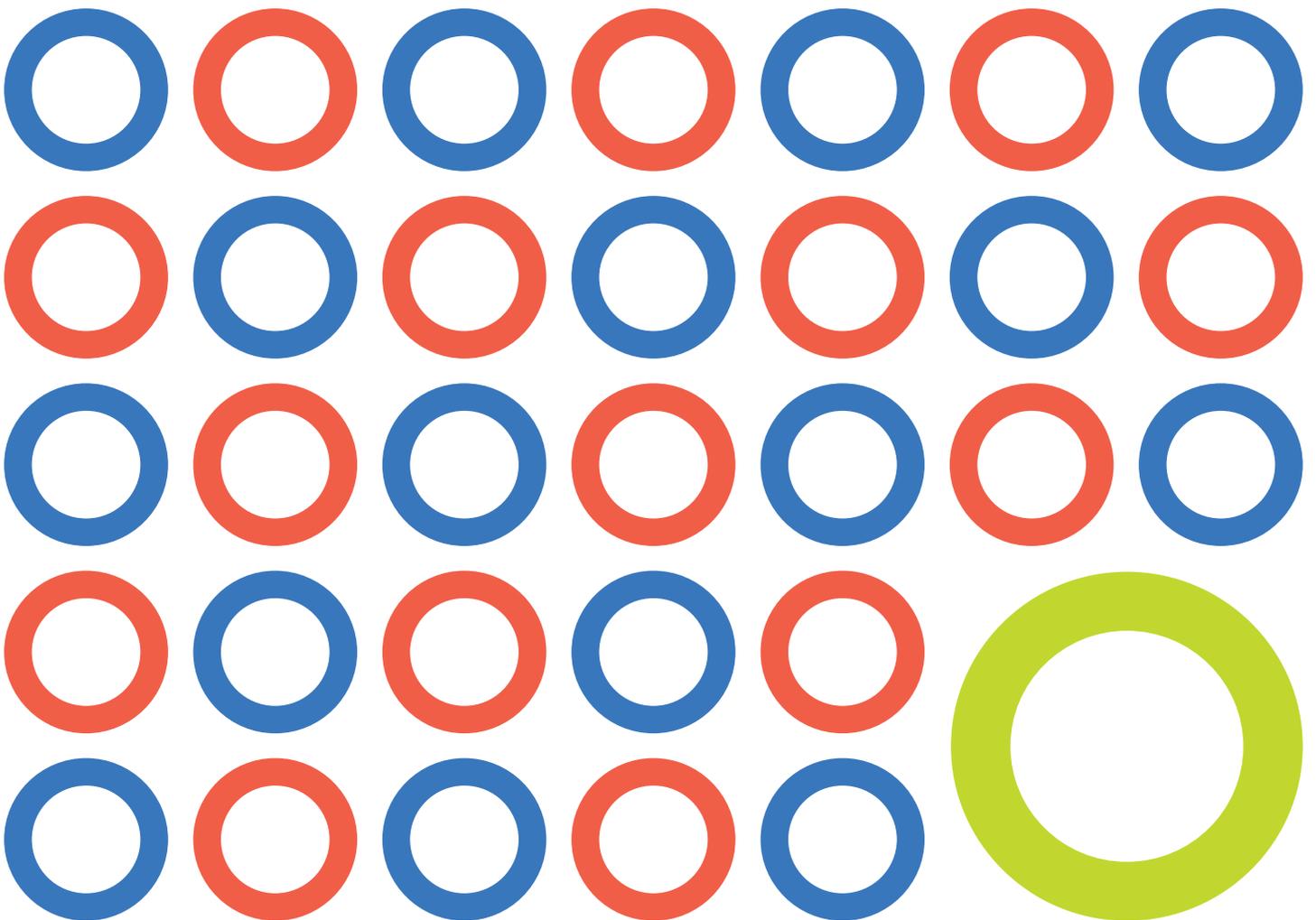


# The Change Agent



**oasis**

School of Human Relations

This manual is based on research conducted at the Oasis  
School of Human Relations, originally authored by Bryce Taylor.

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## Introduction

### Change Agent/Consultant

The terms *change agent* and *consultant* are used interchangeably in this manual because there is such similarity between the two roles. The change agent is someone who may not have the title consultant, but is someone who is committed to change, such as a project leader or manager. The consultant has status and an explicit title and is usually employed by an organisation for their expertise as a contributor to a major process of change, and/or they are hired because they are an outsider; the change agent may be from within the organisation or from outside. Taking these differences into account, the work of each is very similar. Both need:

- To understand the dynamics of organisations, both small and large
- To understand the dynamics of groups of teams
- To know a good deal about the management of interpersonal issues, especially conflict and difference
- To have a fair grasp of their own emotional competence.

Perhaps the major difference between a change agent and a consultant is in some measure related to the scope of ambition and attachment to status. Many change agents are every bit as competent and sophisticated as their colleagues who describe themselves as consultants, usually, however, change agents are not paid so highly and tend to work with social and cultural organisations rather than economic want.

There is also the term *management consultant*, but for our purposes this is an entirely different occupation. Their role usually entails:

- A technical organisational brief
- Making organisational diagnosis
- Putting forward a range of recommendations: the client is then left to act upon their findings and recommendations – or not.

This manual refers to change agents and consultants working with organisational development from a human relations perspective. (There are other perspectives, such as a socio-technical systems approach.)

### The Work of the Change Agent/Organisational Consultant/Project Manager

There are many people who have a role in changing organisations, who would not at first think of themselves as change agents. There are those who:

- Have a **communication** role across an organisation
- Have a **welfare** or support function
- *May lead project teams* to generate new organisational initiatives
- Have a developmental role
- Are **designated change agents** and consultants who know, and others know, it is their work to help the organisation change.

The aim of this manual is to meet an increasing need for a framework that brings together the key elements of the work of the change agent alongside a developmental view of the organisation and its people. It is aimed at benefiting those who:

- Have a clear change agent/consultant position
- Are thinking of developing such a role
- Have a need to better understand how to help others and the organisations in which they work develop more effectively.

### **A Developmental Perspective**

The work of a change agent is often done alone, which often makes it challenging and deeply questioning. There are few signs of success that are clearly the result of your work – this makes the role of the change agent one of particular difficulty. *Preparation for the work is therefore vital.* The change agent works out of themselves and their own resources – unless they simply arrive with a stock solution to whatever problem the organisation is demonstrating. This manual is based upon a developmental perspective and recognises these factors.

A crude approach to **organisational change** may produce some quick effects but is unlikely to make a lasting (positive) impact. A developmental approach recognises firstly where people are, where the organisation is and what options arise, which then suggest the range of potential change that is possible. Whilst it is apparently slower, it is an approach that directly involves those who have to live in the change.

It also recognises that those who do not want to see the changes arrive will have an opportunity to recognise the challenges ahead and begin to make their own plans for what they might do. No organisation can expect everyone to want to make changes, just as individuals can no longer expect the organisation to look after them for life. It is the abandonment of just these kinds of past assumptions that has made organisational change such a growing activity.

### **Changing Organisations**

In this manual the terms ‘change’ and ‘development’ are used interchangeably for convenience, as they are by most people generally. However, there is a critical difference between the two which anyone involved in any organisational work needs to grasp at the outset. The differences are examined in *Section II: Organisational Development*.

Changing organisations is a nicely ambiguous beginning: organisations change anyway – by adaptation, modification, adjustment. Changing organisations is increasingly a conscious activity and there is a growing literature about how to change organisations, but organisations, as those who have been involved know only too well, are not easy to change – not in any significant way. They resist change; they often oppose innovation.

Changing organisations is about helping the people in them change. In the end, the organisation is, in large part, the sum of the people within it. Help those to change and the organisation will change. But that too is not the whole story. Very often helping people make changes to the way the organisation works involves helping them to **understand** more about how the organisation works.

Few of those of us working in organisations have been given much of an understanding of how they operate, as opposed to being able to read the organisational chart. It thus makes it more difficult to empower people to respond to situations if they are handicapped by a lack of understanding of the situation in which they are placed. Much organisational development work is, therefore, about raising people’s awareness of their circumstances; the influences upon them; the options that are before them; the choices they may be able to make and the action they could undertake.

Each one of those processes requires a complex blend of understanding, skill and description to help things make sense to those involved without either being patronising or overly complex.

Organisational change is a complex process because it involves the people, their roles, their structures, environmental factors and other influences that are acting upon the total organisational 'field'. Yet unless organisations change and learn how to manage existing in **continuous change**, they will not have much of a future in the rapidly changing world that we have entered.

Whether as a result of technological innovation, shifts in production to other countries, the application of new processes to work practices, the changing patterns of consumers or customers, all organisations acknowledge that they are in a time of great turbulence. We have moved from a time when the theme was managing change, beyond managing uncertainty to one of **managing in chaos**.

### Themes and Areas of Development

The manual is designed to introduce some of the critical models and methods of assisting organisational changes in a developmental way to those who have an interest and a commitment to working in organisations and to those they find there.

It examines the process of consultancy/change through the Seven Stage Model of Human Relations.  
It puts the work of the consultant in the context of current organisational dynamics and social change.

It is designed to enable readers to take up or develop their existing role with a greater confidence and clarity about the nature of change interventions in organisations and the dynamics of those who have to live through such changes. The manual covers:

- Ways of understanding organisations
- Development and organisations, and organisational development
- Frameworks for assessing interventions and their likely effects
- Individuals, roles, groups, teams – the organisation: how to better understand and assess them
- Authority, power, leadership and direction: some organisational myths and fantasies
- Structure, processes and the place for values
- How to go about developing the individual, the group, the team, the organisation
- Developing an assignment brief
- The consultant-client relationship: what it is and is not
- The internal states needed for change agents to remain engaged but not over-involved in the outcome of their efforts
- Managing the process: theirs and your own
- What it takes when it gets tough: reflection, development, personal support
- Review and evaluation: the work, the people, the assignment.

The manual contains many opportunities for practical involvement by the reader, which reflects the experiential approach inherent in the developmental education perspective inherent in human relations. In this model the change agent/consultant is not someone who watches from afar and makes distant pronouncements. Consultants have to work with the themes that others are living; to design strategies and outline potential approaches for their clients to assess and make decisions about. Whilst it is important to have the underlying rationale clear, it is more important that the consultant can speak to the client's 'felt sense' of things. Entering the world of the client, however, is not for therapeutic purposes; it is to enable both client and consultant to move forward in the development process. This combination of understanding of the other and the needs of the situation create a demand for immediacy and responsiveness.

## **Section I: Organisations in the 21st Century**



# 1: The Ten Features of the Coming Organisational Revolution

A summary drawn from John Heron, Bill Torbert, Charles Handy and Bob Garratt

“Doctrines of human rights are marching inexorably forward, advancing from the political to the economic arena: in particular, the doctrine that every human being has a right to participate in decisions that affect his or her needs, interests, and activities.

This right for workers to participate in managerial decision-making is reinforced by a right for increased self-determination at the site of work. And this in turn is enhanced by the spread of educational and psychological values of personal fulfilment and expression.

At the same time there is a pronounced tendency in the modern world toward large organisations. If these become monolithic, hierarchical bureaucracies, then three interrelated problems set in:

- Unmanageable complexity
- Relative inefficiency
- Human alienation among staff.

The organisational revolution stems from the need for manageable complexity and for efficiency, as well as from needs for participation, self-determination and self-realisation for persons at work.” John Heron, *The Complete Facilitator’s Handbook*, HPRP, Guildford Surrey, 1977.

This is increasingly becoming more feasible, informed by rapid advances in automation, computers, artificial intelligence and the whole range of new information and communications technology. Some features of the organisational revolution include:

- 1. Democratic representation:** increasing numbers of employees have formal representation at board level, and so participate democratically in central decision-making.
- 2. Autonomous work groups:** employees are becoming organised into smaller self-managing, peer supervision groups organising their own work and quality control.
- 3. Co-ownership and co-management:** the traditional distinction between owner, manager and worker is starting to break down. Workers and managers are becoming co-owners with other shareholders. Management is diversified and its functions shared by all staff in different ways and at different levels. The extreme of this tendency is the full-blown co-operative whose workers are the primary shareholders and who hire their managers on contract.
- 4. Consent cultures:** organisations are increasingly recognising the requirement to inform, confer with and consult their staff, rather than control them – and that this works better than the command and control style ways of operating from the past.

Many organisations find a marked degree of ambivalence about consent cultures. On the one hand, they recognise that involving people in the decisions that affect them makes it more likely that they will ‘own’ the consequences. On the other, more empowered people means more awkward questions being asked. More awkward questions means those leaders who rely upon manipulation, bullying or power plays are under notice that their days are numbered. The disruption that a change of ‘culture’ brings about is almost a life and death matter – at least for a time – in most organisations. Culture change is not simply a matter of rewriting the mission statement into more liberal and politically correct jargon.

- 5. Flexible management:** the effective manager is one who can move awarely and appropriately between the three modes of making decisions:
  - Making decisions *for* people
  - Making decisions *with* people
  - Delegating decision-making *to* people.

The analogy is sometimes made that the manager moves from the position of the 'star' player to the 'team coach'. The star player is the one who gets all the attention and is often pandered to for their momentary outbursts of creative genius. They are notoriously difficult to influence or give feedback to.

The team coach is less interested in their own standing and attention-seeking than in ensuring that what needs to be done gets done. They may well not make decisions but have confidence in those who do. They exchange power for influence and share decision-making as widely as possible in an effort to empower others.

- 6. Project teamwork:** management shifts from a classical unity of command at the upper reaches of a hierarchical pyramid, to project teams of specialists. These teams are co-operative and horizontally structured with overlapping and variable functions, and last only as long as the task requires.

'Adhocracies', as they are sometimes known, mean a blurring of lines of responsibility and status and help break down traditional departmental structures. This has a secondary effect of undermining traditional departmental rivalries and encouraging staff to view themselves as members of a 'working community'.

- 7. The 'learning organisation':** much has been made of this term and for some it is no more than a 'flavour of the month' enthusiasm. However, it points to something deeper that is at work in all organisations that have any interest in developing a place for themselves in the future. Organisations need to see themselves as 'learning systems', in which human resource development is continuously applied within them to make them self-transforming.

They need to evolve effective mechanisms for harvesting learning (not simply know-how about the product, or sales and so on, but about 'process') and ensure it is distributed effectively too. For many organisations, this suggests the introduction of a level of reflection that is little short of terrifying. Organisations are not noted for their interest in working out how they got to be where they are but are more concerned with where they are going to be in the future. However, as the pace of change quickens the need to choose where you are going wisely will increase.

- 8. The shift from wages to fees:** 'outsourcing', 'freelance working' and 'portfolio careers' are all terms that indicate a shift that is increasingly prevalent. But whatever term is used it means paying people fees for work done independently to a certain standard, rather than paying wages for time spent under managerial control. Work becomes 'professionalised'.

Home-working, flexi-hours and so on have an upside and a downside: many workers who embraced the idea of becoming independent freelancers are shocked at the level of maintenance that it costs to sustain a freelance life.

- 9. Contracting and networking:** this is the corollary of the above. Legal firms in Leeds get their typing done in the Philippines! GE Capital (the world's largest finance operation and a subsidiary of GE) has call centres operating across the world's time zones. It is cheaper that way!

The large organisation contracts-out much of its work to a network of independent professionals – individuals and teams. Individual freelancers have to spend time (and therefore money) keeping their contacts up to date, and on maintenance that is required to ensure the work continues to flow.

- 10. Federalism and devolution:** the move to federalism and devolution has an internal and external aspect. Internally, large organisations shift to the federal model, with a central secretariat serving and supporting a network of many small human-sized and semi-autonomous enterprises.

Externally, organisations are increasingly looking for 'partnerships' to share costs, equipment, development time and so on. Sometimes this may be no more than cartel-forming. It all points, however, to the recognition that some developments are simply too costly for competitors to fight against one another for the prize of getting there first and that they are also too costly for one organisation to bear alone.

## 2: Contemporary Organisations

### Features of Organisations

There are some near universal features that all organisations must share to a significant degree if they are to become organisations rather than associations, groups or clubs. (Many clubs become organisations when they achieve such a degree of complexity and sophistication in their affairs that formal procedure and rules govern not only who is represented but also how the management of the club is conducted.) An organisation that hopes to be successful has:

1. The need for people to share common aims.
2. The need to recognise that most of its work needs to be focused outside itself – meeting the needs of others (customers, or service users).
3. To recognise that it is through meeting such needs that it gains its legitimacy, rather than through profit. Profit may be necessary for survival, growth and development, but is unlikely to provide a sound or healthy basis upon which an organisation may thrive in order to serve those around it well.

### Organisational Composition

The four crucial elements of an organisation that must be considered individually and in conjunction with the others are:

1. **Structure:** how the parts are connected together and in what way.
2. **Resources:** what it requires in order to accomplish its task (including people as well as material).
3. **Processes and procedures** that facilitate the work being done.
4. **Relationships:** the importance of role-clarity and the relationship of the organisation to its stake-holders – those who matter (for whatever reason) to the future health of the organisation.

It is important that there is some attempt to balance all these areas. And since no organisation is static, the progress of an organisation will require it to adapt and modify its stance to these elements over time. However, left to themselves these elements can become so at odds with one another, or with the overall aim of the organisation itself that 'difficulties' can easily turn into major problems.

Reflection and setting aside time to prioritise in relation to real timescales, rather than short-term demands, helps an organisation generate an underlying sense of rhythm that can combat some of the upheaval and drama that many organisations experience at the present time. Priorities also need to be considered alongside the implications of the choices to be made. This is an important aspect of any organisation developing a sense of its strategy i.e. its approach towards how it will ensure its future viability and success.

