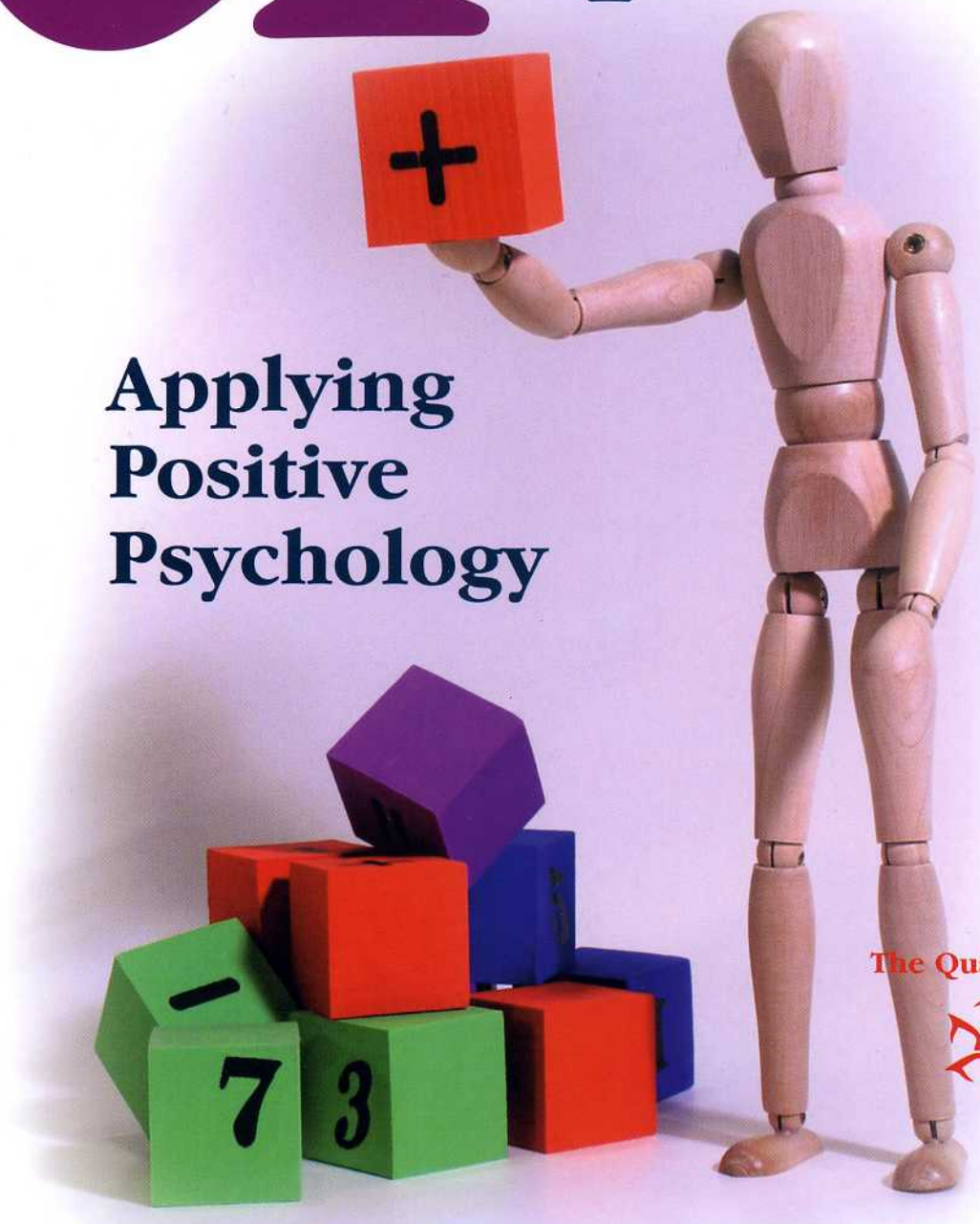
Volume 15, Number 2 • May 2008

Organisations & People



Applying Positive Psychology

The Quarterly Journal of AMED the developers' network

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This *Organisations and People* journal was originally published in hard copy bearing the **ISSN 1 350 6269**

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Organisations & People

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Editorial: Applying Positive Psychology with People in Organisations

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Centre for Applied Positive Psychology
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Applying positive psychology in organisations might sound like giving employees lessons in "happyology"—especially if you believe everything you read in the popular press! The reality, though, is quite different. An increasing number of organisations are recognising that by focusing on what is right with people, working from their strengths, and harnessing the power of positive emotions, they can deliver substantial bottom line benefits. This special issue introduces a flavour of some of the ways in which positive psychology and similar approaches have been developed and deployed in organisational life.

The field of applied positive psychology was introduced by Linley and Joseph (2004a), in their seminal edited volume, *Positive Psychology in Practice*. In it, they defined applied positive psychology as "the application of positive psychology research to the facilitation of optimal human functioning" (Linley & Joseph, 2004b, p. 4). The breadth and inclusivity of this definition speaks of the breadth and inclusivity of applied positive psychology as a discipline—with a reach that spans across organisations, education, coaching, offender populations, health, and life in its broadest sense.

Organisational studies generally, and occupational psychology in particular, have often traditionally been criticised for their overly negative focus (Hill, 2003)—itself likely a reflection of our general human negativity bias (Rozin & Royzman, 2001). In the last decade or so, however, increasing momentum has garnered around what may be achieved through taking a more positive, appreciative approach to understanding and influencing organisational life. For example, Appreciative Inquiry, founded by David Cooperrider in the late 1980's, uses an appreciative, strengths-based, solution-focused approach to organisational change. Similarly Kim Cameron and colleagues at the University of Michigan established the field of positive organisational scholarship, interested in positive deviance in organisations, and topics such as vitality, meaning and strengths at work (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003).

In positive psychology itself, applications with organisations have been led through our work at the UK's Centre for Applied Positive Psychology (CAPP). CAPP itself is an explicitly strengths-based organisation, and takes the approaches, tools, and techniques of positive psychology to work with a range of organisations and schools, some of which have been featured in case studies of strengths-

based recruitment—with Norwich Union (Stefanyszyn, 2007), and leadership development—with BAE Systems (Smedley, 2007). The field of positive psychology applied to work is also the subject of a major forthcoming volume, the *Oxford Handbook of Positive Psychology and Work* (Linley, Harrington, & Page, in press).

Together, these emerging trends of focusing more on the positive in organisational life suggest that something of a sea change in the way organisations operate may just be stirring. And for many people working in organisations, and especially in development, the response may well be one of 'And not before time.'

The articles of this special issue provide a set of diverse but converging lenses through which to view the applications of positive psychological approaches in the workplace. Opening the special issue, Laurence Lyons and Alex Linley make the case for situational strengths, arguing that the much vaunted claim of the strengths movement to date, 'Play to your strengths!' misses the organisational imperative of understanding—and then applying—the strengths that the situation calls for, whether from yourself or from others. Examining positive change, Malcolm Higgs and Deborah Rowland describe how positive emotions can help to account for and explain some of what is happening through successful organisational change initiatives.

Exploring how the strengths that underpin moral courage can be developed, Susan Harrington shows the increasing necessity of moral courage for HR Business Partners as they strive to balance the increasing but often inconsistent demands of the organisation and the employee population they serve. Next, Nigel Sykes introduces his metamorphosis model of organisation development, making the case that truly sustainable growth over time in an organisation can only come through harnessing, aligning and releasing the talents and strengths of the individuals within that organisation.

The popular topic of employee engagement is the subject of the final article, by Martin Stairs, Martin Galpin and Nicky Page. By raising the question of *Whose engagement is it anyway*?, they challenge traditional assumptions that responsibility for employee engagement rests most squarely with the organisation, instead introducing their 'engagement equation' and making the case that employees themselves are probably more responsible for their engagement than is the organisation in which they work—a real challenge to traditional engagement paradigms!

Overall, these articles provide a variety of perspectives from positive psychology applied to organisation and people development, and give a flavour of the richness that this nascent field will be able to offer the development practitioner going forward. We hope you enjoy the reading, and that your practice is inspired as a result.

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Situational Strengths: A Strategic Approach Linking Personal Capability to Corporate Success

LAURENCE S LYONS, PHD, MSC AND P ALEX LINLEY, PHD, CPSYCHOL

The busy organisation allows scant time for individual reflection. As business coaching becomes more pervasive, leaders are realising that a moment's reflection can leverage huge rewards in terms of sharper role clarity, focused research, and creative planning. Yet perhaps the most vital issue of all that cries out for reflection fails to find its way onto that agenda. This paramount question gets neglected because its answer is taken for granted. It is the continuous formula applied at the pivot-point of engagement seeking to orchestrate people's strengths and competencies towards the collective purpose; the molecular architecture of all organisational life. This article highlights the danger of relying on simplistic answers, and the stellar benefits of getting it right. We suggest that this question is complex and symbiotic. By setting it properly within the context of an open business system, we sketch out elements of a strategic approach.

KEYWORDS: Situational Strengths Approach, leadership, strengths, systems theory, talent management.

THE UNEXPECTED SUCCESS OF HERCULES

Take Hercules, the strongest man in the world. Shackle him in cuffs, fetter him in leg-irons, tie him down in chains, and incarcerate him in an unbreakable cage. Now ask: is he strong? How will he explain to himself that although his immense powers can never be taken from him, today he cannot escape the confines of his prison?

Perhaps it is better this way. The cage expresses the will of society while Hercules promotes the interests of only one man. The mindless application of his physical strength would at best frustrate collective success.

Yet if for a moment he were to stop bending bars to reflect on his plight, and tried instead to change your mind, Hercules might persuade you to set him free. To shift tack, he must first realise that strength is inseparable from situation; for it is only situation that can bring meaning to strength.

Thus all consistently successful leaders possess the same supreme strength. They assess the full collective potential at their disposal and beneficially deploy it in the light of their immediately presenting situation.

Nowhere is the relationship between People and Organisations more fundamentally expressed than in the application of personal strengths in pursuit of corporate success, yet this linkage is often elusive. Surprisingly for once, cultural inertia and organisational resistance are not to blame; the fragility in the connection comes not

from a defect in organisational demand but missed opportunities in the supply mechanism.

Strength as a dialogue

A continuous dialogue of questions and answers flows in the workplace between an organisation and its people. Organisational 'questions' demand the satisfaction of organisational needs—typically accomplished through tasks and projects. A typical 'answer' might state how an individual is to play a part in responding to organisational demand.

Yet, all too often, the match between available potential and organisational objective is sub-optimal because the obvious answers are overly simplistic. Examples of such Strategic Linkages are presented in Figure 1.

In this matching process personal potential may all too easily seem to get sacrificed in the wake of stark corporate diktat. People feel frustrated when not given the opportunity to fully deploy their strengths. They regret that their contribution will not achieve the full impact they know it should. They also suspect that it need not be like this; that there must be a better way.

Inspiration as to what constitutes a 'better way' can come only from the individual who takes up the design challenge of creatively matching individual (and team) strengths to organisational demands. Consideration of alternative Strategic Linkages may suggest solutions. But it is imperative that the individual actually makes time to carry out this personal reflection.

Another whole dimension of opportunity opens up when the fully-extended team is taken into account. Thus careful consideration of Figure 1 Cases (4) and (5) may uncover unexpected opportunities in those situations where a coaching intervention is underway by suggesting alternative skills, strengths, styles, or even outcomes that would be otherwise unobtainable.

The Situational Strengths Approach offers the grammar out of which this richer response may be constructed.

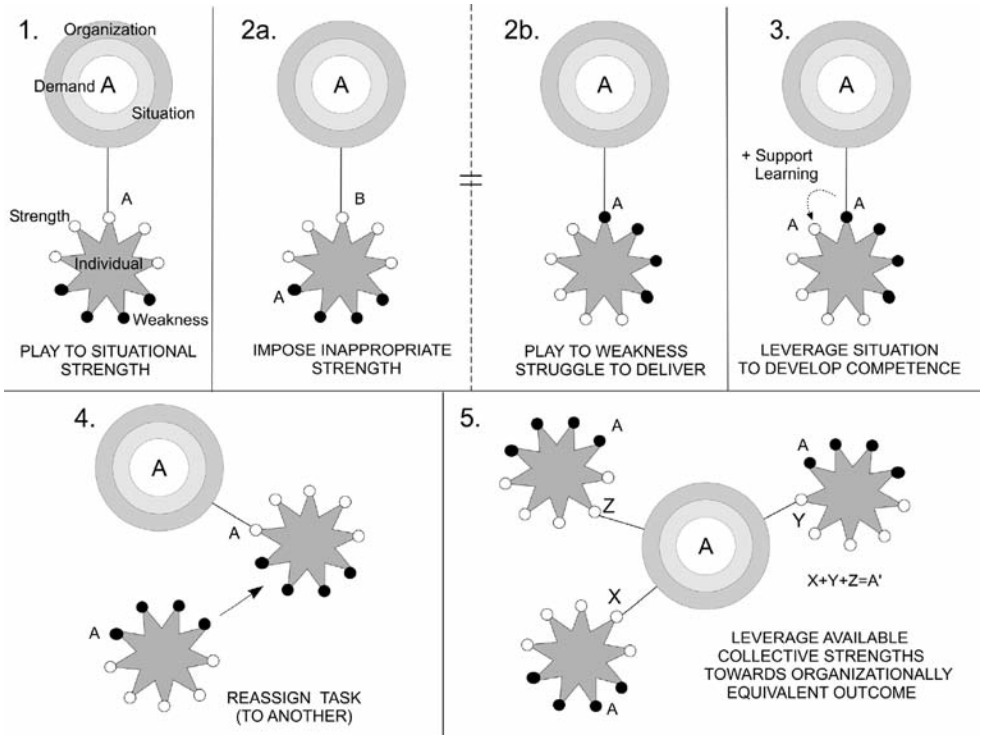

Figure 1: Strategic Linkages–Some Ways for Matching Individual and Team Strengths to Corporate Objectives

Systems Theory—Rediscovering Style

In a modern, frenzied business world which loves to immerse itself in tick boxes, knee-jerk reactions, and the comforting *feel-good factor* to be found in simplistic solutions it may seem there is little room left for individual initiative. Where does personal creativity fit? Where do personal ethics come into the picture? Where is the practical opportunity for leveraging individual strengths?

A major and growing challenge facing today's worker is to find ways of meaningfully engaging the world of work. Yet Systems Theory offers an opportunity for dealing with just this kind of question.

'*Equifinality*—a Systems Theory concept—will insist that for *open systems*, such as business organisations, there will be several ways to reach tomorrow's scenario.' (Lyons and Birchall, 1995, p.218)

In a similar vein, Katz and Kahn complain of the 'failure to recognize the equifinality in open systems, namely that there are more ways than one of producing a given outcome… The general principle, which characterizes all open systems, is that there does not have to be a single method for achieving the objective.'

When applied to the question of optimally matching organisational situations to available personal strengths, this simple idea opens the door to new exciting vistas. It declares that an individual may have at her disposal more degrees of freedom in which to act than would initially appear to be the case.

In pointing to the need for meshing organisational objectives with personal ethics, Lyons (2006, p.5) provides a formula which *An Accomplished Leader* might adopt:

'Different people prefer different learning styles… At work here is the concept of *equifinality* permitting a variety of personal styles, any of which may be applied to a given situation, to meet the same learning or business objective… She must never feel that her quest to become a leader is forcing her to mimic a style that is distasteful to her… she must never be asked to compromise her integrity of action.'

