably never forgot that. He's still my friend to this day. But, I think you use tools of messaging to help people remember. Some with touch and some with “flare.”

A more junior-level employee, Laura Rogers, director of global business management for the after market services, met Johnson at the very beginning of her career. At the time, Rogers was the ISO coordinator [quality control] working on a big project. She was chatting with Johnson's assistant, Teresa Miller, about what she perceived as lack of cooperation from leadership. Miller suggested Rogers speak to Johnson directly, so she did. He sat down with her and set her in the right direction. As Johnson described:

Teaching, especially around the act of communicating, is variable. This was a junior employee who was trying to get something done and had problems. She came to me and very clearly asked for specific help and a recommendation because she didn't know. So in that case, you provide guidance. I think different people have different buttons, and there's a different way to send the message [for each].

To help Honeywell aerospace executives improve their communication skills, especially in the area of being more precise, Johnson hired Mike Jousan, a speech and communications consultant he'd met on the golf course. Despite Johnson's sometime blustery attitude, Jousan described Johnson as “very much a people person.” Many executives told Jousan that Johnson had given them a “chance.” “Make it simple and get to the point because there is a window he'll look through that few moments⁵ while you are in front of him,” Jousan told Johnson's direct reports. “And he will determine what your abilities are.”

Personal Style: Robert Johnson was the kind of person who filled a room. His unusual cadence and mannerisms contradicted the stereotypical, button-down collar–popping publicly owned–company CEO. He was very expressive and waved his arms about freely. Sometimes thinking out loud, he seemed to allow his thoughts to wander all over the conceptual map.⁶ Starrett remembered meeting Johnson:

My first impression was, “He's larger than life.” He came *strolling* into a meeting. He has a very strong presence as a leader and as a human being. Actually, I thought he was a little bit goofy. Yet underneath it is a very sharp set of technical skills.

⁵ Another characteristic of ADD.

⁶ Another characteristic of ADD.

If you are meeting him for the first time, there is definitely a fear complex for people going in. You don't just sit down and have a cup of coffee with Bob. You have to prepare, and prepare, because it's a tough job.

Johnson's notorious multitasking⁷ was part of who he was personally. He admitted his tendency to do five or six things at a time—like talking on the phone while answering e-mail, walking to a meeting and carrying on a conversation. Some people found his multitasking irritating and disruptive and a signal he was not paying attention. Although Johnson found it “mildly frustrating,” that people couldn't keep up with his rapid-fire brain, he made adaptations so that if someone was talking to him, he tried to listen more intently and sometimes resisted doing anything else at the same time.

Starrett noted that Johnson was able to cut to the heart of a matter quickly despite his propensity to multitask. “There may be 30 things to worry about and five that are important,” Starrett said. “Once Bob sorted out what those five things were, then he wanted lots of data around those five.” In Johnson's own words, he had learned to use his ADD and his OCD tendencies to his advantage. He would “diverge” (the ADD) and then “converge” (the OCD). First, he would range widely, exploring all the possible issues and challenges of a situation—using his natural ADD characteristics to cover lots of territory in a short amount of time. Then, selecting the three to five key issues, he'd let his OCD kick in and lock onto those key issues and hammer them until they were dealt with.

People with ADD often have difficulty sleeping. Their minds are spinning so much that they struggle to fall asleep and stay asleep. Add to that OCD tendencies in which the mind locks onto an idea and can't let go, and the result is a combination that makes it difficult to rest. Johnson seemed obsessed with his work in a way that affected the executives who worked with him. Starrett recalled:

Bob's clock works pretty much 24 hours, and he sleeps with his Blackberry next to the bed. When he has a thought, he acts upon it. All of us who have worked for Bob check the Blackberry first thing in the morning. I'm an early riser. I get up at four or five a.m. and 80% of the time there would be things from Bob that he wanted answered before he got to the office in the morning. Many of us worked through the night lots of time because Bob would be up checking on things at two, three, four o'clock in the morning.