Organisations do not follow predictable biological or social stages of development. They are not like people in the strict sense that they have predictable phases of development that take place at predictable points in their lifetime. One key difference between a biological perspective that uses the stages of human life as a point of comparison is that there is no necessary end to the life of an organisation. A further difference is that it can become absorbed within another organisation, taken over or transformed, in ways that are unlike the fate of human beings. Having said that, organisations do share some of the features of biological systems and there are useful points of comparison and illumination from such a perspective. For example they:

1. Are born.
2. Import energy.
3. Transform this energy to produce an output.
4. Are differentiated and functionally specialised.

Organisations are made up of 'bits'. These 'bits' may have been planned and thought out carefully; they may have evolved over time; they may be coherent and make sense of the current realities of the organisation, or they may be outdated and contribute to the difficulties the organisation faces. Organisations rarely develop in any organic or rhythmic way; 'development', such as it is, is often erratic, haphazard and without great foresight into the future. Priorities get lost in the immediate situation and long-term ambitions become platitudes that may still be repeated, but rarely are they the measure of current activity.

'Organisational development' may be too a grand term for the work of many consultants or many of their assignments, more frequently the consultant is working with one part of the system, or a group within a larger unit. Occasionally he or she may be working with all the staff, or the senior management, or even the Executive team and the CEO, but whole organisation intervention, or organisation-wide change programmes, are relatively rare.

They are becoming less so, especially in small high-tech organisations, partly because interdependent working amongst multi-professional groups often means that change in one area has knock-on effects elsewhere in the system. One of the special problems of contemporary organisational life is that many organisations have set up 'teams' or 'units' – project-based initiatives – which are often unclear in their relationship to the wider organisation's overall purpose. Sometimes they are unclear about what they are to do, or how to define success. A new initiative can be attractive in the beginning, when the promise is all, but tough to survive in when the work is not going according to someone's expectations and there is no way of countering the claims that 'you should have done more'.

Working with such units is demanding because the interaction between the unit and the wider organisation is often a key to the potential for enabling both parties to benefit. The consultant may not be given access to those parts outside the unit. The result may be that the unit now knows more clearly what it is about, and even how to get there, but the organisation itself is still unconvinced.

### **The Problem of Ownership**

There is frequently a problem of 'ownership' about projects, units or teams in organisations. Those who establish activities often cannot foresee the kinds of managerial and support systems that will be required for people entering into new areas of activity. At best, they establish a managerial or supervisory role.

Very often the people who contribute to such management teams are themselves unclear of the potential of any project, or even where it may fit into an overall policy for the organisation as a whole. As a result, there is a very marked question of lack of ownership. At such a stage, people in initiatives often feel that they are abandoned; that they are not 'owned'. They are not even 'adopted' by the agency that established them, or the group that manages them.

They often sit about waiting for someone to tell them what they should be doing; for someone to even question what they are doing. Sometimes they hope that sooner or later someone will come along and recognise all the real efforts and anxieties such pioneering work entails. Rarely does this happen.

It is not so much a question of managers not wanting to own the project, the team or the initiative, it may well be that they do not know what it would mean to take a realistic level of responsibility for a project and its staff. Staff themselves do not always want to be 'owned' and don't always know or agree about the wish to 'be owned' at all. A vacuum opens up in which project staff spend their time in great endeavour, in great seriousness, often unsure of the results they obtain and the significance of what they do. They wait with great uncertainty for someone to come along to judge the quality of their work, expecting it to be expressed in a detrimental or punitive way.

Frequently this is the end result, since those involved in the project are not pro-active enough to stimulate their own monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, or to feed the results of the activities back into the system to which they belong. In the end, the system itself starts to react to the fact that a project has been in progress for some unspecified time and no one is clear any longer about what it is doing. 'Ownership' in such circumstances feels much like being brought 'back into line'.

These are the almost inevitable consequences of much project work. They are not deliberate. They could often be remedied quite easily but, very often, the people who establish new projects and new initiatives are unaware that these are the likely consequences of what they set in motion.

Project managers, project leaders, and those involved in such activities, need to understand that they have a far more proactive potential role for feeding back information about what they are doing than they ever give themselves credit for and, rather than waiting to be 'owned', they can claim the 'right to be owned'. Of course by doing so, they lose some of their precious autonomy and freedom of action. The plea for ownership often hides behind it the advantage of having been able to do what one wanted for far too long.

### **The Importance of Reflection**

Frequently, the failure of initiatives, projects and innovation is the failure to learn that too little time is spent actually reflecting on what is being learned, and practically no time is spent in teaching others or disseminating what has been learned in a way that enables them to make more effective decisions about such things in the future. The quality issue may only be a disguise to make organisations start to have to be accountable for their activities, their strategies and their policies. We are moving away from a situation in which change has been thought of as incremental experience, where one change may be succeeded by another, but taking place against a background of a stable state of affairs to which, one day, we will all return.

We are moving to a recognition that we are living in chaos. Instability and unpredictability will become permanent features of our response. In the past, change was not understood in this way.



### 3: Strategic Development

An interest in *strategic development* comes about when those responsible for the organisation have developed a certain level of consciousness.

A strategy, to be worth the name, indicates a certain level of awareness on the part of those who put it together that ensures the organisation does not simply react to events. It is not a form of hope (though many business plans are), but a planned activity that attempts to assess the significant influences acting upon the organisation and to assign them some priority in the allocation of effort and resources. An effective strategy requires three things. It must be:

1. **Clear:** in the rationale it provides, the tasks it outlines, and the priorities it sets forward.
2. **Direct:** in its call to those it is inviting to become involved.
3. **Ambitious:** if it is to raise effort and endeavour beyond that which would take place in any event.

A successful strategy does not have to be 'right' (whatever that might mean), but it does have to be useful. It has to enable those who are taking ownership of it to make better sense of their efforts and guide their contribution. It has to give them some guidance for measuring the success or otherwise of their efforts. A strategy will consider:

- The external influences (so far as they are known)
- The internal issues (so far as they are acknowledged)
- The factors over which those in charge of the enterprise have little or no influence.

It represents an attempt to predict the likely effects of what happens upon the organisation.

#### Understanding What You Do

It is not easy to design a policy to meet the shifting circumstances facing most organisations, even in the short-term. Nevertheless a strategy has to be found to manage existing provision, to begin to look at how to 'manage the future' and to respond to the 'quality' question. The strategy must be based upon the fundamental question, 'What business are we in?' Having a common understanding throughout the organisation of the purpose for the organisation's existence is crucial. *Setting realistic targets means having modest goals.*

There is a difference, for example, between a telephone counselling service and a counselling service that happens to use telephones at present. In the immediate term it does not affect what you do with the client in front of you, but it affects what you learn about what you do, and it affects to what use you put that learning, because how you come to think about what you are doing then goes on to influence what you notice and, in turn, what you learn.

When you work with materials you can only work within the capabilities that the materials themselves have. You cannot make a tractor out of a saloon car assembly line! The process can only lead to one result. Indeed, it is designed to achieve only one result. When you have no materials you are left with a process, a process that could lead you anywhere, unless you impose some structure and limits upon it. So you had better know what they are, *or the process will lead you and you will get lost.*

When working with human beings, switching concepts about what you are doing, being willing to move targets and being willing to change as you go along are all essential. It is called being 'flexible' and 'responsive'. However, in an organisation it can lead to chaos: a kind of chaos you do not want, because you quickly reach a stage where there are so many ways of doing things without any clear authority that it is difficult to work out what is happening, or why. If there is no consistency and you change your activities without reference to any guiding principles you cannot know much about where you are.

The mechanical way of thinking that led to the industrial assembly line leads only to one place. That is precisely its strength. You do not wait at the end of the assembly line and wonder what will come off it. You simply wait to see if it is 'good enough'. For a long time we have searched to produce that kind of predictability in human affairs, but human beings are much more splendid than motor cars. Human beings see possibilities in what is happening to them and they seek to influence, or shift, what is happening to them in ways that are unpredictable and have nothing to do with what was in the minds of those who designed the 'system'.

People in human service organisations make a reality of their own out of the processes that are laid down for them to follow. You can't make helping people, for example, as predictable and linear as an assembly line in a manufacturing plant. There are just too many variables. We might try and design some predictability into our activities to produce better systems of accountability, but improvement is one thing and the elimination of the unpredictable in service response organisations is not a feasible or even a desirable goal.

### **The Consequences of Past Strategies**

Resources have tended to be added onto existing work, as policy makers recognise a new need. Often this leads to funding for the future being used to reinforce financially insecure activities in the present. Reduced funding, for example, forces a redefining of future activity. We have to sit down and ask ourselves:

- What is the central business we are now in?
- Will it then be different from the needs we were set up to meet?
- How should we decide?
- Who should we consult?
- Where does authority lie?

Perhaps most important of all these questions is the deceptively simple one:

- How did we get here?

Its importance lies in the fact that it is so obvious. Yet underneath the simple narrative of, 'Well we did this, then we did that, and then we got a chance to...' and so on is a line of continuity and the expression of an impulse that will show you all the motives, not just those you like to proclaim. It will demonstrate the 'done policy', what you did, and it will tell you what you were about.

### **Strategic Planning**

This is a very intuitive and unpredictable activity. It seems that what makes one organisation more successful than another isn't how well developed the strategy is, but how quickly the strategy is capable of being developed/amended/modified in relation to what happens. In effect this means that:

Those developing the strategy don't mistake the strategy for reality and insist things have to be a certain way, especially in the light of sudden and unexpected shifts. The danger is 'but it says in the plan that...' when the reality is clearly at odds with the plan.

The strategy needs to be recognised as a best guess and that we could all do better if... Strategies are always capable of improvement in the light of events and retrospective strategy making is one sure way of proving yourself to be right. You just wait until all the data is in and then explain how come you got to be where you are. However, this only provides a justification, not a guide to action. A strategy is generated under a time limit and extends to cover only a limited period. It is a working document not a creed to be worshipped.

A strategy is not a blueprint, but a reminder to remember where we all said we were heading. The value of the strategy is the process of getting the information together, of having the discussion that forces awareness. It helps create the need for decisions to be made about competing priorities and therefore of guiding the organisational effort in a concerted fashion in a given direction. The outcome may be very different from the strategy – especially if you operate in a very volatile or shifting environment. That doesn’t mean the strategy was poor or that it was ‘wrong’.

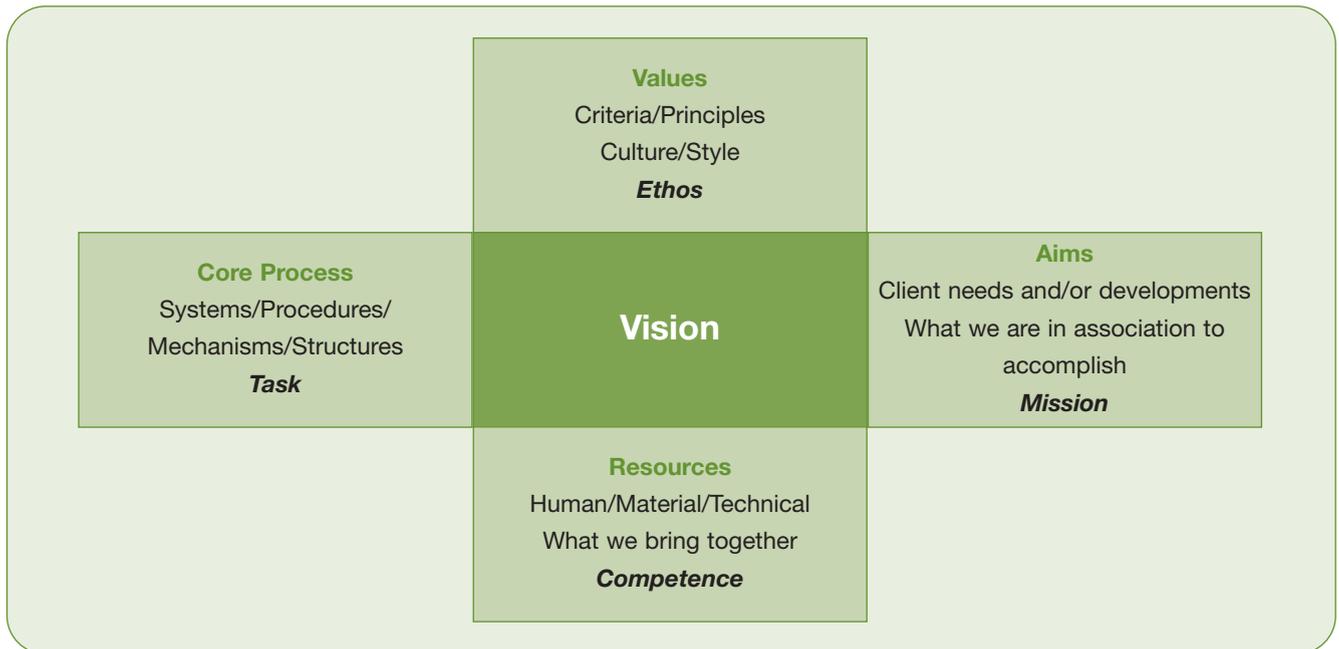
Most strategies need to be worked at and revised because (like so many things) it is the practice that matters and not the result. Learning to think strategically is perhaps the most underdeveloped process in most SMEs.

Having a strategy and being able to change it is part of what makes some organisations sloppy and unfocused, and others dynamic and creative. Many organisations make up their strategy as a way of explaining why they got to where they were – an important task but not a strategic one.

**The Four Areas of Attention**

All four areas inter-relate and interact. Starting anywhere should lead to a check on the remaining areas to ensure there is a ‘fit’ between:

1. What we are doing: **Core process.**
2. How we are doing it: **Values.**
3. Who and what with: **Resources.**
4. In the light of the mission we are here to fulfil: **Mission.**



**Figure 1: The Four Areas of Attention**



## 4: Teams, Groups and Projects in Organisations

### A Team

**A team** is small number of people with competence and skills, who are committed to a common purpose, a set of performance goals and an approach for which they hold themselves mutually committed.

Teams have certain attributes:

- There is a common purpose: related to core process
- When the task is done, the team ends; if the task is changed, the team is reviewed
- Everyone is a leader.

### Project Groups

Project groups are formed out of people brought together to develop or deliver a specific organisational contribution, or to meet an organisational priority. Project groups may develop many of the characteristics of a team and may even function much like one, but they are not required to evolve to such a level of inter-dependence and they are unlikely to be remaining together for the length of time that requires it.

Some form of development may be useful in helping them gel together, but it may well fall short of team building. They need:

- Enough confidence to know that they have what they need
- The know-how to relate to one another sufficiently to be able to get on with it
- Some key individual to whom they can relate to enable them to resolve any unforeseen difficulties that may arise.

This may well be sufficient. Two of the influences upon the evolution of the project team have been the rapid changes in the environment and changing technology that is being introduced into organisations.

### Effective project groups have:

- Loyalty to organisation, healthy social structures
- Shared values
- Acknowledgement of expertise
- Freedom within clear limits
- Identification with organisation
- Clear sanctions
- Been built around the skill levels of individuals
- The necessary range and levels of skills present in the group.

### Aspects of work groups to consider:

- Content: task or work
- Process: quality of interaction, relationships
- What are the aims of the group?
- What are the criteria for membership?

- Review and evaluation need to be a planned part of the work
- Silence needs to be seen as valuable
- Minute-taking is not useful; shared notes can help keep people up-dated
- A work group does not need to act like a committee
- Sensing the mood and formulating it is more useful than formal voting
- The decision to 'wait until' is not necessarily 'putting off' or 'parking'
- Inter-relatedness of teams to other parts of the organisation
- Middle management is not a blanket to smother you or put out your fires
- Continuous development towards increased responsibility
- Greater flexibility needs to be aimed for
- How to get more from less is the art; if you put in the effort, it works
- Conflict resolution is not team development
- Team development requires investment, time, money.

In the workplace of the future most people could undertake most aspects of most roles to one degree or another (this is the principle of inter-changeability). In other words, competence will be high across roles and tasks in organisations. There will be a corresponding need for less hierarchy; flatter structures will mean that differences will not be so great between functions and those fulfilling them. The relative positions of individuals will therefore be related to choice, life stage, and personal circumstance – a drastic re-organisation of the social system (this is an emergent role). This will require new kinds of organisational members: change agents; people employed to consider the health and maintenance of staff and human relations specialists. All one way or another can be seen as:

- **System-developers:** people who are asking the questions that the organisation will have to live with when change and development are taking place
- **Inter-personal, human relations specialists:** people who know *how* to ask questions in a form that enhances human relations.

## 5: A Way of Understanding Organisations

In order to understand organisations, their life, their culture and how they function it is useful to identify the following areas. Examining each in turn and in conjunction with others will enhance clarity and awareness of the effectiveness, needs and the way forward for the organisation.

- The structure within which the work takes place
- The management arrangements that are likely to be operating
- The roles and responsibilities of those involved and the range of different professional groups combined together
- The actual work itself
- The funding arrangements within which the work is conducted
- The inter-relationship of all those elements and parties involved.

All these are undergoing substantial and continuing change in our current social conditions.

### Organisations as a 'Living Being'

Making a comparison with the human being – body, soul and spirit – is a useful metaphor with which most people can identify.

#### Physical

- Buildings: hardware, capital i.e. money, and spiritual capital i.e. people. What is there when everyone has gone?
- Life forces: available funds, in plants, all that moves
- Processes: which is the core process?
- The need to meet the needs of those you respond to
- Information flows: decision-making, money, cash flow
- Procedures and regulations: the flow
- Time management: how it is used, actual priorities, basic values come to expression and are a consequence of what is, rather than what we would like it to be.