Integrity in both means and ends

In the extreme case, whenever an individual finds the business goal to be intrinsically noxious, the entire work programme is perhaps best avoided altogether. In this way we find groups of principled individuals refusing to work in certain business sectors (such as the tobacco industry, nuclear power, or in abattoirs) in much the same way that certain investors restrict themselves to *ethical* funds.

In all other cases where goal attainment suffers from no ethical taint, the principle of equifinality suggests that an individual may be have room to exercise choice in the *means* of reaching the objective in a noble and dignified way.

The expression of such choice may be thought of as a matter of personal *style.* Depending on the specific situation of the moment, the same individual may exhibit a style that plays to personal strengths; develops personal capability within a supporting context; engages the strengths of others irrespective of organisation charts; finds creative ways of meeting the objective which leverage strengths; or even negotiates an improved organisational outcome.

Economics of the Situational Strengths Approach

Strengths come to life in situations whose success depends on them, while situations demand solutions that are bounded within the business scope. When viewed in this way, the workplace may be though of as an economic system whose demands stem from situations, and whose best

solutions are propelled through the supply of available personal strengths.

Thus, is it not totally correct to say that one should always play to one's strengths. A personal strength, however substantial, is at best impotent when applied in an inappropriate situation: the business result can only be sub-optimal. *See* Figure 1, See Case 2.

On occasions, a colleague offering a different set of strengths may be more suited to a specific task. A situation requiring a unique strength which is currently unavailable should preferably result in a search, not a struggle. Yes, of course, we should try to play to our strengths: but it is far more effective to play to both our strengths and our situation.

Parallels from Strategy and Marketing

A Situational Strengths approach which engages individuals with the workplace is necessarily a strategic approach. Strategy in this sense means finding a match of value between and entity and its environment. Management literature often assumes that the 'entity' in question is business or other large organisation. In the leadership world, the entity may just as well be a single individual. In the world of situational strengths, strategy becomes personal.

Success in matching situation to strength thus becomes a matter of personal strategy. It may also be thought of as a marketing question in which an individual's strengths comprise the 'product set', and where the situation constitutes 'the market'. The seasoned marketer is an expert in creating a dialogue between these product and market spheres. Both poles are in a state of flux. Markets can be fickle, in the same ways that situations can change. A shift in market demand encourages suppliers to invest in product development; thus new situations offer opportunities to develop new strengths. On the other hand, a fresh discovery in technology may open up completely new markets; new situational strengths can sow the seeds of organisational innovation. All the product-market dynamics that have been learned over the last few decades in the discipline of Marketing can usefully be carried over to the application of personal strengths in business situations.

In selecting a standpoint from which to consider situational strengths, we can draw on many important lessons learned from Marketing. Levitt's *Marketing Myopia*, one of the earliest breakthroughs which virtually created the field of Marketing, pointed out the necessity of looking beyond the simplistic 'product-centric' approach and instead encouraged us to view the entire subject from the *user's* end on the telescope. So we find that over the years the focus of Marketing has relentlessly moved towards the demand side, never forgetting the power of the product while always shifting closer to the customer.

These lessons from Marketing, when translated to the matter at hand, might suggest that 'playing to our strengths' is merely a primal tactic, and that the true expression of leadership strengths lies in getting closer to our organisational customer. Drawing also on the existing strategic, economic and systems theory frameworks, it seems that the way forward demands from us a better appreciation of our collective strengths, and a richer understanding of our organisational situations.

Knowing your Situation

In a recent book, Linley (2008) argues that the first step in developing our strengths is to 'Know thyself'—advice which can be traced back to the Delphic oracle of ancient Greece. The Situational Strengths Approach extends this adage to 'Know

thyself and thy situation'—to paraphrase for the modern age. Situational awareness has long been recognised as a key competency of the successful leader—Goffee and Jones (2006) identify situational awareness as a key determinant of leadership effectiveness. The leader is enabled to do whatever is most appropriate for the situation, by first understanding what that situation is and what it calls for.

Continuing our classical theme, Aristotle argued for much the same, suggesting that the 'golden mean' guides us to do 'the right thing, to the right amount, in the right way and at the right time,' as Linley (2008) describes it in relation to optimal strengths use. But in order to follow this golden mean, we need to know what our situation requires, and to be able to judge what is 'right' by this golden yardstick. Yet again, this is where our knowledge of the situation turns out to be our necessary foundation.

Too often in strengths approaches, the advice has been—as we noted above—'use your strengths more.' What we are proposing here with the Situational Strengths Approach is a more mature and contextualised call to 'Use your strengths for best effect, as the situation requires and the opportunity permits.'

Implicit within this are a number of core assumptions:

- First, that the situation is critical.
- Second, that we need to understand this situation appropriately in order to deploy our strengths to best effect.
- Third, that we need to know our own strengths and to have the measure of them, if we are to use them effectively.
- Fourth, that it will not be unusual for the situation ***not*** to be calling for any of the current strengths that we may personally have to offer.
- And fifth, that our objective criterion for success is not the extent to which we have deployed our strengths, but the extent to which we have leveraged our strengths in the service of the situation: in organisational contexts as well as many others, it is the *performance outcome* that counts, not the means by which we got there—again von Bertalanffy's principle of equifinality in operation.

When managers are first introduced to the messages of the strengths approach, there is something instinctively appealing about the underlying principle of getting 'square pegs' into 'square holes' and 'round pegs' into 'round holes.' But as valid, appropriate and well-intentioned as this advice is in principle, in practice it is often overly simplistic, missing the complexities that may exist on both sides of the equation—the understanding both of strengths themselves, and the understanding of the situation that calls for them.

Understanding Strengths

Strengths themselves have not traditionally been well recognised nor understood; they have certainly been under-studied. With the publication of Linley's (2008) volume *Average to A+*, however, a new paradigm for the understanding of strengths has been introduced.

Linley defines a strength as 'a pre-existing capacity for a particular way of behaving, thinking, or feeling that is authentic and energising to the user, and enables optimal functioning, development and performance' (2008, p. 9). He traces the roots of modern psychological strengths to evolved adaptations that have been shaped over time (both recent and modern) by distal factors of evolution and natural selection, and more proximal factors of nature, nurture, chance and adaptiveness. From this base of scholarly endeavour and extensive ongoing research in the area, Linley concludes that there are likely many hundreds of different strengths—and certainly many more than

the handfuls of strengths identified in existing classifications.

Once we recognise this, we can start to appreciate some of the complexity that undermines the otherwise simplistic advice that we should just 'play to our strengths more.' Combine this with the variety and complexity of the situations with which we are faced in daily organisational life, and it becomes easy to appreciate just why the Situational Strengths Approach is so necessary and so powerfully effective at getting the job done, while leaving behind motivated people who glow in the satisfaction of having professionally done it.

The Sweet Spot: Where Situations and Strengths Meet

The heart of the Situational Strengths Approach comes from understanding that the 'sweet spot' of exceptional organisational performance is to be found at the intersection of individual strengths and organisational situational needs. When the two coincide, the results are transformational. When they are antagonistic, the results are at best like wading through treacle, at worst outright destructive.

Viewing our circumstances through the lens of the Situational Strengths Approach allows us to gain a perspective on what might be needed far better than we could have done otherwise. By understanding, first, the claim of the situation, and second, the array of strengths on offer, we are immediately better positioned to take a view on the best way of moving the organisation from A to B, from opportunity to value maximisation, or in the case of social business (of which CAPP is one), from social need to social change.

Equally, the lens of the Situational Strengths Approach helps us to see what the blind men missed when trying to understand the elephant: that which is so obvious as to be in front of us, but which without the right perspective we completely fail to grasp.

Sometimes it becomes clear that a given individual simply does not have the strengths in their repertoire for which the situation is calling. Where this is the case, the organisation all too easily will slip back into traditional performance management mode, trying to 'fix' the weakness and remedy the deficit through any combination of threat, guile, ultimatum, encouragement, remedial coaching or training.

But as a senior executive once described it to us when faced with the realisation that a colleague just was not equipped for the job: 'The penny has just dropped. However much I demand that he does this, however much I try and cajole him along, the fact of the situation is that, simply, he can't do it.' Here, a weakness was at play, and one not immediately or easily smoothed out through intervention or training.

The solution? The second tier of the *Making Weaknesses Irrelevant* decision tree:

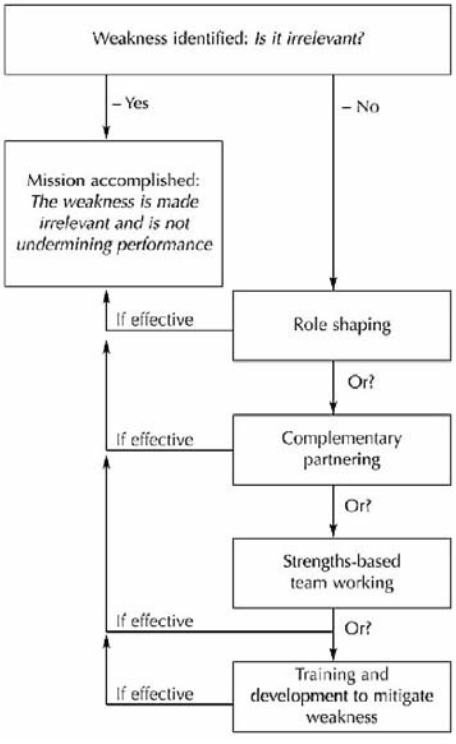

Figure 2: Making Weakness Irrelevant (Source: Linley, A. (2008). Average to A+: Realising Strengths in Yourself and Others. Coventry, UK: CAPP Press. Figure © CAPP Press, 2008. Reproduced by kind permission of CAPP Press).

complementary partnering (see Figure 2). The person in question worked with a colleague who did possess the strength for which the situation was calling, thereby making his own weakness irrelevant. As Figure 2 further shows, other options include role shaping (define the weakness out of the role), strengths-based teamworking (after all, what is the primary reason for a team in the first place if not to work from each other's complementary strengths), and if all else fails and it cannot be avoided, weakness development—but perhaps to a level of adequate competence, rather than to a virtuoso level of performance.

When Strengths and Situations Diverge

Of course occasions will arise, particularly through rapid change (the typical tempo of the modern day), when organisational situations have shifted so much that the strengths of the people in them have been left behind. When this is so, the Situational Strengths Approach again provides a lens from which to explain and address this: with reference to both the individual's strengths and the needs of the situation.

Understood and presented in this way, exit conversations become focused on 'mismatched talent' and the opportunities a person may be able to better contribute elsewhere. As such, the Situational Strengths Approach provides a profoundly more respectful way of structuring an exit route from an organisation, and one which, when used properly, can be leveraged to open up a new vista of opportunity for the future.

Indeed, at the far end of the employee life cycle, this is exactly what Norwich Union have found using strengths-based recruitment—that people either de-select themselves, recognising that the situation is not a fit for them, or that they are enabled to have a better view on where their strengths may best be deployed or developed in the future (see Stefanyszyn, 2007).

When planning an organisation's future needs, the Situational Strengths Approach also provides a frame from which to assess current capability (both individual capabilities and organisational capabilities) against future requirements. By envisioning and understanding the future ***situations*** in which the organisation is expected to find itself, planners can begin to identify and develop the future ***strengths*** that its population will need to deliver against those situations. Thus we suggest that the Situational Strengths Approach should be used as a key tool for underpinning Talent Management.

Looking Forward

Just as Hercules is deprived of the value of his strength if chained down and confined within his cage, so is every member of the human race deprived of their strengths if their situations seem not to be calling for them. Organisational life provides a rich and varied situational vista against which individual strengths can be applied to the advantage of both organisations and the individuals within them. Developing a better appreciation of strengths, together with a better understanding of the situations that call for them, is the focus of the Situational Strengths Approach. At this intersection of situations and strengths lies this 'sweet spot' of

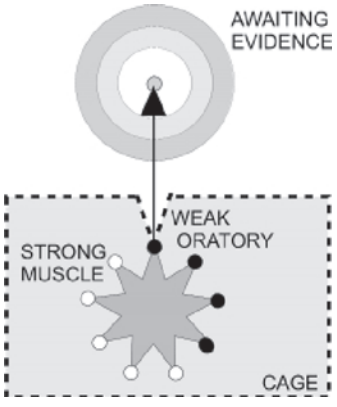

Figure 3: Hercules's Route to Freedom

exceptional organisational performance and vital individual fulfilment and contribution. By understanding both of these better, we can begin to release the immense but latent talent of people in organisations.

And of Hercules?

It had all been down to an unfortunate misunderstanding. Hercules reflects to take stock, engages the attention of his audience, musters the courage to state his case—albeit in his uneasy, untutored voice—and instantly puts an end to his captivity.

At dinner, finding himself unexpectedly stronger than at breakfast, he celebrates victory with the finest of meals, and opens his diary to record his thoughts (Figure 3). For on this auspicious day The Mighty Hercules, the strongest man in the world, this freshly-minted speechmaker who performed a seemingly impossible feat while escaping the confines of an unbreakable cage, has discovered in his moment of triumph a great secret which cuts sharply against the grain of popular wisdom. Hercules has learned a formula for success, a new and better strategy. *Don't simply play to your strengths; play to your situation.*

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Laurence S. Lyons PhD MSc Dip.M Adv.Dip(O&M) is founding director of The Metacorp Group. Working with top leadership teams in large corporation across Europe and the USA, he is an accomplished business coach, strategy consultant, public speaker, author, and a leading authority on organisational transformation. He is a Visiting Academic Fellow of Henley Management College, England; a member of Leader to Leader Thought Leaders' Forum, New York; and sits on the International Advisory Committee of the Worldwide Association of Business Coaches, Vancouver. A library of his work is available at www.lslyons.com

P Alex Linley, PhD, CPsychol is the founder and Director of the Centre for Applied Positive Psychology, Coventry, UK, a social business focused on the applications of strengths in organisations and schools (www.cappeu.org). A psychologist and social entrepreneur, Alex holds the position of Visiting Professor in Psychology at the University of Leicester, and has written, co-written, or edited more than 80 research papers and book chapters, and books, including *Positive Psychology in Practice* (Wiley, 2004) and *Average to A+: Realising Strengths in Yourself and Others* (CAPP Press, 2008). He is an Associate Editor of the *Encyclopaedia of Positive Psychology* and the *Journal of Positive Psychology*, as well as Co-Editor of the *International Coaching Psychology Review.*

Change Leadership that Works: The Role of Positive Psychology

PROFESSOR MALCOLM HIGGS AND DEBORAH ROWLAND

Change and its leadership have been the focus of an ever increasing level of both academic and practitioner attention over the last twenty years. Underpinning this has been the context in which organisations have faced a relentless increase in pressures leading to a need for significant changes not only to the way in which they operate but also to their core business models. At the same time it has been widely recognised that as many as 70 percent of change initiatives are unsuccessful (e.g. Beer, 2000; Kotter, 1995). This paper explores how organisations and, in particular, leaders can work in a way which increases the likelihood of implementing change successfully. In doing this we will explore the potential role that applying the lessons from positive psychology may play.

KEYWORDS: Organisation change, leadership, positive psychology.

