calls. As inclusive and consensus-oriented as this process may be, it is all but guaranteed not to produce results. Important matters (and far too many trivial ones) are necessarily kicked upstairs to Mark, as he alone possesses final decision-making power. Mark, in fact, enjoys meddling, and does not hesitate to overrule and ignore his senior executives when it pleases him, doing so without explanation or justification.

Despite the peculiarities of Mark's leadership, the company prospered. In 1998, Mark announced he planned to retire in three years. No longer able to ignore the company's organizational shortcomings, the board of directors pressured Mark to remedy them before he retired. Their concerns centered on the interplay between strategy and structure. Mark resisted their pressure, and the more he resisted, the more they applied pressure.

Assessment. The projective techniques indicate that Mark's internal conflicts over issues of power and authority undermine his considerable conceptual and interpersonal abilities. These conflicts emerge in a leadership style carefully tailored to play to his strengths and avoid his weaknesses. Mark has organized the company around his psychological need to deny that power and authority even exist. He resists formal hierarchy and uses the rhetoric of consensus and empowerment to pretend that all managers have a more or less equal say. The company possesses a careful vocabulary about managerial roles and their relative power. Managers, in fact, are never managers—they are leaders. Subordinates are never subordinates—they are protégés who take direction from their leaders. Mark is very definitely not the CEO—he is merely "a leader of leaders," and often a "teacher." Despite his apparent aversion to hierarchy and the trappings of power, Mark is almost despotically autocratic and arbitrary. Although he could never admit this, he makes it very clear that he, and he alone, is in charge.

Mark is unwilling—terrified even—of admitting what projective measures indicate is his passionate desire for power. Desiring power means yielding to aggressive impulses that are extremely frightening to him. Consequently, he must disavow them. At a very deep level of his psyche, he cannot tolerate his impulse to act aggressively. He wants very much to act rashly, even destructively, towards others while fearing that their intentions towards him are equally malign. The only way he knows how to control this impulse is to deny it exists—power, authority, hierarchy are simply assumed away. Of course, power, authority, and hierarchy do not magically disappear because Mark refuses to talk about them. His decision-making style, in fact, is fundamentally quite aggressive—do unto others before they do unto him. On the behavioral level, therefore, he effectively emasculates other executives while doing everything in his power to avoid being emasculated by them.

The company has been unable to commit to a particular growth strategy because Mark resists the advice of his directors, consultants, and his own strategic planners. He does not want to be hemmed in by anyone imposing options and choices—even if he agrees with their suggestions. Similarly, he resists the mandates of the board to define an organizational structure that will survive his departure from the company.

Armed with this understanding of Mark's decision-making style, the company's organizational and strategic shortcomings become apparent and easily explicable. When his control is challenged, he does not demonstrate active coping. Not only does he not allow his executives to make decisions, he is threatened by their competence. He tolerates capable executives only as long as they defer to his leadership. Even then, he sabotages anyone who might be a potential successor and rejects capable outside candidates. Action-oriented senior executives work around Mark's aversion to their making decisions by simply going ahead without consulting him and then "begging his forgiveness" for having been so rash and ill-considered. Using this tactic is an important way decisions are actually made, and senior executives regard teaching this tactic to their subordinates as an important element of preparing them for greater responsibilities within the company.

Mark's conflicts with the board of directors are almost preordained. Directors are effectively his only superiors, and he will do virtually anything to resist their giving him direction or their making decisions that he would prefer to make. Because he cannot tolerate head-on conflict with the board, he usually will not overtly resist. Rather, he indicates his willingness to do as they would like while in practice he only goes through the motions. Mark is very good at dithering, using motion to give the appearance of progress. This is the reason the company has gone three years without the strategy/structure matter having been resolved. The directors' increasing frustration only makes them more insistent that he act, and the more they pressure him, the more he frustrates their desires. Mark's tactic with the board is effectively brinkmanship—to go eyeball-to-eyeball and then see who blinks first.

Mark does not—indeed, cannot—see himself as