#### Soul

- Relationships and their quality: ways of working together and other arrangements; hierarchy or not; games, openness and secrecy
- Stakeholders: who are they and what part do they play?
- Role clarity: the more flexible roles become the more the work is required to be clear.

#### The Self or Spirit

- Expresses itself in the structure, systems, biography of the organisation's footsteps
- Are individuals committed to the values for the future?
- The shadow and the secret life: the dreams and ideals and what they have been made into.

#### Together

- How do they all relate: what is the gestalt – health and illness?
- Not from ill to normal but normal to healthy
- How careful is the organisation to examine itself?
- How does it go about it and who does it involve?
- Is there a process to develop its own process to investigate its own life, or is it seen as 'navel-gazing'?

## Uncovering Frameworks

The following questions can all help in 'reading' an organisation:

**1. What is the organisation created to do?**

What type of organisation is it and how similar or dissimilar is it from others?

**2. Who does the organisation serve?**

Looking at the needs it meets and working back from that.

**3. What is the organisational stage of development?**

Recognising there are phases and each one has characteristics that are useful for guiding and influencing what is possible and practical.

**4. Where does the organisation fit?**

Where does it fit in relation to other or larger units of which it forms a part? This helps uncover something of the organisation's capacity to act independently or may help explain its continual dilemma about finding a direction or responding to key themes.

**5. What's the organisational story?**

This looks at the organisation as living out a history and useful understanding can be drawn from it.

**6. Where is the organisation placed in relation to its competitors and supporters?**

This helps create a picture of its relative strength or weakness amongst the field of activity in which it participates.

**7. What is the organisation's structure?**

This looks at the forces that are at play within the organisation and which have to be taken into account in any process of change.

**8. What is happening to the environment in which the organisation exists?**

This opens up the range of questions about the relative security of the organisation in relation to a wider field of players.

**9. How is the organisation placed in relation to technological innovation relevant to its own field of activity?**

This uncovers information about the changes that are subject to all players in an industry.

**10. How is the organisation placed in its locality?**

This starts to uncover knowledge about the organisation's spread of interests, influence, loyalties and the implications those have for its development.

**11. Who provides the resources?**

What is its most neglected resource?

**12. How does it survive?**

This uncovers what keeps it in 'business': profits, subscriptions, endowments.

**13. Where do the major threats lie – including complacency?**

This also includes discovering where its strongest support comes from and exploring whether it is going to remain that way.

## 6: The First Stages of Organisation

<p><b>Stage One:</b> <b>Enthusiastic Pioneering</b></p>	<p>Enthusiasm Uncertainty Informality Networking Role overlap</p>	<p>Hostility Hesitancy Low levels of coherence Unpredictability Faltering connections</p>
<p><b>Stage Two:</b> <b>Activity: First Signs of Routine</b></p>	<p>Role clarity Working to plans 'Politics' plays a part Caution and calculation</p>	<p>Less radical/threatening Measures/assessments Over-structured Alliances/deals</p>
<p><b>Stage Three:</b> <b>Organising</b></p>	<p>Direction Vision Strategy Management</p>	<p>Wouldn't it be nice...? Done that We might have to change More to manage</p>

**Table 1: The First Stages of Organisation**

Stage three is a threshold: *organisation* rather than *organising* becomes a real possibility and a real challenge. It means accepting an identity rather than redefining the activity as it suits. It means counting for some things rather than others – quality of service, growth of organisation, focus on internal values – priorities have to be adopted.

There is more to manage and it takes more time.

Work well done at this stage lays a solid foundation for the future. Avoided it may mean the project continues for a long time, but the momentum will not take off. This is often a time when some people leave because of the new demands and the increasing acceptance of organisational understanding that is required. Solo players often feel rebellious; innovation of a different kind and for a time is required.



## 7: Organisational Portrait

Think of the organisation as a person and build up a character portrait. Here are some of the headings that may help.

- Name
- Age
- Sex
- Position in the family
- Physical build and appearance
- Parentage
- Family background
- Family expectations
- Hobbies
- Friends
- Economic circumstances
- Schooldays
- Early experiences
- Who do they admire?
- Who do they want to be?
- What qualities have they developed?
- What do they need to develop?
- Character traits/faults
- Best worst features
- What kind of landscape are they living through?
- Who do they meet?
- What challenges have they had to overcome?
- What are their triumphs and struggles?
- What are they hoping for next?
- What are they afraid might become of them?



## **Section II: Organisational Development**



## 8: Development and Systems

**Development always takes place within a context.**

### Systems: Aspects of Development

We all live in systems: whether we are aware of it or not; whether we choose to or not; whether we like it or not! Having accepted this fundamental truth, it becomes apparent that if anyone is to develop into 'wholeness', this development cannot take place in isolation. It is impossible to understand human development merely by focusing on individuals, or on what transpires inside them, because the ways in which individuals develop are influenced not only by other individuals but by society as well. This section looks at some of the influences and factors which will affect an individual's development from both a personal and an organisational perspective.

"The human order is nothing other than this world we build together. That we build it together does not mean that we have to conform. On the contrary, one must stand one's ground and make one's unique contribution. This is not a matter of the individual versus society, for we are all part of the common order together." Friedman, *Dialogue and the Human Image*, Sage, 1992.

A system is a set of elements that are inter-related and influence and affect one another, thus understanding a system is about learning how the parts combine together to play their role in the total performance. A human system has people as the components, which includes their history and culture, their personal biographies and their collective identity. All systems interact beyond themselves and are influenced by other systems that impinge upon them. Sometimes other systems facilitate the work of one system; sometimes they challenge or threaten it. The more inter-related systems are, the more vulnerable they are and the more influential they can be. Systems also contain many paradoxes.

"...the human community is made up of people and systems interrelating, and support and challenge are the hallmarks of effective communities. A basic theme of this model is that any approach to meeting the developmental needs of people must keep individuals and the systems in which they live *in focus simultaneously*. No system can afford to ignore the developmental need of its members... *as human beings, we are unique because of the extent to which our behaviour is mediated by an active construction of the meaning of an event; it cannot be explained by evoking a simple stimulus-response pairing.*" Egan and Cowan, *People in Systems*, Brooks/Cole Publishing, Monterey, California, 1979.

There are four system levels which need to be taken into account:

1. **Micro-system:** small and immediate settings, such as personal groupings, friendship networks.
2. **Meso-system:** the network of personal settings – the influence of school upon home; the club group upon the church and so on.
3. **Exo-system:** social organisations and institutional forms that have an impact at a social level, including the legal system and the taxation system. (Including interactions among organisations; organisation-to-organisation, which, of course, can have massive impact upon individual lives.)
4. **Macro-system:** the culture in which a person is living.

### The Role of the Professional

The 'professional' is accorded an almost unique position in our current culture. The knowledge and expertise they have acquired through their training is seen as 'special' and is very often protected by them. In this way they, with all the trappings of professionalisation, restrict entry conditions and accreditation systems, maintain a kind of mystique and specialness which is partly intended to encourage their separateness, status and perceived 'specialness'. Yet the role of the professional is radically changing and they need to explore how their gifts and expertise can be best used if they are to maintain any credibility and/or status in the future world view.

“Those who work at an applied level cannot afford the constraints of a one-sided perspective, whether it favours the individual, or the system. Development is an adaptive process; people and systems change in order to meet new demands that arise from the environment. People who are concerned with the development of human beings need also to be concerned about the quality of life in the human settings of those with whom they are involved.

...Professionals tend not to ‘give away’ their expertise to those they serve, but preserve it with the status and mystique that attaches to any specialism. The issue of how best to serve people is something too important for either professionals or their clients to decide alone. It needs a collaborative dialogue.” Egan and Cowan, *People in Systems*, Brooks/Cole Publishing, Monterey, California, 1979.

### **‘Animateurs’**

Animateurs, or social activists, are those who are in touch with the best of theory and research and can use their understanding to inform programmes and service delivery mechanisms in a productive way. They have a ‘commitment to theory-and-research-based action for people’. *And there are not enough of them.* They:

- Provide a means of translating theory and research into outlines and frameworks of how things might work
- Generate frameworks for action or intervention for practitioners
- Help stimulate programme ideas and suggest ways of approaching ‘on-the-ground’ issues
- Stimulate further action research into the potential for future learning
- Remain open to change and modification in the light of experience
- Use the means available to bring change about in ways that are creative and participative.

By the nature of the activity, an animateur is not likely to act in a conventional manner. To use the jargon, they ‘think outside the box’ and use that to inform their action. This does not mean they never go back and review, but reflection serves the commitment to change the world.

### **System Elements and Design**

Effective systems require those designing, managing or developing them to bear in mind the key attributes, and to have ways of responding effectively to those areas that most need attention. Since a system is a living organism, just like any other, there will always be something to attend to, and there will always be a temptation to interfere rather than let it get on with its own life. The balance between ‘creative interference’ and simple trouble making is not always easy to find at the moment of action; however, the results of the two approaches are quite clear in the outcome. The elements which need to be addressed include the aspects highlighted in the box below.

#### **System Elements and Design**

1. Knowledge of human behaviour.
2. Capacity for effective needs assessment.
3. Clarity of mission.
4. Suitability and appropriateness of goals.
5. Effective delivery of programmes.
6. Relevant training and education.
7. An effective range of other resources.
8. A structure that supports the efforts of those involved.
9. Relationships that the structure facilitates.
10. Communication.
11. Climate and culture.
12. A healthy relationship with the external environment.

#### **Box 1: System Elements and Design**

1. **Knowledge of human behaviour:** an accurate and appropriate level of understanding of how individuals behave and are influenced that is relevant to the degree of sophistication of the enterprise.
2. **Capacity for effective needs-assessment:** an effective way of measuring that the service or product being offered sufficiently matches the needs of those who will receive or purchase it.
3. **Clarity of mission:** a clear understanding of the system's purpose and its role in the wider context.
4. **Suitability and appropriateness of goals:** a range of goals that ensure all contributors understand the purpose of the organisation at a strategic and operational level, and that they know how their contribution fits into the overall effort.
5. **Effective delivery of programmes:** the ability to construct effective and efficient means by which the organisation can accomplish what it requires in order to fulfil its mission and stay in business.
6. **Relevant training and education:** a well developed means of ensuring that those involved are maintained at a level of competence and ability required for the organisation to develop and adapt to the changing circumstances that form part of its environmental niche.
7. **An effective range of other resources:** a recognised pool of resources and a clearly described method of allocating how, under what circumstances and who can obtain them, for what purpose.
8. **A structure that supports the efforts of those involved:** the creation of a set of working arrangements that enable those involved in doing the work to get on with the minimum of unnecessary interference.
9. **Relationships that the structure facilitates:** a recognition that the relationships between people at work are largely a result of the structural possibilities that are created. Only if there is some encouragement to extend or modify the structural possibilities will some forms of officially approved relationships take place. Regardless of whether the system wishes it or not, and no matter what the structure, people are inventive and will not let a structure get in the way of their desires, if the desires are strong enough.
10. **Communication:** all systems depend upon communication. It is the lifeblood of any organisation. The more abstract the information, or the more layers of interpretation through which it is filtered, the less valuable it tends to be. The degeneration of information is formidably fast. The more decisions that can be taken in 'real time', the less time is wasted on waiting for the information to arrive and working out what it might mean: savings are immediate. 'Real time', however, means mistakes are also immediately costly.
11. **Climate and culture:** this concerns the quality of the system's internal world, its relative health, or not. It is important to look at whether the culture of the organisation fosters goodwill, co-operation and openness rather than secretiveness and resentments, whether there are good relationships between departments or projects and whether information is freely shared rather than held for 'parochial' reasons, or reasons of fear or envy.
12. **A healthy relationship with the external environment:** the need to manage the relationship between the organisation and the wider community in which it sits. Failure to pay attention to changes in the external environment can be a major source of failure for organisations that believe the world will always be sufficiently unchanging for them to have a role, such as schools.



## 9: Exploring Systems

First identify the grouping, unit, or the set of arrangements that you are using as a 'system' – such as a group of colleagues, a social group, a work group, the organisation. In order to learn about 'systems and yourself', the 'system' that you pick doesn't have to be something that fits into a strict definition. A 'system', for our purposes, is any entity that is independent, or can be thought of as independent to you.

Some people even pick 'themselves' as a system and use the exercise to find out more about how the parts of themselves fit together, work together, or get in each other's way. The scope is wide and, for the benefit of learning, almost anything will provide a basis for you to work out more of your understanding.

### Stage One

#### Where have I got to with the system?

If this is a system that you have already identified and thought about, this is a reflective question, asking you to bring yourself up to date with what is current in your thinking about the system and your response to it.

#### What have you attempted?

If this is a system in which you have a role in assisting, managing or otherwise influencing, then what have you been attempting to accomplish and how far has it evolved?

#### Summary

This is a way of updating yourself on where you are with your system before launching into the exercise proper.

### Stage Two

#### My intention/purpose

There are different levels of involvement in a system that may be the focus of the work you do. It can go all the way from direct intervention to accomplish a specific goal, to the more general and exploratory that is used to acquire a richer understanding. Is it to:

- Gain more experience of how the system works?
- Learn more about how I operate inside the system or in relation to the system?
- Influence the system in some specific way that I need to work out more clearly before attempting?
- Apply an approach or framework to some part of it – to 'nudge' it forward in a direct fashion?

### Stage Three

Spend some time appraising the system against the following kind of headings so that you ensure that you cover the system as a whole and don't get over-concerned with the bit that most interests or preoccupies you. (This often helps to loosen your thinking.)

1. **Effectiveness:** of the system – in relation to its task.
2. **Culture:** in relation to the atmosphere.
3. **Opportunity:** in relation to individual development.
4. **Obstacles:** the limits/the 'givens' of the system. Those things that are real difficulties and those that people imagine or allow to influence them.
5. **Opportunities:** where are the openings, the scope for movement?
6. **Resources:** what can you call on to help the system's development in the way of material or people?

Using your map from the earlier session, work through these headings, spending more time on the more important ones in relation to your intention.



## 10: The Development Process

The individual carries within themselves the impulse to realise their own potential, to contribute to the development of those around them and to make a contribution to the life and quality of the groups to which they become attached.

The development process can be distinguished from change and growth with which it is often compared:

**Change:** indicates that something will be different, but may occur in any direction.

**Growth:** indicates that something will get bigger.

**Development:** indicates movement of a significant, qualitative aspect.

Development is:

- Bringing out what is latent or potential within
- Bringing to a more advanced or more highly organised state
- Working out the potentialities of advancing through successive stages to a higher, more complex or more full state
- Not necessarily gradual and incremental: a definite jump to a new state of being.

### Elements of Development

#### Elements of Development

1. All processes of change or crisis have within them the potential for development.
2. The work of identifying how the present lives out of the past is an essential step.
3. Only with a realistic reckoning of the contributions of all involved, can the conditions for development begin to flourish.
4. Development arises out of the creative tension between the potential of the individual, group or organisation and its attempt to adapt to the circumstances in which it finds itself.
5. Circumstances may be encouraging and benign, or challenging and hostile.
6. Within the concept of development is the need to recognise decline, decay, dying and death itself.

#### Box 2: Elements of Development

It follows that development is possible in all situations and that the potential for change requires those involved to engage with themselves, those around them and their circumstances. Working in this way is essentially an *educational activity*: it raises questions of values, purpose, identity and commitment.

### Organisations and Development

Organisations tend to change much more via adaptation than by planned effort – despite the amount of organisational

change that is taking place. Unless provoked, most organisations, like most systems that have evolved some degree of symbiotic relationship to the world around themselves, only modify what they do in order to retain a sense of familiarity and stability. Organisations, though they are peopled by human beings who all have a will and a view of things of their own and who all can influence what happens (to some degree), are also not in agreement about what needs to be done about what, when. So even in organisations that know they need to change, persuading people of the need to change, let alone getting them to do it, is a mighty task.

A lot of the organisational change that we are experiencing at the moment is imposed change: change brought about to the structure or framework within which organisations have to work. Such change does lead to organisational change, but again it is more likely to be change that modifies things to match what is needed than change as a dynamic opportunity to reappraise how things are done in a fundamental way. Such change tends to be fearful for all concerned because there is no guarantee at the end of it all that what will be in place will suit those left with the work to do. When change on this scale is introduced, it is often the case that redundancies and mass shake-outs are part of the process. It then becomes a form of organisational change that disturbs the whole organisation and just about everyone within it. These kinds of influences and forces at work are a long way from planned, organisational development.

### **Capacity Building**

There has been a good deal of interest in this thing called capacity building in the last ten years or so. It can mean capacity in the way of a wider set of ideas, in terms of mobilising the resources so an organisation can get more out of what it already has or it can mean increasing the numbers of staff e.g. volunteers. The real issue with capacity is deciding what you need in order to do what. It is important to look at how to make more effective use of the resources and people the organisation already has rather than automatically going to look for more.

Capacity building is often based on the assumption that there is something lacking – it is part of something bigger – and there is a need to build the capacity of organisations. Capacity building is larger than organisational development: it has to take in *all* the actors to which an organisation is tied. Capacity building is the capacity of an organisation to reflect, be aware and be conscious, but does the raising of consciousness necessarily kindle enthusiasm and responsibility?

