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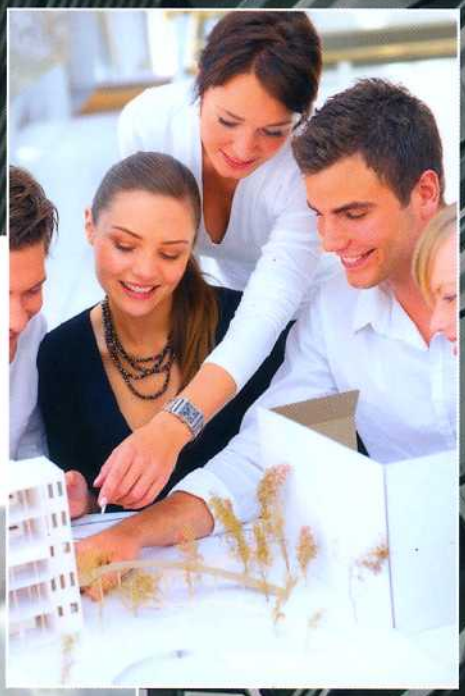
Organisations & People



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Organisations & People

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Solutions Focus and Reorganisation: Restructuring at Freescale Semiconductor

MARK MCKERGOW & JENNY CLARKE

Reorganising a complex manufacturing operation is a complicated business fraught with difficulties. In this case, senior manager Chris McCann at Freescale Semiconductor used Solutions Focus ideas from Mark McKergow and Jenny Clarke to tap into the organisation's know-how and creativity to keep the process simple and effective.

KEYWORDS: Solution focus, restructure, appreciative, change, stakeholders, data gathering.

Freescale Semiconductor is a global leader in the design and manufacture of embedded semiconductors (chips) for wireless, networking, automotive, consumer and industrial markets. The company provides original equipment manufacturers with chips to help them drive advanced cell phones, manage Internet traffic and to help make vehicles safer and more energy efficient. After more than 50 years as a part of Motorola, the company was floated off in July 2004.

The factory in East Kilbride, part of Scotland's Silicon Glen, opened in 1969. It is one of seven Freescale Wafer Fabrication plants all over the world. One of the challenges is that the factory operates 24 hours a day 7 days a week with rotating shift and fixed dayshift communities. With the highly technical nature of semiconductor manufacturing, there is large engineering support function which also operates 24x7 and on dayshift. For this reason, a matrix is necessary and the management wanted to look at different ways of organising the resource.

Reorganising the structure

The Organisation Optimisation Team (OOT), led by Engineering Manager Chris McCann, was set up to devise an organisational structure which would help deliver the business objectives placed on the factory. Just as important were the 'soft' considerations about the factory ethos.

Solutions Focus—keeping it simple

Solutions Focus derives from the therapeutic tradition of Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT), founded by Steve de Shazer and Insoo Kim Berg from their Brief Family Therapy Centre in Milwaukee. We discovered SFBT some fifteen years ago and were instantly struck by how relevant this approach could be for managers and consultants seeking to make progress in organisational settings. Since then the organisational world has started to discover and use SF ideas in many ways. There is now a thriving international community of practitioners who have gathered at the SolWorld conferences and summer university events since 2002.

The three basic principles of SF are, in order of priority:

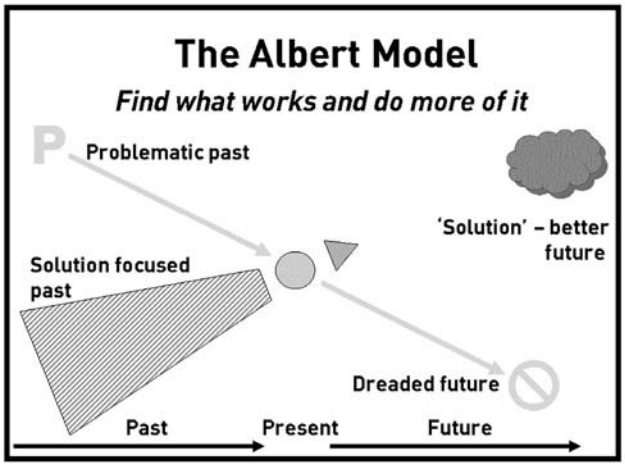
1. Don't fix what isn't broken
2. Find what works and do more of it
3. If it doesn't work, stop it and do something different

The three principles above are brought into action with a close eye on the idea of keeping things as simple as possible but no simpler.

The Albert Model

In practical terms, the SF approach can be usefully summarised in what we call the Albert Model.

The better future (the 'solution' in Solutions Focus) is not the opposite of the problem. The building of this better future is therefore most simply achieved by examining the 'solution focused past'—all those things which relate to what's wanted and are already happening. Small steps can then build on this



in an efficient and flexible way. The problematic past—what's wrong and why, can be safely overlooked, along with the matching dreaded future.

Overlooking the problematic past brings many practical benefits. It allows you to focus your attention and efforts clearly on the things which can start to make a difference. This in turn means less wasted effort, time and resource. The search for what works is usually a positive and energising process. Being highly attuned to noticing what is working leads to a clean and respectful practice, which is experienced as empowering and helpful by those involved. Being less confused yourself helps to keep confusion amongst others to a minimum. And ultimately, you can start to see how many everyday concepts and practices can be simplified or overlooked.

These objectives were to:

- Enhance the sense of common purpose and team spirit.
- Engage the staff in the process of change.
- Develop individual and collective ownership and responsibility.
- Develop new skills.
- Recognise success.
- Ensure good alignment of functional areas.

The existing organisation

Machine operators and some engineering and technical staff worked on 12 hour shifts, supported by managerial and engineering staff working 5 days a week. This led to a complicated matrix of reporting lines, with different lines for day-to-day technical matters, special projects and 'pay and rations' type line management. The complexity was compounded by the large number of levels in the hierarchy, different shift patterns for different groups and variations in relationships between shift and day staff. Was there an opportunity to simplify and clarify roles and responsibilities within this complex structure? This was the challenge set to the project team.

Data gathering workshop

Chris McCann recognised the importance of involving people from all parts of the factory in the project. He was keen to use SF ideas in engaging people in a positive and constructive way. He asked us to design and facilitate workshops to discover more about the ways in which the various departments and groups in the factory saw the opportunities presented by a change in organisation. Two separate workshops were convened, each attended by a cross section of a dozen staff to give representatives of function, hierarchy and geography within the factory.

BENEFITS OF CHANGE—FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED

After the introductions and scene setting, the group listed the 'stakeholders' in the project—parties who would be affected by the outcome—from machine operators to the US-based parent company. Working in three smaller groups, they then considered the benefits each of the stakeholders could gain from a better organisation. This is an important element of what we call platform building, helping everyone see the point of the re-organisation exercise and the advantages that might stem from it for them and for others. This led to energetic conversation and was a good medium for exchanging views and gaining understanding of different perspectives.

BENEFITS OF WHAT'S THERE ALREADY

Next, in randomised pairs, the group interviewed each other about what worked well—from their own perspectives—about the current organisation.

- Which aspects of the organisation works best at the moment?
  - What's good about it?
    What else?…(more detail)
- Which other aspects work well?
  - What's good about it?
    What else?…(more detail again)

This may seem a surprising step when change is in the air. However, we think it's important to build on what's there already, and this process offers ways to acknowledge and retain what is already working. The output from this added to

the sense of optimism and possibility—it was a good process for reminding people of what was already good about the organisation and to ensure that was not compromised by the change process. Not surprisingly, however, the conversations were punctuated by lots of 'buts'—"Yes, that's going well, but…."

This generated 'Hot Topics'—things we must get right. The conversation was energetic and co-operative rather than the moaning session it might have been had the question been 'What's wrong with the current organisation?' The group identified the following Hot Topics:

- Need for clarity in roles, expectations and reporting lines.
- Authority/responsibility well-matched and well-understood.
- Reduced points of contact—less time reporting and conveying and seeking information and more time doing the job.
- Handovers—right time, right people, right information.
- 'Big Daddy' information system so that everyone has access to the information they need, when they need it.
- Shared understanding of priorities and clearer guidance about them.
- People management implications of 400 people on fixed shifts with the rest rotating round them.
- Shift autonomy/self sufficiency.
- Training issues.

Comment: List 'things we must get right' rather than problem issues

Phrasing the hot topics as 'things we must get right' offers the chance for people to raise problems, issues and concerns—but in a way which points them to state them in a positive way. The things we must get right are a much more focused list than the 'things we must not get wrong'.

FUTURE PERFECT—SUPPOSE A MIRACLE HAPPENED…

This proved a useful set-up for the Future Perfect—one particular way to construct the better future. In this case, the participants were asked:

> Suppose you could wave a magic wand and all the topics you have identified are instantly resolved in the way that you would like. What would 24 hours in the life of the factory be like, from your own point of view?

Everyone spent about five minutes pondering this question alone, and then formed two teams each with one representative from each stakeholder group to produce a story board showing the factory from midnight to midnight.

The storyboards showed snapshot pictures of key events during the day, with each individual team member appearing in at least one picture. This helped to keep the story very specific—it involved those specific people, not just any old employees, and drew the people into the story they were developing. As well as jokey requests for bags of money, they included important details about who should meet, when and what information should be exchanged.

After lunch, the same two teams spent some time considering both storyboards and drawing out the implications and questions arising from their idealised pictures. Despite the fact that the magical transformation allowed them to think in an unrestricted way, the teams came up with highly compatible ideas in the Future Perfect storyboards.

Comment: Two Future Perfects can be better than one

In our experience, the fact that the two groups produced compatible Future Perfect descriptions is not unusual. It seems that in thinking about the details of what they would

have in an unconstrained way, people can produce something on which they can agree. Additionally, the points of agreement are instantly clear and can be utilised straight away.

DEVELOPING DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES

Next, participants were paired so that everyone worked with someone from the same stakeholder group. Their task was to make posters addressing the following questions:

- How could things work from your point of view?
- Who would you communicate with on a typical day?
- What do you need from the people you interface with?
- What do you think they need from you?

The posters were arranged on the wall to form a 'gallery walk'. Participants were free to spend about 10 minutes looking at the exhibits and then each pair introduced their own poster and responded to questions and comments from the others. This took about an hour and generated very valuable detail about interfaces, information flows and levels of authority and responsibility. The focus on interfaces and communication helped to develop a sense of how the organisation would organise itself, rather than simply looking at each group's activities in isolation. Again, notice that this is all about possibilities in the future—nothing to do with what is there already, what is wrong with the current situation, etc.

Comment: Organisations are their conversations, not just their people

The focus on interactions and communications, rather than individuals, is a key part of the Solutions Focus approach. The question is not so much 'what will I be doing' as 'how will I know what to be doing'? This links to the narrative idea of organisations as collections of conversations rather than collections of people.

AFFIRMS AND SMALL STEPS

Finally, participants were invited to explain what had impressed them about their colleagues and what they were looking forward to as the project reached its conclusions. Many common threads emerged here: the workshop itself was energising and enjoyable; everyone was open-minded, thoughtful and honest; it was good to be involved in early thinking; there were many points of view and different interests but many shared concerns: everyone wanted to see the factory do well.

Chris McCann comments:

> The project team was really encouraged by these first workshops—particularly with the level of engagement and energy that the process generated. The variety of processes used allowed very detailed information to be gathered and open and lively debate in areas that would not surface in other brainstorm style processes previously used in the factory. This provided great insight and made the next stage of the change process much easier than it could have been.
>
> There was a great level of openness and willingness to share things. The process leads to this—you get it without even realising it. It allowed us to surface areas where there were potentially conflicting viewpoints, but it did it in a way that was non-threatening and constructive, and produced lots of detailed information on what people wanted which produced really good insights.
>
> And another thing—the workshop was fun and people enjoyed participating. Sometimes we do brainstorming and problem solving processes and it can get quite off-putting for the operators and

supervisors. We really got the best out of the people. They even worked through their lunches without complaining!

The revised structure

Chris McCann and his OOT team took the results of the two workshops and produced a proposed revised structure, which drew on the information gathered at the first workshops. We also drew together their views on the topics raised in the workshops, providing an outsider's viewpoint.

The major changes from the previous organisation recognised the participants' ideas. It aimed at improved accountability and alignment by making technical management responsible for both the dayshift and rotating technical support roles. Dayshift engineering would now have the lead role here, aided by the introduction of a new post of Lead Technician working on shift as the primary interface between the production and the shift technical communities.

Next steps—testing and implementation workshops

The team wanted to present these proposals to the people involved in the workshops, with the aims of :

- Testing out the proposals with those who would be implementing them;
- Adjusting the proposed structure to improve it;
- Gathering support and momentum for the changes to come.

Chris McCann invited us to run follow up workshops two months later—again using the SF approach.

Once the new structure had been presented and questions of clarification answered, the participants were asked to imagine themselves working in the new organisation and, with colleagues in similar positions, to consider these questions:

- Take a few moments to think about the impact of the new arrangements:
  - How will things work well on a typical day?
  - What will help you carry out your role better?
  - How will you get the support you need and give support to colleagues?
  - What advantages can you see?
  - What questions are there?

Then, working in mixed groups, they discussed these questions. How could things be made to work? What should happen in times of crisis or emergency? And so on. Issues were raised and options considered, all in a positive and constructive atmosphere.

Chris McCann:

> Not everyone would have come into the room agreeing that our proposal was the way to go. Presenting the new structure to the whole cross-sectional group meant that all could understand why it was being proposed this way, and all were able to accept the reasoning for it. The discussion in the first workshop showed a variety of viewpoints, which everyone had heard, and so everyone was aware of the various views.

Looking forward to implementing the structure

Next, the group started to address the process of implementation with a Hot Topics process:

- In implementing the new structure, what are the things we must get right?

Having listed these, they turned to looking for what works about change in the East Kilbride plant. In groups, the participants considered their own experience:

- Each think back to a time when a change was implemented in the factory (preferably successfully!)
- What helped it to go well then?

Chris sat at the front of the room in the role of a consultant who was about to tackle the change process. He asked the group questions about what they would advise him to do and which steps should be taken next, based on previous experience. The group provided answers for him, based on their thinking about past successful changes.
Chris says:

> This was a really useful part of the process for me. We had successfully ratified our ideas for a new structure, and this then formed the first steps towards a plan for implementation.