Change and its Leadership

There is a growing realisation that change is a complex process. More recent research and writing have looked to the emerging field of complexity theory and the associated development of the 'new sciences' as a source of understanding change. Building on this, Litchenstein (1996) proposes that the root of much of the failure in change is that leaders are trained to solve complicated problems rather than complex ones. Thus managers view change as a problem which can be analysed and then solved in a linear or sequential manner. However, complex problems require managers and leaders to cope with dilemmas in the system rather than to arrive at definitive solutions. Indeed there is clear, and growing, evidence that the role of leaders in the change process does impact significantly on the success of change. The beliefs and mind-sets of leaders have been shown to influence their approach to change and its implementation. It has been asserted that the role and behaviours of leaders in a change context per se has been an area which is lacking in empirical research (Higgs & Rowland, 2000). However, the transformational leadership model developed by Bass (1985) has been one which has been the subject of much empirical investigation. This stream of research does demonstrate clear linkages between leader behaviours and a variety of 'follower' behaviours and performance measures; although this work does not link directly with the change literature. Taking these points together gives rise to the following question: What leadership behaviours

tend to be associated with effective change management?

Recent Research Studies

In exploring this question we have conducted a number of studies working with organisations on a collaborative basis. The studies entailed interviewing leaders within organisations and asking them to provide stories relating to changes with which they had been working. In the course the first stage of our research, data was obtained from more than fifty leaders drawn from some 19 organisations. In all some 110 change stories were gathered. The transcripts of these stories were analysed in detail in order to identify the overall approach to change which had been adopted and the leadership behaviours which were exhibited. In analysing these data we found that:

i Change approaches which tended to be programmatic, and were rooted in a viewpoint which saw change initiatives as linear, sequential and consequently predictable tended to fail in most contexts; and
ii Approaches which recognised change as a complex responsive process and embedded this recognition within the change process tended to be successful across most contexts.

In exploring these findings it was evident that a significant shift which occurs when moving from the more linear approach to change to the approaches which work with complexity is that the dominant mind-set moves from 'doing change to' people to 'doing change with' people. In this respect it was notable that change stories which adopted a complexity-based approach contained far fewer references to resistance to the change as an issue or barrier than in the more programmatic stories.

Having explored change approaches we examined the behaviours of the change leaders. In doing this we found three core sets of behaviours which were:

i **Shaping Behaviour**: the communication and actions of leaders related directly to the change; 'making others accountable'; 'thinking about change'; and 'using an individual focus';
ii **Framing Change**: establishing starting points for change; 'designing and managing the journey'; and 'communicating guiding principles in the organisation'; and
iii **Creating Capacity**: creating individual and organisational capabilities; and communication and making connections.

Examining the relationships between leadership behaviours and change success, we found that leader-centric behaviours (i.e. Shaping) had a negative impact on change success. On the other hand the more group and systemic focused behaviours (i.e. Framing and Creating) were positively related to success in most contexts. Furthermore, when we examined the relationship between leadership behaviours and change approaches they found that 'Shaping' behaviours tended to be more widely encountered within the more programmatic approaches; whereas 'Framing' and 'Creating' were predominant behaviour sets in approaches which were based on a recognition of change as a complex phenomenon.

In a final analysis of these studies we identified that those leaders who demonstrated a strong combination of Framing and Creating behaviours appeared to be particularly successful in most of the change contexts examined. This finding led to a further study involving nearly 60 leaders drawn from 30 organisations and over 100 change stories (Rowland and Higgs, 2008). Whilst this study was designed in the same way as their previous study, the aim

was to explore the leadership behaviours associated with change success in greater depth.

Analysing the data revealed four distinct sets of 'changing leadership' practises and behaviours. These were:

Attractor

- Connects with others at an emotional level, embodies the future intent of the organisation.
- Tunes in to day to day reality, sees themes and patterns that connect to a wider movement and from this creates a compelling story for the organisation.
- Uses this to set the context of how things fit together, working the story into the life of the organisation so that every conversation and decision 'makes sense'.
- Visibly works beyond personal ambition to serve higher purpose, the organisation and its wider community.
- Is consciously aware of one's own leadership and adapts this for a specific purpose.

Edge and Tension

- Tells it as it is—describes reality with respect yet without compromise.
- In times of turbulence, has constancy; does not withdraw from tough stuff; keeps people's hands in the fire.
- Can spot and challenge assumptions—creates discomfort by challenging existing paradigms and disrupting habitual ways of doing things.
- Sets the bar high and keeps it there—stretches the goals and limits of what is possible.
- Does not compromise on talent—pays attention to getting and keeping 'A' players.

Container

- Sets and contracts boundaries, clear expectations and hard rules so that people know what to operate on (performance expectations) and how they need to operate (values and behaviours).
- Is self assured, confident and takes a stand for one's beliefs—is non-anxious in challenging conditions.
- Provides affirming and encouraging signals; creates ownership, trust and confidence.
- Makes it 'safe' to say risky things and have the 'hard to have conversations' via empathy and high quality dialogue skills.
- Creates alignment at the top to ensure consistency and constancy of approach.

Creates movement

- Demonstrates a commitment that engenders trust, enabling the system to go to new places, learn about itself and act differently.
- Frees people to new possibilities through making oneself vulnerable and open.
- Understands what is happening in the moment and breaks established patterns and structures in ways that create movement in the 'here and now'.
- Powerfully inquires into ripe systemic issues to enable deep change to happen.
- Creates time and space (including attending to its physical quality) for transforming encounters.

Overall we found that a combination of these four factors accounted for around a half of the variance in success of changes in all of the contexts examined. Once again they found that Shaping behaviours were negatively related to change success in all contexts. Whilst most of the four 'changing leadership' practices showed some relationship to change success it was very notable that in the most successful changes the leaders exhibited strong evidence of deploying all four of the practices and behaviours. This led to a more detailed analysis of the transcripts of these successful leaders. In doing this we found a number of notable behaviours which differentiated those leaders who deployed all four practices from others in the sample. These were:

They understand and incorporate the wider context: they lead upwards and out-

wards to create space for the organisation and catalyse energy for change

They build their leadership teams to think and act for the whole: requiring them to step up and back to hold a bigger space and be strategic, interdependent and systemic—thereby creating an aligned transforming energy at the top.

They work on the underlying system that produces the performance outcomes: they show an intense ability to 'tune in' to their organisation, see patterns, notice how things are said not just what's being said, identify the few key assumptions and patterns that if shifted would transform everything, and then take creative moves to make those shifts.

They are then patient with people to make the transition: while still keeping the change on course (others by contrast were passive, and just stood back and waited).

They display extremely high levels of self-awareness: are able to sense the impact they have on others, seek feedback and exchange on this, and consciously use their presence in the organisation to create shifts ('evidencing leadership').

They set tangible measures for the change: they open up the system to share information and performance data to both 'hold up the mirror' and catalyse people to take personal ownership for improving things.

The overall picture, which emerges from the above studies, appears to be one in which:

- In a more complex change paradigm the role of leaders becomes significant, particularly in terms of making judgments in relation to change approaches to be adopted.
- The more effective leader behaviours identified in this study tend to be more 'enabling' rather than shaping the behaviour of the followers.

In broader writing on leadership this move to a more enabling approach is seen to be related to the emotional content of leader-follower exchange (e,g, Goleman et al, 2003; Higgs, 2003). Indeed Goleman et al highlight the significant role of 'mood contagion' in increasingly complex and volatile leadership contexts. This particular assertion provides a clear focus for the potential role of Positive Psychology.

The role of Positive Psychology in Change

The major challenge of resistance to change was highlighted above. This arises not only in the literature on change, but also in working with practicing managers and leaders (perhaps even more notably!). All too often in implementing change we tend to forget the people. The change imperatives and related plans fail to allow for the personal transition of people. Resisters tend to be labelled as 'bad people' and are frequently coerced into accepting the change. As a result the required performance and contribution are rarely achieved and the levels of personal commitment of the 'resisters' decline. Many have suggested that working with resistance, rather than trying to overcome it, is a more effective strategy. This way of viewing resistance places greater emphasis on understanding the impact of how we approach and lead change on the ultimate effectiveness of its implementation. Furthermore it emphasises the need to do change *with* others rather than doing change *to* them.

Commonly the very way in which change is positioned in itself arouses negative emotions. For example Kotter (1995) talks about our need to 'create a burning platform' in order to catalyse change. This does not exactly create a positive context within which to approach change within an organisation! Furthermore, the conversations around the change all too frequently focus on the limitations of the organisation and its people and the things they

have be doing which are wrong (Higgs and Rowland, 2005).

It is against this background that insights from the field of positive psychology may be valuable in developing an understanding of how we can implement change more effectively. Much of our thinking and practice has been dominantly influenced by 'traditional' psychology which is a 'deficit' model (Linley, 2006).

Employing this 'deficit' lens, the way in which we manage and lead change may be characterised by the following:

i Change is viewed from a problem-focus. We are not achieving what we need—what do we have to change. Change represents an unwelcome interruption to business as usual:
ii Change is bad news. A glass is half-empty mindset;
iii We need to critically evaluate what we have been doing wrong;
iv If we change things we will get resistance, we have to manage this and change resistant behaviours;
v We have recruited and developed people to behave in a certain way; change requires that as an organisation we need to direct people to behave in a different way to achieve our business goals; and
vi Fundamentally we know what new behaviours are required and we can therefore develop people to acquire and use these new behaviours.

The alternative to the 'traditional' 'deficit' model of psychology is encompassed within the positive psychology paradigm, initially conceptualised by Martin Seligman (1999). In his view there was a need to redress this and to balance the 'traditional' focus with exploration of, and building on, positive qualities. In essence he maintained that this is not a new area of psychology but rather a change in perspective which includes the study of strengths as well as weaknesses and to promote well-being as well as exploring the absence of 'ill-being'. Thus in the context of change this would suggest two core themes to focus on, these being:

i An increased focus on strengths and positive individual and organisational characteristics; and
ii An increased understanding of the role of positive emotions.

Within this frame it may be feasible to shift the paradigm within which we manage and lead change from that outlined above to:

i Change is an integral aspect of the continuing growth and development of an organisation;
ii Change is natural and offers new potential. A 'glass half-full' mindset;
iii We need to learn from what is working well;
iv People can be energised to contribute to the change;
v People have a diverse range of strengths which can be utilised; change involves facilitating others to deploy their strengths and contribute appropriately;
vi The behaviours required in the post change context will emerge and be learned during peoples' involvement in the process of change.

In considering this change paradigm there are two areas related to positive psychology which are useful to reflect on. These are i) the use of Appreciative Inquiry; and ii) the role of positive emotions,(the former preceded the formulation of the positive psychology paradigm). Although examined separately below they are clearly strongly interrelated and also link to the strengths-based view at both individual and organisational level.

Appreciative Inquiry

Appreciative Inquiry is a process for identifying, focusing and releasing potential within the

organisation. At its core it seeks to make positive use of the complex networks within the organisation and sees the people as having potentially valuable views, being trustworthy and having a need to be empowered. Appreciative Inquiry seeks to find the elements in the organisational system which are well and finding ways to deploy these strengths in a way which supports the goals of the change. At its simplest level it involves changing the nature of the conversations around an organisational change. In practice this entails engaging with groups and individuals in identifying and examining he intended change:

i What is it that we are really good at which we need to take forward and will enable us to achieve the goals of the change?
ii What capabilities and practices do we need to build in order to achieve our change goals?
iii In achieving the change goals what do we need to leave behind or stop doing?

It is not only the nature of these questions, but the sequence in which we ask them that changes the nature of the conversations and, therefore, the course of the change.

The Role of Positive Emotions

In developing an understanding of the impact of Appreciative Inquiry it is important to reflect on the role of positive emotions. Indeed it is evident that Appreciative Inquiry frames conversations in a way which is likely to arouse positive emotions.

Our understanding of the role of positive emotions is strongly informed by the work of Barbara Frederickson (2000). From her work associated with the impact of trauma on individuals she found clear evidence that the balance between positive and negative emotions had a significant impact on individual well-being and behaviour. In particular she points out that situations that promote positive emotions broaden and individual's attention scope, allowing them to see both the forest and the trees. On the other hand a predominance of negative emotions tends to lead to a narrowing of scope in thinking and negative responses to new stimuli. However, she pointed out that *balance* is important and that totally positive emotional experiences constrain individual growth in thinking and acting. In a change context all too often negative emotions lead to fear; resistance; adherence to established behaviours and ways of working; and lack of openness and flexibility. These responses play a significant role in impairing the achievement of change goals. On the other hand, positive emotions can result in greater appreciation of the 'big picture'; willingness to experiment with new behaviours; increased flexibility and innovation; enhanced understanding of, and ability to cope with, complexity. Within change the leader's challenge is to facilitate the creation of a climate which releases such positive emotions. Frederickson has provided indications that a minimum balance to achieve movement in an individual or group is one of three positive emotions for each negative. Whilst she does not provide a precise optimum she points out that once the ratio reaches around ten to one then growth and movement tend to cease.

Although our research findings described above were not originally informed by positive psychology explicitly, it is interesting to note how the strands of this thinking explain the nature of the results which were found. Below these findings are reviewed in the light of the positive psychology perspective in the following ways:

1. APPROACHES TO CHANGE

The largely programmatic approaches to change appear to be rooted in the 'traditional' 'deficit' model and are focused on communicating what is wrong and identifying the things which need to be fixed. There is little scope for inquiry and very

little attention to either organisational or individual strengths. As a consequence both approaches encounter significant levels of resistance; often based on predominantly negative emotions.

The move from 'doing change to' to 'doing change with' people encountered in a more complexity-based approach to change sees increasing use of Appreciative Inquiry and the identification and valuing of individual strengths and contributions. Overall the approaches arouse more positive emotions. However, these are balanced with a use of direct feedback, hard rules and challenging goals which may well arouse balancing negative emotions. These approaches were more successful and notably aroused lower levels of resistance and increased levels of commitment to the change.

2. LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOURS AND PRACTICES

Overall we found that Shaping leadership behaviours were a significant factor in explaining failure of change initiatives. In reviewing this set of behaviours through a positive psychology lens it is notable that they do not tend to make use of inquiry, but rather focus on the leaders' perceptions of the nature of change and approaches to its implementation. There is little scope for identifying and utilising individual strengths and the leader-centric, driven approach carries with it the potential to develop a higher level of negative emotion.

In examining our later research it is interesting to note that three of the 'changing leadership' behaviours (i.e. Attractor, Container and Transforming Space) each contain practices which employ elements of Appreciative Inquiry, explore both individual and organisational strengths and which are likely to create a climate in which positive emotions are aroused. The fourth group of behaviours (Edge and Tension) on the other hand are more focused on creation of challenge and 'hard' conversations. Thus they are more likely to arouse negative emotions. However, this provides the necessary counterbalance to maintain movement. In taking a very simple view it is interesting to note that, in using all four areas (which the most successful leaders did) the three to one ratio mentioned by Barbara Frederickson is achieved!

What is noticeable from an examination of the research transcripts was that both the approaches and leadership behaviours which released the positive emotions were associated with observations about the speed with which engagement with the change was widely achieved. This could be a result of the 'mood contagion' referred to above.

The above description of the role of positive psychology in change is based on what is, in essence, 'post hoc' rationalisation. However, the conjecture is certainly rooted enough to warrant further research in the future.