Capacity appears in how the elements of an organisation are working with one another, and how they are integrated into the organisation. The necessity for short-term dependency in capacity needs to be acknowledged, if we do not do that we start to lie. Power relations can be dynamic, but only if we acknowledge their real nature and you don't get passion if there is no honesty. Many questions and issues are raised with respect to capacity building:

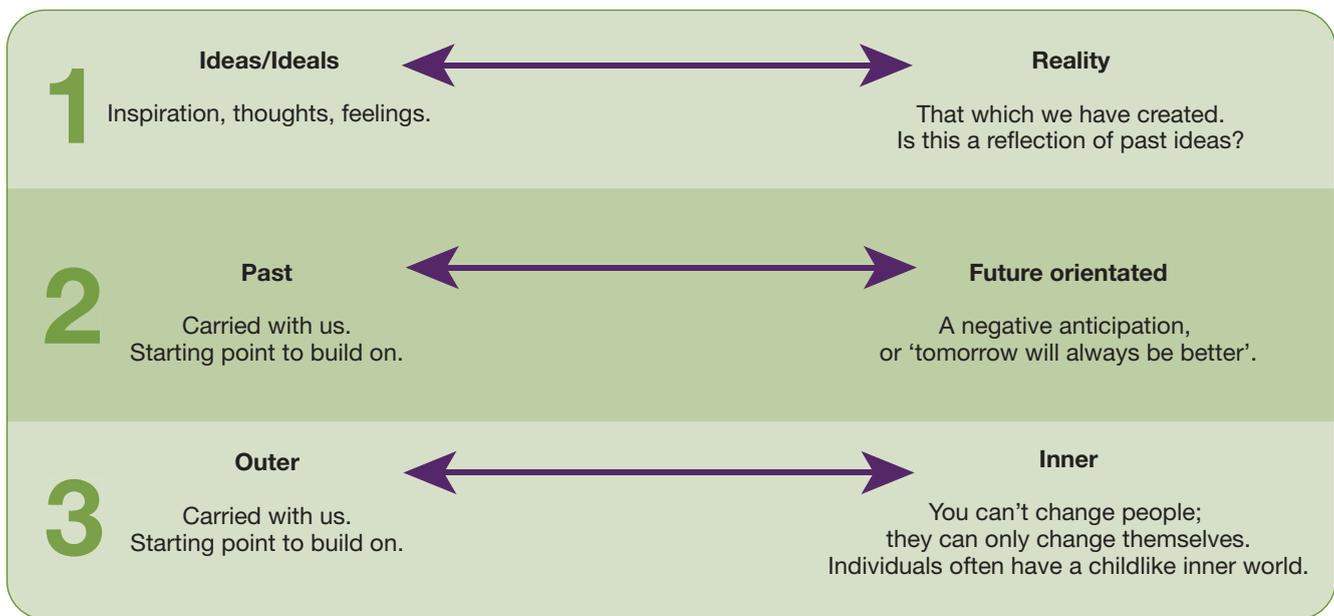
- Capacity building begins with building your own capacity: if we have a good relationship with our inner selves we have a better chance of having a good relationship with the outer world
- We need to know the limits of what we bring to capacity building and develop the necessary skills within those limits
- How do we build individuals to build organisations or build community?
- Which 'layer' are people referring to when they use this term?
- 'Capacity building' should be used as the criterion for assessing the quality of what anybody brings – trainer, donor, consultant or whoever
- Organisational development can be disabling in the sense that raising consciousness beyond an organisation's capacity to act is going too far
- The capacity to act is a key capacity.

**Development and the Three Polarities**

A human being progresses, not only in a linear direction, but also goes through a number of life stages, (infancy, adolescence etc.). Throughout that process major developmental shifts occur that are based upon the relative success of previous stages, and these changes amount to a transformation of the past. Development is linked to the relationship between each of three polarities and their relationship to one another. The three polarities are:

1. Ideas/ideals v reality.
2. Past v future orientation.
3. Outer v inner.

A balance is never found except for a moment, so there is always tension and healthy conflict between the various needs of the different polarities. This concept can be applied to many, many settings including that of organisational life.



**Table 2: The Three Polarities**

**1. Ideas/Ideals versus Reality:** the first polarity is that between things as we would wish them to be and the reality with which we have to work. Finding a relationship between imagination and creativity and the hard facts of the world is a matter of constant reassessment:

- A good idea ahead of its time may be left for others to exploit later
- Failing to act in the light of the needs of the situation for fear of failing has stopped many an initiative from succeeding when it had every chance.

Reality testing is often unpleasant, for our ideas and dreams are not always received with the degree of compassion and interest we would wish. In this way many potentially good ideas can be squashed, just as over-encouragement to an ill-thought out plan serves no one in the end. The loss of a good idea because the holder wasn't willing to work to bring others along and build a shared sense of endeavour ensures many potentially valuable efforts fail to evolve as they might. Development, then, is not a foregone conclusion leading confidently to an ultimately valuable direction. Much development has struggle and setbacks; regression is part of development and is often a necessary phase of reforming and reassessing. For development to become a conscious and willed aspect of one's life, it is useful to have some place, or relationship, that enables us to take stock and make assessments of progress and failure too.

- 2. Past – Future Orientation:** all development takes place through time. We live in the present moment caught between the past and the future. Our own culture looks back to the past and sees development largely as a matter of unfolding from a point of origin to a destination in the future, as though the future were a passive element in the equation. *But the future is an active agent in all our lives.*

The trends and ideas at work in our lives all herald a future, all generate an influence that modifies the past and that casts a new light upon what took place in the past. Only at great and unmistakable moments are we reminded of this aspect of the interaction between past and future. The fall of the Berlin Wall and all that it stands for is a moment that enables us to rewrite the history of an era. But it is often only when such a moment has taken place that we can confidently see the trends and the movements that were at work leading towards that end – nevertheless they were there.

We can see the past as a prison-house of memories or a treasure store of resources awaiting a new opportunity to release them. For most of us, our past isn't something we have explored with a positive view of seeking the talents and abilities that have found expression there: the resourceful needs with which we may have managed a difficult situation; the courage with which we met a challenge or the dedication that we offered to sticking at a task that required completing. In these kinds of ways and through the use of biography work we can release potential from the past to aid us in our work in the future and begin to experience the present as a moment of dynamic expectation.

- 3. Outer and Inner:** all of us have to choose between action and contemplation. We cannot live exclusively inside ourselves; nor only out in the world. Action has to be balanced with reflection and reflection needs to be tested with new experience and challenge. Understanding something of one's temperament and needs can make the tension between the demands of the inner and outer aspects of our efforts nourish our overall development. Too much attention to the demands of the world and we may lose ourselves. Too much time spent understanding who and where we are may leave us unfit for action. A world that prizes accomplishment as much as ours does, however, stands in danger of underestimating the value of inner work and of giving it insufficient time to really contribute to the development process.

## 11: Developmental Requirements

### Organisational Attributes

Not all attributes apply equally to all organisations. Some of those highlighted here will fit some organisations at certain stages of their development more usefully than others but they do highlight the 'type' of attributes to consider in making an organisational assessment. Some of the qualities that highlight the potential for organisational success during an unstable period of change include:

- The entrepreneurial qualities of the founder
- The timeliness of the enterprise
- The ecological suitability of the project – finding a niche before other rivals
- Clarity about whether it is:
  - The development of an existing enterprise
  - A new type of enterprise
  - Creating a need
  - Adding another variation: is this one more fast food restaurant or is this a new concept?
- That the size is small, efficient and fast working
- That it is not routine-bound and there is an investment in building and creating a way of operating that responds to what is being learned
- That wages stay small but assets grow
- That the members believe they may well be worth more but they do not take anything out of the enterprise beyond what they need to spend.

*Organisational 'drift' can be thought of as the gap between innovation and actuality.*

### Survival

*If management is 'the activity of enlightenment' then quality is 'contemplation upon activity'.*

There are a number of issues which must be addressed by all members of an organisation if it is to survive into the future. All aspects of organisational life will be affected by the rapid changes currently taking place in the world of work and in what is expected from, and by, the workforce of today. The growing, viable organisation will need to explore these aspects of organisational life in an active and committed way. The following sections highlight the areas organisations will have to come to terms with.

- Learning to thrive on chaos
- Embracing innovation and change; learning from and about them
- Working with 'Where You Are', and 'What You Have', rather than wishing it were different
- Becoming committed to 'Managing the Future'.

## Implications of Organisational Development

### 1. Implications for Practice

- An increase in collaborative styles of work
- Increased flexibility of response at all levels of the organisation
- A willingness to experiment
- A recognition of the value of differentiation
- An ability to deal with 'information anxiety' and act responsively
- A recognition of the need to change beliefs about 'what' and 'who' we are
- An understanding that the cultural climate of the organisation will influence everything else that happens.

### 2. Implications for the Future

- There will be a need to develop a culture to support innovation and change
- New and unwelcome service developments are to be expected
- Thinking needs to be seen as an acceptable activity and not a dangerous disease
- Time spent learning is as important as anything else and must be acknowledged
- 'Applied use of self' means *personal development is to be encouraged*.

### 3. What Does This All Add Up To?

- An organisation that learns by what it does and thinks about what it does and has a mechanism that ensures that learning is identified and applied
- An organisation in which individuals contribute more of themselves
- An organisation that is responsible for its own direction.

All this adds up to development, not training. You cannot, by definition, train people for the unknown. You can only prepare them. Training will play a part in that preparation, but it will not accomplish everything.

*Development is the activity that will help people move into the future.*

People can respond to change well or badly. When change offers the possibility of development they have to be managed effectively and that requires the design of a programme to help them. It also means answering the essential question, 'What is the business that we are in?' in ways that all involved both understand and 'own'.

## 12: Approaching Development

### Moving Forward

For a group to move forward and become visible it needs to consider:

- Its tasks
- The membership
- The boundaries
- The structure to maintain it.

There are dangers of a group going nowhere if people come together out of fear or isolation from elsewhere. Without positive need in their gathering together it will be impossible to progress.

There are a number of dimensions to consider:

#### 1. Needs and Dangers

Needs		Dangers
Head	Thought	Avoid overextended ambitions.
Heart	Feeling	Contact at the expense of real relationship.
Action	Willing	Mindless activity without connection to purpose.

*Table 3: Needs and Dangers in Approaching Development*

#### 2. Tasks

- a. Those things that are needed to get people to contribute.
- b. Those things that make it worthwhile.
- c. Those things that would represent a useful development.

#### 3. Membership

- a. Who will be involved?
- b. What kind of commitment is required?

#### 4. Boundaries

- a. Frequency of meeting.
- b. Length of meeting.
- c. Practical agreements.

#### 5. The Structure of Maintenance

- a. What arrangements would give us what we need?
- b. Who would have to do what?



## 13: Developing a Vision

### Stages of Development

There are certain stages that need to be addressed in development. The stages will generally follow each other sequentially or there will be no realistic basis upon which to build the development. These stages are:

1. Identifying needs.
2. Formulating a direction.
3. Assessing the networks of interest.
4. Testing out commitment.
5. Working it out.
6. Managing the enterprise.
7. Growing up.
8. Assessing where we have reached.

New ideas will change reality, if people commit themselves to the realisation of those ideas. Without that commitment they become illusions and fantasies. An existing reality is based on ideas of the past, which have become part of people's habitual thinking, which forms a natural source of resistance to new ideas.

*The past has to be transformed into the future.* Some people and/or organisations are very dominated by the security the past offers; some pioneers race ahead with their ideas about the future leaving all that has been grown in the past behind them, missing the opportunity for building and transformation. Most business people have directed their lives towards controlling and changing the world around them, but an organisational culture will not change unless people review their own values, habit patterns and life style. Becoming too inward, on the other hand, may lead to stagnation in the outer world.

### Moving Forward

Those involved in an initiative or project need to learn how to build pictures of their inspirations together. The starting place is a picture of what is actually there, present to begin with. This may sometimes be painful; for example, we may find that a particular reality is of our own making and that our shadow side has kept things hidden from view. We may have to recognise something of our limitations.

The 'Shadow' is the part that no one talks about, although it is usually the most significant issue in group, just as in personal, life. At a certain stage of development, a willingness to look at the ways in which we haven't lived up to all we would wish ourselves to be, to face and meet our inner demons and temptations, though painful, generates a move towards an increased integration and wholeness. 'Skeletons in the cupboard' stop development. In order to face the shadow, a safe environment is required – one that is non-judgmental, and supportive. Once exposed and after some time for healing has been allowed, the questions to raise are:

- How can we move forward?
- What is the next step?

Relevant questions for a picture of the future situation you want to create are:

- What will the situation look like?
- What values do you wish to see realised?
- What size of group or organisation is wanted or needed?
- Who will be there?
- What will we be doing?

**Fantatising does not equal imagination that is based on reality.**

The key task is to identify the core process; the essential features of what is being attempted. There may be other important processes, systems and arrangements at work and they may even be essential for the core process to exist at all, but the core process is what, in the end, holds things together and provides the *raison d'être* for what will harness people's contributions. This requires a maturity of relationship with whoever is involved in the discussion. Even those working alone need to find a good speaking partner with whom there exists a quality of relationship.

**Development is a continuous process of planning, working, changing and evaluating.**

### **Consensus Decision Making**

When steps are being considered and pictures are being formed about the current situation, it can be very difficult to find a real consensus amongst all interested parties. Awareness of the following observations will help.

1. **False consensus leads to compromise**, which in turn leads to half-truths.
2. **False consensus indicates bad preparation** of a decision. The work to prepare a decision must be thorough, explorative, and the mood of the meeting sensed.
3. There is a need to **clarify the issues** before seeking a decision.
4. Someone needs to be **willing to carry the decision**.
5. It can often be seen at the beginning who is going to 'own' a decision and **unless a decision is 'owned' it is unlikely that it will be implemented with any useful effect**.
6. For anyone who feels there is no first step necessary at this stage, **consolidation** is fine as a conscious step in development.
7. **Communication** can only be truly done in a safe environment. Sharing biographies, for example, 'This is where I've come from and what this step means for me...' is a way of getting to know people, leading to feelings of safety.
8. There is a **need to support one another**. The person who goes first in sharing biographies is often the most insecure and gives quite a superficial picture and then comes back (sometimes) and adds to his/her biography. (A useful tip is not to address the painful issues as a first step.)

## 14: Phases of Organisational Development

### Pioneering Organisations

Organisational development often starts with an enthusiast, also known as a pioneer or entrepreneur. This is someone who sees that something new or better can be done *based* on an identified need with an element of intuition and 'I can do it'. A number of features are recognisable in the pioneer organisation.

#### 1. Characteristics

- Talking to others
- Obsessive
- Actively networking
- Want something to happen
- Others prepared to follow or support.

#### 2. Main Orientation

- Everything for the user/client/customer.

#### 3. Other Aspects

- Based on a lot of knowledge of the user group
- Also based on knowledge of staff – personal knowledge
- Development is on the basis of the person: what can be built on them and their connections
- Improvisation
- Flexibility
- Rough and ready
- It works because they all believe in the enthusiasm making a difference – they stay in touch with one another
- This phase does not welcome specialisation... consultants are folk to be wary of
- Advisors may be called in but they need to know their place: it can often feel to the outsider as disorientated as there are no 'tight' guidelines.

#### 4. Leadership

- Often charismatic but autocratic leadership; lots of support and confrontation
- Informal or hidden power structures
- Listens
- Not logical – but rather what fits
- Little organisational structure
- Leadership structure is not there.

#### 5. Weaknesses

- Vulnerable: what happens when enthusiasm needs to be transformed?
- One person cannot replace the initial enthusiast
- This system breeds followers not leaders
- If the founder goes, it becomes chaotic
- Succession does not meet standards
- If it grows too quickly and the original enthusiasts don't know everyone, there will be blind spots
- Specialisation becomes necessary
- Leads to crisis
- 'Let's get organised'... 'Can't have four people doing this'... 'We need this role'
- Job descriptions become a reality
- Moves from everything for the customer to 'we need more profit'.

Pioneering organisations either move into another stage, or they collapse, or they bump along never getting a secure future but people scrape along enough. Usually, pioneering organisations get to a point where they wake up, recognise what they have and realise it is not what they thought they would get. They then recognise that they cannot go on the way they are going and realise they need some structures. The problem with putting the structure around someone's precious dream is that it is a decisive act of maturity. It is one thing, for example, to look through travel catalogues to see where to go on holiday and quite another to find all you can afford is a weekend at Blackpool. That is sometimes the reality in organisations. Aspirations are very high, commitment is very strong and yet the world isn't interested enough in what you are offering.

Whatever the impetus, the transition from a pioneering organisation to a more *settled form* is a decisive change because it means closing down on infinite options and focusing on a settled few. It means developing roles for people to fulfil. It means having a system that people can follow, and a routine and rhythm to organisational life. It is a move from being focused on the relationships of people inside the organisation to being much more concerned with the progress of the organisation's effort to be effective in the world. The settled form has two main dangers:

1. **The overuse of bureaucracy:** in order to get the organisation more streamlined and productive, it buys in expensive expertise which often either does not understand the culture or takes it over.
2. **The pioneer leaves:** the pioneer who leads by charisma, mobilising others by enthusiasm, taking erratic and intuitive decisions, often finds it impossible to work with a more rational outlook. This causes great tension and pioneers often leave feeling alienated and distressed, without understanding that the problems are organisational as well as personal. They have difficulty in separating the two because for so long they have been identified with the enterprise.

## Stage 1: Transition from a Pioneering Organisation

### Characteristics

- Based on the logical and rational
- Must have controls and processes
- The question becomes, 'Is it feasible?' rather than, 'Do we want to do it?'