Comment: Changing roles changes conversations

The setup for this activity seemed important—we put Chris at the front in the role of someone who knew nothing and asked the group to share their advice. The 'role' part of this seems important—if Chris had simply asked for advice as himself, the group would have had to try to work out what he already knew, rather than just saying what they want to say.

Having collected ideas big and small from these positive experiences in the past, the group started to look forwards:

- How can we apply these previous good practices to the present change?
- What small steps would you like to see happening next?
  – For Chris and the team
  – For you as part of this group

In this way, the small steps were something that everyone was considering for themselves as part of the process. Spreading good words about the forthcoming changes was a key part of the desired result for the team, and we built on this with the final process of the day:

- What are you going to tell people
  – About this meeting?
  – About the new organisation?
  – About what's going to happen next?

The day finished with a lively 'cocktail party' exercise where people mingled and practised saying what they were going to say to each other and colleagues back at their workplace (and also heard their colleagues' ideas and views).

Comment: Practice and improve your stories

This kind of exercise, where people quickly try out saying the things they want to say, can work in a very interesting way. We have noticed that people change, adapt and improve their words—particularly if they are encouraged to. Seeing someone's reaction to your words in a fun and encouraging environment can be an excellent process for all concerned.

Chris McCann:

> The second workshop was useful for checking in and ratifying the work to date, and keeping the people involved in the process. We were able to turn an important corner in the overall process—from testing our ideas to see how they were received to generating an implementation plan.

Following these second workshops, Chris and his team revised and presented their proposals to the management team. These were accepted.

Chris McCann:

> Looking back from here, my overall summary is that the change would not have been successful without the inclusion of the Solutions Focus processes. They were the key to unlocking the door, so that we could tap into the best experiences of the people and talents we had on the site. It's a technical environment and we use problem-solving approaches every day. The SF approach gave us something different from the conventional approaches.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Mark McKergow and Jenny Clarke are co-directors of sfwork—The Centre for Solutions Focus at Work. This case is taken from their new book *Solutions Focus Working: 80 real-life lessons for successful organisational change* (SolutionsBooks). See review section of this journal.

AMED members can order *Solutions Focus Working* for £13.99 post free (saving £4) directly from info@sfworks.com (or call 08453 707145). Mention O & P.

More information about Solutions Focus at Work on www.sfwork.com.

Values-Centred Leadership—Practical Tools for SMEs

ANN LEWIS

The notion of improving leadership quality may seem abstract and academic to those in small to medium organisations (SMEs). However, the success of any organisation depends on creating the conditions in which its employees are able to contribute fully and effectively. It may be prevented by all manner of obstacles. This SME case study discusses how a focus on values-centred leadership involving staff at all levels created the foundation for a review and improvement of critical processes including approaches to customer service, business processes, communication, employee management and development, and reward policy.

KEYWORDS: Leadership, transformational leadership, values, communication, performance, engagement, involvement, SMEs.

Growing pains—the ownership to leadership dilemma

Most small businesses are founded by one or two people. As they grow, many see the issues around employing staff as being largely about getting the right skills and compliance with the law. They can manage the burden of employment legislation and its practical implications by using specialist employment law advice and insurance services. This way, they can be reasonably sure that if they follow instructions, they will not go far wrong as they recruit staff, draw up employment contracts and manage performance and reward. Essential, but is it enough?

In the early days of the growth of a small enterprise, the interplay between the founders and a very small number of staff is still manageable and the company may still transmit its original pioneering spirit. Disagreements can be both excruciatingly visible, and also more easily resolved while people are working in close proximity. The dilemma for business owners as they take on more staff is how to maintain quality, how to keep up the energy that drove them to start the firm, and how to sustain growth.

What should they delegate? How do they let in new thinking, which may challenge their sense of ownership? How do they keep talented people? Why are people less committed than they used to be? How can they be sure they have the right skills *and* the right attitudes for their business? What do they do when promising

newcomers fail to perform? These are questions more about leading the business than about running it.

Clues from leadership research

Most research on effective leadership has been done in large organisations. Case studies on global brands such as BP, Nokia, Hewlett Packard, Glaxo SmithKline and Unilever are the backbone of leadership literature. What clues do these 'elephants' offer to what Charles Handy (2001) would call the 'fleas' of the business world?

Writers on leadership have repeatedly emphasised authentic leadership, effective communication, and engaged employees as critical in successful organisations (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999; Goffee & Jones, 2006; Gratton, 2007). Goleman's (2002) leadership competency framework highlights the importance of emotional intelligence, creating a rounded view of effective leadership in which self-knowledge is pivotal.

Previously taboo words, such as 'spirituality', are finding a place in the thinking of progressive organisations. Leaders are realising that when people genuinely co-operate, the result is far richer than when they compete from entrenched silos. Highlighting three key principles to healthy development: learning, growth and nourishment, Judith Glaser (2005) uses the striking metaphor of turning a cancer cell back into a healthy cell to describe the effects of toxic, low energy workplaces and what needs to happen to turn them around. Zohar and Marshall (2004) have created a sophisticated motivational table based on Maslow's hierarchy of needs to illustrate the draining capacity of negative motivations and the wholly different energy created by shared values and deep purpose.

There have been detractors from this groundswell. Early in 2003, Management Today (MT) published a series of articles on the characteristics of successful leaders after the millennium. In one of these, journalist Stefan Stern (2003) suggested that the era of 1990s emotionally intelligent leadership must give way to a new brand of mental toughness in the face of sluggish market conditions. Touchy feely leadership theories would have to be rethought, he insisted. Goleman (2003) was quick to point out that, in fact, the attributes listed in Stern's article—including self-belief, self-control and resilience—were also among of the competencies of emotionally intelligent leaders.

Leadership is neither wimpy nor easy. One contributor to MT's letters page commented that humility—the ability to acknowledge mistakes and seek better solutions—was also a key leadership attribute (McGee, 2003). Humility helps growth but requires courage.

What has all this to do with SMEs?

When growing pains strike, the dividend that small companies derive from involving staff and freeing them to contribute fully is potentially huge. The smaller scale of operations allows for the involvement of a large proportion of the workforce in awareness raising and contributing to solutions, with the payoffs of heightening their sense of inclusion and raising energy and creativity.

The transformational prism

For this to work, I suggest top management needs to be willing to explore how input from experienced staff can improve the operation, and be open to the concept of transformational leadership—however it is described in practice.

Over time, I have developed a model for describing this transformation process. It uses the metaphor of a prism, which splits visible

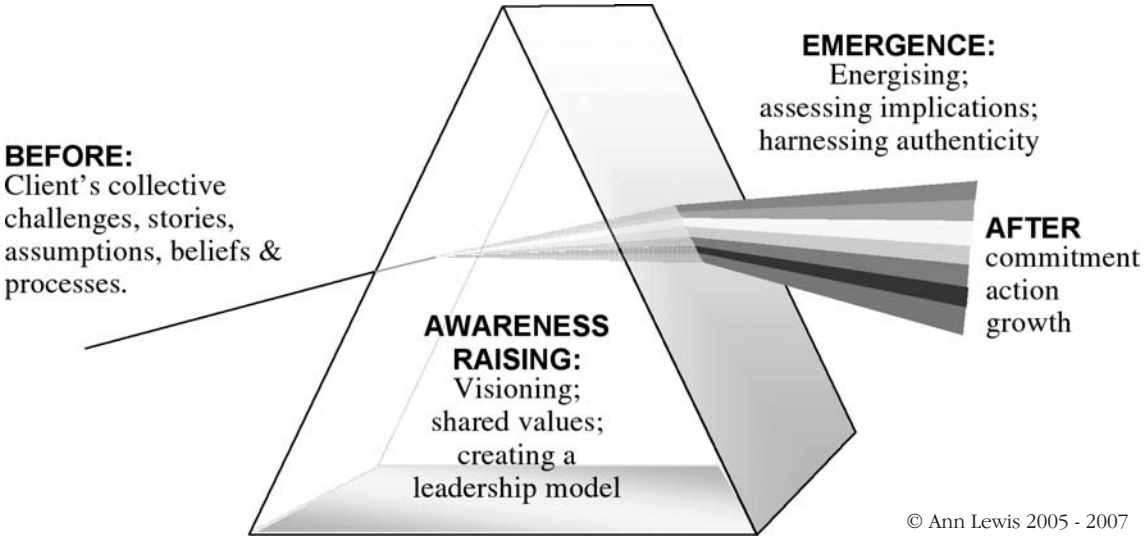


Figure 1: The Transformational Prism

energy (light) into its component colours (the spectrum) and gives a fuller picture of its composition (see Figure 1). The starting point is the current energy in the organisation, informed by its challenges, its stories, assumptions, beliefs and current business processes.

Transformational work begins within the prism, as we get back to the basics of the client's vision for the organisation, and the values that underpin its work. These are often (though not always) vague at the start. From a clear vision and values, we create a leadership model defining the characteristics and behaviours of a leader in the organisation. The model sharpens up the sense of what leadership is and of what it means in the client's context. It ultimately applies to all leaders in the organisation, thus creating a shared perspective. Once the model is drafted, employees are invited to contribute to the final version and to begin to get involved in finding the way forward.

With vision and values clear, and a roadmap for leadership agreed, the implications of this for the current and future state of the business are assessed. These will be different for every company. This important step forms the basis of an action plan for development. In the model I refer at this point to 'harnessing authenticity'—the moment when people begin to bring their whole selves into play.

As changes are made, the continuing involvement of employees and managers is critical to the success of this change process. They have lived with whatever difficulties have developed, and are well placed to know what improvements will best help. Equally important is simplicity. This process is ultimately about pragmatic change and continuing flexibility. Overly rigid processes and procedures can hamper progress and are avoided.

Case study

Frontline Telephone Answering Services (TAS), based in Hampshire, was founded in the mid-1990s by Tricia Jones. It provides a 24-hour answering service, 365 days a year. Frontline's success depends on maintaining consistently high standards in the work of its highly trained operators. Having initially used manual recording systems, the company now employs state of the art call-handling software.

In 2004, Frontline moved to new offices in a high quality new development. Very soon, to Tricia Jones's surprise, staff morale dropped,

despite the move to 'ideal' surroundings from relatively cramped conditions. People were grieving for the familiarity of the old office, and the move highlighted cracks in the consistency of service delivery, which had not been apparent when people were physically closer both to each other and to their boss.

It is important to Jones that staff not only deliver a good service, but are happy to work at Frontline. She says: "To give a good customer service, you've really got to think beyond yourself, to the customer, and I think that everyone was too inwardly focused, too insecure about where they sat themselves, and about what was going on. That really stopped them from giving good service." She set out to understand and reverse the downturn and asked me, her coach, to help her do it.

Creating a leadership model

Initially I worked with Frontline's senior management team as they devised an approach to taking their company forward, based on identifying an overarching vision, and creating a values-centred leadership model. They began by answering such questions as:

- What is your vision for Frontline?
- What does leadership mean to you?
- What is important to you about the way you treat people in Frontline?
- How do you want your customers to see you?
- How do you make sure you communicate this?
- What is good about your communication with your customers? With your staff?
- What needs to improve?

Using Nancy Kline's Thinking Meetings approach (1999), individual views were shared, and the team created a vision statement and a draft 'leadership model', comprising elements of their answers to these questions, and thus closely tailored to Frontline. Working in a thinking meeting allowed everyone to contribute equally, without interruption and with mutual respect. We were already starting to model the way Frontline would develop its relationships.

The vision identified by Frontline's directors was 'to give the best customer service in our sector in the UK'. It was stretching and aspirational, but would allow them to benchmark their performance on a range of measures against others in the industry.

After the initial workshop, I facilitated a meeting at which the top team invited staff from across Frontline to comment and help develop the leadership model. The meeting was frank, open and animated, and resulted in a model which describes the values and behaviours of a Frontline leader, and puts respect for customers and colleagues at its heart (see table 1).

Once staff were involved, the energy in the company began to shift. Jones says of this period, "…it made everybody feel that something was being done. They were able to air their views of what they felt was going on, and (together) we developed a plan of action to correct it. And that was brilliant. The ownership from the people was vital, I think."

Using the model to review and develop business processes

Armed with an aspirational leadership model, the top team set about assessing what it meant for running an effective service. We involved some staff in creating a customer care statement, from which to identify the standard of customer service expected (see table 2), and to enable them to understand and deliver this on a personal and committed level.

Then we asked staff what needed to happen to make the customer care statement a reality. Lack of clarity was top of the list for many

A Frontline leader…
…understands and communicates the vision (to give the best customer service in UK).
…promotes a successful business.
…involves and supports all our people in taking things forward (including night and weekend workers).
…consciously grows a positive culture, challenging negativity and asking for solutions.
…puts processes in place; trains thoroughly and monitors performance; regularly gives constructive feedback; delegates appropriately.
…deals with mistakes promptly.
…supports, and is supported by colleagues.
…behaves with honesty, respect and integrity.

Table 1: Leadership in Frontline

employees. Jones remembers "… a lot of things were in my head. I felt I had all the knowledge. As long as I was there, saying 'do this, that and the other', it worked. I wanted to rise above it. I wanted it to work without me there. I had quite a bit of input at that time—I was doing accounts, training, all sorts of things, and eventually we trained other people to do those things".

Over several months, we laid the foundations for future development. The principle underlying Frontline's review of its business and HR processes was simplicity. No processes were created for their own sake, and each one was kept as streamlined as possible. It was also really important that Tricia Jones and her team could progress independently of outside help once the foundations were in place, and the organisation has developed organically as it has matured.

The new leadership model was used

- To create the Customer Care statement.
- To create the role of team leader, and to train a group of team leaders to ensure that each shift was managed effectively and to hand over any unresolved issues from one shift to the next to ensure that they are resolved speedily.
- To help identify the qualities and skills of an effective Frontline operator, and to translate these into a competency framework and training needs analysis.
- To develop a unique 'traffic light' training system, which now takes new staff from straightforward call handling to complex and sensitive call management in a carefully structured and monitored development programme. The traffic light system is also used to colour-code different customer call 'scripts' so that operators have an immediate indication of the potential level of complexity of a call.
- To create a performance management process, which keeps staff in touch with their progress, and enables team leaders to handle performance issues promptly, effectively and with confidence.