Though he may not have described his behavior as ADD or OCD early on, Johnson became increasingly aware of the strengths and weaknesses of his personal approach. He developed various mental and behavioral systems for keeping himself on track and to help him channel his energy. For example, he used the Microsoft Outlook® task list and color coded items to “get some sense of satisfaction of completing these in the right order.” He hired assistants to help him manage his calendar and appointments—and finances. Indeed, he hired people to

⁷ Another characteristic of ADD.

handle almost every aspect of his life—transportation, communications, mail—all the daily things that busy people must deal with to be productive. Johnson attributed methods like those for keeping him organized and ultimately helping him become successful.

Johnson’s Third Office

Bob Johnson spent plenty of time in offices and board rooms. And he was known to hold court in hotel lobbies during conferences and business review meetings. But where he really loved to “work” was on the golf course, a venue that also allowed him to build and renew friendships.⁸ His senior executive job allowed Johnson to play with some of the game’s best—like Spain’s Sergio Garcia and American star Tiger Woods. In 2001, Johnson was paired with Tiger Woods in the Phoenix pro-am, and despite playing in front of close to a hundred thousand people, was able to play his career best round, ensuring that the pair would finish in a tie for first in the pro-am part of the tournament. Johnson recalled fondly that employees in the Honeywell corporate tent were yelling and screaming his name, and throwing things onto the course as he passed by while at the top of the pro-am leader board. Johnson described why he liked golfing:

I’ve played with lots of great golfers, and although they are there with you, they are really in another place. They are in a zone when they play. I’ll never forget playing with Tiger and while in his back swing, he took one of his hands off the club. I asked him why he did that. He said, “If I hadn’t taken my hand off of the club at that time, I would have hooked the ball.” Now I’ve *never* been able to know exactly where my hands were and what was going to happen during the swing. But I’m thinking about it now!

Johnson’s interest in spectator sports, basketball in particular, continued over the years as well. He purchased season tickets to the Phoenix Suns professional basketball team’s games. His tickets were on the second row right next to the Suns’ bench, so he had an up front and personal view of the players and their interactions. The tickets also came with immediate valet service, a sumptuous buffet under the grandstands, and handshaking access to the players as they emerged from the locker room.

The Zipper Club

When he was 56 years old, Johnson underwent heart surgery for three clogged coronary arteries. Fortunately, he had not had a heart attack; the blockages were discovered during his

⁸ Many people with ADD actually struggle to play golf, because of the multiple things that golfers try to keep track of in their minds. People with ADD often become overwhelmed by all the various concepts to keep track of. At the same time, people with ADD often do very well when they can focus on just one consumptive thing like movies, programming, writing, quilting, and so on. Those who can turn on that singular focus more or less at will, like Payne Stewart, may become very good golfers. More commonly, people with ADD who try to play golf can be heard to say, “Oh, look at the birds!” or “See the turtle!” or “There’s a ball! [six feet deep in the bush].”

annual physical checkup. Following surgery, Johnson's activities were severely curtailed, and he was enrolled in a cardiac rehabilitation program. He rebuilt his strength and learned some new stress management techniques. For the first time in more than 30 years, he was unable to work—his computer was unplugged and his Blackberry idle. That forced isolation gave him a lot of time to think about his life and how he had gotten to that point:

This was a wakeup call. It was time to look after my health. I loved my job and didn't want to stop, so I used to work through lunch and have unlimited office hours.. Now, I made new rules like never having a meeting before 8 a.m. or after 5 p.m. I hired a physical trainer and took up palates and yoga.

The aftereffects of the surgery were evident when you were with Johnson. He had a large scar running from his left wrist to his shoulder where they had harvested the veins for transplant. He also had the all too widely known "cardiac zipper," a scar that ran from sternum to stomach where the thoracic surgeons had cracked his chest. But there was another "club" that Johnson was about to become a member of.

The Broken Marriage Club

While Johnson was recuperating and re-evaluating his life, it became clear to him that he and his wife had drifted apart. Unfortunately, it was not an uncommon thing among his executive associates. The challenges of being on the road constantly, of being fully engaged in running a business 24/7, and the mental strain of dealing with a myriad of issues took their toll on both health and relationships.

In Johnson's case, he saw that he and his wife had "run our family like a business." "We had divided up all the responsibilities and were successful, Johnson said. "But when the kids were gone and my job was over, we didn't have much between the two of us." The two had developed different interests over time, and in the end, they found little, passion or otherwise, to bind them together.