### Management

- Planning
- Organisational capacity: getting resources, organising capacity
- Directing and controlling activity
- Leads to further forms of specialisation (functional), also division of labour (work planning)
- Implementation (doers)
- Control (monitoring; budget; quality)
- Think/feel/will are separated out
- The whole has to be held together – therefore *co-ordinating*
- One-way – standardisation – rules; or *principles* – leads to pyramid – endless communication problems
- Emphasis becomes efficiency rather than effectiveness.

### Leadership

- Indifferent
- Bureaucratic element: rules *lead* not the person.

### Weaknesses

- In the differentiation phase there is a great risk of burn out and sickness as people have to learn to work within limits
- De-humanisation: the organisation becomes less personal. People move more into roles and therefore more and more uninterested in each other.

### Crisis aspects

- Despite efficiency, people become more costly to motivate
- Consultation is usually a sham – slowly becoming deeply cynical.

## Stage 2: Towards a More Settled Form

The changes in understanding, perception and consciousness already mentioned above indicate different ways of thinking about organisational life. There has to be a system and administration of procedures yet it is important that the methods evolve appropriate to the organisation and its size. Over-sophistication is a real handicap to a small organisation going into stage two: it is about building up credibility slowly, not over-reaching at the early stages. It is important to realise that the pioneer stage was all about change and difference, whilst in stage two it is more about looking at consolidation and repetition.

The organisation is vulnerable to expertise and the tendency is to try to make a new enterprise similar to an existing one and that might not be the case. There is the risk, too, of getting the wrong kind of expertise. At this stage it is difficult to know what the organisation might need in order to manage what they already have, let alone where they might go.

In the first stage, customers are often people you know and more often than not you are dealing with them face-to-face. When the organisation grows to any size, it can no longer have face-to-face dealings with all its customers and it also needs more staff. Therefore, the feel for the marketplace is more and more remote and so in the second stage you need to know you have a product that is sufficiently needed and valued by a wider market. The questions to ask are:

- How big is the market?
- What is our market share?
- What are our competitors doing?

The risk is whether to move into a new market and possibly fail if there are too many other organisations taking the first step, as happened in the dot.com industry. In the settled phase, the organisation has to grow up and realise it is in a bigger world, with other people doing what you do and recognising that this will affect what you do.

### Characteristics

- Formulating new aims
- Questions of 'what is our main purpose': because of all the changes this is a piece of repositioning; need to look at vision, structures, aims and so on
- People come back into the frame. The 'people' questions get more sophisticated, including customers/clients, staff, competitors
- Customers are considered more and recognised to be vital
- Work groups need to be more interconnected.

In the later stages of maturity, when someone can move into the organisation, settle in and adjust to all of its procedures then there is what is termed an *organic return*. It is about being attentive to organisational life and developing its new rhythm. However, the outside world is so turbulent that few organisations are ever in a settled enough rhythm to have a strong sense of organisational rhythm.

**Leadership:** leadership comes back to more than the original enthusiast. In this second phase leadership is group based; different people have a say in decision-making. Personnel, finance, administration all need to be alert and involved in a sophisticated coordination of contributions. This is a different kind of leadership and a kind that is not as well understood.

There are many studies of charismatic and entrepreneurial leadership but few on this kind of participative leadership. This is much more about the peer based model of leadership. Leadership here is about responding to the needs of the situation, therefore, an ideology is not needed.

A developmental view of things is needed in order to help the organisation move in rhythm and this includes recognising that people are the greatest asset. *Pioneering enthusiasts can't cope with this phase because this is really about equality.*



## **Section III: Managing Change in Organisations**



## 15: Organisational Reality

We have met the enemy and he is us. Pogo

There are many different theories that seek to explain how organisations change, or fail to change, but none of them are universally accepted. Even those that dominate academic and management discourse provide only partial explanations of life in organisations.

**There is no universally true explanation of how organisations evolve, only a number of increasingly contested accounts.** If one is to avoid blindly following one of these accounts, mistakenly taking it to be the truth, then it is necessary to stand back and ask two fundamental questions:

1. What is the phenomenon that is being talked about when the terms 'strategy' and 'organisational change' are used?
2. How do human beings make sense of any phenomenon...?

The second question is important because there are different explanations of how humans make sense of anything. **The particular explanation one adopts directly affects the particular account one gives of any phenomenon**, including that to which the concepts of strategy and organisational change apply.

It is striking how unstable the dynamics of the population of organisations are on the one hand, but how stable on the other. Or, to put it another way, what is striking is just how unpredictable they are. What I mean by this is that it is virtually certain that mergers and take-overs will take place and it is often clear in which industries they will take place. At the same time, however, it is often very surprising that one particular organisation should buy, or merge with, another. Members of an organisation, including its most senior managers, often experience such unpredictability and instability as anxiety provoking and stressful. Another striking point is how some organisations are merging with others, while yet others are splitting themselves into two or more parts. In other words, some are integrating while others are dividing.

“So the population of organisations changes over time in ways that display stability and instability, both predictability and unpredictability, both division and integration, both ‘birth’ and ‘death’. What is one to make of it when the phenomenon one is trying to understand, change in the population of organisations, displays such contradictory tendencies? Is this simply because I do not understand the phenomenon fully? Or is it a paradox, the genuine, simultaneous coexistence of two contradictory forces. How one answers these questions has important implications for the kind of theory of organisational change one develops. Some theories see only contradictions to be solved by further work, while others see paradox that can never be resolved.” Ralph D Stacey, *Strategic Management & Organisational Dynamics: the challenge of complexity*, Pitman Publishing, 2000.

### Organisations and Change

There is an old Sufi story of Nasrudin who had lost his keys in the dark and was fumbling around attempting to find them. His friend approached him and asked what he was doing. Nasrudin stopped and, looking up at his friend, he explained that he was looking for his keys under the light of the street-lamp. ‘Where,’ the friend asked, ‘did you lose your keys?’ ‘Over there,’ said Nasrudin pointing some way off into the inky blackness. ‘But it is no good looking over there, because it is too dark to see anything. At least here there is enough light to see what I am doing!’

Managing change is, perhaps, all that we can ever do! The idea that change can be made amenable to our direction, be brought under our ‘control’ and made to serve our purposes, is having to give way in the face of the present pace of social, economic, political and organisational change.

**If you are asking the wrong questions, any answers you get won't help you. And if you don't know where you are going, wherever you end up will still be somewhere else.**

We can approach change from opposing directions. There are those changes we wish for; those we initiate and promote; those which we know will occur and can, to some degree, plan and prepare for. However, there is another group of changes which 'come to us', are brought to us, whether we like it or not, whether we are aware or not. These are altogether more arbitrary and troublesome changes.

Trying to ride a wave of change in the hope that we will somehow stay afloat and arrive at the shore is likely to become less and less attractive given the complexity of the changes that we are passing through. Many people sat out the social changes of the 1960s and 1970s waiting for the foamy turbulence to settle, relatively confident that the shoreline would look much as before. Almost everyone knows that this time it is different.

However each of us experiences it, however differently it impacts upon us all, we know that this is qualitatively different. We are moving from one era into another. Whether the new era will usher in a time for renewed optimism and hope in human endeavour, or something altogether more deadly, will, no doubt, hang in the balance for a long time to come, but it is happening.

Existing frameworks of understanding are giving way. They no longer hold. They no longer offer convincing explanations or descriptions of the texture of our experience. New models can only be tentative, at best, for the time being. And yet paradoxically, some realities remain much the same; some inescapable movements continue. Individual experience, however different and dislocated, is also connected to some familiar points: leaving school; becoming a citizen; taking up employment; establishing a relationship and so on. It is the wider context of our lives that is undergoing upheaval and which is shifting so quickly.

### **Organisational Culture Change**

It is usually the case that strong emphasis in organisations is placed on strategy and organisational structures and systems. Ideas are formulated on culture, but apart from a certain amount of team development it is rare that much work is done to help create a new culture. Debates on culture remain slightly peripheral to most organisational activities and the massive resources that have been poured into them. Future actions that have been recognised so far have been to do with communicating the ideas on new values and setting up more teamwork. This is an insufficient basis for how to develop culture.

Managing the culture of the organisation is a good deal different from managing the production process, marketing, or the finance of the enterprise. It requires what one team of writers described as *institutional skills*. By this they mean skills that are much more about nebulous and abstract ideas such as *values, culture and atmosphere*. It also means generating a way of thinking about what is taking place and why, a gift for instilling a sense, not of dumb loyalty to the organisation, but of an articulated commitment to what the organisation stands for and what it is aiming to accomplish.

Much of this effort can be derided in the crude mission statements that have proliferated in the public sector in imitation of the commercial world, but many companies that have seriously undertaken this exercise know only too well the benefits it can bring. Unfortunately, the uncritical adoption of such innovative devices into a culture that is neither ready for them, nor can actually live up to the generalised clichés that are usually the end result, does nothing to improve the image of many organisations, especially, perhaps, those in the not-for-profit sector. There is a skills gap of the greatest kind in this area of organisational life. It has previously gone unnoticed and very much unrewarded: promotion and status usually falling on those with more practical skills. Institutional skills are therefore in short supply amongst most organisational leaders at a time when they couldn't be more crucial. This lack of institutional skills is one of the major difficulties facing many organisations.

Those charged with the direction and leadership are often nervous of striking out, or being decisive in offering a vision of the way forward since it is, at best, only a probable route to the future. Lacking in conviction about the future itself and feeling unused to the kind of direct involvement with people that the modern organisation requires, they often withdraw and act through intermediaries – not unlike mediaeval barons. Decisions appear, orders are given and consequences flow.

The director or CEO appears momentarily to reassure those remaining that all is well and the danger has passed, never stopping to share his or her own concerns about the real uncertainties that the organisation has to grapple with on a day-to-day basis. Such information is regarded as being an indication of weakness, failure of nerve and 'lack of bottle'. Our culture of withholding and excluding those who are part of the solution from any inkling of the dynamics of the problems ensures they cannot give their all to the effort and it may well reduce their capacity to respond and their allegiance to the organisation that so desperately needs their efforts.

Whilst maintaining any standards required for technological or physical safety in a specific environment, people should be encouraged to experiment with new ways of working against a non-punitive background, thus creating a working organisation that is also a learning organisation. The following situations are just two examples for potential cultural change.

1. Small, flexible teams work together on complex issues that require a multi-disciplinarian approach or the exploration of policy issues.
2. People's development should be continuous and go beyond the filling of functional slots.

A learning organisation has a lively and open team culture, in which responsible individuals act intelligently with an understanding of the larger context.

The present autocratic, hierarchy and expert driven culture is far removed from that. A statement heard recently illustrates this well:

Leadership is making other people do what you want them to do.

This would meet with very little disagreement, unless perhaps one compares it with:

**Leadership is empowering people to make the right decision for every new situation they have to confront.**

High levels of control, combined with detailed questioning leads to people setting up complex mechanisms, creating work for many more people, to satisfy this particular non-productive hunger. Only when people at the top start questioning themselves about what it really is they are getting out of this and to what extent they might be OK without it, can the organisational culture begin to change.

It is often said that we should free ourselves from the heaviness of slow, bureaucratic decision-making and that responsible individuals should take initiatives and make effective high quality decisions that address the real issues of customers, colleagues and suppliers. It is also felt that people should communicate well, making use of systems that serve the needs of people.



## 16: Worksheet: Process of Culture Change

### Phase One

**Developing new ideas:** becoming aware of the old ideas at work in the present organisation.

Out of the polarity create a qualitative picture (aim) of the future organisation. This could take up to six months.

### Phase Two

**Developing new values:** self-survey of how the existing values are reflected in present systems – identifying barriers to change.

This involves extensive training and development work, and building a network of facilitators who can give assistance locally with change projects and team building. This phase can take anything up to three years or even more.

### Phase Three

**Development projects:** including any or all of the following:

- Changing decision-making processes (not just structures)
- Building new teams
- Redesigning systems and procedures
- Encouraging new initiatives.

To complete this thoroughly and effectively, a time scale of five years would be recommended.

The phases will, of course, merge into each other, but the danger is always that Phase 2 will be neglected and the organisation moves straight from the new ideas to the (ungrounded, undeveloped and inauthentic) new behaviours.

The phases will eventually recycle on a permanent basis and through that people in the organisation will acquire the confidence and skills to manage continuous change.

**This is the real and lasting aim of any development process in a modern organisation.**



## 17: Managing Organisational Change

“The situation is hopeless but not serious.” Hungarian proverb

The process of change has to be managed at *all* levels of the organisation and in all aspects. This is so whether the change is to focus upon one predominant area, one key aspect of functioning or upon a particular group of staff. For the fact is that a change in one part of a system will have ‘knock-on’ effects on all other parts of the system and unless these are taken into account in the planning and the implementation of change, the unanticipated effects that are produced may bring change of a very different kind than anything hoped for or expected.

Those responsible for change initiatives will often give some thought to their effects upon the structure and the way roles and groups relate to one another. However, less time and effort is usually spent upon some of the other aspects indicated in the table below.

Structure	How far will the changes influence the structure and systems of the organisation?
Communication	What will be the consequence upon the flow and pattern of communication – not only the official and overt patterns but the informal and social aspects – which may contribute to the overall wellbeing of people, keeping them involved and committed to otherwise relatively uninteresting work?
Identity	What effects will this have on the identity of key groups affected, or upon the organisation and how it is seen in the outside world? This may or may not matter a good deal, but it does need to be considered.
Motivation	How do we expect the changes to include people and influence their motivation, both during the change and as a consequence afterwards? If there are long-term benefits for people these may be insufficient to gain their commitment to live through the pain and difficulty now; so what is the appeal to be?

**Table 4: Effects of Organisational Change**

As change accelerates, faith in structures and procedures in the architecture of an organisation, if you like, will prove less and less durable. Increasingly, organisations will need to look at the *quality of the relationships* of those involved and the values out of which they work as the strongest element in sustaining their shared endeavour. Values need to be expressed not only in things like mission statements, but also should emerge out of the real meeting and engagement of those involved in developing the destiny of an organisation. The work should arise out of ‘explicit values’ and they need above all to be practiced values – understood and embraced by those involved.

Organisations that wish to develop effectively in the future will have an interest in looking at the differences between the values they profess and those they practice. They then need to find a way of closing the gap – initially by being interested in learning through the discomfort that the discovery causes.

### Turning Experience into Learning

No organisation can hope to thrive by expecting to continue to do what it does well when everything else around it is changing.

As we have already discovered, the process of change has to be managed at *all* levels of the organisation and in all aspects. It is well worth repeating the fact that a change in one part of a system will have ‘knock-on’ effects on all other parts of the system and unless these are taken into account in the planning and the implementation of change, the

unanticipated effects that are produced may bring change of a very different kind than anything hoped for or expected. It is essential that anyone with a responsibility for implementing change or introducing innovations into an organisation be aware of all the change issues described in this manual.

Organisations, like individuals, have experience and turn that experience into learning via reflection and conceptualisation. How far they extend their gaze and what it includes as 'relevant experience' determines what it has to reflect upon. In the past, the typical organisation considered only direct experience as the relevant base upon which to reflect; hence the interest in sales, distribution, patterns of growth and so on. From this information the organisational leaders could plan their strategy for the future; however, what is required in today's climate is a much wider range of information from much broader sources.

Social trends, changing consumer habits and general social data may be crucial in determining the long-term future success of an organisation with a product or service of even high quality. The 'brain' of the organisation is the collective consciousness of:

- What it is about
- What its policies and goals are
- Where it is directing the greater part of its efforts
- An awareness of the likely difficulties to be met with along the way.

This needs to be co-ordinated and integrated somewhere within the organisation's framework or individual experience is not turned into collective understanding and much valuable learning is lost to the organisation.

Change is now so pervasive an element to organisational life that no enterprise can afford not to make strenuous efforts to learn all it can from what is happening to itself. Whatever set of arrangements it introduces to monitor the effects – because few organisations will have appropriate mechanisms in place for assessing how change is moving throughout the organisation and what effects it is having – the importance of gathering useful information throughout the whole organisation will be crucial.

If those involved in assessing the effect of change are seen as yet another secret society then people will not value whatever they produce or report. Thought should therefore be given to who is involved in monitoring the effects of change and in how they disseminate the information they are gaining. Thought, too, should be given to how the information is acquired since staff who are nervous and vulnerable about the potential effects of changes upon their long-term security may view enquiries about the effects of change as part of the process of designing them out of a job! The questions to ask are:

- Is there a mechanism for reflection?
- Is learning valued or are we looking for answers?
- How wide do we look to learn?

### Implications of Change

As we have already seen, change issues will affect all aspects of the organisation. Many of those highlighted below overlap with those already noted, but they are given as a series of sub-areas so that those involved in change can ensure they give attention, or pay some recognition, to them at different points in a change process. For example, an over-concern with the philosophic aspects of the change process – of questioning oneself about the nature of what is happening and the rationale that has been proposed to justify it – can be a crucial point of review for a change process that has begun to go awry and something that is rarely attempted.

#### **Summary: Important Influences**

1. Managerial style.
2. Priorities in service.
3. Conflicting expectations.
4. Technological issues.
5. Environmental effects.
6. Uncertainty.
7. Staff and personnel change.
8. Demographic change.
9. Monitoring

It is usually a post-mortem months, or even years later, when the organisation gets round to considering just what it was up to when it undertook a change programme, rather than what it thought it was up to and told itself at the time. Philosophic concerns, then, are not to be considered in the leisure of distant reflection, but may be required at periodic intervals of 'time out'.

An over-concern with some aspects of a change process can of course handicap a process that needs decision and action. If a drastic change is being implemented and it has been considered, it may be far better to push ahead through the pain threshold to attain a more stable point of reflection before attempting to assess what has been accomplished. No one enjoys reflecting in the midst of anguish and uncertainty – it is all too real then. There are some *important influences* to consider.