Frontline Customer Care Statement

In providing our service we will all:

- Respond professionally at all times, with honesty, integrity and respect, and without being judgmental.
- Treat each caller personally, with friendliness, empathy, respect and an appropriate response.
- Give the right information, with a positive attitude, consistently and with confidence.
- Own each call, by
    - Taking responsibility for the call from start to finish
    - Supporting each other
    - Answering calls as requested by clients.
- Work from an understanding of the customer's needs, and promote the customer's business.
- Control the call to produce the best possible outcome, effectively, efficiently and precisely, by listening and repeating back, explaining to, and respecting, the caller.
- Acknowledge mistakes and problems, by
    - Communicating to those who need to know, with adequate explanation
    - Updating on progress
    - Following through to ensure the problem is dealt with
    - Being honest, and big enough to admit mistakes, and putting them right.
- Do what we say we will do, by
    - Underpromising and overdelivering
    - Going the extra mile
    - Treating callers and customers as we would want to be treated.

Table 2: Frontline Customer Care Statement

- To design reward structures to reflect the standards required of staff in the future. For operators, this is now linked to the training system, and trainees who successfully pass a 'competent operator' test receive a pay rise.
- To find ways to encourage a sense of belonging and company spirit in all members of the team. This has led to formal and informal events and initiatives.

Other organisations would have different priorities. Some of the work was done with my help. Key projects, such as the development of the traffic light training programme, were undertaken by Tricia Jones and her team.

Keeping up the momentum

Since the initial work was done, Frontline has continued to refine how it operates and to incorporate its new ways of working into subsequent developments. For example, Jones says: "Team Leaders now come in ten minutes before the shift and leave ten minutes after the shift, so we have a 20 minute handover. And then each day, David, the Operations Manager, will look at their reports, and we can see if the same things are coming up, and work out where the problem is. Is it a training issue? Is it that we need to educate the customer? So it just keeps continuously improving the service."

Maintaining effective communication continues to be a challenge, and Jones is very keen to work with people's priorities and commitments. Handovers work well, but attempts to set up regular meetings for team leaders to exchange learning were not immediately successful. "They work shifts, and they've got families," she says. "So we've come up with the idea of call conferencing. Once a week they'll all dial in from home. They'll be conversing with each other. And I think that will, again, keep the communications open a bit more."

The intention is in line with the company's ethos, and the solution is as practical as possible for staff. In a sector notorious for high staff turnover, Frontline has kept most of its people, and some are returning after leaving to try other ventures.

Reflecting on the journey her company has taken, Jones says: "One of the biggest things that I've learned is that you can sit there and ponder a situation that comes up, and wonder what's gone on, but it's ever so simple—you just go and ask somebody, 'what do you think?' And you get the answer. But that seems to be the hardest thing to do for a lot of businesses."

Three years on, Frontline has more than doubled its turnover and is poised for significant further growth. Tricia Jones believes that putting leadership and customers at the heart of the service has made a significant contribution to its success. She is clear that what made the difference is the engagement of people. "I think the staff know that we listen to what they say and do. It's worth them speaking out now, because we take notice of them" she says. "If we're open and honest with them, then we get the same back, and so it has proved to be, time and time again."

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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Why Restructuring Doesn't Deliver

NAOMI STANFORD

Trying to solve a specific issue simply by changing the reporting relationships and/or number of layers and spans in an organisation does not work, and it is odd that leaders think it will. This article seeks to explain that considered organisation design is the way to achieve desired goals.

KEYWORDS: reorganisation, restructure, transition, organisation design.

Ask employees for their view of restructuring, or reorganising as it is also known, and they'll roll their eyes and tell you stories of confusion—their own and their customers, downtime, lack of training, and when the restructure fails to deliver promised results they'll mention sudden (usually senior) staff departures, often followed by another similar reorganisation led by someone else.

These responses result from the belief many managers have that they will be able to solve their operational issues by changing the structure; that is, by devising a new arrangement of reporting lines and people in relation to work. This attractive and apparently simple approach to solving a problem inevitably fails to achieve the objectives.

Take this example; a large non-profit organisation facing significant revenue decline from fundraising efforts determined that it was not 'donor centred' enough. Leaders agreed that if the organisation was re-structured to become donor centred then individual, corporate, and foundation donations would rapidly rise—leaders set a goal of raising £1 billion within a year—solving the revenue problem. To achieve this goal they announced a series of changes to the reporting lines and team composition in the Fundraising Department. The timescale for achievement of this restructuring was within six weeks (the minimum allowable time for job consultation compliance).

The announcement provoked an immediate response of intense anxiety and some anger

from Fundraising Department employees. Typical questions included: Would every employee still have a job? Would they have to re-apply for 'their' job? Was the restructuring just a smokescreen for headcount reduction? Would it be totally shambolic like the recent HR department restructuring? How would the work get re-allocated? What was the basis for a target of £1 billion? Would there be extra resources available to get to it? And so on.

Digging a little further into the proposed new structure (one that had been created by the Head of Department in consultation with her two direct reports) employees began to ask more probing questions. They wanted to know what 'donor centred fundraising' meant as there was no common view of what it would look like in practice. They asked questions about the links to other departments, and to field offices, some made the point that donor centeredness was more about culture and behaviours than about structure, others questioned the notion of restructuring along individual, corporate, and foundation lines. It seemed that the forces of resistance were building.

This example illustrates many of the early warning signs of things of a restructuring that is not going to deliver the intended results. In no particular order:

1. **An apparently arbitrary target—of raising £1 billion—was set**. Targets are 'a good thing' to work towards. They give a sense of purpose and carefully selected and communicated can rally people to work together to meet them. A Harvard Business Review, classic article by Porras and Collins[1] talk of the value of BHAGs (big, hairy, audacious goals) making the point that "A true BHAG is clear and compelling, serves as a unifying focal point of effort, and acts as a catalyst for team spirit. It has a clear finish line, so the organisation can know when it has achieved the goal; people like to shoot for finish lines. A BHAG engages people-it reaches out and grabs them. It is tangible, energising, highly focused. People get it right away; it takes little or no explanation". Where targets don't work is if they are seen to be beyond stretching and completely unachievable, or people have no idea how they were arrived at. The targets have to be grounded in some sort of assessment and reason for choosing them. Stretching targets inevitably mean looking at organisational processes and systems and ensuring that have the support capability—in the example the IT system designed to receive and process donations by geographic region is not going to be able process by type of donor without adaptation—regardless of whether the team members are set up in a new configuration.

2. **There was no prior assessment of whether restructuring (as opposed to another type of intervention) would deliver donor centredness.** Given that any organisation comprises a number of elements (including systems, processes, culture, performance measures, people, and structures) redesign can be started from any of these as long as the purpose of the new design has first been established. The example mentions that employees made the point that the culture and behaviours might be a better place to start thinking about donor centeredness as the culture was inward looking reinforcing behaviours of 'we know what's best for you' derived from a 150 year history of looking after people. Changing behaviours could well be a more effective start-point than changing the structure.

3. **Employees were not involved in early discussions about possible structures—one was announced**. This is a typical

[1] Collins, J. and Porras, J. (1996). Building Your Company's Vision. Harvard Business Review. September-October.

mistake senior management makes. In announcing a new structure they adopt a Captain Picard (of Star Trek) aloofness asking people to 'make it so' without appreciating or acknowledging the burden this places on employees at lower levels in the organisation who are doing the day to day work. Senior people are often divorced from the working experience of lower graded staff who are familiar with the work flow of say, receiving and acknowledging donations. These employees are bursting with ideas on how things could be organised more efficiently and effectively. In well led design projects these operational staff are participants in the process from the word go.

4. **The structure was determined without consideration of other organisational elements or the internal and external interdependencies**. Thinking about the structure in isolation from other elements means a range of unintended consequences occurs. In the opening example there was a significant risk of the relationship between a regular high contributing donor and a specific fundraiser being fractured as the proposed structure organised staff along type of donation—individual, corporate, or foundation—a change from the existing geographic structure. Repeated across several donors the upshot could be a decrease rather than an increase in donations. Doing 'walk throughs' of the work processes in any proposed structure helps surface the inherent risks which can then be addressed.

5. **A method of converting the idea (in this case donor centred fundraising) to the day to day practice was not discussed or agreed**. Even if the proposed structure for donor centred fundraising had been aligned with the other organisational elements—resulting in a full design—and it had go the go-ahead there still needed to be a realistic plan and timescale for moving from the end of the design into the transition and embedding of the new design. Many design schemes founder for lack of a disciplined and coherent implementation plan. So although it may feel like over-engineering, following a standard project management methodology is a good investment.

6. **The timetable for re-structuring did not allow time for hiccups, stoppages, or stakeholder input**. In the example, the time scale required was six weeks and this is a very short period to transition from initial announcement to new design state. In most organisation design projects there are trade offs between time, cost, and quality, and in this case cost—in terms of dedicated resource to manage a swift implementation, and quality—in terms of lack of time for testing, evaluation, and rethinking would be impacted by the demand for a short implementation timescale. No design project proceeds without things in the context changing unexpectedly. In the example one of the wildcards was the intervention of some Board members. They got wind of the proposed re-structure and wanted to know the detail of what it was all about. This request meant preparation of a detailed business case and scheduling of presentations. A better way of undertaking organisation design is to do this sort of preparatory work before making any announcement of change.

7. **The method of transitioning from the current structure to the new structure maintaining operational effectiveness was not thought through.** Any organisation design work involves balancing working on the design and maintaining day to day operational effectiveness. This creates a tension that requires skill to handle.

Productivity, morale, and motivation drop alarmingly quickly in staff who feel alienated, anxious, or uncommunicated with. An additional burden is placed on staff who are called on both to maintain operations and to participate in the organisation design project. Further, at some point a decision has to be made on whether to transition over time to the new design, or whether to go for a 'big bang' cutover. Both have advantages and disadvantages. In either case appointing a good project manager (preferably full time) is essential, and depending on the scale of the task other staff to work a proportion of their time on it (and be recognised for this).

Clearly, the example illustrates that trying to solve a specific issue simply by changing the reporting relationships and/or number of layers and spans in an organisation does not work, and it is odd that leaders think it will. Using the analogy of restructuring a building, even construction novices would agree that knocking out the front wall, or removing a staircase, without an investigation of the effects of doing so would be risky to edifice survival. Organisations, are infinitely more complex systems than buildings, and to enable them to have even a reasonable chance of success the better way is to design them: "arranging elements in such a way as best to accomplish a particular purpose"[2].

Leaders who restructure without paying equal attention to other organisational elements are at high risk of failure in achieving the desired outcomes, and many pay the price by losing their own jobs. These two pieces of information imply this:

1. In the US in the last two years, three-quarters of marketing departments have been reorganised.[3]
2. The average tenure of Chief Marketing Officers in the telecommunications industry is 15 months (and it is similarly short in other industry sectors[4]).

But, as Fast Company remarks: "Some marketing honchos do buck the trend. Russell Klein has lasted four years as CMO at Burger King. … . His relative longevity may have something to do with his background. … But more important, Klein sits comfortably at the helm of a multi-pronged marketing organisation that gives him the data—and the relationships—he needs to make the less visible decisions. By understanding how small changes might cause inadvertent ripples, he says, he's able to avoid mistakes". [5]

Note the reference to the inadvertent ripples that might be caused by small changes and then think of the magnitude of the ripples that might be caused by larger-scale structural changes. Now think of an organisation as a series of interdependent elements—much as a mobile with hanging parts that must be weighted and aligned with each other to achieve balance—only when the purpose of the re-structuring is clear (and agreed), and due consideration is given to all the elements to be balanced and aligned is a successful organisational outcome likely to be achieved. Focusing solely or predominantly on the structure will not deliver desired results in the same way that balancing a mobile is hard to achieve just by weighting one piece of it.

There are several theoretical models of organisational elements[6], and any one of them serves as a useful framework for 'arranging … to accomplish a particular purpose'. The model proposed by Burke-Litwin (Figure 1), for

2 Charles Eames, designer
3 Kim, P. (2006) Reinventing The Marketing Organization. Forrester Research. July 13
4 Welch, G. (2004) CMO tenure: Slowing down the revolving door. Spencer Stuart. July
5 McGirt, E. (2007). *The Most Dangerous Job in the Business*. Fast Company. June
6 See, Stanford, N. (2007). The Economist Guide to Organisation Design.

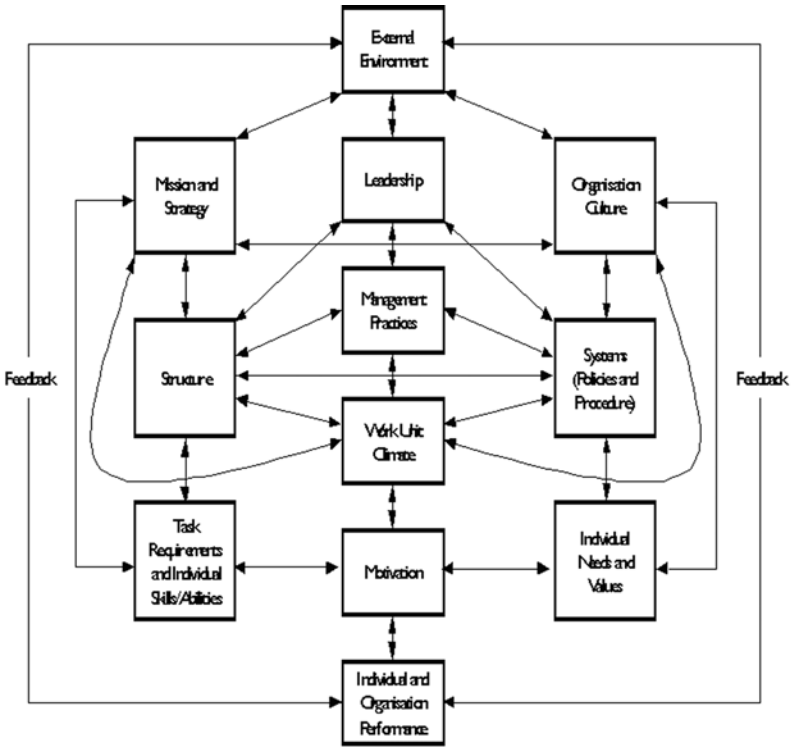

Figure 1: A causal model of organisational performance and change. Journal of Management, Sept. 1992, W. Warner Burke, George H. Litwin

example, charts the interactions of twelve elements that collectively and individually respond to feedback from the external environment. It is this feedback from the context—deriving from things like trend analysis, impending new legal requirements, predicted social changes, and current or forecast competitor activity—that usually signal the need to change the way the organisation achieves desired outcomes.