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has considered the challenges of change and how by shifting approaches to implementing change from the more 'traditional' ones of 'doing change to' people to 'doing change with' people can result in an increased likelihood of change succeeding. Furthermore leadership behaviours play a very significant role in achieving successful change implementation. Those behaviours which are very leader-centric (i.e. Shaping behaviour) tend to be associated with unsuccessful change initiatives. On the other hand leadership practices and behaviours which focus on the group and are more 'engaging' (i.e. Attractor, Edge and Tension, Container and Transforming Space) have a strongly positive impact on change success. However, the most successful change leaders (as identified in our research effectively deploy all four of the practices.

As mentioned earlier in the paper organisational change tends to be perceived negatively and arouses negative emotions within an organ-

isation. However, the research outlined above illustrates that this does not have to be the case. In particular it appears that effective change leadership can have a significant impact on transforming the emotional climate within which change occurs and can lead to greater levels of success and create a positive climate which creates energy and releases potential within the organisation.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

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Malcolm is a member of the British Psychological Society and a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and is also is actively involved in consulting on leadership, change and assessment with a range of international companies both as an individual consultant and as the Chairman of the consulting firm Transend.

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Seeking the Positive from the Negative: Morally Courageous Human Resource Management

SUSAN HARRINGTON

Despite the high media visibility of workplace bullying and the fact that most organisations have a specific policy for bullying, it remains a prevalent issue within organisations. Within the changing nature of work and organisations and the contemporary context of Human Resource Management (HRM), organisational and HR responses to bullying are often incoherent and inconsistent with bullying policy (Ferris, 2004). Strategic decision-making takes precedence over ethical decision-making. This article will explore why this might be the case, and suggests that, when viewed with a positive psychology lens, human strengths such as courage, authenticity, resilience, hope and self-efficacy, may help to elucidate the concept of moral courage, which leads to more ethical decision-making in situations of bullying.

KEYWORDS: Workplace bullying, ethical decision making, positive psychology, moral courage.

Before considering workplace bullying, there are two points of clarity: firstly, this article takes an organisational and management process level view of bullying—hence, the focus will not be on the impact at the individual level, an important and significant topic in its own right. Secondly, there is a distinction between HR practitioners (HRPs) and HRM. The former is a specific genre of roles within the Human Resource or Personnel department of an organisation. The latter, HRM, is the policies and processes of managing people and people-related issues within an organisation. HRM does not refer to the individual performing the HRP role because in many organisations aspects of HRM are the responsibility of the line manager.

Organisational Bullying

It is now generally accepted that workplace bullying describes the experience of one or more negative behaviours (e.g. unjustified criticism, isolation, with-holding information) that are persistent and unwelcome. It is behaviour that violates a standard of conduct and is harmful to the recipient. There is usually a power imbalance between the recipient and the bully, and the behaviours are often intentional and/or controllable (e.g. Salin, 2003). Bullying has significant impact at the individual, team and organisational levels (Hoel, Rayner & Cooper, 1999). Organisationally, CIPD (2004) estimates that bullying costs UK employers 80 million lost working days annually and up to £2 billion in lost

revenue (via sickness/absence, turnover, reduced productivity, formal and legal investigations). However, despite the focus from academics and practitioners alike, it remains prevalent. In part, this is due to the complex nature of bullying; it is a phenomenon with multiple individual and organisational causes. Factors such as the changing nature of work and organisations appear key to understanding both why it occurs and the organisational responses to bullying (Hoel and Beale, 2006).

Organisational Context

Organisational cultures are changing. Key trends are having dramatic effects on the nature of the world of work, e.g. globalisation, increased competition, the impact of information technology and the changing role of the manager (Cascio, 1995). Cascio goes onto discuss how work itself is being redefined: jobs defined by specific tasks are disappearing and the emphasis is now on constantly changing roles, driven by ever increasing business goals and customer demands. Such changes result in contemporary organisations that are more aggressive, competitive and insecure. Organisational down-sizing and de-layering frequently increase internal competition and workload, creating higher pressure, anxiety, distrust, powerlessness and a lower threshold for aggressive behaviour (Peyton, 2003). There is a greater risk of bullying as employees seek to improve their own position at the expense of their colleagues and managers adopt more autocratic styles of management to meet increasingly aggressive targets (Simpson & Cohen, 2004). Within a competitive climate, the management agenda of meeting ever-increasing targets (or minimising costs) becomes more dominant than the human resource well-being agenda required for a healthy organisation and workforce. The language of 'strong management' gains dominance over that of 'bullying'. Within such organisational contexts, contemporary HRM, striving for strategic business alignment in organisations, may actually exacerbate this problem further.

The Context of Contemporary Human Resource Management

Contemporary HRM emerged from the USA in the 1980s in response to organisations seeking greater competitive advantage in the increasingly aggressive economic climate (Guest, 1987). HRM is now required to *demonstrate value* to organisations by providing greater accountability in terms of profitability; to *create value* by understanding the economic factors driving the organisation; and to *deliver value* by aligning HRM with strategic business goals (Wright & Snell, 2005). In an attempt to fulfil these three requirements, numerous models of HRM have been proposed, suggesting that HRPs should be adopting the seemingly incongruent roles of both strategic partner and employee advocate (e.g. Ulrich & Brockbank, 2005). Such models have been criticised for placing HRPs in the impossibly difficult situation of attempting to simultaneously champion employees whilst being part of the management team (Reily and Williams, 2006).

This inherent conflict in HRM, caused by the requirement to be both strategic partner and employee advocate, has resulted in a three-fold criticism (Lewis & Rayner, 2003). Firstly, the drive to meet a strategic management agenda may be creating an environment in which bullying can remain unchallenged or actually encouraged in an indirect way; HRM thus becomes a source of bullying itself. Secondly, changes in external organisational contexts, such as market pressures and the reduction of trade unions, have resulted in changes to working practices that contribute to bullying, e.g. increased managerial control and work

intensification. Finally, this conflict in the nature of HRM may result in HRPs feeling unable to deal impartially and fairly with bullying, because they feel obliged to protect the organisation's interests. In support of this, research on HRPs' responses to bullying, and the related behaviour of sexual harassment, has found that responses are inconsistent with organisational policy and, instead, support the management agenda in organisations (Collinson & Collinson, 1996; Ferris, 2004). The tensions inherent in being an employee champion and strategic partner mean that an HRP cannot be a neutral mediator in situations such as bullying. Taken together, these criticisms question the process of ethical decision-making when HRPs respond to workplace bullying.

Ethical Decision-making in HRM

Recent research has sought to examine whether HRPs perceive ethical dilemmas in their role, and their subsequent ethical decision-making process (e.g. Foote & Robinson, 1999), although no published research has focused specifically on bullying. The findings indicate that HRPs experience frequent and complex ethical dilemmas in their work, and that they feel under sustained pressure, in increasingly complex circumstances, to act less than ideally (Shacklock, 2006). He found that they frequently opt for a less than ideal ethical decision, citing reasons such as feeling powerless to change things, a duty to do what the organisation expects and a concern for their own job security. Together, these reasons suggest that conflicting pressures require the compromise for an 'optimum' rather than ideal solution. Therefore, HRPs' ethical decision-making appears to be motivated more by organisational and personal factors than by fairness or ethics: supporting the line manager and business change, and protecting one's own position, may be more important than supporting employee interests.

These findings indicate that HRPs feel unable to influence organisational ethics, and this inability appears to be determined by the interaction between organisational and individual factors, and the status, credibility and influence of the HRM function within the organisation (Macklin, 2006). Although these studies did not specifically look at the issue of bullying, it is argued that the conflicts and pressures discussed by these participants could be applicable to understanding HRPs' inconsistent response to bullying. A sense of powerlessness, lack of credibility and pressure to meet organisational requirements may result in decisions supporting 'bullying as a management technique' rather than 'bullying as an unethical behaviour'.

Seeking positive from the negative

So far the picture does not appear to be a positive one, and it seems there are multiple pressures and factors influencing an HRP's ethical decision-making at work. However, if we return to Macklin's (2006) study, we find that it is not all negative. He found a small group of HR participants who chose to act ethically, despite the negative consequences of doing so. He suggests that HRPs differ in their level of moral autonomy, and that their ethical decision-making depends as much on the individual's own ethical commitment and moral courage as it does on organisational and situational factors. He acknowledges that HRPs may be constrained by certain situational organisational factors, but that they have an important role and responsibility in determining moral human resource management within organisations. Thus, the morality of the management of human resources within an organisation is, in part, dependent on the influence of the individual, which in turn, is contingent upon organisational

factors and their individual moral courage. It is here that we turn to the concepts and research from positive psychology to help elucidate the concept of moral courage and to consider the development of more effective ethical decision-making in response to bullying.

Moral Courage

So what do we mean by *moral courage*? And how might it be a useful concept in understanding how HRPs respond to bullying? Sekerka and Bagozzi (2007, p.135) define moral courage as 'the ability to use inner principles to do what is good for others, regardless of threat to self, as a matter of practice'. Similarly, Peterson and Seligman (2004, p. 29) argue that moral courage is epitomised by acts in which an individual stands up for what they believe to be right despite opposition, or acts of integrity despite obstacles or risk. Likewise, Mahoney (1998, p. 189) defines it as 'the capacity to do what one judges is ethically called for in spite of one's instinctive reaction to the perceived dangers and difficulties in which such an action will result'. Common to these definitions is that the individual is able to act in a manner that they deem as right, good or ethical, even in the face of obstacles or risk to self. Risk can be perceived for a number of reasons, such as the fear of criticism, ostracism, losing face, status or credibility, or job loss (Petersen & Seligman, 2004).

Components of Moral Courage

Several authors have attempted to identify the components of moral courage, and there are some consistent similarities. These include: self-efficacy, bravery, resilience, hope, optimism, integrity, kindness, altruism and compassion (e.g. Sekerka & Bagozzi, 2007; Youssef & Luthans, 2005). More specifically:

Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief that they can make things happen within a given environment (e.g. their workplace), based on their motivation and cognitive resources (Bandura, 1977). Given that self-efficacy is domain specific, Youssef and Luthans (2005) argue that individuals are capable of developing what they term *ethical efficacy*, especially when they are aware of the moral intensity and consequences of the situation.

Bravery, here, is being able to stand up for what an individual considers to be right, despite the fear associated with that action (Petersen & Seligman, 2004). Bravery, along with integrity and kindness are more characteristic of moral courage than physical or psychological courage (Pury & Kowalski, 2007).

Resilience is linked to bravery: acting ethically may involve overcoming obstacles or criticism; there may be short-term negative consequences for the individual. Resilience enables individuals to overcome these, to bounce back and maintain their sense of hope, optimism and self-efficacy (Youssef & Luthans, 2005).

Hope, with its components of agency and pathways, enables individuals to engage in goal driven behaviour and to have the ability to consider multiple ways of achieving their goal (Snyder *et al*., 1991). In terms of ethical behaviour, Youssef and Luthans (2005, p. 7) argue that hope is the 'willingness and ability to act ethically', and can contribute to an individual reducing their feeling of fear associated with acting ethically.

Optimism refers to a belief that the outcome of an action will be successful and that positive outcomes and feelings will outweigh negative ones (Petersen & Seligman, 2004). Optimistic individuals are more likely to attribute positive outcomes to stable, internal causes. When such individuals behave ethically and see that their behaviour has made a difference to others, their hope and self-efficacy are likely to strengthen, which is turn is likely to increase future ethical behaviour (Youssef & Luthans, 2005).

Integrity refers to behaving in a manner that is congruent with the individual's values; behaviour that publicly supports an individual's moral convictions, despite obstacles; and behaviour that shows care and sensitivity towards the well-being of others (Petersen & Seligman, 2004). Hannah *et al*., (2007) argue that integrity is part of having a morally courageous mindset, and that when individuals behave authentically, concordant with their values, it provides them with increased resiliency against threats and obstacles to their moral behaviour.

Kindness, altruism and compassion are closely related and these strengths of humanity result in an individual orientating themselves towards others and a belief that other people deserve care and respect, without any utilitarian reasons—i.e., not as a means to an end (Petersen & Seligman, 2004). Individuals possessing these strengths are concerned about the interests of other people, and feel and respond to the pain of others (Kanov *et al*., 2004).

Morally courageous individuals also possess a high level of self-awareness (i.e. an awareness of what is important to them in terms of their beliefs and values), and high self-regulation (May *et al*., 2003). In their model of moral courage, Sekerka and Bagozzi suggest that self-regulation is an essential part of ethical decision making because individuals possessing high levels of moral courage are likely to consider the impact of their decisions on other people and their organisation. When an individual is faced with a moral issue, their decision to act is initially determined by a mainly automatic and unconscious behavioural reaction, based on the individual's habits and impulses. Self-regulating individuals will, however, be aware of this initial reaction, and will reflect on whether it is congruence with their personal values and standards. Thus, they may consciously change their response in light of this reflection. Moreover, individuals who frequently exercise this moral self-regulation will gradually change their immediate instinctive reactions, further increasing the likelihood of future moral behaviour. In effect, self-regulating individuals develop 'moral muscle' (Baumeister & Exline, 1999).

It is worthy of note that these human strengths and characteristics identified as underpinning moral courage show significant overlap to those associated with positive organisational behaviour (Youssef & Luthans, 2005), psychological capital (Luthans, Avolio, Avey and Norman, 2007) and authentic leadership (Avolio & Luthans, 2006). Thus the development of such strengths are likely to have a holistic benefit for HRPs, beyond that of moral courage: as part of their role and responsibility in determining moral human resource management within organisations it is suggested that HRPs would need to demonstrate authentic leadership, by modelling positive organisational behaviours, and moral courage in the face of ethical dilemmas such as bullying. In essence, an HRP should demonstrate authentic leadership by leading by example, by responding to bullying in an ethical and fair manner, and by considering all aspects of the situation in a transparent and impartial manner.

Empirical research from these related areas of authentic leadership and psychological capital suggests that self-reflection, moral reasoning and moral courage can be developed via training, increasing an individual's ability to recognise and evaluate moral issues. Recent work by May *et al.* (2003) has shown that the moral capacity, moral courage and moral resiliency of leaders can be increased via development programmes, using techniques such as group discussion, role-play, mastery exercise and coaching. Research on authentic leadership has demonstrated that self-awareness, an essential component of moral courage, can be developed in individuals (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Likewise, the strengths underpinning moral courage, such as self-efficacy, resiliency, hope and optimism, may also be developed via

training and organisational interventions (e.g. Youssef & Luthans, 2005).

Conclusion

Against the backdrop of the changing world of work and organisations, and the context of contemporary HRM, research suggests that HRPs' response to workplace bullying is frequently inconsistent with organisational policy. Arguably the drive for HRM to be strategically aligned, and to create and deliver economic value, has created a conflict between the role of employee advocate and strategic business partner—a conflict which may result in a lack of impartiality required to investigate situations of bullying. Moreover, research suggests that HRPs' ethical decision-making may be negatively influenced for number of reasons: feeling powerless to change things, a need to meet organisational expectations and support business requirements, self-protection, and the status and credibility of HRM within the organisation. However, when viewed through a positive psychology lens, individuals who are high on moral courage may be able to overcome these pressures and respond in an ethical manner to workplace bullying. It is suggested that such individuals who demonstrate moral courage possess the strengths of self-efficacy, bravery, resilience, hope, optimism, integrity and kindness, with a high level of self-awareness and self-regulation.