**1. Managerial style:** many organisations fail to consider the managerial style and the culture of the organisation as something essential. Nor do they pay enough regard to attempting to plan change so it is as aligned to what already exists as is possible. Neither do they adopt the alternative position which is to make no pretence that the future will be like the past and to force through fast, clearly described change in an open and honest way so that those who are doubtful can get out. Similarly, methods successful elsewhere were often designed to fit a very different context and culture.

Managerial style is not something to identify quickly or to believe is obvious. Much management is just what it says, 'managing', but underneath it there needs to be a more deeply understood sense of:

- a. How come it is done this way here and now in this organisation?
- b. How do the effects of the changes fit the contribution and efforts of the managerial style adopted by the organisation itself?

**2. Priorities in service:** a frequent consequence and cost of change efforts is the effect upon quality of service and service priorities. This creates massive difficulties for front-of-house staff in the way of long explanations to customers or users about why the service is temporarily of poorer quality. Much unnecessary long-term damage is done this way.

**3. Conflicting expectations:** too often changes are introduced with all the best expectations well-highlighted with few indications of the potential costs or who to. Result: dismay and embarrassment when the glossy future arrives unlike anything the brochure offered.

**4. Technological issues:** improvements as a result of the introduction of new technology are everywhere apparent; so are their mistakes. Computer programmes that didn't work, new systems that have had to be abandoned at the cost of millions of pounds are quite familiar. Not all technological innovation is either necessary or beneficial to the organisation or those in it. Fashion has an influence here like anything else and avoiding fashionable mistakes is an important quality to develop.

**5. Environmental effects:** the environmental effects of changes – using the word in the widest sense to include the wider environment of customers and users – can have a long-term effect upon the benefits of an otherwise useful innovation. Bringing about changes that benefit the customer but which the customer doesn't actually want has been the downfall of a number of organisations. The small example of the introduction of the vending service, 'available at all times with a wide selection of items' (but only when it is working!) is often pointed to as an innovation that increases the services to staff in an organisation.

The facts are that the machine was introduced to replace the tea lady because people stopped and chatted and took a break. The machine stops all that 'unnecessary activity' and 'improves productivity'. Well, of course, those who have to do battle with such machinery on a daily basis to get what passes for something drinkable know only too well that this is a small organisational disaster.

The point of contact and the social exchanges that took place at a given time is now spread in a more diffuse way, takes longer and is perhaps made even more necessary. A focal point of meeting has gone with the disappearance of the tea lady, adding to the anonymity of the work place.

- 6. Uncertainty:** many managers are afraid of admitting to uncertainty in the belief that it makes everyone nervous however, in many change initiatives, people are already understandably nervous. Sometimes admitting the range of the uncertainty can come as a relief. Managing uncertainty competently is not the same thing as illustrating incompetence and lack of judgement. Illustrating how to live confidently in uncertainty is an art few have mastered.
- 7. Staff and personnel change:** most of the costs of change initiatives lie under this heading and directly affect those involved in this area. Change is often associated in many people's minds with reductions in staff, cutting back on departmental activities, cost savings and so on – all of which is accurate. How an organisation attempts to face up to what it is doing, who to and at what cost is a mark of its likely success in getting through a difficult time effectively. No one will look forward to the prospect of reducing the conditions of staff, or of reducing their number, but in many organisations these are realities that will have to be faced or the consequence will be a lingering death. Managers are paid to manage such difficult situations, though few believed they would have to do it.
- 8. Demographic change:** a further pressure upon the need for changes arises out of shifting patterns of consumption and the changing profile of age distribution of the population. The demographic profile of the country is changing fast with an increasing proportion of people surviving into later life and for longer. The impact this will have upon services and products is only just beginning to be felt and will be with us for many years to come. The growth in part-time work – primarily attracting women at the moment – will all have an effect in changing expectations of male and female roles and the earning potential of individuals. Add changing patterns of career expectations to this and we are on the edge of a very different world of social arrangements that will have major effects upon organisations and the way they operate.
- 9. Monitoring:** in the face of such major changes at so many levels of an organisation, monitoring the activities of the enterprise can seem an overwhelming task. It is a task which can easily get neglected in the face of managing the immediate and thinking about the long-term; the medium term and the strategic can easily go by default. Monitoring and discussion of the effects of all that is taking place helps keep what is happening in the forefront of everyone's mind.

## 18: Organisational Stereotypes

There are three stereotypical ways of thinking of stages of organisational responsiveness to change. A **traditional** model of the organisation typically views managing change as an *interruption* to the normal run of events. A model of the organisation that has moved on in its thinking (an organisation **living with unpredictability**) regards the world as *becoming more complicated*. The third model identifies an organisation facing turbulent change as beginning to face **working with the unknown**.

**1. The traditional model** can be characterised as relying upon:

- Stability of response
- Structural clarity
- Predictable routines.

**2. The organisation going through unpredictable change can be characterised as:**

- Having many of the features of the first
- Implementing new working practices: self-managed teams/outsourcing etc.
- De-layering: downsizing; attempting to shift responsibility to lower levels of the organisation
- Whilst attempting to change style and operational practice in mid-stream. (The analogy, that is often useful, is that of the oil tanker – very hard to get going and very difficult to manoeuvre or change course once underway.)

**3. The organisation working with the unknown is distinguished by:**

- Erratic shifts of direction
- Collapse of career pathways
- Fragmentation of working practices
- Seeking clarity of identity.

Each stage of organisational development or phase has features that make for organisational discomfort. Many organisations recognise that older systems are clearly inadequate, however such organisations have often not abandoned old approaches for new ways of working. New methods may well still be in their infancy and in such circumstances everyone is unsure.

**The third stage** organisation has moved beyond these kinds of difficulties and into a world that isn't simply unpredictable but one in which much is 'unknown'. Many features of the internal and external world are no longer so well profiled. There may be many internal contradictions and shifting priorities that make for erratic demands and conflicting priorities. Rather than viewing this simply as a stage before things get back to some kind of 'normality', the proposition is that this kind of atmosphere itself will increasingly be the norm.

In many organisations, elements of all three types of response are present, which creates complex tensions and difficulties in how to 'read' what is happening. Contending explanations are given for the same phenomena, internal dissent increases and there can be a spiralling downward of morale.

These organisational dynamics are affecting almost any service organisation. Add to them the changes that are taking place within the sector itself: first, second and third degree elements of the change process combine together. They make for a formidable level of insecurity for staff.

Asking fundamental questions about operational style, whilst maintaining a continuing high standard of current provision and retaining a traditional identity amongst the public is no easy task. This brings tensions to a critical level.

## Responses

*Clarity of identity* is crucial both within the organisation and amongst its supporters and those it serves. Often *corporate events*, in the form of training (better still development) programmes that focus upon working out the implications of the ethos in a new era can assist those entering the organisation in way that traditional induction programmes by and large don't any longer.

Perhaps most important of all is the organisation recognising that middle level managers are the key individuals in both 'modelling' and maintaining the organisational ethos. If there are unclear or competing interpretations of the organisational culture then it will quickly have profound effects upon the internal coherence of the organisation itself.

## 19: The Challenge of Change

**The challenge of change is to remain effective, efficient and adaptable. Establishing realistic targets means having modest, achievable goals.**

It is often only by attempting to implement a change, or live through a major upheaval that we uncover all the resistances, difficulties and limitations we put in our own way as a result of our fears and our limited understanding. There are few models of how change can come about elegantly and effectively, releasing the curiosity and creativity of those involved. We are more familiar with the discomfort of our frameworks being rendered useless, burnt up in front of our eyes and, often, we simply don't know which questions to ask.

### Detecting Change

The first signal is often one of unease; a suggestion that all is not well, something has gone wrong, or isn't working. Sometimes we know where the failure lies, but then it is usually someone else who should take action. Change and the responsibility for change lies outside of us and we are free to blame or criticise. Only when we bring the change within our grasp, inside our own boundaries, can we move out of antagonism towards it or righteous indignation about it. Only when we begin to ask, 'What else could there be?' or 'I'd like to see...' do we begin to form a relationship to it.

Only by forming a relationship toward what is happening can we begin to exert any useful influence since it is by developing a fascination, or a loving interest, that things speak back to us. Sometimes, when working with change questions, the questions themselves come in search of us. Reminders of a situation that demands attention appear time and time again, and we know, sooner or later, we will have to put the time aside to respond. Some such changes stack up, just waiting for a glimpse of daylight to appear before us, they then fly out of the shadows and demand that we no longer put off dealing with them.

There are those changes, too, that we can barely look upon, because they bring us face-to-face with the shadow of all we thought that we were about, where the 'darker side' of our motives becomes revealed and we have to face the pain of self-knowledge, acknowledge the hurt or the pain that we have, in part, inflicted. It is unpleasant and painful to have, at last, to acknowledge all that we have tried to put to one side or deny, but it pursues us until we recognise and work with it, or it helps destroy us. Our freedom is related to the degree of intimacy we have developed with our own shadow.

Sometimes it is the people coming towards us that bring with them the challenges and the questions we next need to meet. We may have to look beyond the immediate needs of the situation or what is being expressed and ask:

- What are they seeking?
- What more do they require of us?

It may be straightforward and appropriate: it may not be within our power to offer, but if we enquire into how they have come to find us and what it is they are in search of we will always come to understand more about where we are.

### Choice and Change

Choice is always available at any moment, if we are only willing to create the inner space to sense it, because choice is finally an inner movement – an aspect of the relationship we have with ourselves. It is not governed by external circumstances, though they influence it, of course. It is the ability to see opportunities that exist before us and which may lead us forward that distinguishes those who make something of change and those who are defeated by it. Unless we nurture and protect that inner space, where choice and development lies, we will be left responding mechanically, or we will drift aimlessly. We will become shaped by circumstances themselves, left without any firm resolve or clear sense of who we are.

## Change and Learning

### Change and Learning

**Change and learning are synonymous:** you cannot learn without changing and you cannot change without learning.

**Change is related to understanding:** you can change something without understanding it – but not much.

**You cannot truly understand something without it changing.**

### Box 3: Change and Learning

Disinterested concern is something that brings out the best in people and then they change whether they want to or not. The important work of the times in which we live is to enable people to recognise and influence the shaping forces that are at work in all our lives. In doing so it will enable them to act with greater consciousness to bring about benefit and value both to themselves and to the community in which they live.

“Every human being, no matter how ignorant or submerged in the ‘culture of silence’ he may be, is capable of looking critically at his world in a dialogical encounter with others. Provided with the proper tools for such an encounter, he can gradually perceive his personal and social reality as well as the contradictions in it, become conscious of his own perception of that reality and deal critically with it...”

There is no such thing as a neutral educational process, education functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the ‘practice of freedom’, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

The development of an educational methodology that facilitates this process will inevitably lead to tension and conflict within our society. But it could also contribute to the formation of a new man and mark the beginning of a new era.” Taken from Shaull’s introduction to Paulo Freire, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Penguin Books, 1996.

### How Change is Perceived

How we understand what is happening strongly influences what we decide to do. If we are using the wrong ideas, or have inadequate concepts, then the actions which flow from them will not resolve our dilemma or further our development. However, having the right answer isn’t any use if we can’t get people to make use of it. We often hold contradictory views of change within the space of the same conversation, depending upon which aspect of change is uppermost in our minds. Some of the ideas which influence how many of us feel about change are characterised below.

Aspect of Change	Associated Perceptions
Incremental Change	Changes are linear and accumulate in sequence.
Disruptive Change	Change is an interruption to a predictable order or routine.
‘One-Off’ Change	Change is an interruption as a means of re-organisation, from one state to another.
Momentary Change	There is a stable state to which we shall one day return.
Imposed Change	External agents impose their ill-considered and unworkable ideas upon what is an already perfect system.
Interruptive Change	External agents impose their ill-considered and unworkable ideas upon what is an already perfect system.
Revolutionary Change	The political realities in the situation have changed and another group is now imposing their will upon what will take place. It is all out of our hands.
Random Change	No one knows much of anything about what is happening, so there is really no need to do any more than muddle on as before.
Programmed Change	This is only a ‘blip’ on the graph of progress that underlies everything that goes on.

Table 5: Perceptions of Change

## Transition, Development and Transformation

Change is a word that is used very widely and in many contexts. It can simply mean any event which heralds something different: wanted or unwanted, positive or negative, so, in that sense, the word itself is neutral. However, there are certain 'levels' of change that can be identified and it is useful for anyone involved in change to be aware of them.

**Transitions:** have elements of predictability, phases of activity and thresholds that identify various stages along the route, whether it be the transition into a new position at work, a divorce, or into parenthood. The possibility of learning and integration are also important features of transitions, providing we understand that they have predictable and understandable phases from which lessons can be extracted.

**Development:** a qualitative change process. Development is not necessarily gradual, or incremental. It is not necessarily related to travelling through a predictable transition; it can be experienced as a jump from one state of being to another. It is characterised by thresholds or frontiers and a strong conviction of a shift that is irrevocable. It is, however, linked to biography, or 'life script', and is a living out of themes or issues at work in individual lives. The same features apply to organisational transformation.

Development then, is not random or unpredictable, however revolutionary it appears to the subjects who are living through such a change.

**Transformation:** a 'qualitative shift of being' manifested in external and internal ways. It is a break with the past and an unpredicted shift to an altogether new level of operating. It is a move to a higher order of functioning that incorporates and integrates previous functions and it will be manifested in changes in organisation, structure, function and process. Whilst identifiable through these differences and modifications, it is actually contained in none of them. It is beyond individual manifestation and is only apparent as a result of appearing in all of them.

## Responses to Change

Before you know where you are going you need to know where you are (and how you come to be there rather than somewhere else). People have views about what they think is 'going on' and what they think is going to happen to them, even (especially) when they don't know. Gossip, which is valuable and important and part of the lifeblood of any organisation, generates myths and legends which are difficult to counteract. The collective consciousness that evolves is a combination of the sanitised 'official' version and the one people discuss in coffee breaks, in the car, and outside the official arenas: a split personality develops, something which is organisationally unhealthy.

One reason for this is that many organisational leaders are not confident or at ease with the changes they have to promote and so do insufficient to bring issues, especially contentious ones, out into the open. We also have a very limited tradition of organisational development and of involving groups and teams in contributing to what is taking place. We fear what people will do if they know, on the grounds that they create mayhem in their ignorance. But attempting to talk together under stress is a bit like having an argument underwater while sharing only one air line: survival becomes more important than sensitivity.

When confronted with a challenging situation, most of us want to modify the situation to make it more amenable to our influence. We try hard to conceptualise and describe it in ways that make it easier for us to live with, or, if we have to change, then to change in ways that seem most amenable to us. This is often a way of changing the view we hold of our experience, rather than changing what we do about it; most of us would rather change our experience than risk changing our beliefs about what we might do about it. We have elaborate ways of changing in order not to really change but convince ourselves that we are 'doing enough'. Another way of saying this is that we are all good at pretending.

**The maximum potential to have the greatest impact lies in sudden, unpredictable and disruptive, external intervention.**

It produces alarming confusion, rendering the subject open to large-scale manipulation, which takes a long time to settle. If this is done repeatedly, systems and individuals literally have 'no idea' of where they are and therefore no considered response to offer.

People are ambivalent with regard to change. On the one hand they feel attracted to it, because it keeps life interesting; on the other hand it creates fear, because there is the risk of failure. Most people in organisations have negative feelings about change, because in their experience they have been manipulated or coerced into change, willed and designed by others. In practice they will have to deal with overcoming resistance to change at three levels of the inner human being:

1. At the level of **thinking** or ideas.
2. The level of **feeling** or values and attitudes.
3. The level of **will**.

**1. The level of thinking or ideas:** this is the most conscious and objective part of our inner being. When others tell us we need to change our ideas and concepts of reality we experience doubt before we can form new ideas. 'Have I been wrong?' or 'Surely, that cannot be right.' Old managerial concepts that people have been working with for decades are up for grabs.

New concepts that have huge implications for organisational structures and the attitudes and behaviours within those structures have to be understood and accepted at the thinking level before people are able to work effectively with them. A new idea can be incorporated, if we can relate it to familiar concepts – 'Ah, now it makes sense!' – or if we can see the steps or process that have led to a particular conclusion. Thus we can make a new idea into our own.

**2. The level of feeling or values and attitudes** is much less conscious and far more personal. Therefore, when someone tells us we have to change our values and our attitudes we feel resentment or anger, which we may or may not be able to express. Since our values have much more to do with who we are, it offends us if others start to question them, particularly if this is done out of a sense (or position) of superiority.

In order to develop new values and attitudes we need to try and examine our present values and understand how they do or do not work for us in our present life/work situation. Sometimes we need to understand the biographical origin of some of our beliefs and assumptions in order to feel free to change them. Exploration on a basis of human equality, often done in group situations, can be productive. Only thus can new values and attitudes be owned and become effective.

New attitudes and values cannot be prescribed, except in a hierarchical climate, where people will pay lip service to the new values without being able to live and work with them. People will be able to change their values when they are met with respect and they have widened their inner horizon through increased consciousness. Otherwise people ape the values imposed upon them from above or try their luck somewhere else, depending on how actively they can mobilise themselves.

**3. The level of will** is the least conscious and most individualistic level from which stems the decisions and actions with which we shape our lives. At this level, where we harbour our aspirations and deeper motives, when people tell us we need to change our picture of our own future, change our behaviour patterns, use new and (as yet) untested skills, we experience fear. Can I cope? What support will I have? How will I be judged?