Addressing a business issue from a design perspective—that is recognising that the alignment of all the elements is required for success—requires more thought (and thus is potentially slower) than simply redrawing the organisation chart during, for example, a lunch discussion. However, spending time designing in this way is an investment worth making. Its outcomes are cost effective, efficient, and human centred. In a well executed design the process used is explicit, rational and fair, people are treated well—their inputs are heard, and they are motivated to work in the new way because all the organisational elements are supporting their endeavours.

Returning to the example of the non profit organisation that opened this article, leaders quickly recognised the forces of resistance building and took the bold step of admitting a false start and beginning again. This time they mustered a team of 18 people able to speak for the full range of elements and interfaces. Over a series of five three-day workshops each with about ten days in between (to enable action and communication), they set off on a path to become a donor centered fundraising organisation designing fundraising in a way that enabled:

- Everyone to be a fundraiser—telling the organisation story, building relationships and asking for support.
- The leveraging of existing organisational strengths and best practices.
- The implementation of proven programs and tools.

Rather than being seen as just a Fundraising Department issue other stakeholders (for example field staff, and members of the IT department) were brought into the design process. Communications made invited people see that becoming donor centred was an undertaking that impacted every member of the organisation in some way. Because the design approach worked to align all organisational elements it had, within a year, enabled substantial achievement of the objectives of:

- Arresting the enterprise-wide decline of fundraising and proving that the £1 billion within a year was unrealistic in the first year of being donor-centred but would be realised in the second year.
- Compensating for the expected continual decline in fundraising.
- Growing individual major gift fundraising.
- Focusing fundraising activities on markets and donors with the greatest opportunity for sustainable support, irrespective of the local financial status of field offices.
- Sustaining the fundraising during all disaster operations (essentially making fundraising disaster-proof).

Summary

Restructuring does not deliver results but organisation design does. The outcome of shaping and aligning all the elements of an enterprise towards the achievement of an agreed mission gives a competitive edge. Yet, curiously executives rarely talk about it and more rarely act to consciously design or redesign their business for success. However, aligning all the elements of an organisation enables leaders to achieve their business goals by building in efficiency, adaptability, and high performance. Read the author's latest book, The Guide to Organisation Design, or her earlier book, Organisation Design the Collaborative Approach to learn more about creating high performing enterprises using effective design techniques.

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Organisational Transactional Analysis in the Workplace

ANITA MOUNTAIN

Communications are the bed rock of effective organisation. Here the author explains the theoretical models she uses and describes their application in a case study.

KEYWORDS: Transactional Analysis, communication, safety, Okayness, commitment, ascendant

Most organisations have difficulties at some time or other with communication within, and between, different departments and teams. Often consultants are called in to enable the organisation to establish clear communication, sometimes being asked to set up a process or system to enable effective communication. However, in my own experience I have found that communication is usually only effective when people feel comfortable, safe and relaxed with their colleagues.

I will outline two models I have used with departments and teams to enable them to get to grips with the issues they need to address and to go on to resolve these. I link the second model to Wickens' work in *The Ascendant Organisation* (1995).

The first model, Concepts for Thriving (Mountain, 2004: pp 59-61) is based on Denton Roberts' Hierarchy of Functioning (1995), and fits with the philosophy and the belief that safety and security are of paramount importance. It also takes into account both the individual and the organisation and can be used as a diagnostic tool and a structure for action. It is based on the assumption that there are seven basic components to effective functioning—emotional safety, positive reinforcement, belonging, clear communication, productive activity, integration and celebration. Celebration needs to implicitly, if not explicitly, run throughout the concepts.

These seven components build upon each other; that is, one must be in place before you can go on to the next. When they are

established, nourished and applied in an organisation that is the degree to which the organisation, and the relationships within it, is functional. The extent to which these basic components are established, nourished or applied, is the extent to which the organisation is dysfunctional or functional.

Outlined below in Table 1 are the definitions of the concepts.

These components are implicit in Transactional Analysis theory and express an interest in thriving rather than stagnation.

In order to thrive we need to be nourished by:

- *Acceptance & protection*—when new employees arrive into a team or department the culture needs to be one of acceptance. As they have not yet established their credibility in the new place of work, new people tend to return to their previous place of work to obtain the recognition they require. The new work organisation needs to find ways to offer acceptance to new arrivals so that they can settle in and get on with the job.
- *Appreciation & respect*—we all need to feel valued and appreciated. This is something that needs to happen even before we may have had the opportunity to develop any credibility for the work we are doing. Everyone, at all levels, needs to look for contributions that can be appreciated, whether that be for the way we have dealt with a situation, delivered something on time, or

Concept	Definition	Required
Safety	When I have this my primary needs are taken care of, I am comfortable with myself, and boundaries are maintained.	Acceptance & protection
Positive Reinforcement	I am given positive recognition and there is mutual exchange.	Appreciation & respect
Belonging	I feel accepted and respected within this environment / team / organisation	To feel safe with others and self and to receive recognition
Clear Communication	I know I am being heard and I am therefore more willing to hear others.	A developed sense of belonging. Colleagues use active listening, feed back and response in a way that is accepting but challenging
Productive Activity	My actions are based on here and now reality and I collaboratively problem solve. I recognise, and am recognised, for my competency, and I have a sense of who I am. I am able to balance giving and receiving.	Realistic expectations
Integration	I can celebrate what I do well, take a positive view of my "growing edge" and learn from my mistakes. I make positive things happen and can recognise my achievements. I enjoy who I am and what I do.	Facilitation
Celebration	I am celebrated. I celebrate me and who I am, what I do and who I am in relation to others and the world.	This runs through every level.

Table 1: Concepts for Thriving © Mountain A.

showed some initiative. Naturally, this appreciation needs to be well founded and not false in its nature, or it will be devalued.

- *Belonging*—this occurs when we feel accepted, appreciated and respected.
- *Realistic expectations*—Realistic expectations relates both to the position of the person being asked to do a task, the task itself and the deadline set for it. We can decide if expectations are realistic by assessing if it is measurable, manageable, and motivational. Whilst not all work we do is motivational, when this element is in place, a better job is likely to be done. (Many people believe they have failed even when the job is impossible, so that 'failure' is not the relevant term).
- *Facilitation*—learning is effective when adequate time given to reflection and supervision. Good management enables the workforce to learn from tasks done, however successful they were. Integration and assimilation is more effective when we receive feedback when strengths are also part of the feedback process. This links back to the development of safety.

The negative environment flourishes through:

- Blame.
- Ridicule.
- Humiliation.
- Unrealistic expectations.
- Alienation.

When we experience safety as being weak or absent we might feel threatened. This affects our relationships and we are more likely to be negative and critical as a defence, or perhaps withdraw and do the minimum required of us. This in turn is likely to lead to poor communication which leads to destructive actions with resultant conflicts. This can then lead back to the start of the cycle when we feel threatened instead of safe.

All organisations need to develop a healthy environment for their employees. Understanding the Concepts for Thriving promotes this process. Establishing Emotional Safety will lead to attachment; Positive Reinforcement provides attachment and leads to engagement; whilst clear communication strengthens the bonding through engagement with others and the environment.

If we are in leadership positions we need to provide emotional safety by ensuring that contracting and expectations are clear. When undertaking training, coaching or supervision we need to ensure that sessions are not interrupted. We need to facilitate the process between ourselves and others, and between group members, in ways that show respect and develop understanding whilst at the same time ensuring appropriate boundary setting. Through appropriate recognition we provide Positive Reinforcement. Listening to others establishes Clear Communication, and will enable everyone to keep out of self-driven behaviour. Rather than waste time on conflict this will enable the workforce to be productively active and to integrate their experiences.

Having outlined the theory I will now discuss how I have used it.

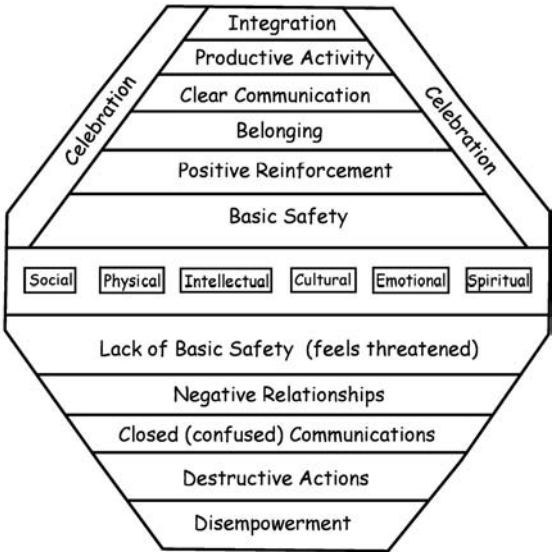

Figure 1: Concepts for Thriving © Model

I was called in to work with a multi-disciplinary team within the service sector. They knew each other well at collegial level, and were experiencing difficulties with communication issues. Staff members sometimes felt left out of the loop and this affected relationships. I drew up the *Concepts for Thriving*—the top half of Figure 1—explained the concepts and then broke the team up into three smaller syndicate groups to assess at which level they thought they needed to pay attention.

On returning to the large group to give feedback they had all assessed that they were experiencing difficulties at the level of Basic Safety. This self-assessment meant that they were more prepared to discuss the issues with each other in ways that kept themselves and others okay. They sought out what the issues were in positive ways that addressed what needed to change.

This process itself began to establish safety within the team. A part of the later action plan included taking time in staff meetings to celebrate what had gone well at individual and team levels, as well as ask and receive support with areas that were not going so well.

Management were given the constructive feedback that they did not offer sufficient support and recognition and they agreed to change this process.

So, out of a brief to enable effective communication came a process which addressed a deeper issue and gave the team ways to address the difficulties that also mirrored the Concepts for Thriving model itself.

I also introduced other concepts, including *Okayness*, within the discussions about change. This is a Transactional Analysis concept that says that we all have a right to be in the world and to be accepted and recognised. When we believe this to be true our beliefs and actions will be congruent. We will listen to others and be interested in their perspective before trying to convince them that we are right even before we have heard and thought about their views; we will get on with others, even though we may not like them as an individual.

We will also set and maintain boundaries when we need to, in ways that keep the other person okay, even if we don't like their behaviour. I colour these positions in red and green to reflect traffic lights—red for ineffective communication, likely to put a stop to things, and green for go, when I believe this my communication will be effective.

The alternatives to *I am OK and You are OK* are unhelpful in terms of communication and developing and maintaining relationships. These alternatives are:

- *I am OK and You are not OK*—This is the one-up position and if I am here I am likely to be angry. I will believe I am better than others, that my ideas are the right ones, and that you and your frame of reference, beliefs, behaviours are not as important, relevant etc. as mine.
- *I am not OK and You are OK*—If I am in this position I will put my self down and want to get away from others. I cannot be assertive here and I make others more important than me. I will feel helpless when I am in this place and invite others to take advantage of me and my desire to please others.
- *I am not OK and You are not OK*—When I go into this place I will feel hopeless and believe that nothing can be done to change my lot, the situation or life. Here I will experience passivity and will not be willing to hear solutions to situations. At my worst I will use drugs and drink to obliterate things for a while.

The majority of people do not stay in any one of these zones all of the time. Behaviourally we move around them dependent upon the situation. However, there is likely to be one we go to more readily when we are under stress, and we call this the existential life position.

When we interact with those whose style of communication is in one of the red zones we can use this experience to reinforce our own negative beliefs about ourselves and others, thus going into a red zone ourselves. Of course, our own negative perspective can invite people into their own red zone. For example, those of us who go into the *I am OK and You are not OK* position are likely to find those who believe they are not OK, and then they have someone to persecute. This belief is unlikely to be overt but will come across when we talk about someone else as 'stupid', 'ignorant', or talk generally in derogatory tones about or to others.

Whilst these positions are generally considered in two dimensions, in organisations this can developed into a three dimensional process. For example, a finance department and an administration department may talk about the training department in derogatory terms as they perceive them as always "swanning off" round the country having a good time while they are there working away to support them. This would be *You and I are OK and They* (the training department) *are not OK*. Under the surface this negative process may cover the fact that the finance and admin. departments do not actually feel good about themselves and can only feel good when they put another department down, so the underlying position may be I am not OK, You are not OK and They are not OK. However, we would only really know this if we consulted with each department and assessed the organisational culture, in the meantime we go by the behaviour.

All these positions are purely perspectives, the only actual fact of course is that I exist and you exist—I *am* and You *are*. However, the *I am OK and You are OK* position will be helpful to communication and to life in general as this is the only place that we can really solve problems and invite relationship. It is from this place that effective management and leadership takes place. It is from this place that safety can be established and co-operative processes be encouraged.

Ernst (1971: pp 19-23) developed a behavioural approach to the life positions, which is different to Berne's (the originator of Transactional Analysis), who considered the importance of life positions to be their existential nature.

Ernst's concept is called the OK Corral and I have diagrammed this below (Figure 2).

I have linked this with Wickens' work on the Ascendant Organisation as there is a correlation between the culture of the organisation and the life positions. Wickens looks at organisation types and starts with a simple model outline below (1995:4) before moving on to a more complex perspective.