The fact that it is possible to elucidate, measure and develop these strengths has implications for organisations. It would be possible to design interventions that presented individuals with bullying scenarios and encouraged them to recognise and reflect on the moral components of bullying situations. In other contexts, such exercises have been shown to increase moral sensitivity, moral capacity, and individuals' self-awareness of their immediate reactions and motivations. Furthermore, the key strengths underpinning moral courage can also be developed, increasing the likelihood that an individual will make an ethical decision in response to situations of bullying, despite the organisational and situational pressures. Such interventions should not be solely focused on HRPs. The responsibility for morally courageous human resource management sits with all individuals who deliver people management processes—HRPs and managers alike. Consideration from a positive psychology perspective suggests the potential for developing the necessary 'moral muscle' in managers and HRPs, enabling morally courageous decisions and behaviours in response to workplace bullying.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Susan Harrington has been a member of the Positive Psychology Research Group at the University of Leicester researching the assessment and applications of psychological strengths. Sue now teaches on the MSc Occupational Psychology and Psychology of Work courses in the School of Psychology at the University of Leicester. Sue's PhD research is on workplace bullying, viewed from the perspective of HR practitioners. She has previously provided HR Consultancy on bullying and harassment, and has developed and delivered training workshops on a range of organisational issues.
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Envisioning, Enabling and Enacting: Individual and Organisational Development as Metamorphosis

NIGEL SYKES

Previous evolution models have an intuitive logic and attempt to delineate an organic approach to organisational development and growth. They fail, typically, to look at the recognition and release of individual talent and organisational capability. This paper reviews the position taken by these approaches and presents an alternative model of organisational growth. This paper demonstrates that the foundation for successful enterprise is for the abilities of three founder types termed Envisioners, Enablers and Enactors to align around a unifying vision or shared mission. These leadership roles define and process creativity from initial principle through to practical implementation. This relational and motivational alignment is a condition for the proposed Egg to Butterfly (EtB) organisational growth model and is likened to its enabling DNA for releasing the potential of the enterprise through sustainable metamorphic progression. The theoretical model provides a fresh insight into growing enterprises, based on these three leadership dimensions being engaged throughout the metamorphic progression.

KEYWORDS: Organisation development, leadership, individual development, organic growth.

Harnessing creativity is often what defines entrepreneurial activity. Many organisations, both large and small, seek to become creative because they realise that through creativity they may release the potentiality of their enterprise. Organic models such as those developed by Griener (1972) suggest that systems and bureaucracy inhibit entrepreneurial management and lead to the stagnation or levelling off of the growth process. He suggests this is a result of their inability to change fundamentally (see Miller and Freisen, 1984).

Organic models of organisation development are not new, although they have been criticised on the grounds of the difficulty in identifying and appropriately labelling organisational change, the fact that people in organisations are not driven principally by profit maximisation but by utility maximisation (i.e. independence or maintenance of a particular life-style), and the risk that organisations may miss particular life-style stages or go through them so quickly as renders them difficult to measure appropriately. Moreover, even if organisations do pass through uniform stages, the various attempts to measure the life-cycle have been beset by measurement difficulties.

As much as it may be argued that organic models of organisational development and growth are fundamentally flawed, they do have an intuitive logic: organisations are born, grow and die. It may also be suggested that part of the difficulty with traditional operationalisation of

organic models is that they have considered the *symptoms*, rather than the *causes* of why organisations evolve.

There is burgeoning evidence suggesting a more appropriate measure of organic change is to consider the characteristics or attributes of the *individuals* who reside at the heart of these organisations. Indeed, rather than seeing organisation growth as a function of an increasing tendency towards control, bureaucracy and hierarchical forms of organisation (Scott and Bruce, 1987; Adizes, 1989), Handy (1994) suggests that these organisational modes can often engender individuals who look to stifle rather than promote growth and development.

Empirical research (Storey, 1996) has indicated that successful medium sized businesses which grow in excess of 30% per annum, termed by Storey (1996) the Ten Percenters, could be characterised by two particular traits. The first is that they are likely to have exploited a rapidly expanding niche within a particular market and the second is that the firm is well managed. Storey (1997) later observes that whilst the owners were gifted at 'locating the boat in fast flowing rivers' many of these firms were not, in the traditional sense, well managed. He argues that a successful firm needs to anticipate the next wave or opportunity and prepare the crew in the right position on the boat to take advantage of this opportunity as it passes.

The role, therefore, of individuals and groups is central to organisational development and growth. Indeed, a failure to account properly for the role of people in an organisation may help explain the miss-specification of many organic models and the general inability that we have in understanding the development and growth of the organisation.

This paper argues that releasing and harnessing creativity enables the organisation to grow and that it is vital that the apposite structure of the organisation to facilitate this is better understood. Typically, alignment has been viewed as the coalescing of individuals around a particular mission statement, set of objectives or goals. Following on from this, it is further argued that these objectives are often grouped around some form of financial maximisation thesis such as profit or sales.

There are clearly difficulties with such an approach: for example, concentration on maximisation could lead us to restrict our understanding of the causes of growth. Hence, we often perceive organisation development by some reference to economic performance, when reference to capability or potential instead may offer broader and more helpful insights.

Development as Metamorphosis

In this paper, I argue that there is a need to look at the individuals themselves—both in terms of their own motivations and their relationship with the group—if we are to better understand, organisational growth and development. We need to go beyond this point: it may be, if we are to assess organisations appropriately, that we need to consider if the existing organisational forms (hierarchical, patriarchal, maximisation-bound) are appropriate for unleashing the creativity that is inherent within an organisation and the people that make up that organisation.

The breadth or range of talent needs be better understood, correctly aligned and encouraged. Marcus Buckingham and Donald Clifton (2001) described how The Gallup Organisation interviewed over 2 million managers and found a pattern of 34 themes of human talent that explain the broadest possible range of excellent performance. They suggested that we can identify our five most dominant themes of talent and that these five individual signatures are the most powerful sources of strength. (An Internet-based personal profile can be taken called StrengthsFinder.) To this end, the development of these talents is seen as

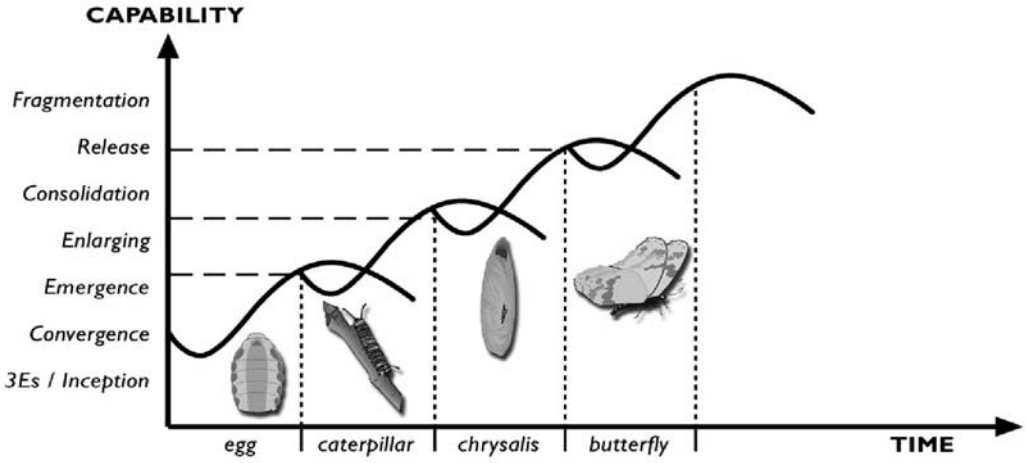

Figure 1: The Metamorphosis of Enterprise

a key feature and indeed purpose of organisations and implicit in their sustainability and long term transfer and intergenerational existence.

Central to this process is the presence of three generic characteristics that inform the structure of an organisation. The first is the characteristic of **'envisioning'** or the ability amongst an individual or group to conceptualise laterally. A second vital constituent needed is the ability to **'enable'** or to manage and co-ordinate activities. The third element, **'enacting'**, refers to the ability to carry out the work and bring it to completion.

These three elements are essential if the organisation is to mediate successfully not only emergence and development but also growth. It is suggested that this process can be viewed—through understanding that organisations metamorphose around four distinct stages:

- The **'egg'** phase (inception to convergence).
- The **'caterpillar'** phase (emergence to team enlargement).
- The **'chrysalis'** phase (consolidation to product development stages).
- And the **'butterfly'** phase (release to fragmentation) (see Figure 1).

This paper also argues that to negotiate each of these four stages, it is essential that the organisation has elements of envisioning, enabling and enacting leadership written into its very core. The 'fruit' or evidence of the complete alignment of this organisational leadership or **DNA** could be monitored throughout the metamorphic progression by tracking motivational alignment, resource capability and propensity to release or change, using the diagnostic in Figure 2.

Called the P3 diagnostic, it is based on the three key dimensions of the entrepreneurial process, Possibilities, Process and Progression, which represent the Envisioner, Enabler and Enactor capabilities respectively, being exercised effectively. The fruit of the successful organisational transition through the P3 phases would typically be evidence of positive motivation and agreement, ability to attract resources and

Figure 2: P3 Diagnostic

inclination toward release and change into new possibilities, thus completing the entrepreneurial transition. Should the identified fruit be general lack of motivation, high staff turnover, shortage of resources and over control, then this may indicate that either the Envisioner, Enabler and/or Enactor bases are not effectively covered or recognised in the organisation being examined.

Figure 1 illustrates that an organisation passes through four distinct phases or development curves. Each time the leadership must adopt a different strategic focus and be prepared to move out from their current path or paradigm into a new 'way of being and seeing'. During the initial **Egg** phase the organisation aligns resources in order to take advantage of an opportunity: a time when it seeks to develop relational alignment and maximise effectiveness given, at least initially, its limited resources. Establishing credibility, confidence and a strong foundation from which to move out, also becomes a priority.

The **Caterpillar** phase is characterised by a time of moving out, rapid growth and alignment of initiative toward the external environment and in particular toward the gathering of resources. Enlarging the scope of the enterprise will call for new skills and the implications of this may be seen as uncomfortable to the original founder(s). Changing the way the firm behaves should not be underestimated and resonates with the proposition that Charles Handy (1994) termed 'second curve thinking' (see Figure 3).

Handy (1994) also describes one of the paradoxes of our times. If you continue on the course you have set to where you think you should be going you will miss the turn off to the future. Figure 3 shows the need to change at point **'a'** when resources and future expectation is positive rather than at **'b'** when confidence and resources are in decline. The capability of a product or business cycle is represented by an 'S' shaped curve; it typically starts slowly, takes off rapidly, wanes and dies.

Handy suggests that it is difficult to know when to change. It is important to have the confidence to move into a new paradigm and the political stability to maintain a course on the change continuum. Entering a new growth trajectory involves new people joining who will have skills and attributes that are more relevant to 'second curve thinking'. The firm can enjoy the vitality once aligned in the new paradigm at **'c'**—but this requires metamorphosis.

This series of metamorphic stage transitions are a feature of the Egg to Butterfly model, since if organisations do not metamorphose onto the second curve, then ultimately they will stagnate, decline and die.

Using the P3 diagnostic in Figure 2 helps to identifying the zone on the first curve, and inform the decision by helping us to recognise when the conditions are 'ripe' for change.

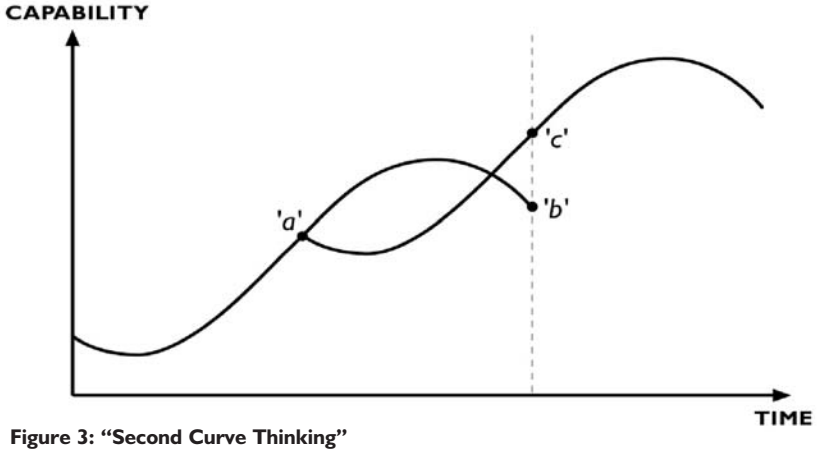

Figure 3: "Second Curve Thinking"

Typically, using financial projections alone, would tend to encourage us to delay the decision and could result in overshooting point 'a'.

As such, entering the **Chrysalis** phase must be seen as a time of inward investment and utilisation of the resources gathered during the **Caterpillar** phase. The emphasis shifts towards new product development and the legacy of the enterprise.

In the next section, we shall consider an original approach to understanding enterprise development. We shall see that central to the better understanding of such development, are three roles within any emerging or existing organisations: the **envisioner**; the **enabler**; and the **enactor**. For an organisation to grow in this metamorphic way, it is not only the case that all three roles must be fulfilled, but also that these different individuals are appropriately aligned. Without this alignment, it is likely that the organisation will grow hierarchically. If so, the organisational progression may be arrested at any of the four growth stages that are suggested: 'egg', 'caterpillar', 'chrysalis' and 'butterfly' (see Figure 1).

The Three Leadership Roles

The three leadership roles comprise the 3**E**s, of Envisioner, Enabler and Enactor:

- **Envisioners** tend towards expansive thinking, invention and innovation. In many respects, these individuals are akin to the entrepreneurs at the heart of Schumpeter's (1934) creative destruction.
- **Enablers** may be thought of as good organisers and interpreters of the vision. As the name suggests they are good at making things happen and able to process ideas.
- **Enactors** are interested in the practical aspects of carrying out the task of implementation.

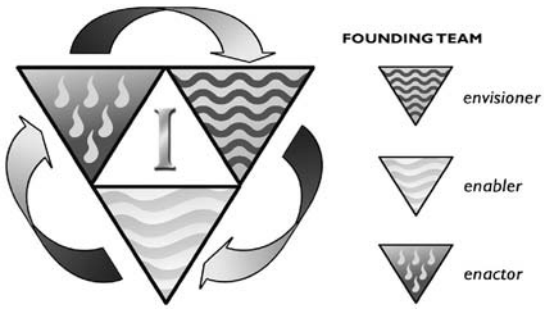

Figure 4: Egg—Inception and Convergence

It is, however, not sufficient that these three roles are merely present in the organisation. For an organisation to be successful there must be an **alignment** of these three roles, around a central vision **'I'** (Figure 4). It is possible that an organisation will grow if there is misalignment or even in the absence of these core attributes, but it is likely to follow a more hierarchical and bureaucratic form. Even in instances where creativity is valued and treasured, without correct alignment of the 3**E**s, the organisation will flounder and decay.

If an organisation recognises and releases all three roles, and can appropriately coalesce itself around a shared vision, the consequences for organisational development and growth may be profound (see Figure 5).

STAGE 1: EGG

Its first stage is the **Egg**, shown in Figure 4. Here we assume the firm has decided on its growth trajectory. It is planted in position with a start up team and has sufficient resources to sustain it through 'pre-emergence'.