Change of behaviour patterns can become effective if:

- People are clear about the ultimate aim and can commit themselves to it
- People can experiment with new behaviours in a non-blaming, non-punitive environment
- The principle of gradualism, a step-by-step process, is applied.

No massive roll-outs, but small beginnings, getting practice in pilot situations before you go national, is what creates real, lasting change. It only seems to take longer, but it actually works much more quickly. Any real development process needs to take account of this human reality.

### **Contributing Factors in Effective Change**

Vision amongst the most influential members of an organisation is often limited and remote from the field of action. This is because many organisations promote staff away from the field of action as a matter of policy and therefore encourage dissatisfied practitioners to become uninterested managers with little feeling for the issues of those they left behind.

Further, the ideology of most institutions tends to be rigid and inflexible thus producing 'tunnel vision' within an 'acceptable' range; organisations are inherently conservative. They often tackle piecemeal issues rather than global ones because of the strength of organisational resistance to such major efforts. In addition, policy makers and people with influence within the organisation tend to find ways to perpetuate the need for their own continuance rather than responding disinterestedly to the needs the organisation might have.

The very real vested interests people have in keeping things the way they are is frequently minimised, if not altogether discounted. Alternatively, it becomes the raw material for 'power plays' and factional competitiveness. Power is unequally distributed across organisations and any change initiative inevitably gets brought into the wider political struggles that are taking place. Whenever a situation becomes defined in such a way that what one party wants is seen as being obtainable only at another party's expense, conflict becomes inevitable.

This adds up to 'change' being promoted by one group in relation to another and creates division between those who introduce change and those who have to live through it. Not only do they have to take on what they did not want and have not asked for, but they are also supposed to be grateful!

Organisations frequently ignore the importance of gaining commitment and involvement from their members. Perhaps the most common reason most change efforts fail is that those living through the change remain unconvinced of the benefits but are all too aware of the potential losses at stake. Expected resistance to any change effort often leads those initiating the change to oversell and overstate the benefits and stay silent about the costs of what is intended. The initiative then comes to be seen as the pet theory of a bunch of enthusiasts who are not in touch with the real world.

The process of consultation, which often precedes change, is often regarded with cynicism. The influential members of an organisation do get consulted and they are easily identified; they usually have access to more of the implications of change and can therefore improvise upon the theme of any change in order to protect or promote their own interests all the sooner. Canvassing opinions and taking 'contributions from the staff' rarely succeed in accomplishing what the promoters want i.e. willing acceptance of the change and enthusiastic commitment to bring it about.

Problems in organisations are frequently posed as being of a technical kind, such as a lack of the right type of resources; or of a conceptual type, such as a lack of the right kind of information. In actuality, they are often interpersonal and are related to how one group, unit or section relates within its own sphere or with others outside. Even relatively technical and conceptual difficulties will have an interpersonal dimension.

Change efforts inevitably meet obstacles and there is a general ignorance of the dynamics of effective use of mobilising group support or opposition.



## 20: How do we respond to change?

If change is induced as a result of growth then the organisation needs to consider how far it has planned for what is happening. The following are questions for people when looking at moving forward so they are not working in a vacuum.

### Growth

- What is our policy?
- What are the consequences?
- Who decides what to do – if we don't?
- Do we respond to need and, if so, who defines it?

### Criteria

- What do we use to enable us to make decisions about the need, the scope and the timescale for any changes we are planning or having to endure?
- How far do we let change sweep over us and how far do we anticipate what is to come and use the information we obtain to make several changes together rather than adopt a step-by-step approach to change?
- Who defines priorities?
- How are they managed and held?
- Who controls the practice?
- How far do we 'own' what happens to us?
- How able are we to live with the consequences?

As a result of what is happening to us or what we are implementing the key question to consider is:

- What kind of identity are we acquiring?



## 21: Assessing the impact of change

The elements of change may include one, some or all of the elements.

### What We Do

- **What:** we can become more or less of... This relates to the style of delivery method.
- **We:** the personnel, level of expertise, training recruitment.
- **Do:** the activity, the task we perform; it may increase, decrease, change or be recombined in some way.

### Who Do We Do It To

- **Who:** new customers, new users. New structures in which users are managed.

### We can change both what we do and who we do it to

This creates maximum disruption. Such change results in:

- Massive turbulence
- The loss of any organising principle around which to gather your energy and move forward.



## **Section IV: The Role of the Change Agent**



## 22: Organisations and Consultancy

### Organisational Development

In organisations and institutions, so long under siege, or so it seems, the impact of the cumulative changes has begun to take effect at a new depth. Accountability, deregulation, budgetary responsibility, the shift of resources away from institutional solutions, have all contributed to the vital need to develop the capacity for strategic thinking and to increase our understanding of the similarities and differences between the processes of change, the phases of development and the experience of transformation.

More than ever, those working in responsible positions in our organisations have to identify clearly where those organisations are, and what the characteristics are of the 'reality of the situation' in which they are placed. In order to do that there is a need to look both inside the organisation and outside. The central purpose of the organisation has to be recast in the light of new realities, which raises important issues of choice and direction: dilemmas between competing priorities. Although it is easy to recognise, as one manager did recently, when a situation requires a 'change mode now' response, it is much more difficult to be aware of and understand the implications of such a process.

Organisations are not intelligent, creative, dangerous or devious – though some of their members are. Organisations are in the main inert and rely upon members withdrawing their energy from difficulties and finding personal solutions to organisational dilemmas. This seems especially so in service organisations.

Organisations are made up of 'bits'. These 'bits' may have been planned and thought out carefully; they may have evolved over time; they may be coherent and make sense of the current realities of the organisation or they may be outdated and contribute to the difficulties the organisation faces. Organisations rarely develop in any organic or rhythmic way, rather, 'development', such as it is, is often erratic, haphazard and without foresight. Priorities get lost in the immediate situation and long-term ambitions become platitudes that may still be repeated but are rarely the measure of current activity.

'Organisational development' may be too a grand term for the work of many consultants or many of their assignments; more frequently the consultant is working with one part of the system, or a group within a larger unit. Occasionally he or she may be working with all the staff, or the senior management, or even the Executive team and the CEO, but whole organisation intervention or organisation-wide change programmes are relatively rare.

They are becoming less so, especially in small high-tech organisations, partly because interdependent working amongst multi-professional groups often means that change in one area has knock-on effects elsewhere in the system. One of the special problems of contemporary organisational life is that many organisations have set up 'teams' or 'units' – project-based initiatives – which are often unclear in their relationship to the wider organisation's overall purpose. Sometimes they are unclear about what they are to do, or how to define success. A new initiative can be attractive in the beginning, when the promise is all, but tough to survive in when the work is not going according to someone's expectations and there is no way of countering the claims that 'you should have done more'.

Working with such units is demanding because the interaction between the unit and the wider organisation is often a key to the potential for enabling both parties to benefit. The consultant may not be given access to those parts outside the unit. The result may be that the unit now knows more clearly what it is about, and even how to get there, but the organisation itself is still unconvinced.

Beyond a certain point, engagement with an organisational issue begins to generate guilt at the neglect of the task. The practitioner then starts to seek an individual accommodation to their difficulties and cohesion amongst members fades. This can be termed a **retreat into practice**.

### 'Resistance to Change'

The term 'resistance to change' is commonly used but ultimately it is not very helpful since it creates a mindset of struggle and opposition. For many people it is not so much that they are resistant to change itself but that they have very

understandable (to themselves) objections either to the method, the timing, the implications or the values that the proposed change represents. People are always responsive to change but the nature of that response may not always be to the liking of those proposing the change. Labelling it 'resistance' may be one way of displacing it onto those who are thus described, but only at the expense of making them into an opposition that has to be overcome, put down, or otherwise defeated.

If such opposition is seen merely as *one response* then the task of the development agent is to establish what shifts in the programme, the way it is described – what modifications, in other words – can be offered to reduce those objections. If done with sincerity, the consequences can often be a more refined and well-thought-through change process that now accommodates the most reasonable of objections and has given those who were 'resistant' an opportunity both to have their say and have it taken into account.

Not all change agents have the patience for this process and would rather push ahead with the programme and deal with objections as they go along. Since this is by far the most common way of proceeding with change, it is difficult to persuade those involved in promoting change to consider pacing the objections. However, if this can be achieved the so-called 'resistance' can be managed with more respect and interest in order to learn some of the lessons that can be costly when the programme is not delivering the expected benefits and staff are pointing out that 'we could have told you all this would happen months ago, but you wouldn't listen.'

The organisational 'split personality' that can develop when contentious issues are not brought out into the open and the official version of what is happening clashes with people's own views has already been identified as an important aspect of the change process in *Section III Managing Change in Organisations*. Awareness of this process is important for an effective Change Agent.

To begin the process of developing a collective understanding there are at least four layers of reality to peel back. We need to uncover:

1. Those things we know but don't talk about: what we **take for granted**.
2. Those things we are willing to talk about: the **official history**.
3. Those things we don't talk about: the **taboos and yearnings**.
4. Those things we do not even know we don't want to talk about: the **undiscussable**.

Individuals place a high value upon coherence and any significant change will appear to undermine and overthrow internal stability, even if it is only for a short time. This makes it essential, if they are to be successful and any lasting change is to become established, that the development agent's role includes the capacity to understand 'other people's model of the world' and how they establish and maintain coherence. Belief systems have a pervasive influence upon how people code their experience – to the point that people will frequently change their experience before changing their beliefs. They will only notice or take in only what is consistent with what they want to believe.

"...an understanding of the capacity to transform events is crucial to any adequate developmental psychology of the person.

There are complex interrelationships between perception, attention, and transformation on the one hand, and transformation and behaviour on the other." Egan and Cowan, *People in Systems*, Brooks/Cole Publishing, Monterey, California, 1979.

### **Organisational Leaders or Managers?**

Where it isn't possible to predict, guide or channel the cycles of information, responses to change, willingness to change and so on, it is important to be able to adapt quickly to the trends that do appear with an awareness of the impact and consequences upon the other elements that are not as critically involved. This means that a 'change manager' will at times need to be:

- **A politician:** a builder of coalitions
- **A power broker:** leveraging agreements, adjusting and balancing factional influence
- **An influence manager:** coping with the political cycles
- **Technical problem-solver:** employing rational criteria and relying on ‘scientific’ data and principles to cope with the technical cycle
- **An ideological leader:** reminding the organisation of its commitment and its direction
- **Offering aspects of all the above** simultaneously.

The complex and often mutually conflicting roles that may be required mean that those charged with change management need to develop a much deeper awareness, not only of organisational cycles, but also of their own profile of skills and knowledge of how to work with each of them and with them in concert.

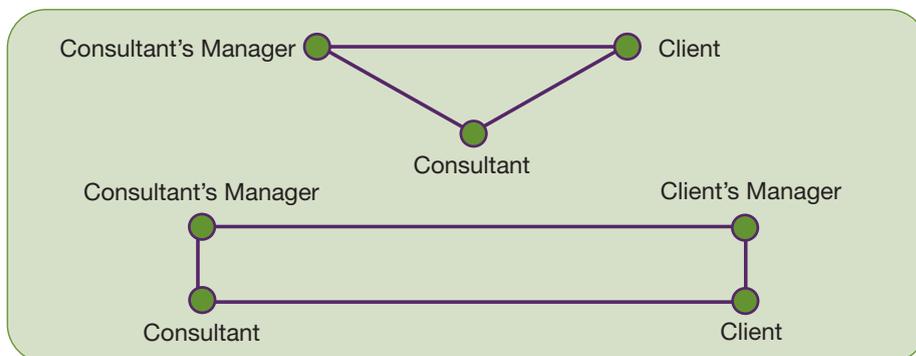
### Characteristics of Internal and External Change Agents

The **external change agent** faces some of the same issues as an internal change agent but often without the same degree of intensity. Organisationally, as long as the external consultant is bringing in work contracts, it is unlikely their own organisation (if they are part of one) will complain.

Internal	External
Salary	Less certain income
Embedded in hierarchy	Not part of formal structure
Living implicit politics	Walking into a potential minefield
Organisational ‘uniform’	Own ‘uniform’
Blurred boundaries	Clearer boundaries at outset
Status and job level may limit access	Status and job level is more ambiguous
‘Prophet in your own land’	‘Wisdom from afar’
Manager in the organisation	Manager (if any) outside the organisation

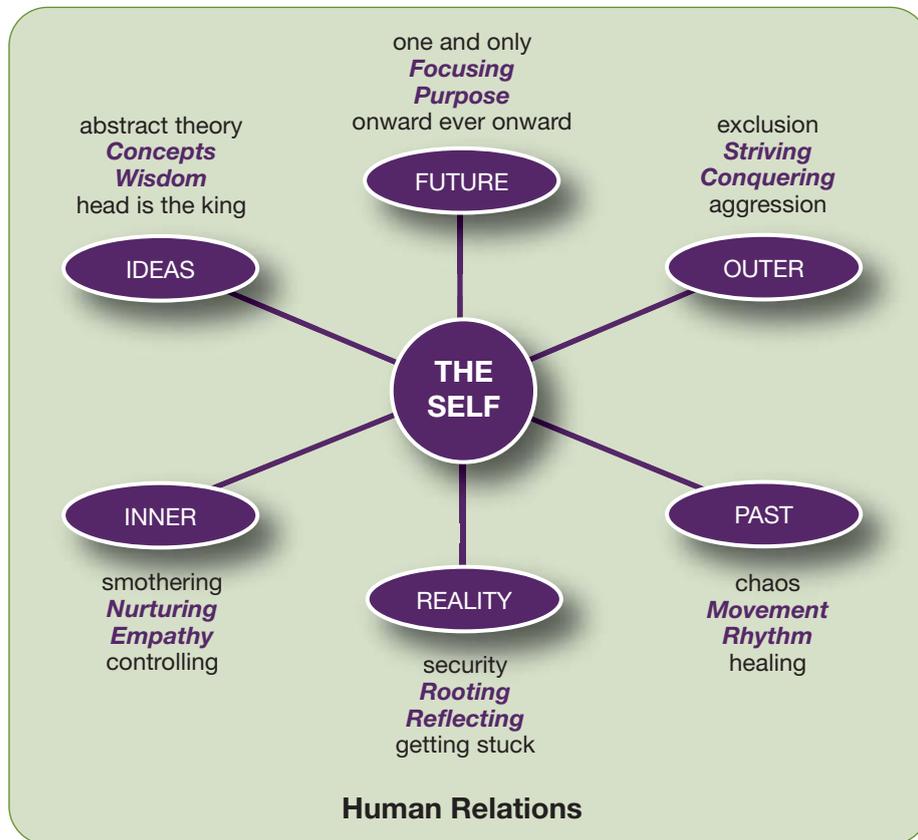
**Table 6: Characteristics of External and Internal Change Agents**

In addition to holding a change agent role, the **internal consultant** also has to manage their own relationship within the organisation with that of their own manager, who also often carries organisational objectives for the introduction or promotion of particular ways of working or developmental processes.



**Figure 2: Internal Consultant Relationships**

For an internal change agent it can be crucial to have a ‘speaking partner’ who will stand by them, explore options and help examine decisions they have to make. Internally, however, it may be seen as a weakness and may weaken their position especially in an immature and political organisation.



**Figure 3: Polarity Model for Consultant Development**

Each of the polarities cannot be fully realised unless they meet in their polarity. If lived out of in isolation then the shadow elements are more strongly emergent i.e. one-sided.

### 23: The Oasis Seven Stage Model of Consultancy

Oasis Seven Stages	Comparative Stages	Purpose	Elements	Skill
Contact	Entry Orientation	Orientation to the organisation Developing working alliance	Setting up first meeting Raising questions Expectations	Rapport
Contract	Entry	Setting limits Gaining shared perspective Outlining main features of the work	Checking match Getting started Who will be involved	Contract questions
Clarification	Diagnostic	Identifying the issues Examining the need for change Testing out readiness for change Finding meaning	Purpose Relationships Rewards Structures Processes Leadership Direction Politics	Listening Reflecting Summarising Data collection Open questions Creating manageable chunks
Challenge	Feedback	Developing new perspectives and opening options Identifying organisational themes Unfolding complexity	Assessing gap between where we are and where we want to be Exploring internal commitment	Confrontation Challenge Immediacy Affective competence Working with complexity
Choice	Planning	Examining options Determining implementation path Creating a climate of choice	Resources Aligning organisational forces in relation to change	Problem solving Option analysis
Change	Implementation and Intervention	Enabling organisational change agents to take charge Managing the change process Manage consequences	Mobilising resources Monitoring processes	Action Planning Rehearsing Implementation Goal setting Revision Review
Closure or Cycle	Evaluation	Bringing the intervention to a close Say 'farewell'	Ending work Ending relationships	Evaluation Re-contracting Managing endings

**Table 7: The Oasis Seven Stage Model of Consultancy**



## 24: Development and the Consultant/Change Agent

**A system-developer:** someone who is asking the questions that the organisation will live when change and development are taking place.