> The ascendant organisation combines high levels of commitment of the people and control of the processes to achieve a synthesis between high effectiveness and high quality of life leading to long-term, sustainable business success.
>
> (Wickens P. 1995:3)

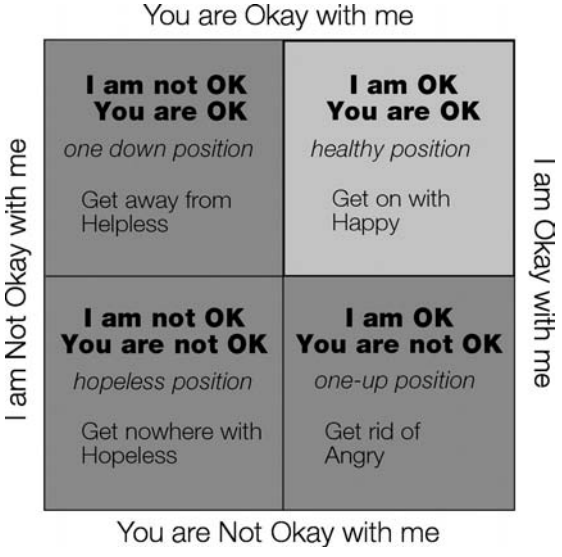

Figure 2: The OK Corral

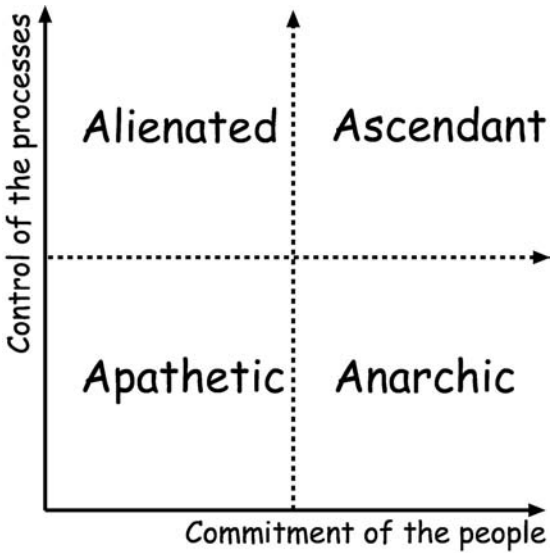

Figure 3: Wickens: The Ascendant Organisation

Previously many leaders concentrate on one axis: control of the process, and control was externally imposed. However, as Wickens points out, commitment is an internal process, with people believing in their own values. Ideally people work for organisations that reflect these values and therefore they are highly motivated to work to achieve their own goals and those of the organisation.

> Commitment, though does not come from the length or style of a contract. It comes from ensuring that irrespective of their employment status, everyone is treated with respect, no one is a second class citizen, the contribution of everyone is both valued, and seen to be valued, and the employer helps employees develop their talents and skills.
>
> (Wickens P. 1995: 156)

Wickens model fits well with the OK Corral. The Ascendant Organisation quadrant falls within the I am OK and You are OK quadrant of the OK Corral. For Wickens the Ascendant organisation is the one in which there is most prosperity, power and happiness. In terms of Okayness we can only really solve problems when we are in the OK/OK top right hand quadrant. In this position we will be genuine, congruent and own our own power—both hierarchic and internal sense of power—as well as acknowledge that of others. This behaviour is more likely to lead an organisation to be an 'Ascendant' organisation in Wickens' terms. Therefore, there is a direct causal link between relationships in the organisation and the success of the organisation.

Organisational leaders and managers need to treat everyone in ways that show they value and appreciate each member of the workforce and their contributions. The leader's behaviour is key to the development of effective team working and to the promotion of good communication. This occurs through clarity in contracting and establishing clear boundaries in terms of behaviour. People need to be genuinely involved in those areas they can directly affect and kept fully informed about areas they cannot affect but that affect them. These processes will help to develop a safe environment where the workforce will flourish.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Anita Mountain MSc, CTA (O)(P), FITOL, Teaching & Supervising Transactional Analyst (Organisational and Psychotherapy specialties). Anita is the founding partner of Mountain

Associates. She is accredited to train trainers both nationally and internationally. Being certified and accredited to this level in these two specialties in Transactional Analysis is no mean feat as she is only one of a handful world-wide, and the only one in Britain, to achieve this. It takes about five years to achieve the first level in one specialty and another five to achieve the teaching and supervisory level. Mountain Associates can be contacted through: www.mountain-associates.co.uk

CALL for PAPERS

Special Issue on 'Leadership Toxicity': August 2008

Concerns about the misbehaviour of executives and the misuse of their position and power remain matters of profound concern as they affect the wellbeing of so many and the standing and reputation of the organisations of which they are a part.

The Centre for Leadership Studies at the University of Exeter, in association with AMED (the Association for Management Education and Development), is inviting articles from practitioners and scholars for a special edition of *Organsations & People* in the area of 'Leadership Toxicity' to be published in August 2008.

This special edition invites contributions from practitioners, academics and executives on such matters as derailment, executive dysfunction, toxic working environments, misbehaviour and fraud, misuse of power and privilege, delinquent behaviour, bullying and harassment, anti-social behaviour, toxic impression management, sociopathy, personality disorder including illness 'at the top', and related themes.

Grounded models and frameworks for de-coding overt executive behaviour and uncovering covert leadership dynamics will be particularly welcomed. Descriptive accounts are welcomed particularly if they offer ways of re-viewing descriptive accounts of leader dysfunction.

The lead Editor for this edition is Dr Michael Walton, PhD to whom abstracts should be sent by Friday 26 October 2007 as follows:

Dr Michael Walton
Centre for Leadership Studies
University of Exeter
Xfi Building
Rennes Drive
Exeter EX4 4ST

Michael.walton@exeter.ac.uk

Final articles are invited in the range 2500 - 3500 words and should be written with a development practitioner's perspective in mind—practical in nature but founded on a bedrock of theory. Diagrams and graphics are welcome but must be submitted in separate files with their position clearly indicated in the copy. Please ensure that diagrams are able to be unlocked by the editors if necessary.

Following acceptance of the abstract the deadline for full copy will be Friday 28 March 2008.

Managing in a Coaching Style

DR ANGUS MCLEOD

The benefits of managing in a 'coaching style' for those who work for us are said to include increased pro-activity and self-determination. These results are only likely to be realised if you know when to use coaching interventions. Coaching at the wrong time can be counter-productive to both of you. This article explains a methodology for understanding when and with whom to use coaching interventions, with examples.

KEYWORDS: Coaching, managing

If you have ever been over-managed or under-managed you know how demoralising that is. To what extent are you better at getting the balance right compared to the people we know (who got that balance wrong)?

Have a look at the management model in Figure 1. The vertical axis is based upon the level of working 'independence' of the person. The horizontal scale shows a developmental curve from the lower levels to the highest, right. For completeness, I include an off-chart level Zero (left of the y-axis) for which additional help and support is normally required—that is, a person who is not capable of effective work without specialist support.

Independence

A person is independent when their needs for information and support are minimal. They are capable of doing the work and self-resource themselves to satisfy their needs for information and support in most situations.

At every level, there are clues to the sort of conversation we will have to determine the best way forward, for that individual, in that context. This is important—we do not act on supposition but check our assumptions by asking questions to provide accurate meaning. Firstly then, we need to focus our attention on the individual to observe or perceive how we think they are

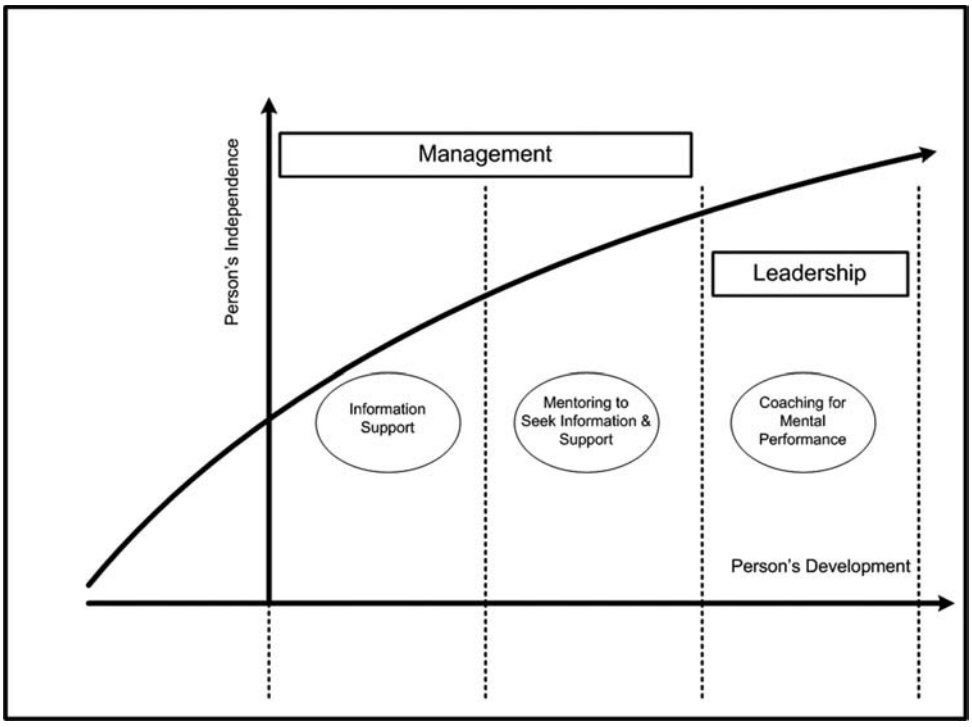

Figure 1. McLeod Management Model

doing (Perception). Then we need to test that by asking questions (Test) and only then, take appropriate action (Action). A leader may want to consciously go through this process of Perception, Test, Action with everyone in the context of all their major tasks. Figure 2.

It is important to know that in levels One through Three, a single person may be at any level in one context at work and at another level in a different context at work—each requiring different things from us. For those familiar with the Situational Leadership model of Ken Blanchard the importance of context is similarly vital.

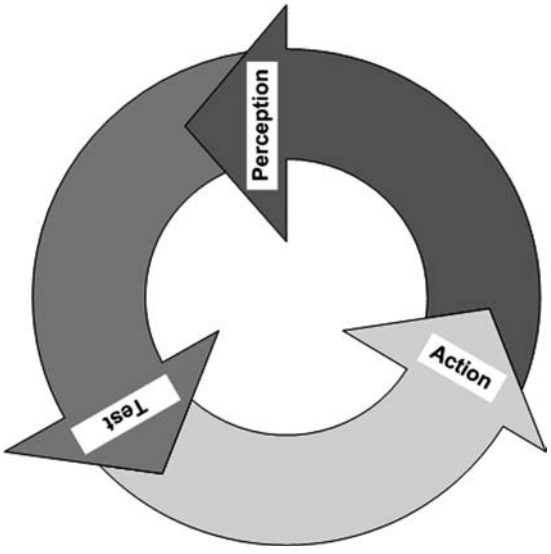

Figure 2: The Perception, Test Action Cycle

Information

Information is the data, knowledge, people-networks, how-we-do-things, boundaries and experience that we need to achieve most perfectly at our jobs.

Support

Support takes a number of forms including recognition, personal-acknowledgement, offering to assist, offering to facilitate, providing resources, boosting confidence and commitment through to success or failure.

Mentoring

If someone knows nothing, then we simply need to tell them what to do, provide lists of actions and know-how. Mentoring adds to this since it can involve more or less direct information and widens the input of information to include examples and stories—to offer new ways of thinking, new choices. One can go further, where an individual is independent enough, questions can be used to encourage them to find new perceptions, new choices and motivated actions.

All of these can be linked:

> Tom, I can think of three options we might use here and these are <gives details, 1,2,3>. There may be at least one more I haven't thought of. Would you like to think of other options and then discuss the pros and cons of each?
>
> Tom, I had a similar problem some years ago and at the time came up with an idea. This was <gives detail>. In addition, I can think of another two options <gives details A,B>. Do any of these give you ideas for what to do now or is there a better way?

The process provides information for the relative novice within an organisation to understand how things are done within the culture and it encourages independent thinking. The benefit of that is that they may need less of your management time in the months to come. Invest now for gain later.

There is a good reason for providing ideas and solutions in threes (McLeod, 2004). Where you offer one solution, the mentee will typically accept or reject it without further processing. The decision is a simple 'yes' or 'no' based upon their current thinking.

Our minds are adapted to comparing. The yes/no tends to stimulate that simple process. However, we hope to stimulate them into deeper processing. When the mentee is given three solutions, their processing becomes more complicated. With three solutions, several, concurrent comparing-steps are needed:

A or B
B or C
A or C

As the comparing begins, the mentee will typically give up the comparing process and start to do higher-level processing. Once this happens, it is more likely that they will introduce ideas of their own based upon their own experiences. The result is likely to be a new idea, previously inaccessible to the mentee.

Facilitation

This term is applied to methods of drawing out the latent potential and knowledge in people whether in 1-2-1 or in groups. In this case information is not normally provided, the premise is that the solution needed can be developed by enquiring and by their self-reflection. This can be neatly illustrated by considering the process of coaching which is typically facilitation on a 1-2-1 basis.

Coaching

Coaching is a facilitation process dominated by three 'Principle Instruments', these are Questions, Challenge and Silence (McLeod, 2003). Coaching is always goal-oriented. Where an issue is presented, this too will ultimately be converted to a realisable goal.

Questions

Questions have many purposes. Typically at the early stages of an issue or goal-development we use questions to develop perception and choice.

Questions include:

> What other options are there?
> And if there was another option, what is that option now?
> And if I had this same challenge, how would you advise me now?
> Imagine you are an observer in that situation, what is happening?

These are all open questions[1] in that the answers require detail. Later, we may ask questions to get to a single plan of action:

> Which of your ideas will work best for you and the department?

After that we will want to test their motivation and be sure that the plan of action is holistically sound and realistic. Again, questions are used:

> What are the pros and cons of those options?
> How would that be for you if you did not succeed?
> What other resources are needed to achieve that?
> If there is another implication we missed, what is that?
> And if that does mean more work, what about your private life?

When they are fairly certain and committed to a course of action, it is then useful to use questions again in order to invite them to take a Sensory Journey[2]:

> Imagine it's all done, you have the award, what is that like now?

Notice the change of tense from future-conditional to present, in effect tempting their conscious mind to imagine 'as if' the experience is really happening in the present.

Challenge

Whereas questions may invite a new perspective or action, challenges are more pushing than pulling in nature.

Challenges can be statements or questions and are designed to shift perception another level. Challenge can only be made where there is already a very good, working level of rapport and a willingness to be pushed further into the Stretch Zone. It is from this zone that new perceptions and ideas will spring.