The outer triangle in Figure 4 represents the egg casing or boundary of the enterprise in which the founders have chosen to operate. The egg stage is, at least initially, unattractive to predators and to an extent therefore, the firm is protected from competitors. Confidence must be maintained in order to fulfil this initial phase

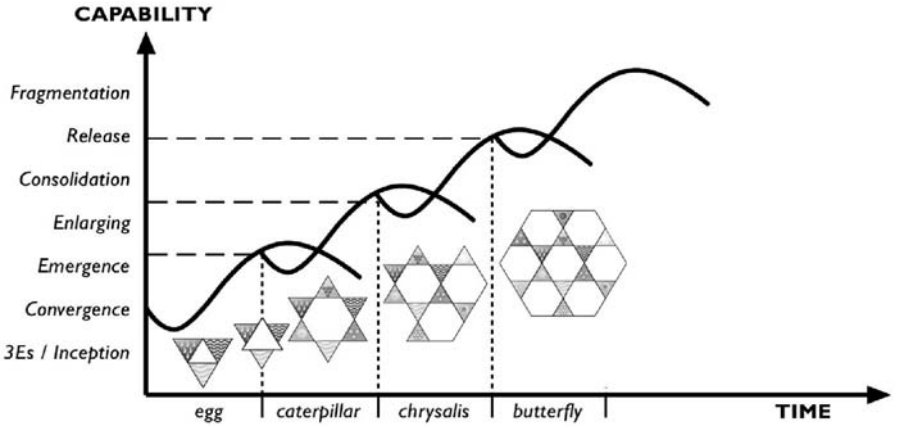

Figure 5: Metamorphosis of Enterprise

rather than being tempted to move out of position into new product development or market segments developments.

The **Envisioner**, the **Enabler** and **Enactor** leadership roles align around the shared vision and release the opportunity on to each other, termed 'baton passing'. The arrows in Figure 4 represent the movement and direction of the idea through the 3**E**s and, as it is released, it is progressed toward commercialisation. Thus they encode the organisation with the ability to move an idea through to implementation.

The resources appropriate to the development of the egg stage inevitably become depleted and it is necessary to break out of the relative protection of the now maturing niche to forage for new opportunities.

STAGE 2: CATERPILLAR

The firm emerges from its market segment and forages for resources and will typically adopt a market penetration strategy. The process resembles the emergence from an egg to metamorphose to a new state called the **Caterpillar** stage.

In the Caterpillar stage, the firm is more vulnerable when it is both hungry for resources and becoming more attractive to predators. At this stage the business is of more interest to bigger firms who may be seeking to expand through market penetration or acquisition. Some owners, wanting to capitalise on their early success, could choose to adopt a deliberate exit strategy and seek to be taken over at this stage. This is a serial entrepreneurial strategy and the highest sale price depends on the firm's attractiveness as a take-over target.

Let us however, now assume that the firm is not taken over, instead it decides to expand and prepares to involve three more leadership roles. The **Emergence or 'Bud Burst'** phase presented in Figure 6 shows the original founders being stretched as they enlarge the scope of their original positions. **Team enlargement** is represented in Figure 7. A person to develop sales who will help expand the market potential

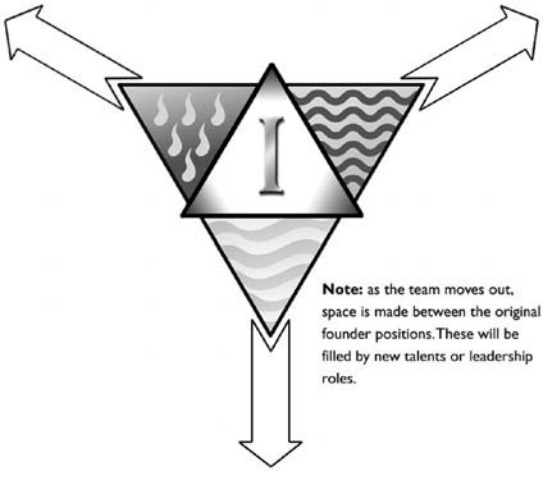

Figure 6: Emergence to Caterpillar ('Bud Burst')

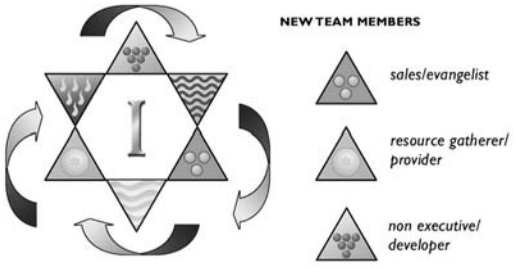

Figure 7: Team Enlargement

is identified. Another key addition to the team will be a resource investigator who may typically attract longer term funding and establish a stronger resource base for the business. The final role needed at this stage is an overseer or non-executive chairman who needs to join the founding team and bring longer range planning skills and broaden the experience base. These positions are represented by the additional triangles in Figure 7. This decision to develop the team and expand the resource base needs to be a conscious decision and the new paradigm sets the organisation on a growth trajectory for the purpose of gathering enough internal resource for its future potential to be realised. This would give them the opportunity to develop new ideas and growth opportunities in the subsequent chrysalis stage.

The dimensions of the original founding leadership are maintained and enhanced by the sales function pairing with the *Envisioner*. The resource gathering called *provider* enhances the enabling aspect and the non-executive called the developer, the enacting role. The firm has expanded rapidly and has significant potential in terms of stored resources.

The decision is taken by the now enlarged leadership to develop products called in the model, the 'chrysalis phase.'

STAGE 3: CHRYSALIS

In the **Chrysalis** stage (combining the consolidation and product development stages) the organisation retrenches and deliberately settles for a time of reformation. This is a time when pressure for harvest by stakeholders may be most extreme. New product development and an inward investment policy to use stored resources may be adopted and the business becomes 'chrysalis' like in order to prepare to become a 'butterfly'. The waiting and utilisation of resources is important and premature emergence or even extraction of resources needs to be avoided. Typically, new people join the organisation and are responsible collectively for product development and testing.

At this point, the organisation moves through the product development phases of concept testing, qualitative screening, viability, product testing, test marketing, and ultimately full launch (Sykes, 2008 for a fuller description of these stages). At each of these stages, there is pressure for the enterprise to release resources, but to do so too soon would mean that it misses its opportunity for metamorphosis and transformative growth. The *chrysalis* phase is complete when the firm has the ability to regenerate and metamorphose to *butterfly* phase and has reached its full capability (see Figure 8).

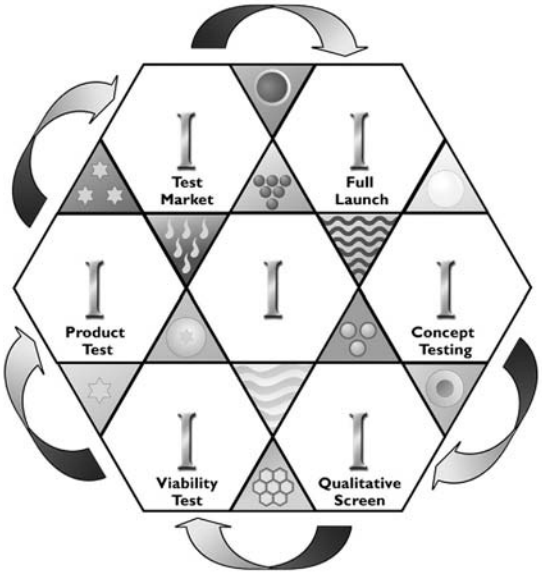

Figure 8: Full Launch

STAGE 4: BUTTERFLY

Stage 4 with a metamorphosis to a Butterfly (release to fragmentation), is a time of release and full potential of creativity realised—release from the *chrysalis* to *butterfly* is achieved. The firm has now developed and may choose to launch the new product. It enjoys the potential of further developments emerging from the now established product development and testing process. The core business may have reached full maturity and be gradually phased out. Subsequent product developments would be available to facilitate further expansion and the possibility exists to develop spin off companies. The metaphor of the butterfly is powerful, being now relatively short lived and whose objective is to establish a new generation seems apposite.

Growth models partially reflect this transitional development, without defining the stages in this way. However, understanding the growth of the organisation through the Egg to Butterfly model, and the need to realise and then release first, people's, and then collectively the organisation's capabilities, through 'baton passing' in this way, helps inform management and assist in the decision making process. The stages of development are different and management must understand the unique characteristics of each phase and adapt their management approach accordingly, again, an example of 'baton passing' in leadership (see Figure 8).

There is a temptation to emerge prematurely from each transition stage, but it is worth noting that the premature realisation of the chrysalis stage often results in the failure of the firm.

Case Study: International Publishing Group (Emergence to Enlarging)

An international publishing group had a division in the Far East, which had operated profitably but modestly for a number of years. A new Managing Director was sent from headquarters to 'maximise the opportunity' and saw new products as the necessary growth path. Without any knowledge of the Egg to Butterfly model, he enlarged the team and incorporated aspects recognisable in the caterpillar or second phase.

The enterprise emerged from its market segment, foraged for resources adopting a market penetration strategy in a similar way to the way instinctively caterpillars emerge and immediately start to 'look' for a meal. The business saw unprecedented growth, and recruited a sales specialist as well as a General Manager to try and keep everything on track through the turbulence that rapid growth brings. Although revenue and profits were growing, the pressure to deliver returns on the investment meant that even further market penetration was required and the organisation began to feel the pressure.

The caterpillar's skin cannot stretch, so as it grows larger it has to moult or shed its skin. Corporate changes saw the MD return to headquarters and the General Manager promoted to the MD position. He instinctively discerned that facets of the enterprise were weak and encouraged appropriately experienced people to develop in the gaps. Then, as he put it, he 'let them get on with it.' The pressure from headquarters was absorbed by the managing director as he sought to give the organisation time to align with the 'natural' sequence of growth.

Every caterpillar wants to be a butterfly, but for the time being they are a growing caterpillar. The MD released internal, cross-disciplinary teams to develop new products according to their interests, but backed up by market research, and sought to consolidate the firm's growth by fully utilising existing resources. In terms of the model, he wanted to enter the chrysalis phase, but at the right time.

Meanwhile the parent company required cost-savings and cutbacks as the immediate answer to their wider organisational challenges (a quick way to 'right-sizing'). Although some new product development success came out of the playroom, and newly launched products remained in the portfolio some years later, the pressure at the time to deliver a higher ROI to the parent company won the day, and the MD was required to resign. The case study is not intended to criticise this decision, as the resources may well have been better placed elsewhere within the group. But from the perspective of the MD and his motivated team, a real opportunity for steadier more secure organic growth was missed, in favour of autocratically imposed/forced growth.

Subsequently this same MD has learned of the Egg to Butterfly model, and recognises the phases through which he had moved with the company and the frustrations experienced.

In summary, if a new phase transition is missed (or forced) because corporate strategies are not aligned, hidden costs arise from the justifiable anger in local teams. Furthermore gaps in trust will only grow wider if HQ refuse to understand that they need to align themselves with the 'natural' stages in the growth of their hitherto autonomous constituent business division(s).

Case Study: The Butterwick Hospice (Inception to Release)

Martin Johnson has studied the development of the Butterwick Hospice located in Stockton–on-Tees in the North East of England. It is an institution, a charity, a voluntary organisation and a Limited Company. The organisation has undergone rapid and substantial change. In terms of performance it has seen its income rise from £200,000 in 1989 to £2m in 1999/2000.

Since 1995 it has seen spectacular growth in income, rising from £400,000 to £2m in 4 years. Year on year the financial growth has been 39% putting it firmly within the Ten Percenters growth rate in the Storey (1996) fast growth study.

Mary Butterwick's husband John died of cancer in 1979. Mary became involved helping others in a similar situation by giving them advice and encouragement. She set up a division of CRUSE (a leading organisation in providing support for cancer patients and their families). As an Envisioner she is an ideas person with lots of energy. Feeling moved to do more she decided to set up a cancer help and advice centre and sought resources and support. She came alongside a successful local businessman, Albert Dickens who is an Enactor.

Things developed slowly until in 1994 David Luke joined the team. David is a people oriented leader who is a good motivator, in other words, an Enabler. The organisation now had the 3 leadership types in place and each shared the common purpose or vision for the work. Spectacular growth resulted and the group attracted a resource gatherer in 1994 and the core team enlarged to correspond to the caterpillar phase of the model.

The chrysalis phase took place between 1993/4 and 1997 when six projects were developed. These included a home-care service, hospice day care, in-patient care, children's hospice, South Durham Hospice and an education centre. The organisation did not appear to change much externally, but inside the organisation, plans were being made as new product development and transfer between Concept Testing, Qualitative Screen, Viability Testing, Product Test and Test Market were taking place.

Now these new operating units have developed and release from the core business has occurred. Albert Dickens, the Enactor, and David Luke, the Enabler, have moved on, and future plans involve transferring Butterwick expertise to enable others to develop in other geographic regions.

Links are even being made with Kenya and beyond as other organisations are seeking advice and support. Butterwick has an inherited 'DNA' which is being passed on from the core vision and founder team. New directors and managers are being appointed to take Butterwick beyond the butterfly phase, and into the release and seeding of other organisations.

CONCLUSIONS

If organic models are to be of value, then there is a continuing need to specify better organisational emergence, development and growth. Previous attempts to do so, this paper has suggested, have largely foundered because of too narrow a focus on the financial maximisation thesis.

This paper has argued instead that individuals within the organisation are of critical importance. Indeed we have seen that central to the process of growth is the correct alignment of the **Envisioner**, **Enabler** and **Enactor** or 3**E**s, and the realisation and release of the talent of each of them. The paper has also shown both theoretically and empirically the roles that these and other individuals play as they move through each of the four stages from egg to butterfly.

We may consider that organisations choose to grow in a metamorphic way. An organisation may develop for the purpose of collecting acorns (resources) to feed on for a while and then die. Alternatively it can choose to develop to be an acorn producer, an oak tree. They have a long life and eventually die but leave a legacy of many new enterprises encoded with the parent DNA. So enterprises which choose to metaphorically 'die' to metamorphose to the next level of development may emerge to be both socially significant and economically successful. The multiple capability is released, each with the potential to grow and a replication, or even multiplier effect is created. But for this to happen, and for it to happen effectively, the talent of the individuals within the organisation needs to be recognised, developed and released. The three leadership roles of Envisioner, Enabler and Enactor show this process of 'baton passing,' and the fundamental role of releasing the talent in the organisation, and releasing the organisation itself, if it is to

become everything that it is capable of becoming: in its turn, a butterfly that then seeds many other organisations.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

Nigel Sykes is Principal Teaching Fellow, Head of the Enterprise Group, and Head of Heads of Group, whom he represents on the Dean's Board at Warwick Business School. Nigel moved to Warwick Business School from the private sector in 1988. Prior to coming to Warwick, Nigel ran his own businesses, set up an Enterprise Agency for the Home Office and is and has been involved in many enterprise development initiatives. This interest in business development emerged after working for some years for Bass plc, whose many and varied small businesses enabled Nigel to "cut his teeth." Nigel has taught the MBA options "Entrepreneurship and New Venture Creation" and "Starting a Business" to undergraduates across the University of Warwick's Science faculties. Most of Nigel's research and consultancy interests, both in the UK and abroad, relate to economic regeneration through small business development initiatives and entrepreneurship, as well as understanding the success and evolution of firms, particularly in terms of marketing and team development.