Coming up on Retirement

The road to retirement for Johnson probably began during the search for Honeywell International's new CEO in early January of 2002, when he questioned his level of desire to be chairman and move to New Jersey. After his first interview at corporate headquarters in New Jersey, Johnson did a lot of thinking. Among the nagging issues was the very real fact that he liked living in Phoenix and the position would mean moving away. There was pressure from many who wanted Johnson in that position, and he had frequently done what company leaders asked of him. This time, though, was different. "One of the board of directors told me afterwards," Johnson said, "When I come back in my next life, I want to be you." Johnson decided to retire as CEO of Honeywell Aerospace. His heart surgery in May of that same year helped reinforce his decision.

In the summer of 2005, Honeywell named Johnson's successor and his retirement date: January 1, 2006. Johnson had ensured that his financial incentives were all in place and that the length of service requirements were met, so he anticipated being able to retire financially independent. Johnson spent the latter part of 2005 slowly disengaging from work and the previous 58 years of his life.

That December, at a retirement party hosted by a longtime friend, Johnson felt totally at home. There, Johnson was in his element, moving easily from group to group, making acquaintances, renewing friendships, reveling in the momentary fruits of a lengthy and very successful career. The next day, however, he felt the turbulence of the transitions he was making.

Learning to Live as an Ordinary, Single Citizen

First, he realized that he'd forgotten much of how to function in society. Leading the busy executive's lifestyle, he had let himself become helpless in doing what many people consider routine details. It had been a long time since he had flown on a commercial airplane rather than a corporate jet, let alone buy a ticket on his own. Indeed, he didn't even know what an "e-ticket" was. Johnson was also unaware that travelers needed to remove their shoes and take their laptops out of their briefcases to go through security procedures. He laughed about his inability to mail a FedEx package. He'd stopped going grocery shopping years before, and began to discover that much had changed.

Second, he began to realize that fewer and fewer of his associates were connecting with him as their attentions turned to the new CEO. Though he continued to check his Blackberry and his cell phone, the volume of business-related contacts had already begun to shrink.

Third, as Johnson continued to distance himself from his wife, he was feeling more and more disconnected. Not only was he learning new patterns of daily living, he also wrestled with the distractions inherent in the process of divorce.

Beneath it all, Johnson also wrestled with loneliness. For decades now, he'd been the center of attention, with people responding to his many requests. Now, increasingly, he found himself alone. The employees were dwindling away, and his family was becoming more distant. And though he had accepted appointments on several boards that would keep him "in the business" he somehow felt *alone*.

Reflecting on all of that, Johnson acknowledged that looking for his own happiness was a struggle, something he'd not paid a lot of attention to:

If I were 30 and entering this process with the experience I have in my memory bank, I'd ask myself a couple questions. Something I didn't ask at the time. What are the end values? Where am I really going and why? Is this about reward or

security, or satisfaction? Is it about awards or fame? Is it about business success and about making people's lives better? Ask these questions at age 30, then ask them again at 35 and then at 40.

I spent a lot of time making everybody else happy—satisfying the people who hired me, the shareholders, the customers, the employees. And a lot of that came at my expense—my health, my stress, my family. I spent 58 years giving. You could argue that I did that for myself. And maybe I did. But I didn't actually do it at anytime for my benefit and anyone else's demise. So, I've decided to play pickup sticks here... and rearrange my priorities.

It was just days later, as he navigated that sunny Scottsdale boulevard in his Jaguar sedan, that Johnson's thoughts and the conversation turned once more toward the balance between his professional career and his personal life. "I'm not in a good place," he said again.

Exhibit 1

**THE LIFE AND CAREER OF A CEO:
BOB JOHNSON AT HONEYWELL (A)**

Chronological Listing of Key Events in Bob Johnson's Life

1947	Born in Zanesville, Ohio.
1965	Graduated from Zanesville High School, having won the state championship in YMCA basketball.
1969	Graduated from Miami University of Ohio in economics
1969	Began career at GE Aircraft Engine
1974	Married
1983	Moved to Singapore
1993	Took job with AAR Corporation in Chicago
1994	Joined AlliedSignal in Phoenix
1999	Became CEO of Honeywell Aerospace
2002	Underwent open heart surgery
2005	Appointed chairman of Aerospace. Retirement announced.
2006	?