> Who says you are hopeless?
> Is that slightly hopeless or completely hopeless?
> What would someone else need to think and do in order to be that scared?
> Not very good at presentation? I have never seen you present but let's agree that you are really terrible at presenting and move on to the next item.

The more challenging statements only work if the rapport is excellent. Of course you risk rapport every time you push a person into the Stretch but that must not deter you.

Silence

> 'Learn to be quiet enough to hear the sound of the genuine within yourself so that you can hear it in others'
>
> Mariam Wright Edelman
>
> 'Let us honor silence, the perennial flow of language interrupted by words'
>
> M. Ryan

In coaching, the most profound perceptions and motivations arise because the coachee has been able to self-reflect (without an interruption from their coach/leader). These silences can run for several minutes and the coachee is never (in my experience) aware of that time span because their focus is wholly internal. The self-reflective

1 All these questions also fall into other categories as well as 'open'. The opposite type, closed questions, are ones that can be answered by the words yes or no or a numeral

2 In neuro-linguistic programming terms, sometimes called 'future-pacing'

silence may create a novel solution, great certainty, massive motivation, a great feeling of stupidity for not having thought of the solution before and/or an overwhelming desire to start on their plan instantly. In other words, the most extraordinary convictions and energy arise directly from careful questioning and a silent space in which the coachee is self-reflecting.

The coaching-leader therefore needs a number of key qualities and skills to work at this level of performance. The skills include productive questioning, rapport-building and managing silence.

The ability to hold that silent space is one that needs practice and confidence to achieve. We run courses to do just that[3]—these explore the power of silence specifically but also, naturally, develop all the skills of coaching-leaders.

To begin with, notice these two things:

1. Where there is a silence and which you have an urge to break.
2. When you ask a question and a silence follows.

If you have discomfort with silence then it is worthwhile giving yourself permission to stay with silence and practice the management of it by leaving longer silent spaces in conversations. If a person is busy thinking through an answer to your question, then force yourself to be quiet and observe the effect of that.

Silence is enormously powerful. It can be used to help people talk themselves into uncomfortable reality, for example, that it is *they* and not their people who is responsible for some event that went badly. Silence is also powerful when used just prior to speaking at meetings—the more confident and impressive you are, the longer that you can hold that silence. This increases your status in the perception of others.

Working with the McLeod Management Model

When we manage, it is more important to understand the best way we might manage rather than be able to label someone. For that reason, I concentrate on the differences between the levels. Noticing those differences then helps you to have productive conversations with the individual so that your response is optimal for their performance. This is flexible managing at its best and will avoid under-managing and over-managing.

LEVEL 1: INFORMATION & SUPPORT TO LEVEL 2: MENTORING

The boundary between these two 'management' levels is demarked by a general change in the level of independent working. At level One these are largely below professional standards, at level Two independent work has reached generally acceptable levels. There may still be issues about speed, quality or the understanding of the consequences of actions but the base level of work is adequate and advancing. At level Two we can begin to test the person to think solutions through in the areas where they are most experienced. One way to do that is to ask mentoring-type questions.

> Tom, the Financial Report for Category D purchasing is fine. I want you to look at the circulation list and tell me if you notice anyone that is there that ought not to be listed or whether anyone is not listed that ought to be—any thoughts?

[3] The Power of Silence, first designed and delivered with Steve Breibart and available via Angus McLeod & Associates

Possibly followed by:

> Excellent. Now, what do we normally do in a situation like this?

If Tom does not know the system, you can intervene:

> Tom, there are at least three ways that might work. The others went yesterday by internal mail right?... okay, we could mail the others with a note from me or you; we could email the report similarly so it catches up, or since all the people we missed have offices that are on site, we could get Jonathon to walk them around by hand with a note. Which do you think would be most appropriate?

The questions are only asked if an assumption can reasonably be made that the individual has some level of understanding in that context, if not, we should consider them as level One and ask what information and/or support needs they may have. The answer to that should be sufficient to enable them to complete the job. Remember, Perception, Test, Action.

LEVEL TWO: MENTORING TO LEVEL THREE: COACHING

Level Two to Three is demarked by a higher level of independence and also marks the change in managing style from management to leadership.

At level Three the person is self-starting and more resourceful. Level Three people are taking new initiatives and finding, from experience, better ways of doing things. The real development that awaits them is mental aptitude. By that, I mean the development of higher reasoning, wider and more holistic understanding of the consequences of actions, broader ability in initiating and developing relationships (to improve performance) and careful and sensitive handling of communication, management and strategic issues. All of these are stimulated most excellently by facilitating their development using coaching interventions to make the difference.

Coaching assumes that they have the mental resources to find motivated solutions for themselves and enough information about the detail of their specialty, the role of their product or service and their impact within the whole business. Using a combination of questions, challenges and silence, the coaching-leader aims to encourage the person to achieve their goal, gain a wider set of options for moving forward and select one that is effective (and for which the person is suited and motivated).

Comprehensive examples about the use of coaching interventions in management are available in 'Performance Coaching' (McLeod, 2003). Here though are some typical coaching interventions:

> Tom, you say that that we cannot produce the order in time, but what if we could? What would we have to do in order to do that?
>
> Tom, if I heard you right you said that Peters dislikes you because he has twice left you off the monthly meeting list. If there was another reason for that, what might that reason be?
>
> Tom, you have suggested three different approaches. Which one is the best and why?
>
> Tom, should we concentrate on what we know we can't do or what we can?
>
> Tom, imagine if you will that John has this same issue going on with him at the moment. What could you advise him to do?
>
> Tom, What if we had just won the Annual Award, how good would we be feeling right now? What do you think we would have learned that would be useful to us in order to achieve this award again?

Each question is designed to test Tom's present perception and move him to a more useful, performance mindset. More than that, professional coaching develops mental agility and the expert

use of tools that Tom will apply long after Tom or the coach (or coaching-leader) has moved jobs.

LEVEL ZERO TO LEVEL 1

The off-chart parts of the model include level Zero. What do we do when we have people who are regularly distressed and have variable efficacy at work? Typically, we need help too! Most managers are not qualified to deal with such issues, even if they have the time to grapple with these situations. But you still need to understand and manage those situations at work where the level Zero is largely performing at level One.

The differential between level Zero and level One is determined by the emotional resource of the person to do their job rather than by their competences. Competence will help people in both levels to gain self-esteem and self-confidence. However, at level Zero the individual is too distracted, too panicky and/or too preoccupied to learn quickly enough and to achieve a consistent level of quality in their work.

People working at level Zero have a lack of emotional resource. In the extreme situation this lack of emotional resource can manifest as crying, absenteeism and self-harming. In these cases, it is worth considering having a conversation about further help and involving a professional from the HR department, possibly of the same gender as the person exhibiting those symptoms.

A conversation will be measured in time and the manager must always be prepared to go over the same ground several times if necessary. In stress, people may hear but not understand what is being said due to inner-dialogue, self-judgment and interpretation. When repeating information, keep the messages simple and clear. Check that they have understood—ask them to summarise.

The conversation will best be conducted in a neutral and familiar space. Ideally they will have options where they can sit without any desk or table between them and you. Make sure there can be no interruptions and that phones are turned off.

> Tom, I am concerned about you because you seem to be struggling. Because we care about you and not just your work, I have asked you to meet with me so we can talk confidentially about any pressing concerns and issues that you may have. Where we can, I would like us to agree a way forward that will help you to feel confident and competent in your work. To start, would you like to tell me what you believe I have said so far so that we are starting on the same page?

Asking for clarity is essential. If Tom has gone internal, he will have missed most of what has been said, critically, the part about working together to help him.

Where the emotional situation seems less debilitating it may be possible to have a conversation about some training or 1-2-1 mentoring (from an encouraging colleague) to get their confidence back. Find a private, egalitarian space, a choice of identical chairs, remove physical blockages. The pace of delivery should be measured and your attention should be good so you can observe reactions and gain insight into whether or not they really understand what you are saying.

> Tom, you seem to be struggling sometimes and I realise that I may have expected too much of you too soon. I want us to talk together so we can both agree a way forward that will get you moving forward and feeling more confident in your work. To start, would you like to tell me what you understand I have said so we are starting on the same page.

And later:

> Tom, there may be some options for assisting you to get up to speed faster and I hope that one of them may appeal to you. I am wondering if Joanne or Peter might spend an hour with you for a couple of mornings to offer advice and show you how they do things. Alternatively, you could shadow one of them for a half-day. There is a training course on quality management coming up in two months and I want to put your name down for that as well—how do you feel about these three options?

In contrast, level One people do have the emotional resource to improve but need support and information to do that. Not all people at this level will realise they need help however—a conversation in all cases makes that explicit. Three things count:

1. Asking them for their understanding of what you have said
2. Asking whether they agree they are in need and thirdly, if helpful,
3. Using silence to get that agreement.

Remember, you may have misdiagnosed level Zero and level One. The person that you thought was level One may get upset and their fears, lack of self-confidence etcetera may come spilling out. For that reason, it is still best to make sure that the space is not-overlooked, that you have privacy and that interruptions are not possible.

> Tom, thank you for coming in. I would like you to feel positive about this meeting because its purpose is simply to do our best to advance your working effectiveness and help you feel more confidence as harder projects and more work-load come your way. To begin with I would like to be sure we are both on the same page so could you tell me what you understand I have asked you here for please?

If any correction is needed to Tom's interpretation, you can give it—use the same phrases as before to make it easier and again ask for his interpretation of what you have said.

> Tom, I want to tell you that I am pleased with your time-keeping and enthusiasm. I also want to talk with you about some working practices that fall short of our requirements in the department—I mean specifically the accuracy of filing and the speed at which files are returned so others can access them quickly. Do you want to tell me what is working and not working for both those issues, I mean the accuracy and the speed of filing?

The speech contains positives and inclusive language ('I also want to talk with you'), is clear and specific but inviting rather than ordering. If Tom does not agree that there is performance issue then resort to specifics and use silence to ensure you get an answer:

> Tom, if I heard you right, you disagree that files are being put back incorrectly by you. Here I have five records from three of your colleagues, both the time of your call and your notes in the files are prior to theirs in each case. What do you have to say about that?

Keep the silence unless Tom starts to fidget or to look around the room. We are so used to speech that the silence may be difficult to manage but you must. A minute, even three or four or more may be required to get Tom to do the self-awareness work internally to be able to admit his errors. If you butt in or argue, all you will achieve is argument. The problem is internal to him and he will not sort that out by arguing his case, only by self-reflection. If he starts to look bored or begins to fidget, ask the question, just exactly as you did before. The sentence will hit exactly the same processing area in his brain if it is identical and no re-interpretation will be required (This comes from understanding neural pathways and

what we know from the use of Clean Language and Symbolling Modelling. (See Lawley & Tompkins, 2000).

Typically a question like this only needs to be asked once, occasionally twice to get a sensible answer where any amount of argument and denial would have failed.

> I am sorry. I've always struggled with words. I mean, does The Ford Group go under 'T' for The or 'F' for Ford. And what about the Robert Thomas Company? Is that R or T? I thought I put it under Thomas—is that wrong?

Again, the manager will want to gain a mutual agreement about the way forward.

> Okay Tom, I could get a print off of all the names in file-order and yes, you are right about the difficulties. In the telephone book I have seem the Robert Thomas Company listed under the surname but we list by the first letter of the company name, that's 'R' for Robert'. The list will be useful though as some companies are better known by a brand and that may be at the top of their correspondence, even though we list by company name. An example is 'Whizzo' which is manufactured by the Reading Chemical Company and hence listed under 'R' for Reading. Will that be enough to get you back on track or do you need any other help with this?

At level One we need to be specific about what needs to be done and how it needs to be done and not offer choices. Choices are only likely to confuse at this time as the consequences of each choice is unlikely to be understood.

Conclusion

Managing in a coaching style requires flexibility and a commitment to taking the time to test how people are doing by having conversations. It does take an investment of time and hence fire-fighters will tend to continue to manage poorly. Investing time in coaching conversations creates more independent working in our people and makes sure that they rarely, if ever, feel over-managed or under-managed again. To have proactive, motivated people we must make that investment. As our people become more independent, effective and realistically confident, they need less of our time—the investment, for our own productivity is worth the effort.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

This article is an adaptation from Dr Angus McLeod's latest book, '*Self-coaching Leadership—Fast Strategies from Manager to Leader*' published in May by John Wiley & Sons, Chichester. ISBN: 978-0-470-51280-7. He is also author of '*Me, Myself, My Team*' and '*Performance Coaching—The Handbook for Managers, HR Professionals and Coaches*' both published by Crown House, Carmathen & NY. He can be contacted via the website www.angusmcleod.com
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News Scan

Crucial project conversations

In NewsScan 14.1, I shared an article on project management where The Chickens are in Charge! One of the comments in that article was that "projects are not scripted performances, they are conversations." New research by VitalSmarts, reported in Projects@Work expands on this and the impact of communication on project execution.

One of the keys to successful project management is holding the right conversations on the right issues at the right times. For any given initiative, there will be a handful of crucial conversations that the best project managers will make sure take place. But more often than not, these conversations do not take place and silence and suspicion rule.

Researcher David Maxfield makes a distinction between two types of communication failure. "One is unintentional: Information falls between the cracks—between phases of the project, between departments, between professionals. That's not what we're talking about here. We're talking about where you know there is something wrong. There is an elephant in the room, the emperor has no clothes, and nobody is speaking up."

Maxfield identified five crucial conversations that are critical to the success of most projects, but are routinely avoided:

1. Confronting an AWOL sponsor.
   Too often, sponsors get something going, but then fail to provide the support or assistance needed—they back off and the project dies, but slowly.
2. Challenging arbitrary deadlines and inadequate resources.
   This is a big one, according to the research—80 percent of project managers routinely experience this problem, and when they did, the results were ugly: 74 percent of these projects went over budget; 82 percent missed their deadline; 79 percent failed to meet quality or functionality specs; and 67 percent of the time team morale was damaged. Most discouraging of all, 93 percent of project managers described this problem as "difficult" to "impossible" to confront and successfully resolve.
3. Confronting people who are inappropriately influencing priorities.
   Powerful people often skirt or manipulate the priority setting process. They use their political clout. So when a project managers says 'no' to a change request, he suddenly finds his CEO countermanding the decision after a representation from the requestor.
4. Dealing with ineffective or absentee team members.
   Some members on the project team are either unwilling or incapable of supporting your project. They may attend the meetings, but they don't do any work, and you often don't notice until you are seriously behind.
5. Openly discussing problems before they cause failure.
   Especially with high visibility projects, project managers and team members often don't admit when there are problems. They are either blind to the difficulties, or just hope they might go away.