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Whose Engagement is it Anyway?

MARTIN GALPIN, MARTIN STAIRS AND NICKY PAGE

Stop, for just a minute, to consider how you feel about your work. Do you truly love what you do? Do you consistently give your best? If you do, then you are probably one of the 20 per cent or so of people who are fortunate enough to be highly engaged in their work. It is perhaps unsurprising that negative views of work are so common, given that the concept of 'work' has traditionally held negative connotations. A review of synonyms in a thesaurus, for example, reveals a direct link between work and practices such as grind, slog, sweat and toil. Couple this with sixty-hour working weeks, 24-hour connectivity, e-mail overload, and unrealistic deadlines and it is perhaps to be expected that the majority of employees have a negative view of work. However, it doesn't have to be like this. Leading organisations recognise the potential benefits of increasing engagement and seeking a more positive working life for their employees. And it's worth noting that these acts are not completely selfless: research is increasingly demonstrating links between highly engaged employees and organisational bottom-line benefits. In this article, we explore the concept of employee engagement in more detail, reviewing the reported benefits, both for the individual and for the organisation, and outline research from the field of positive psychology which plays a role in helping us to understand whose engagement it is anyway.

KEYWORDS: Employee engagement, positive psychology, leadership, work.

What is employee engagement?

In its simplest form, engagement means 'passion for work' (Truss, Soane, Edwards, Wisdom, Croll & Burnett, 2006, p.xi). It involves feeling positive about your job as well as being prepared to go the extra mile to make sure you do your job to the best of your ability (Truss et al, 2006). Many definitions focus on the organisational benefits that accrue through increased levels of engagement. Whilst it is hard to argue against such benefits, our view is that such a narrow focus omits individual benefits that come as a result of increased levels of engagement. It is for this reason that we define engagement as "the extent to which employees thrive at work, are committed to their employer, and are motivated to do their best, for the benefit of themselves and their organisation" (Stairs, Galpin, Page & Linley, 2006). As well as highlighting the mutually beneficial nature of engagement for individuals and organisations alike, our definition places the experience of 'thriving at work' very deliberately at the heart of our approach. Whilst it is important to maintain integrity by retaining alignment with research from the roots of industrial/occupational psychology, our view is that the concept has to evolve to accommodate new and emerging approaches and HR practices. As Seligman notes, the science of positive psychology, through its mission to assess and build human strengths (Keyes & Haidt, 2003, p.xix), aims to help people live and flourish rather than merely

exist (Keyes & Haidt, 2003, p.3). Flourishing should not just be something that happens outside of work-time, at weekends, or during vacation periods.

Why seek to increase engagement?

Building on earlier studies which have shown a relationship between positive human resource management and job satisfaction (Spector, 1997; Judge et al, 2001; Purcell et al, 2003), recent studies have consistently demonstrated a positive association between employee engagement and a wide range of key organisational performance indicators. Higher levels of engagement are associated with reduced absenteeism, greater employee retention, increased employee effort and productivity, improved quality and reduced error rates, increased sales, increased income and turnover, higher profitability, enhanced customer satisfaction and loyalty, greater EPS and shareholder return, faster business growth and higher likelihood of business success. Engaged employees are also more likely to promote their organisation as an employer of choice. As Harter, Schmidt & Keyes (2003) note, satisfying basic human needs in the workplace, such as clarifying desired outcomes and increasing opportunity for individual fulfilment and growth, can contribute to organisational success (see also Wagner & Harter, 2006).

On an initial review of the literature there appears to be a wealth of research demonstrating the relationship between employee engagement and organisational benefits. However, with the exception of the peer reviewed research by Harter et al (2003), which is based on data from nearly 8,000 separate business units in 36 companies, and the study by the Corporate Leadership Council (2004), which is based on a sample of over 50,000 employees from 59 organisations across 14 industries in 30 countries, these findings come with a caveat. Much of the research conducted to date involves small sample sizes. Furthermore, most studies have been published by consultancy houses operating in the engagement arena with a vested interest in proving the benefits of their approach and associated interventions. This does not mean the studies should be disregarded, rather that they should be interpreted in the light of this caveat.

At the individual level, there is to date relatively little empirical evidence that has been produced to support the personal value of engagement—it has not been a topic of major research interest. There is, however, general agreement on the positive individual benefits that accrue from higher levels of engagement. May et al, for example, see engagement as important as it 'serves to fulfil the human spirit at work' (May et al, 2004, p.12). Britt, Adler and Barton (2001), in a more specific study of US peacekeeping soldiers in Bosnia, revealed that being engaged in meaningful work was associated with both personality hardiness and longer-term benefits from the deployment, months after it was over. As May et al note, such outcomes give credence to the argument that leaders, managers, and researchers of organisations should be concerned with the engagement of employees in work, not just for practical, but also humanistic reasons (May et al, 2004, p.13).

Who can increase employee engagement?

For many organisations, moving beyond a reliance on the traditional model of employee motivation—which relied heavily on tangibles like financial reward, benefits and prospects—is a real challenge. Similarly, there has been relatively little written about how organisations, and individuals, can increase levels of engagement in a practical way. This is somewhat surprising

given the benefits that can come from such increases. One way to understand the potential levers that an organisation can pull to move the dial on employee engagement is to understand the role of internal and external engagement drivers.

What are the external drivers of engagement?

For organisations and HR teams it is often the case that the focus of any engagement increasing interventions tends to be on external drivers. This is partly because external drivers are generally more within the direct control of the organisation, and in some cases can influence large numbers of the employee population. The difficulty that organisations and HR teams face is which external drivers will deliver the best results.

The positive psychology literature suggests several alternatives to the traditional external drivers that organisations tend to focus on. Warr (2007) describes nine primary factors of the work environment which have been shown to correlate with happiness. These are: (1) opportunity for personal control; (2) opportunity for skill use; (3) externally generated goals; (4) variety; (5) environmental clarity (e.g. clarity of job requirements or opportunity for feedback on performance); (6) contact with others; (7) availability of money; (8) physical security; and (9) valued social position. However, Warr cautions that the relationship between these drivers and happiness is not necessarily linear (particularly so in relation to the first six in the above list). As Warr writes, 'one possibility is that happiness is influenced by the environment in a manner analogous to the effect of vitamins on physical condition … it may be that an absence of the primary environmental characteristics leads to unhappiness, but that their presence beyond a certain level does not further increase happiness.' (Warr, 2007, p. 95). In considering how to increase levels of the broader concept of positive engagement, we suggest that this list of drivers is a good point to start.

A further framework worth highlighting here, although less rigorously researched, comes from an analysis of data from more than 3,000,000 employees. The study by the survey organisation Sirota (2004) found that employment needs and expectations can best be summarised in the three areas of camaraderie (having warm, interesting, and co-operative relations with others; achieving a sense of community and belonging), achievement (doing things that matter and being enabled to do them well; receiving recognition for accomplishments and taking pride in them), and equity (being treated justly in relation to the basic conditions of employment, particularly with respect to others in the organisation and minimum personal/society standards). In their report, they highlight the particularly strong impact that an absence of perceived equity can have on employee enthusiasm. This raises the question for us as to whether certain negative factors in the working context may in fact have more of a derailing influence on engagement. Perhaps such mechanisms work in almost the opposite way to the vitamin analogy (Warr, 2007) in that an absence of such factors does not increase engagement but the presence of them (e.g. bullying or harassment) can have a strong and detrimental effect.

What are the internal drivers of engagement?

Like us I suspect that you meet people who are highly engaged with what they do despite less than 'ideal' circumstances. Conversely, you have probably encountered people who have a distinct lack of engagement despite working in environments that other people would be

desperate to be part of. In a recent study on engagement, we set out to establish what engaged the most highly engaged employees. As part of this study, we conducted in-depth qualitative interviews with 50 employees from three organisations. Initial analysis of these interviews shows that this highly engaged group of people share one thing in common, their sense of ownership and responsibility for their levels of engagement. These individuals talk about being very conscious of their engagement levels. Equally, they will actively disengage if they feel they are not being treated fairly or rewarded and valued. Several of the people interviewed mentioned taking action to find something that is more engaging for them if their levels of engagement ever decreased. This included moving jobs or changing the nature of their role to work from their strengths more. Strengths use was another commonality across this group. Typically, employees in the UK use their strengths 38% of the time (Gallup, 2007). However, our findings show that this highly engaged group use their strengths 70% of the time. Focusing more specifically on internal drivers of engagement is key for organisations who are genuinely committed to increasing employee engagement.

The difficulty that organisations face is having an impact on internal drivers of engagement. Here the positive psychology and happiness literature may again, offer some useful indicators. As Lyubomirsky et al note 'changing one's intentional activities may provide a happiness-boosting potential that is at least as large, and likely much larger, than changing one's circumstances' (Lyubomirsky et al., 2005, p.123). Emmons and McCullough (2003) also show that the act of routinely writing down things for which you are grateful can lead to significantly more positive affect, is one example which may be helpful to consider. Writing down things that have gone well, and their causes, has also been shown to increase well-being over extended periods of time, as has finding new and different ways to use your strengths each day (e.g. Seligman et al, 2005). As Warr (2007) notes, there have yet to be any reported studies of such interventions in organisations.

In addition to developing interventions which are based on these self-help exercises from positive psychology, we would suggest that some of the greatest opportunities to enhance engagement are found where the internal and external drivers overlap.

Where internal and external drivers of engagement overlap

Of course, the distinction between external and internal drivers of engagement is somewhat over simplified. There will be a number of factors within the worker's environment which have the potential to influence their internal drivers of engagement, with social relationships being an obvious example. While colleagues could be thought of as a part of the working context, they form part of a dynamic system and hence can actually influence how an employee thinks about their work.

An employee's relationship with their line manager is usually one of the most important in the working context. In our study of highly engaged employees, when asked 'what has caused the most significant decrease in your levels of engagement in the last year', most frequently mentioned was poor relations with their manager. Indeed, the phrase 'people join companies and leave managers' is often quoted in HR circles, and for good reason. Research suggests that the link between engagement and intention to leave an organisation (e.g., Hackman & Oldham, 1975; Harter et al., 2003) is significantly influenced by an employee's relationship with their supervisor (e.g., Harter et al., 2003; Judge, Thoresen, Bono, & Patton, 2001).

Line managers are often able to influence many of the environmental correlates of happiness described above by Warr (2007), such as the degree of control that the employee has or the nature of the goals that are set. Through their interactions with their reports they can also, either directly or indirectly, help the employee find meaning in what they do and of course they can have a tangible impact on the prevalent emotions in the team.

The level of influence that line managers can have on so many of the internal and external drivers of engagement most likely explains why a recent review of 12 major engagement studies shows the line manager to be the strongest of all drivers. Research by Hay Group suggests that up to 30 per cent of the variance in business results can be explained by differences in the work climate created by managers (Hay Group reported in Jensen, McMullen & Stark, 2006). A lack of adequately skilled managers is a key barrier to improving engagement (Chiumento, 2004), giving credence to the need for further research into interventions that have the greatest impact on driving the 'engagement behaviour' of line managers.

A further area worthy of particular consideration relates to people working from their strengths. Across major meta-analyses, covering many thousands of employees and hundreds of different business units, the use of strengths has been systematically linked to higher levels of engagement: indeed, it is often recognised as one of the key drivers of engagement. Of course, line managers can again play a significant role in helping employees recognise and understand their own strengths, and then find ways to use them productively in the work environment. However, the organisation can also work at a higher level to create a culture in which strengths are given more prominence than 'development areas,' and in which strengths are celebrated (see Linley, 2008, for more on this).

The 'engagement equation'

In reviewing both the internal and external drivers of engagement it can be useful to review research on the causes of sustained happiness, Lyubomirsky, Sheldon & Schkade (2005) note that genetics account for approximately 50% of the variation seen in the population, and that the circumstances in which people live account for around 10%. The remaining 40% is down to volitional activity. This equation has been coined the 'happiness formula' (Seligman, 2003). Essentially, this formula sets out the key drivers (or perhaps meta-drivers) of happiness. Given the parallels we have previously drawn between happiness and engagement, this leads us to consider what the equivalent formula might be for employee engagement—the 'engagement equation,' if you like. We suggest the following:

Positive Engagement = Work Context + Engagency + Individual Thoughts & Actions

In the apparent absence of anything to suggest otherwise, we would argue that the meta-drivers of positive engagement might be the same core components as those in the happiness formula—i.e., a set point, contextual factors and things within the employee's own control. If that is so, then it puts a clear emphasis on the role of the individual in achieving sustainable levels of engagement, as two of the three components (set-point and volitional activity) rest with the person. Indeed, if the variance explained by these factors is broadly consistent with those described in relation to happiness then it would set a very low ceiling on the potential for organisations to influence engagement levels through the changing of the employee work context such as pay, working environment and development opportunities. This, in turn, suggests that organisations may need to think somewhat differently about their strategies for raising levels of engagement.

One clear implication of the comparison we are making here, is that a large part of how engaged an employee is might be due to their set point—which we refer to as 'engagency' (i.e., the individual's predisposition to be engaged). At present, there is a notable shortage of research or comment on the possibility that there are such individual differences in employee engagement. Naturally, however, such a notion may lead organisations to consider including an assessment of engagement potential in their selection processes. In fact, this is an approach advocated by the consultancy DDI, who have identified six personality characteristics which they claim predict candidates likelihood to be engaged—adaptability, passion for work, emotional maturity, positive disposition, self-efficacy and achievement orientation (McGee, 2006). While organisations may be able to select new employees for their potential to be engaged, such a strategy is clearly unlikely to lead to significant change in the short term. Indeed, we recognise that many practitioners will be uncomfortable with the notion of selecting for engagement at all.

Conclusion

Work is and will remain, for the foreseeable future at least, an important part of most people's lives. Determining who is responsible for employee engagement cannot be simply answered in terms of the organisation or the employee. However, some of the answer seems to lie in the complex relationship and interplay between the individual and the organisation. Our review of literature and recent research suggests organisations need to shift their focus from just external drivers also to include consideration of internal drivers.

In order to impact individual drivers of employee engagement, organisations will need to consider more readily an employee's capacity to demonstrate engagement as early as the recruitment stage. They will also need to ensure that they have in place a robust engagement strategy that covers all the drivers that promote positive engagement. Line managers will also need to understand their role in managing the interplay between the internal and external engagement drivers. As a first step, they should be encouraged to ask employees regularly and specifically what engages and disengages them, a question that should appear in all quarterly and annual reviews. Finally, we would emphasise the need for individuals, managers and organisations to understand the importance of allowing employees to identify and realise their strengths, as Linley (2008) acknowledges, "the strengths approach provides a rare opportunity for a way of working that makes the best of what people have to offer while also enabling them to make the best of themselves, and truly forming a partnership between organisations and their employees that it is fit for the rapidly changing 21st century world of work."

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

Martin Galpin BSc MSc CPsychol is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and Director of the consultancy Work Positive. His main work-based interests lie in employee engagement, management development and coaching.

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Martin Stairs BSc, MSc, C.Psychol is a Chartered Occupational Psychologist and specialist in employee selection, leadership development and employee engagement and retention.