These are problems that don't fix themselves, they need to be confronted, otherwise the project becomes a slow-motion train crash, with the project manager taking most of the eventual blame.

Crucial Conversations, Projects@Work podcast

Universal drivers for engagement

Research by consultants Kenexa shows that from country to country, although the level of employee engagement may change from year to year, the key factors that keep employees engaged remain consistent. There may be cultural differences in each country, but feeling valued is a top priority for employees world-wide.

From the global survey, the following emerged as the most universal drivers of engagement among employees:

Driver	A top driver in % of countries
The leadership of my company has communicated a vision of the future that motivates me	75%
I feel that I am part of a team	73%
My company values my contribution	75%
I believe my company has an outstanding future	73%
I trust the leadership of my company	73%
My ideas and suggestions count	73%
My manager is an outstanding leader	68%
My job makes good use of my talents, skills and abilities	68%
My manager provides me with timely and helpful feedback	58%
I receive the information and communication I need to do my job effectively	58%

Don't go it alone

Two recent Harvard Business Review articles expand on the connection between social networks and effective leadership. In their January 2007 article, "How Leaders Create and Use Networks," authors Herminia Ibarra and Mark Hunter, both affiliated with INSEAD discuss the kinds of networking leaders must do to create effective change. "In Praise of the Incomplete Leader," a February 2007 article by Deborah Ancona, Thomas W. Malone, Wanda J. Orlikowski, and Peter M. Senge demonstrates how leadership itself can be networked, and how such "distributed leadership" can relieve the pressure to be a "perfect leader."

Ibarra and Hunter followed the successes and failures of a group of managers as they transitioned to leadership positions. For many of the new leaders, networking was an obvious part of their jobs, yet it proved to be one of their most dreaded challenges. Watching these emerging leaders, the pair discovered that three distinct but interdependent forms of networking: operational, personal, and strategic.

Operational networks are comprised of individuals, mostly internal to the organisation, who are helpful in getting work done efficiently. These individuals can meet objectives as assigned, but are not well-suited to asking the strategic question of "What should we be doing next?"

Personal networks are those that can enhance personal and professional development. Usually consisting of professional associations, clubs, alumni groups, and personal interest communities, these networks are a valuable source of referrals for information and contacts.

Strategic networks can help leaders set future priorities, meet challenges, and get stakeholder support for critical changes. The contacts are internal and external to the organisation and are oriented toward future issues. These networks are difficult to develop because membership is discretionary, and it is not always clear who is relevant.

Ibarra and Hunter made two fascinating discoveries. First, as managers widened their professional contacts, they often shifted their focus from operational to personal networks. However, these expanded networks were unlikely to affect key organisational changes.

Second, they observed that almost all managers underutilised strategic networking. Some tended to dismiss strategic networking as "political" and something to be avoided, while others let interpersonal chemistry, and not strategic needs, determine which relationship they cultivated.

In "In Praise of the Incomplete Leader" Ancona and her colleagues challenge the myth of the complete leader, arguing that "only when leaders come to see themselves as incomplete—as having both strengths and weakness—will they be able to make up for their missing skills by relying on others."

The authors develop a model of "distributed leadership," in which the leadership function is jointly provided by two or more individuals. Ancona and her colleagues don't claim that leaders should avoid working on their weaknesses in any of these four areas, rather, they suggest that leaders surround themselves with people who have complementary skill sets.

Once leaders diagnose their strengths and weakness, they can search for those who can fill in the gaps. Doing so can simultaneously improve the functioning of the organisation while lowering expectation pressures on the chief leader. Write Ancona and her colleagues: "It's time to celebrate the incomplete—that is, the human—leader."

Harvard Business Review
January and February 2007

The top seven management myths in today's workplace

The Myth of Empowerment: The way to empower people is to leave them alone and let them manage themselves. What is the reality? Almost everybody performs better with more guidance, direction, and support from a more experienced person.

The Myth of Fairness: The way to be fair is to treat everybody the same. What is the reality? What's truly fair is doing more for

some people and less for others, based on what they deserve—based on their performance.

The Myth of the Nice Guy: The only way to be strong is to act like a jerk, but I want to be a "nice guy." What is the reality? Real "nice guy" managers do what it takes to help employees succeed so those employees can deliver great service for customers and earn more rewards for themselves.

The Myth of the Difficult Conversation: Being hands-off is the way to avoid confrontations with employees. What is the reality? Being a weak manager makes these confrontations inevitable, whereas being a strong manager means these confrontations rarely occur, and when they do happen they are not so painful after all.

The Myth of Red Tape: Managers are prevented from being strong because there are so many factors beyond their control—red tape, corporate culture, senior management, limited resources. What is the reality? Focusing on the many factors THAT ARE within your control is the way to make yourself stronger. Meanwhile, learn the rules and red tape so you learn how to work within and around them (another way to increase your strength).

The Myth of the Natural Leader: I am not "good at" managing. What is the reality? The best managers are people—natural or not—who learn proven techniques, practice those techniques diligently until they become skills, and continue practicing them until they become habits.

The Myth of Time: There isn't enough time to manage people. What is the reality? Since your time is so limited, you definitely don't have time to deal with all the things that go wrong when you do not spend enough time up-front managing people.

Bruce Tulgan, Rainmaket Thinking

Reaping the rewards—management development works

A report by the Chartered Management Institute provides evidence of the links between organisational performance and investment in management and leadership development in a study conducted over an eight year period.

The research, which is based on detailed interviews with 1,000 managers revealed:

- Improved business performance when development is linked to business strategy.
- A significant shift in the priority given to management development by employers.
- A change in attitude towards what makes a good manager and how development should be delivered.
- Trends amongst organisations towards active talent management and fast-tracking high potential managers.

7 out of 10 agreed that management and leadership development allowed managers to meet business needs and when it is linked to specific skills that address business needs, organisational productivity levels climb.

In the survey, managers are also seeing that leaders are made not born, valuing on-the-job experience over natural ability. Line managers are focusing on job-related development, such as in-house management and leadership development and job-specific qualifications. UK organisations have also recognised the need for sustained development programmes. Almost half (45 per cent) allocate a specific budget for management training compared to 37 per cent in 2000.

Almost 90 per cent of organisations claim to have regular appraisals to establish training requirements and more than half (57 per cent) admit to 'talent management' by selecting high potential managers for intensive development. The report also shows that the skills most sought after are managing people, leadership and meeting customer needs. Looking forward managers are looking to develop skills including the management of change and risk, and the ability to facilitate organisational learning.

'Management Development Works: the evidence' Chartered Management Institute

QuoteScan

"I find the great thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving: To reach the port of heaven, we must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it, but we must sail, and not drift, nor lie at anchor."—*Oliver Wendell Holmes*

"Challenges make you discover things about yourself that you never really knew. They're what make the instrument stretch -- what make you go beyond the norm."—*Cicely Tyson*

"Hide not your talents. They for use were made. What's a sundial in the shade?"—*Ben Franklin*

"Every lesson is a widening and deepening of consciousness. It is a stretching of the mind beyond its conceptual limits and a stretching of the heart beyond its emotional boundaries. It is a bringing of unconscious material into consciousness, a healing of past wounds, and a discovery of new faith and trust."—*Paul Ferrini*

"If there is a sin against life, it consists perhaps not so much in despairing of life as in hoping for another life and in eluding the implacable grandeur of this life."—*Albert Camus*

"The fast pace of our lives makes it difficult for us to find grace in the present moment, and when the simple gifts at our fingertips cease to nourish us, we have a tendency to crave the sensational."—*Macrina Wiederkehr*

"When we learn to say a deep, passionate yes to the things that really matter, then peace begins to settle onto our lives like golden sunlight sifting to a forest floor."—*Thomas Kincaid*

Changing conditions requires a different response which does not mean the old response was wrong. It may have been right for the old conditions, just no longer optimal: The musk oxen that live in Siberia and Alaska evolved a defence strategy over the millennia of forming a circle facing out with the young in the middle. This presents an impenetrable wall of horns to a pack of wolves. Standing and defending their ground was always more effective than running. Until human adversaries came with guns. Standing was no longer the best choice.

Scanning the network…

As usual, please send me copies of your own news, research, newsletters, favourite sources of information, web-sites, words of wisdom, stimulating sayings or trivia. An idea is worth sharing…

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Reviews

Off-Ramps and On-Ramps

By SYLVIA ANN HEWLETT
Harvard Business School Press, Boston, May 2007.
Paperback 261pp
ISBN: 978-1-4221-0102-5

To anyone in the field of workplace equality, Sylvia Ann Hewlett will be well known as the author of *Creating a Life.* In this follow up to that bestseller, Hewlett has looked at the current state of women's careers, the reasons for the continuing existence of the glass ceiling and the male competitive model. But this is not another book that just presents the problem, well over half of the book is devoted to solutions that have been implemented in some of the leading corporations and some of the high powered environments of Wall Street and the City.

The book is in two parts—the first four chapters are devoted to a study of the issues: an analysis of why the male competitive model still continues to dominate, the non-linear nature of typical women's careers which include breaks for children and elder care responsibilities, the growing demands of what Hewlett calls 'extreme jobs', and the business case for investing in diversity. What makes the analysis more interesting is specially commissioned research into feelings and motivations on careers and work conducted in the USA and the UK for both men and women. It shows the differences—but also some remarkable similarities.

The second part is composed of case studies from companies such as Goldman Sachs, BT, Ernst & Young, GE, Johnson & Johnson and Citigroup who have all implemented highly successful projects to encourage women returners (On-Ramps), flexible employment and working practices, maintaining ambition and re-engineering thinking about work and career paths. To a practical HR person this is probably the most significant section (although the chapter on the business case is very persuasive and in the language that Chief Executives can relate to).

Hewlett had been the catalyst in setting up the Hidden Brain Drain Task Force which brought together business people, consult-

ants and academics to investigate the issues and solutions. At the 2006 summit of the group, the 'core package' of six measures that emerged were: Establish a rich menu of flexible work arrangements; create arc-of-career flexibility; Re-imagine work life; Help women claim and sustain ambition; Harness altruism; and Reduce stigma and stereotypes. Each of the chapters in part two covers one of these subjects, each with three detailed case studies from the business world, with a summary of each solution stating the business case identified in that company, how to get started if you wanted to try to replicate the idea, and the critical elements for success. Individual examples add colour and interest.

This is an important book for all HR professionals and business leaders who are interested in turning the rhetoric on diversity into reality—and reaping the benefits, both financial and social. To the business leaders it makes a clear statement of the financial imperative of diversity, and backs that up with the analysis of (male) Chief Executives like Niall FitzGerald of Reuters and formerly Unilever, Jeremy Isaacs of Lehman Brothers and Ken Chenault of American Express. To the HR professional she elaborates on a range of immensely practical initiatives with a level of detail that can be used as a checklist to help start up something similar.

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The Starfish and the Spider: the unstoppable power of leaderless organizations

By ORI BRAFMAN AND ROD A BECKSTROM
Published by Portfolio (Penguin Group), 2006
Hardcover £15.99, pp. 230 (Nov 2007 paper) pp. 230
available Nov 2007 in paperback
ISBN: 1 59184 143 7

The origin of this intriguing title is that if the head is cut off a spider (a metaphor for a conventional organisation with its CEO), the spider will die, but if you cut an arm off a starfish (a metaphor for a neural networked organisation) it will grow a new arm. As there is no central brain (as we know it) in a starfish, in order to move an arm, the animal has to somehow work and communicate with the other arms to move.

This is a book about decentralised organisations and more particularly about 'starfish' organisations—those like neural networks. Brafman and Beckstrom illustrate how it works with stories from many organisations: Alcoholics Anonymous, the Abolitionist movement (decentralised organisations have been with us for a long time), Al Qaeda, Amazon, craigslist, eBay, the internet, Intuit, Wikipedia, Jamii Bora Trust and more.

They give us a model that says that a decentralised organisation has five 'legs'.

Circles, that operate independently and autonomously. Once you join, you are an equal with everyone else. Instead of rules, you have norms. Trust grows through people spending time together. Members assume the best of one another and that is usually what they will get.

Catalyst, a person who initiates the circle then fades away, letting go of the leadership role. By doing so the catalyst transfers ownership and responsibility to the circle.

Ideology, the glue that holds the decentralised organisation together

Pre-existing Network, almost every decentralised organisation that has become big was launched from an existing platform. For instance, the Quakers in England launched the abolition of slavery. And of course the internet which is a platform for many starfish organisations.

The Champion, a person who is relentless in promoting a new idea. Catalysts are charismatic, but champions take it to the next level.

The chapter on the Catalyst explains what he or she needs to have and to be. A Catalyst is much better at being an agent of change than at being the guardian of tradition. A Catalyst is genuinely interested in others and wants to help them. To that end, they map connections, spending time thinking about how each person fits into their own network. They lead with emotions; emotional connections come first, after which you can brainstorm and talk strategy. A Catalyst's main job is to create personal relationships. Of course they are tolerant of ambiguity and, as mentioned before, they let go and let others take on ownership and responsibility.

There is a section on hybrid organisations—for example, eBay is a hybrid: a centralised company that decentralises the customer experience.

But what do you *do* with this that makes sense for an organisation? Especially since a principle of decentralisation is that, as industries become decentralised, overall profits decrease. You aim

for the 'sweet spot' on the continuum between centralised and decentralised. This is the point that yields the best competitive position at any point in time. As it shifts with time, it needs to be checked regularly. The more information oriented an organisation is, the more likely it will be decentralised. The more it has to do with security and accountability (like a bank) the more likely it will need to be centralised.

And how do you decentralise an organisation? One way is to allow the customers a role, as eBay does. Another way is to use Appreciative Inquiry because it shares power among the participants who co-create their future, working together as peers.

This is a fascinating, easy-to-read book. The style is pleasant, it gives one plenty to think about. If you are interested in chaos theory and complexity science, this is a must read. In fact, of the books I have read this year, this one is the best and gives me the most to think about. I hope that you will enjoy it too.

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X-teams: how to build teams that lead, innovate, and succeed

By DEBORAH ANCONA AND HENRIK BRESMAN
Published by Harvard Business School Press, Boston MA. 2007.
Paperback 256pp,
ISBN978-1-59139-692-5

The 'X' in the title of this book refers to the external focus of the teams studied by Ancona and Bresman. They contrast this external focus with the internal focus that they attribute to most team development activities and writings. Their premise is that this inward looking produces teams who get on well together, but do not necessarily deliver. Having thus differentiated themselves from the majority of other books and research on teams, they then—in my opinion—fall into the same trap as many popular texts in that they focus on the successes of a few, senior level teams involved in major organisation change activities. This makes a good read, but often leaves the average reader—who is working in a less exhaled or visible role—unable to relate to the messages. It is a similar problem where books on leadership often focus on the stories of some charismatic political, business or military leader which is beyond the comprehension of most managers and team leaders.

For the writers, who are professors at, respectively, MIT's Sloan School of Management and INSEAD, an X-team differs from a traditional team in three ways—its high levels of external activity coupled with extreme execution inside the team and flexible phases of activity moving from exploration through exploitation to exportation. Whilst being descriptive and creative, this repetitive—and sometimes contrived—use of the 'X' in the descriptions might affect some more sensitive readers!

The case study examples are broadly based and informative. The organisations profiled include Microsoft, Motorola, BP, Proctor & Gamble, Oxfam and Meryll Lynch, covering a range of industries and situations that show the application of the ideas. There is no doubt that X-teams produce creative results and are very proactive in getting them implemented, providing that intrapreneurial spirit that organisations have been seeking for years. There is also no doubt that there are some significant lessons to be learned from this research into how teams need to have a balance of external and internal focus in order to be fully effective in today's fast-paced business environment. I would have liked a little more made of these lessons and how the average team leader could take them on board and improve their own performance. But for someone who is willing to put in the effort to translate the messages to their own environment, this is a useful challenge that will help break out of more traditional thinking.

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The Change Handbook (Second Edition)

By PEGGY HOLMAN, TOM DEVANE AND STEVEN CADY
Published by Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco CA. 2007.
Paperback 732pp £31.99
ISBN-10: 1-57675-379-4
ISBN-13: 978-1-57675-579-8

The Change Handbook is a 'must-have' for anyone working in the field of organisation development whether in the public sector, small to multinational business, community and not for profit organisations, education or consulting. It is a major reference text, rightly described on the cover as "The Definitive Resource on Today's Best Methods for Engaging Whole Systems". It is, to my knowledge, only book that provides such a comprehensive view into the wide variety of change methods from around the world in one place. The first edition was published in 1999 and is now updated with the latest change methods that have

emerged since the first edition was published and the removal of now outdated methods.

In all, the book covers 61 processes. 19 of the more well-established practices such as Appreciative Inquiry, Dialogue and Deliberation. Open Space Technology, Technology of Participation, World Café, Future Search, Scenario Thinking, Rapid Results and Six Sigma, are given in-depth chapters written by the leaders in the community of practice, in many cases the original designer—names like David Cooperrider, Harrison Owen, Marshall Rosenberg, Dick and Emily Axelrod, Marvin Weisbord, Sandra Janoff and Diana Whitney are among the chapter authors. The other 42 chapters are described as thumbnails—briefer overviews of the method, In some cases these methods are long established, or hybrids or developments of core methodologies, but also there are outlines of new, leading-edge techniques that bring an originality and challenge to the subject.

As you would expect from a comprehensive reference text covering so many methods, none of the chapters contains a complete 'how to' guide, but there is an overview of the basics, usually illustrated with some examples, answers to the frequently asked questions on the method, a table of uses, and where to go for more information. In addition the in-depth chapters contain sections on getting started, the roles and responsibilities of sponsors and facilitators, the theory base and conditions for success.

The methods are grouped into Adaptable—ones that can be used for a variety of purposes; Planning—about helping people shape the future; Structuring which seek to redefine relationships or work practices; Improving methods to increase effectiveness; and Supportive methods which enhance the efficacy of other change methods. There is an overview matrix in the introductory section and a one page quick summary of each method at the end of the book which allow quick comparisons and method selection. Chapters on mixing and matching; outcomes, sustainability and measurement; and future speculation round out the introduction and epilogue to the main text.

As you would expect from the standard of the authors and the 90 or so international contributors who supply the meat of the text, the articles are informative and authoritative. It is no mean feat by the editors to have compiled such a wide set of contributors and yet maintained a consistently high standard and style of writing throughout. It is a comprehensive and useable resource in the area of whole system change. For anyone remotely involved in the subject it is an invaluable asset. My copy is already well used and will probably stay on the desktop rather than being returned to the bookshelf!

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Getting Unstuck—How Dead ends Become New Paths

By TIMOTHY BUTLER
Published by Harvard Business School Press, Boston MA. 2007.
Hardback 204pp £15.99
ISBN-13:978-1-4221-0225-1

Dr. Timothy Butler is a Senior Fellow and the Director of Career Development Programs at Harvard Business School. In this book he draws on his research and practice of career coaching to give a pathway for dealing with the impasse that we have all felt at some time in our career and life path—times when we have the feeling that we're stuck or paralysed and unable to move forward.

Butler points out that we will experience this psychological impasse many times in our life. We're convinced that something must change, whether in work or personal life, but often unable to move beyond it. But, of course, failure to "get unstuck"—using the title of the book—can put career and personal life at risk, as well as affecting the functioning of your team, family or organisation.

In the book Butler describes how to recognise this state of impasse, and then offers strategies for moving beyond it—by tapping into our interests and imagination, recognising patters and moving our insight into taking action in a new direction. Each chapter contains a number of practical exercises drawn from Butler's own coaching and workshop practice so that the reader can follow a self development process to deal with their own life situation. Career counsellors, coaches and consultants will also find the processes and activities very useful in their own practice of helping others to make decisions. In particular, Butler shares his 100 Jobs exercise which is key to identifying an understanding of work and life themes, and the tensions between them which often lead to our impasse.

Throughout the book, Butler also uses a number of case studies about individuals who have successfully transitioned out of their impasses, These are very useful in highlighting the process stage and the use of the tool or exercise that is most relevant to helping increase insight or make decisions. I did find the portrayal of

the easy, positive outcome for the individual in every case a little unbelievable. Obviously they are being used for illustrative purposes, but some indication of difficulty or examples where the intervention was less successful would have added something more true to real life.

That said, "Getting Unstuck" is a practical, authoritative framework for self-development or helping others to define and move past their current 'stuckness' and move onto a new career or life path that is more meaningful and fulfilling. It is well written; the practical exercises are relevant and well described; and there is a comprehensive bibliography for those who want to take their learning and understanding to deeper level.

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Guide to Organisation Design: creating high-performing and adaptable enterprises

By NAOMI STANFORD
Published by Profile Books Ltd. (2007)
Hardback, pp.343 £20.00
ISBN: 978-1-86197-802-8

This book talks about organisation design, but it is actually about far more. As one would expect, organisation design impacts other areas than just the structure of an organisation and Stanford covers all the bases. This isn't just a must-have book for OD specialists, but I would suggest that any manager who is thinking about a re-organisation would do well to read this carefully.

It starts by talking about just what organisation design is, why it is important and how it links into the business — the most important of which, it seems to me, is that there must be a compelling business case for undertaking a re-organisation. The design must then be driven by the strategy of the business bearing the whole system in mind, not just focusing on one part.

The author focuses on different models, approaches and designs with some excellent tables listing designs in use, their benefits and their limitations. I particularly liked a list of questions you could use to help choose a model, approach and/or design.

The book has practical information, but also nice case studies of when a particular approach or model had been used in well-known organisations and a *warts-and-all* story telling what actually happened.

I was amused to see that, in her experience, most leaders concentrate on the organisational structure, equating structure with organisation design. It is only one of the issues to consider. Stanford sees organisations as complex adaptive systems rather than as being mechanistic and linear. Again, there are useful tables and interesting case studies as well as insightful questions to ask yourself (or your client) to help make the right choices.

A chapter follows on Planning and Sequencing which emphasises the iterative and inherently messy nature of moving forward with organisational design. In her words, "taking a programme management approach [to organisation design] provides a robust framework for planning and sequencing organisation design work."

The rest of the book looks at measurement, stakeholder engagement, leadership, culture and group processes, and morphing "not future proofing". Difficult subjects are tackled, like:

How *do* you measure your progress in an area that is almost impossible to measure?

What are the nitty-gritty's of stakeholder engagement? How do you analyse and map them?

How do you lead a change, especially in times of uncertainty and ambiguity?

How do you become aware of the political games being played?

How do you enable collaborative working?

I would say that this is the best book on organisational change I have ever read. And I do read a lot of them. It is a book I wish I could have written—it covers the subject handsomely and the writing is clear and straightforward. It is well arranged and it backs up suggestions about theories and models with examples of real life case studies from organisations that we all know. It does not imply that any one method, design or model is the right one—there is no silver bullet—rather it helps you decide which one is the best to choose for the situation you find yourself in. Stanford is not afraid to tackle difficult areas, like the need to keep the larger perspective in mind and the difficulty of measurement, or leading the design and implementation or working out what is the best model or method in a difficult, quickly changing environment. Best of all, it helps readers to focus on thinking about what they are doing and what is working and to continually check that it is working—as soon as it stops working, to revisit and do something different…. It all sounds rather solutions focused to me!

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Solutions Focus Working: 80 real life lessons for successful organisational change

By MARK MCKERGOW AND JENNY CLARKE
Publ by SolutionsBooks (2007) paper, pp 214 £17.99
ISBN: 978 0 9549749 4 7

This is an interesting addition to the books on appreciative methodologies. It takes the view that you already really know what solutions focus *is* and now you'd like to see how people have used it. There are 80 lessons distilled from 14 case studies of organisations across Europe and Canada which are co-authored by the practitioners who worked on them.

The book is practical and pragmatic and, true to its pedigree, focuses on what worked in each situation. I found myself thinking, "I could use that!" or immediately seeing how I could apply a particular idea to current work. It is a pleasure to read—great stories about what work and change can be like if we allow them.

For those who aren't familiar with Solutions Focus, there are three basic rules:

Don't fix what isn't broken

Find what works and do more of it

If it doesn't work, stop doing it and do something different.

It urges practitioners to keep things simple—as simple as possible (but not simpler). If we disengage from looking at a problematic past (which we then extrapolate to a problematic future) and instead look at when things have worked a little bit as we would like them to… we can extrapolate the 'working a little bit' into the future, making it 'working a lot'.

In The Power of One (Chapter 2), Carey Glass coaches a manager to improve motivation across his organisation. He does this in many (~30) different little ways without much fanfare. He tries things out, reflects on what is working. If it doesn't work, he tries something else. He learns from the areas of the organisation where things are working and tries those things elsewhere.

Another example is Solutions Focus Tackles Complexity (Chapter 9) where Kirsten Dierolf works with Bayer CropScience on a project around the European Union helping to lobby the Commission on the drafting of new legislation such that their interests were taken into account. Solutions Focus was used to help simplify (enough, but not too much) a very complex situation so that people could work productively. One of the lessons here is that being solutions focused is not being problem phobic—it is important to listen to the story of the problem to help join with the clients in the project and also because it is possible to find traces of a solution when you hear the problem being described along with what is wanted, what is useful, what might be seen as strengths, and so on.

In the end, the client was interviewed twice, once six weeks after the workshops and once after 9 months for the purpose of the book. He reflected that what was most useful for the groups was concentrating on what was already working. A very powerful lesson indeed.

If you are at all interested in working in an appreciative way, then I can highly recommend this book. I guarantee that you will read it and find ideas of things you can try in your next intervention. As with the other books by these authors, it is straightforward, easy to use and you can dip in and out. Since a part of Solutions Focus is not to use a $5000 word when a $5 word will do, it keeps things simple. It is an enjoyable read as we all like to see how others handle interventions.

TRICIA LUSTIG
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Readers can obtain this book at the special price of £13.99 post free from info@sfworks.com (or call 08453 707145). Mention O & P.

What Kind of World do you Want?

By JIM LORD WITH PAM MCALLISTER
Pre-Publication copy. 2007. Information on purchase available from gifts@whatkindofworld.com
Hardback 184pp
ISBN: 7774584773

In this book, Jim Lord sums up his philosophy for advancing society—an activity that he has been dedicated to since writing a series of articles on the quality of life in American cities in 1975. He comes from the school of forward looking thinkers who consider what works and what might be possible, rather than the analytical school who look at problems and seek to fix things that are going wrong. It is a philosophy that therefore encompasses Appreciative Inquiry and other approaches that reframe conversations and thinking, and the book contains not just a challenge to reframe our own thinking but also inspiration to do this from a wealth of real life examples from around the world where people—individuals as well as groups—have made a real difference to their communities. The

final words in the book sum up his challenge to us: "What kind of world do you want to leave behind?"

This is a well written text, not dwelling too deeply in the theory, nor just being a collection of anecdotal stories. Rather, Lord has intertwined the two with simple but insightful reflections on the different nature of the conversations, the deficit and the generative. The examples he uses range from the globally changing leaders and thinking, such as Winston Churchill tapping into a fundamental strength of the British people in order to inspire them during World War Two, through to the local people taking the lead to raise awareness or money for their community. The underpinning theory is simply explained with well known examples such as the Pygmalion Effect and sports psychology—you tend to get what you focus on.

The common theme if the overcoming of resistance and difficulty by taking a stand to share and act on our dreams and beliefs in order to make something happen—something that goes well beyond just positive thinking. I am already a convert to this approach and have personally experienced major community and organisation development improvement, and I know a lot of the examples used, including that of fellow Organisations & People editor Tricia Lustig and her work raising community interest and funds to build a school in rural Nepal. So it is not surprising that I would recommend this book as a welcome addition to anyone's library—it makes the ideas accessible and not overwhelming, hopefully inspiring many more people to help make a difference by changing their thinking and conversations.

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