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Nicky has also worked on assignments with clients in America, Argentina, Canada, Nigeria and Venezuela, across many client sectors and both public and private organisations.

She has published a number of articles relating to psychology, strengths and engagement in both journals and popular HR magazines.

Organisations & People
NEWS, OPINIONS AND REVIEWS

Reviews

Average to A+: Realising Strengths in Yourself and Others

ALEX LINLEY
Published by: CAPP Press, 2008.
www.capp-press.org
Paperback, £11.99 + p&p
ISBN 978-1-906366-03-2

The field of positive psychology has attracted increasing attention over the past eight years since Martin Seligman's presidential address to the Annual Convention of the APA in Boston, Massachusetts in August 1999. Strengths, the focus of this new book and but one part of the positive psychology movement, have until now remained largely buried and often misunderstood. This book aims to change that.

The essence of the strengths approach is very simple. It is about what is right, what is working, and what is strong. Strengths are part of our basic human nature, therefore every person has strengths and deserves respect for their strengths. Our strengths are also, according to the author, our areas of greatest potential. Ultimately strengths are about helping people to create a life where they can spend much more time living in the A+, rather than average, zone.

A clear focus of the book is about moving beyond just academic research and understanding to application. It achieves this balance very well, with sufficient reference to both applied and practitioner research to comfort the academic reader, coupled with a strong focus on tools and approaches for the practitioners amongst us. The first three chapters of the book draw the reader into the world of strengths, focusing on an exploration of what a strength is, where strengths come from, and some of the pitfalls both of underplaying and overplaying strengths.

For those unconvinced or sceptical about strengths, comfort is offered through an early section on typical responses to the strengths approach. Through chapter two, the reader is introduced to the colourful vocabulary of strengths with labels such as Lift, Bounceback, and Contact which, at first read, I personally found hard to relate to. But this, I now understand, is to be expected given that the language of strengths is new and consequently unfamiliar. I was supported through this challenging section by being taken on a journey of exploration, by way of examples, of how strengths truly come to life when they are differentiated, combined, and maximised, and was also helped by the strengths glossary included at the end. A key aim of this book is explicitly to help build the vocabulary of strengths, to bring strengths out from under the bushel and into the spotlight. This is an aim that, in my view, is clearly met—and not before time.

The middle chapters of the book—chapters four and five—are more practical in focus. They are squarely aimed at equipping the reader with some very practical skills to help them bring strengths into their own life, and into the lives of others. Beyond the very practical guidance that is offered, these chapters are interspersed with examples of strengths in action—stories about real people, organisational case studies, anecdotes—that bring the concepts and ideas to life very effectively. Chapters six and seven are devoted to looking at strengths in the contexts of the world of work and the world of parenting / education respectively. Given these two facets, in combination, take up the majority of my waking hours—much like many of us I'm sure—I found this juxtaposition in a single text to be genuinely refreshing.

I would add that as an organisational consultant, this is also the first book I have read that truly offers practical solutions to the question 'how, in an organisational context, do you really harness strengths?' For this reason alone I will be carrying a copy with me for some time to come. In chapter eight, the reader is encouraged to take a step back to take a wider perspective on why it matters that we all try to live lives that are A+ rather than just average. The author introduces a very interesting idea that leading an A+ life is not just about ourselves, but is about our wider contribution to others, and to society more broadly. As the author notes, none of this is straightforward, and requires effort. Thankfully this book helps the reader on that journey with very useful chapter summaries of 'key points' and 'areas for reflection and action'. The final chapter, chapter nine, is a surprise. Enough said.

At a personal level I found reading the book was a powerful developmental experience. In part I put this down to the way that I, as the reader, was invited to interact with strengths as a concept through reflecting on personal preferences or circumstances, or by undertaking short, simple exercises to put ideas into practice. At

the very least this book will serve to deepen our collective understanding of strengths, and will enable the development of a much richer, fuller strengths vocabulary. But I suspect that the author has much more ambitious hopes for this book. This book is not just about building collective understanding. It is a call to action for humanity, in particular to counteract what is termed 'negativity bias,' the propensity each of us has to see the worst rather than the best in situations and others. It is, as the book states, 'a clarion call for us to reawaken the best of what each of us has to offer,' for the benefit of ourselves, of others, and of humanity in general.

It is through this thread that the book holds its greatest strength—as well as its greatest challenge to the reader. Whether mankind needs another challenge at this point in time is open to question. The delicate balance in our current economic climate, the mountain we need to climb to protect our physical environment, and the likely adaptations we will need to make to respond to the imminent drying up of our natural resources are all, one might think, enough for now. Not to mention the challenges we all face in living together in peace and harmony, irrespective of race or religious belief. But this book offers a ray of hope. As the author notes in chapter one, realising human potential remains the last great untapped resource for humanity. Yet if we can tap that resource effectively, and if we actively encourage our teachers, our engineers, our politicians, and parents to be the best they can be, we will be better able to address and overcome the seemingly insurmountable challenges ahead. Reading this book has affirmed, in my own mind at least, that focusing on strengths, in all walks of life, offers a compelling approach and can viably be—indeed should be—an important part of the solution to ensuring a positive future for our offspring and the generations that follow.

One of the hardest things to judge about any book is its appeal. Some texts are clearly important but bland, inaccessible, too academic. Others are very readable, but lack substance. In his authorship of this text, Alex Linley has got the balance near perfect and I will be recommending it in many spheres, starting with the most important people in my life. The book is both important and accessible. It has substance, having evolved out of strong academic foundations, yet is very readable. More than that it is inspiring, clearly written by the hand of someone who is passionate—genuinely passionate—about the strengths movement and what it can offer. The focus of the text, in common with the work of CAPP, is broad, touching on subjects as wide ranging as evolutionary biology, philosophy and psychology. It is as relevant to employers and employees as it is to educators and students. It is also a book for parents. In fact, it is a book for anyone who wants to cultivate more positive relationships with the people they know, or have yet to meet. In this sense it has relevance for us all to a greater or lesser extent. In my experience it is rare to find such richness in a single text. It is a book about history and the past. It is a book about hope and the future. Most of all it is a book about humanity and human nature, and that should interest is all. Average or A+? I give it A++.

Reviewed by MARTIN STAIRS, MSc, CPsychol, Partner, Martin Stairs Consulting, UK, martin.stairs@gmail.com

Appreciative Inquiry for Change Management

SARAH LEWIS, JONATHAN PASSMORE & STEFAN CANTORE
Published by Kogan-Page, London and Philadelphia, PA. 2008.
Hardback, pp. 247, £29.99
ISBN 978-0-7494-5071-7

This book adds significantly to the growing library of books devoted to the process and practice of Appreciative Inquiry. The sub-title of 'Using AI to Facilitate Organisational Development' is a very clear summary of the book's content, and it will be particularly valuable to those who know the fundamentals of AI and wish to take their practice to a new level. It is not a 'how-to' for AI itself, although it does include excellent chapters on its history and process—so it does not compete with the excellent titles by Watkins & Mohr or Whitney & Trosten-Bloom. Instead it focuses on exploring conversational approaches to organisation development, of which Appreciative Inquiry is at the forefront.

As a starting point, the book focuses on making the difference between conversational and mechanistic approaches, with comparisons between the two approaches and reflecting on the historical strands of theory and practice from which the view of organisation as an living human systems emerges. The history and practice of AI is then covered in two summary chapters.

Part 2 explores the skills and practice guidance that support being a practitioner who is using conversational practice as a key tool in their interventions. Chapters look in depth at the power and form of questions; conversation and how to promote and use it in organisation development; working with story; and some practices other than Appreciative Inquiry that centre

on conversational practice—such as World Café, Open Space, The Circle and Future Search. To end off this section, there is a discussion on being an appreciative conversational practitioner, and the challenges that arise from adopting this approach.

Part 3 is devoted to case studies, not just written by consultants who focus just on the highlights, but in collaboration with the case study line managers and thus identify and reflect the greater complexity and the ups and downs of the experience. They thus provide some meaningful insights into the real difficulties and real benefits of the approaches. The case studies do focus on Appreciative Inquiry interventions as one might expect, but also includes a World Café case study with the American Society for Quality.

Taken as a whole, this is one of the most significant contributions to the practice of conversational interventions to be published in recent years. The book is clearly written with relevant underpinning of theory and experience and successfully advocates for the expansion of appreciative conversational practice in organisation development. It will help facilitators and line managers to analyse situations more effectively, and also develop and improve their understanding and skills so that they—and the organisations with whom they interact—can benefit from adopting conversational and appreciative techniques in their practice and development.

Reviewed by GEOF COX,
New Directions Ltd
Consultant and writer.

Communicating Strategy

PHIL JONES
Published by Gower, Aldershot, 2008.
Paperback, pp. 179, £25
ISBN 9 780566 088100

In many respects, developing a strategy is the easy bit. After all, knowing what you want to do and how to do it is the motivating, creative element of organisational life. Problems start to arise in the implementation, and many are the frustrations of leaders and strategists who have singularly failed to see their plans and ambitions translated into collective action and results. "They don't get the strategy" a CEO is reported to have said when a particularly well researched and documented strategy failed to deliver. If they don't get it, then it is unlikely to be implemented.

This book sets out to solve this difficulty by helping to identify an appropriate communication process to ensure those tasked with implementing strategy do, in fact, 'get it'. As in so many aspects of human endeavour, there can be a sea change in understanding within the space between the transmitter of an idea and the receiver. Much can change in the filters between what is said and what is 'heard'. Language was always a two-edged sword.

A good example of the complexity of seemingly simple language is the very word 'strategy' itself. What actually is meant by strategy? Jones comes up with a dozen or so meanings of this over exposed word, including strategy as: something important, a plan, a position, a long term view, a response, a choice, or a pattern of behaviour. No wonder getting the message across has proved so difficult.

Research is quoted that suggests less than one in ten—possibly as few as five percent—of staff fully understand the strategy of their organisation. This raises the question of what strategy the other 90 percent might be executing. Even if these figures are wildly out, organisations that cannot get their strategies across will still be missing massive opportunities of effectiveness and efficiencies. No matter the quality of the thinking behind the strategy, it will all be worthless if it does not become the property of the people who must bring it to life through their intellectual and emotional commitment.

Jones approaches his task in a pragmatic manner, suggesting tools and techniques which can help the reader make up their own mind about what to do in bringing change within their own situation. The book, therefore, shies away from the prescriptive trap of which many others are guilty. It is the thinking behind good communication which the author attempts to convey as much as the practical suggestions to achieve results.

This is accomplished through a wealth of questions, case examples, and suggestions with which the reader is encouraged (with some insistence) to engage. It soon becomes apparent that there is no single route to success—contradictions and anomalies abound—but the exercise of questioning and reflection raises this book to the highest level of grounded practicality.

There is a certain linear textbook logic to the layout. An early chapter sets out some misconceptions about people's perceptions and responses to communication and goes on to investigate the purpose of a specific communication. Sadly, there are many instances of people so eager to get their message across they fail to take note of who their audience might be. The starting point of considering what needs to be communicated, to whom, and why, is of paramount importance—as is the timing—but frequently overlooked.

Some change theories and the motivation behind change are explained. These will be familiar to many but they are clearly and sim-

ply defined and serve to remind the reader of some basic psychology which needs consideration to win 'heads, hearts and hands'.

One important section explores the 'what's in it for me/us?' question. Jones helps the reader consider the possible reaction to change from a full range of stakeholders in the system including suppliers, staff, investors, customers, regulatory bodies and even political and pressure groups. It is a comprehensive list containing many groups who would usually be completely overlooked when a new strategy is rolled out.

Once the reasons for a strategy have been understood and agreed there comes the time to get the message out. Three channels are assessed—face-to-face (cascade meetings, company conferences, team briefings, workshops, etc.); electronic based (internet, email, blogs, video, etc); and the rest (letters, newspapers, notice boards, PowerPoint, etc). Each has its advantages in specific situations.

At the end of the day, selling a new strategy is about achieving buy-in. One person's compelling future can very well be another's nightmare. But if the processes Jones describes are adhered to there is a very good chance the story of 'where we came from where we want to go, and how we will get there' can be sold more effectively than is usually the case.

Here is a clearly written and highly practical book which involves the reader in reflective learning throughout. It contains a wealth of behavioural and organisational theory but most of all common sense, which together combine to help ensure that considered and appropriate change can be achieved with the willing and motivated involvement of those who have to ensure its success.

Reviewed by TERRY GIBSON

The Power of Difference: exploring the value and brilliance of diversity in teams

KAREN & IAN TAYLOR
Published by Management Books 2000 Ltd. 2008.
Paperback, pp. 240, £14.99
ISBN 9 781852 525491

A guide to how diverse teams can be a major asset to problem-solving in an uncertain environment. Different types of diversity, from thinking and creative style, through personality, values, gender and national culture, to ethics and technology, all offer different resources.

Most team leaders have far more material with which to solve problems than they realise within the personal make-up of their teams. This book describes how to release this powerhouse of diversity for beneficial results. It contains examples, exercises and advice to help any team manager get the best out of their team.

The authors are both directors of The Deva Partnership with over 40 years experience between them working with teams. Their approach to team development is based on detailed analysis of team profiles, establishment of a shared language, the creation of dialogue, and the valuing of difference.

Managing Difficult Conversations at Work

SUE CLARK & MEL MYERS
Published by Management Books 2000 Ltd. 2008.
Paperback, pp. 258, £14.99
ISBN 9 781852 525408

A book which provides detailed practical advice for anyone about to embark in a difficult conversation. The aim is to help people operating at all levels of organisation to manage difficult conversations in a way that enables them to say what needs to be said while maintaining or enhancing relationships an improving performance.

It is based on a coaching programme which the authors have been working on and delivering for two decades and employs strategies which work for both parties.

The book explains common 'closed-to-learning' pitfalls in approaching difficult conversations. It offers a practical and comprehensive 'open-to-learning' approach which only requires practitioners to remember three simple principles: question your assumptions, make the conversation a partnership, and promote the exchange of all relevant information.

These principles and the forms of words required to implement them are described in detail, and their use illustrated through annotated examples of difficult conversations in a wide range of situations.

As well as providing a well-grounded model that explains why we have difficult conversations, the book contains many suggestions for practical work in the form of simple observations and exercises that follow each chapter. Readers are encouraged through the exercises, to reflect on and learn from their approach to their own difficult conversations.

Managing the Psychological Contract: using the personal deal to increase business performance

MICHAEL WELLIN
Published by Gower, Aldershot, 2007.
Hardback, pp. 244, £55
ISBN 978 0 566 08726 4

Wellin says the psychological contract lies at the heart of the relationship between a person and the organisation they work for. It is the deal made the one's employer and colleagues at work; mutual expectations and their fulfilment.

Too often this contract is implicit and left to chance, resulting in misunderstanding, stress, lower commitment and performance. The author demonstrates how to use the psychological contract to raise the business game and increase personal fulfilment.

Wellin advocates going beyond the traditional static view of the psychological contract between the organisation and its employees. He shows how to create unique and dynamic customised personal deals between people and teams. by showing how to make these deals explicit and mutual. he provides practical tips for leaders, employees and HR professionals. Separate chapters are devoted to leadership, culture change and strategic HR management. There is also a chapter of practical ideas for individuals who want to change their personal deal at work.

The author's ideas are based on his own research and consultancy experience as well as recent business school research. There are a number of case studies included.