Working with a consultant or change agent has many benefits. Having the services of an independent person skilled in group dynamics, who has an understanding of organisational issues and who is able to guide a group or organisation through various stages of the development process, is highly beneficial. The presence of an external consultant can also lessen the likelihood of hidden agendas remaining hidden as they draw them out in an atmosphere that is non-judgemental and open. In order to gain the most effective use of the time and the effort with a consultant it is useful to be willing to look at the following:

1. **What is involved?** Is there recognition of a crisis or feelings of being stuck and needing help?
2. **What kind of commitment is required?** There must be a commitment to work.
3. **Relationships:** the quality of the relationships will determine whether the process will succeed.
4. **What is the time scale?** This can vary but would be determined by the nature of the issues being addressed and would be laid out in a contract of boundaries between the relevant people and the consultant.
5. **What are the likely benefits?** This might be raising the level of consciousness and a move from either/or polarities to somewhere in between, i.e. asking the question, 'What is the true third option?'
6. **What can be expected in the way of support?** This would not be a white-coated expert bringing in things from the outside; it would be someone who is an available resource.
7. **How can it be afforded in time and cost?** Thinking time is often the last on the list of priorities. It is often feared because of what may arise from it.

The aim of the questions a consultant would ask is to bind and to unify; to overlay diverse groups and individuals with common thoughts and actions. This is about finding the organisational voice rather than the group or individual voice.

1. **What is the one thing they want to do together?** If you don't know, find out. They maybe don't know, and then the consultant's role is to help them realise it.
2. **What would you have them do right now?** If you don't know, you need to reflect on this and figure it out. If they don't know, tell them.
3. **What unites them?** Ask yourself. Ask them.

### Responding to Change

If change is induced as a result of growth then the organisation needs to consider how far it has planned for what is happening:

- What is its policy?
- What are the consequences?
- Who decides what to do – if we don't?

- Do we respond to need and if so who defines it?
- What do we use to enable us to make decisions about the need, the scope and the timescale for any changes we are planning or having to endure?
- How far do we let change sweep over us and how far do we anticipate what is to come and use the information we obtain to make several changes together, rather than adopt a step-by-step approach to change?
- Who defines priorities?
- How are they managed and held?
- Who controls the practice?
- How far do we 'own' what happens to us and how far down the organisation does it go?
- As a result of what is happening to us or what we are implementing the key question to consider is, 'What kind of identity are we acquiring?'

### Change and the Change Agent

A change agent needs much more understanding than a purely technical knowledge of the area(s) in which the organisation operates. To work effectively, the change agent needs a good grasp of their own issues, their own processes and an understanding of their affective competence. They also need to have a breadth of understanding in interpersonal issues, in working with change and how people may respond to change.

- 1. Organisational change is only similar to personal change:** it is critical to realise and to expect there to be a gap between the stated intentions of those bringing about the change and the commitment of those who have to endure the change. However, the same gap should not exist on the part of those responsible. Anyone managing a process of change as a cynical career move will get what they deserve – there is a special circle of hell in Dante's Inferno reserved for those who bring about change and do not believe in it. Those who believe in it but cannot bring it about merely suffer eternal damnation!
- 2. Planned change, however beneficial, will always bring about unanticipated side effects:** those planning change need to pay much greater attention to this aspect of the process than is usual, since the unanticipated outcomes of any planned change may have a much greater impact upon the overall success than the plan itself.
- 3. There are no guarantees of success:** since bringing about change in organisations is about introducing something unpredictable into an already dynamic and live situation, you cannot guarantee success – even if it worked last time, or elsewhere. Rarely do those involved in designing change take this into account. The higher the level of previous success (as defined by whom, you might well ask), the more risk there is of becoming lazy, taking things for granted and getting complacent.
- 4. The climate in which change occurs will be unstable:** in contemporary organisations instability is everywhere and so introducing further change only adds to a sense of turbulence. There is a limit to how well people can respond to what you demand of them.

#### Summary: Change and the Change Agent

1. Organisational change is only similar to personal change.
2. Planned change always has unanticipated side effects.
3. There are no guarantees of success.
4. The climate in which change occurs will be unstable.
5. Organisations are not families.
6. Wider relationships.

- 5. Organisations are not families – whatever you would like to believe:** it is a dangerous misconception to compare an organisation with a family and to start expecting it to behave that way. Most families are not so disinterested in their members nor so able to see them disappear. Your survival is not a prerequisite for the organisation staying in business.
- 6. Wider relationships:** there are four dimensions of the wider relationships that need to be taken into account:
- The relationship between the elements and groups within the organisation may have more impact upon the change process than is recognised.
  - The relationship between the change and the individuals affected, though vital to them, is usually of little concern to those planning change and managing the organisation.
  - The relationship between the organisation and its customers should be a vital factor in the consideration, implementation and management of any change programme – if the organisation is to retain the loyalty of those it serves.
  - The relationship between the organisation and the outside world upon which it depends has a decisive influence upon the consequences and the motivation for change.

### Enhancing Change

Helping people understand the difference between what they have and what they want is another vital function of the consultant/change agent. Within this concept is:

- Helping them see that they can do something to bring about change
- Aiding them in the creation of visions they want to be in and work in
- Bringing them some ways of gaining new perspectives and new alternatives
- Facilitating their expression of what they want to accomplish
- Building actions that show their progress out of their problems
- Working with a problem that is worth changing
- Allowing the griping, whining, complaining and moaning – it doesn't accomplish much but it does feel good.

### The Importance of Context

The context of any meetings can be hugely influential in how members relate to each other and how willing they are to consider change. Every consultancy situation will, of course, be unique; however there are some common elements that can be explored and, where necessary, adjusted to make the environment more conducive to change and development. Possibilities for shifting contexts include:

- Vary the length of meetings. Perhaps holding longer meetings with a problem-solving agenda where necessary
- Adjust the planning process so that operational plans are assessed quarterly against the mission
- Redesign an individual job to include more decisions
- Adjust the work flow within the group
- Gather and discuss data on group morale
- Rearrange the office to enhance communication
- Provide daily feedback on production.

Each one has something to do with adjusting the space, system or structure within which work is done. All are context rather than content. The output is the same, the way it is produced changes, and hence other outcomes may be altered.



## 25: Key Things to Remember in Consultancy

The effectiveness of the consultant or change agent will be enhanced by paying attention to the following aspects of consultancy.

1. **Underlying assumptions in consultancy:** individuals are able to work collaboratively to work through problems
  - a. Effective decision-making requires free and open choices.
  - b. Effective implementation requires internal commitment.
  - c. A whole organisation understanding is required for effective development.
2. **The work begins here:** you can't go anywhere unless you begin from where you are. Any attempt to place the organisation and individual where they aren't in order to get them to where they need to be is based in the fantasy of *if only...* Acknowledging where we are bases the help in action rather than dreams. This is crucial to embrace the work rather than avoid it.
3. **Simple works:** change needs to be participated in, understood, owned, and acted upon by the people in an organisation. This calls for simplification and lack of complication: simple as shown through elegance rather than crudity.
4. **Get out of the way:** let the clients run their own business: the external consultant is not a manager. This means helping them learn rather than doing their work. It means keeping quiet whilst they learn. It means celebrating their accomplishments. It requires patience, humility and self-confidence.

Beware of working to get attention rather than trying to help. 'You can get anything done if you don't worry about who gets the credit.' It is important to find the balance between inward and outward motivation.

5. **Change hurts:** this is not the hurt of injury, but rather it is the hurt that comes with release. It is often no less painful, although for an organisation to know that the changes intended will have consequences makes them more acceptable. Ignoring the hurt by being 'sunny' in all circumstances leads to the 'tyranny of the positive', unhelpful to individuals, groups and the organisation as a whole.
6. **Risk as you expect others to risk:** the role of risk and challenge within consultancy holds a crucial place. It is unlikely that change will be enhanced unless you are willing to face a similar level of risk to the one you are suggesting. This does not infer the same risk, but rather a level of risk or challenge that takes you to a new place in the same way as you are suggesting the organisation takes. Often, you are employed to do what you've already done successfully, so there also needs to be the balance between enough risk for your own development and not too much risk that, say, over 85% of your consultancy work ends with the organisation feeling their needs have not been served.
7. **Create context:** to enable and lead an organisation from one state to another, it is essential that a new context be created to help them be themselves in new surroundings. The elements of this are offering new understanding, new perspective, creation and consequences of possible futures and collating new information. This is about changing the context rather than the content.
8. **Seed hope:** the sense of 'We can do something about this' is very important. Without hope all plans are likely to remain just that – plans. Hope and energy comes when a successful challenge has been offered which results in new perspectives being seen and embraced. Suggestions for change within the current paradigm merely serve to reinforce the sense of helplessness or hopelessness. A solution defines the problem: alter the framework and the solution changes, as does the problem. This results in a 'freeing' of the stuckness. One way is to focus on the future before getting lost again in the present or being anchored to the past.
9. **Persevere:** effective change is not accomplished through the quick and dirty method. It requires a long-term relationship built for the purpose of partnership and change. This is about a commitment to be in it with the

organisation, rather than coming along to do something to the organisation. A willingness to engage and an understanding that the learning will come out of the times that you feel least like being involved, brings the necessity for perseverance.

**10. Find the client in yourself:** it is discovering the next question within me and therefore being in contact with the client in me that is my most crucial perspective. This is not about understanding *about* the client, it is to do with the sense of understanding *with* the client. I am choosing to take this perspective and so I am in a stronger position to find paths out. It is about finding the emotional, physical, intellectual, psychological and spiritual elements within oneself and relating these to your shared experiences.

**11. You are the instrument of change:** all techniques, methods and perspectives fade in the light of the presence of the consultant. The presence of a consultant stands for something in the organisation. Through this given perception, change occurs, individuals develop their inner consultant – often more creative than the actual one! The task for the consultant is to hone themselves as an instrument of change, without getting the possibilities for change in the wider context out of perspective.

### Difficulties of Change Initiatives

Change agents should not begin the change task without first having established the degree of shared meaning that exists amongst those with whom they are working. It is worth remembering that the more those who will live out the solutions are involved in designing and implementing the change, the more likely it will succeed. Change initiatives are susceptible to a number of difficulties. Some of the most common are indicated below.

#### Difficulties Facing Change Initiatives

1. Change efforts inevitably meet obstacles and there is a general ignorance of the dynamics of effective use of mobilising group support or opposition.
2. Posing the problem at too high a level of abstraction.
3. Minimising or overlooking potential by-products of changes, such as the arrival of the coffee machine, which not only doesn't work, but which replaces the free flow of information that occurred at break times.
4. Failure to see the importance of gaining the potential commitment of all those involved.
5. Not recognising the importance of dealing effectively with people who have vested interests.
6. Initiating a change for the supposed benefit of another group without their assent or collaboration.
7. It is always easier to say 'No' and find good reasons why something won't work, shouldn't work, or if it does why it won't make any difference.

#### Box 4: Difficulties Facing Change Initiatives

The maximum potential to have the greatest impact lies in sudden, unpredictable, disruptive external intervention which produces alarming confusion rendering the subject open to large scale manipulation which takes a long time to settle. If this is done repetitively, systems and individuals have literally no idea of where they are and therefore no considered response to offer.

## 26: Aspects of Leadership

### Leadership Qualities

Leadership requires developing and displaying key qualities to others, which include:

- The ability to create a vision of the future order of things
- To communicate that vision in a compelling way
- To generate and maintain high levels of trust and commitment
- To build positive self-regard amongst contributors
- To possess 'institutional', as well as organisational, skills
- To monitor the need for organisational management
- To possess an accurate knowledge of the market place
- To 'free' energy in people and systems
- To recognise the importance of spiritual capital as well as money
- To realise, and to help others realise, that a shared philosophy arises out of a shared purpose
- To be alert to the questions coming toward the organisation.

### Leadership Questions

- Where do you think you and the agency are heading in the next two to three years?
- Who have you told about this?
- How did you tell them?
- Do you communicate your view of the need for these things in a committed way?
- How far does that reflect the way you relate to your colleagues and staff generally?
- Do you acknowledge the importance of fostering a way for people to feel a sense of belonging?
- How do you go about it?
- How do you check you are developing the kinds of support and systems you need or do you accept things being the way they are?
- Do you have a clear idea of the way needs are changing, the service is developing and what your rivals are doing?
- How far do you look for opportunities to encourage people to take real initiative as opposed to tinkering about?
- Are people encouraged to look beyond material incentives?
- How far do you create opportunities for people to come together to re-affirm their common purpose and review their contribution to it?
- How far do you look outside to see what is coming your way?



## 27: The Development Agent

### The Development Agent

- Will accept that others will have relevant experience and expertise to contribute – especially amongst those who are involved in carrying policies through
- Will recognise and use this experience and expertise
- Will seek ways to widen the scope of her or his empathic response
- Will curb any desire to increase her or his popularity or approval
- Will make sure that she or he has something worth saying and will therefore take the trouble to ensure it is said simply enough for anyone to understand
- Will create a climate in which people can both listen and be heard
- Will recognise limitations and encourage groups to develop their strengths rather than seek to point out their weakness
- Will be aware that her or his solutions can be accepted at a superficial level simply because of the position she/he occupies
- Will be willing to ask awkward questions – of herself or himself as well as others
- Will respect the value and importance of everyone's time
- Will help generate clarity of direction and help identify by what means people will recognise when they have achieved their goals.

### The Development Agent's Role

- Diagnose the problem accurately and clearly
- Communicate the problem and its causes effectively
- Assess the system's motivation and capacity for the desired change
- Consider the underlying factors and assess the likely by-products of any change
- Select appropriate change objectives
- Establish agreement of the objectives
- Respond to and clarify all objections before anything else
- Establish and maintain the helping role
- Guide the client system through the phases of the change
- Offer information to reduce anxieties and insecurity
- Select techniques that are suitable to the change, the goal and those involved
- Have a realistic time-scale to work with
- Help disseminate the results and the learning following on from the change – both positive and negative
- Manage closure and withdrawal effectively
- Ensure continuity of the initiative and check opportunities for future development exist.

### Reactions of the Client System

#### The development agent is:

- Not felt to be needed (especially now)
- Seen as imposed rather than desired
- In the wrong place: 'there is no problem here (though you might try elsewhere)'
- Going to introduce new elements/practices or controls – which are going to change things and we do not want that.

#### The development agent can be:

- Seen as too right wing, left wing, tall or fat
- Regarded as part of a bandwagon of change
- Seen as someone sent to promote a minority interest rather than someone with a genuine desire to help us
- Regarded as being the creature of some group of self-appointed experts who are unwilling or unable to do their own dirty work.

#### Summary: The Development Agent

1. Clarify what is needed against what is wanted.
2. Pace objections.
3. Identify 'ecological' considerations.
4. Generate other ways to achieve the end.
5. Identify whose is the problem: often it is a 'condition' to manage.



## 28: Working with Organisations

### What to Look for and What to Bring

It may be that we have to bring something to the work we do or it may be that we need to look more carefully before we do anything. Some of the areas of investigation include:

- What are the ideas being used here?
- Where have the past ideas come from and how were they regarded?
- Is there a need to raise levels of consciousness?
- Is there the will for change?
- Watch for the danger of one-sidedness, of seeking an answer.

Answers are often desired but are not easily found. There is often an appeal to the structures, but structures simply enable an organisation to fulfil its purpose. The interests in technical expertise may disguise more important issues: systems experts, management information experts etc. and culture change all may contribute to an improvement and be part of a solution, but they will rarely be the answer.

1. **Develop both skills in practice and a philosophy** to understand underlying change.
2. **Act supportively:** empathise; listen to what's going on.
3. **Care for the past and the future.**
4. **Manage time and hold to commitments and boundaries:** this helps choice and warmth, brings focus by narrowing options and seeking priorities.
5. **Know when to make concrete a suggestion:** it is grounding be able to look back with objectivity at what has happened and ask people, 'What can we learn?'
6. **Encourage evaluation:** bring the quality of cool observation and presence of mind. This is a form of situational awareness, a bringing of what's needed now: timeliness is more important than content.
7. **Be willing to conceptualise and give meaning:** it can help bring things together. It may not always be pleasant, but if it is significant it can inspire.
8. **Look for movement:** ways of mobilising, energising, loosening things up.
9. **Remember that the feeling life is the gateway to the will.**
10. **Recognise when something has been realised:** offer expressions of affirmation and acknowledgement: people need to know they are recognised.

### Other Thoughts

- Who I have become is more important than what I can do
- How far am I able to let other people be in control themselves?
- How far can I allow others to work things out for themselves?
- What is the secret of your success?



## 29: Exploring a Consultancy Type Process

### An Overview: Aspects the Change Agent needs to Consider

- Why change?
- What are the questions being addressed?
- Whose questions are they?
- What is the rationale for change?
- What is the necessity for change? Is it, for example, to remedy things not done before but were needed. How has this influenced any resistance?
- Who will benefit and how?
- Who will be disadvantaged and how?
- How do you justify the benefits?
- What is the stage of development: of yourself for this work and for the organisation?
- What information, processes, costs, structures, models, wider context have informed your thinking?
- What is the organisational capacity for change?
- How responsive are the systems (this includes the subsystems, the politics of relationships and the consequences of change)?
- How prepared is the organisation for change?
- Who would be involved?
- Who might be allies, neutrals, enemies before and after?
- What processes will you primarily be working with?
- What are the milestones to ensure you are on target? How much would they be shared – when and how?
- What would be anticipated outcomes: for you, for the organisation?
- What would be the first steps? For yourself, for other individuals/groups, for the organisation?
- What are the other aspects to hold in mind?

### The Contact and Contract Phase

This is sometimes termed 'entry' or the 'orientation' phase: it ends at the agreement of contract and its purpose is to find agreement on initial diagnosis. Initial diagnostic work can be enhanced by the development of a 'position paper' outlining the stage and issues the organisation is facing. Until the diagnosis is accepted it is unlikely that further work can progress. These two stages represent the first step and is the step that can be handled most successfully. It represents a phase that is more helpfully seen as a process to be managed rather than a product that is to be delivered.

#### Orientation

- Deciding whether to undertake the work or not
- Establishing the context
- What's the best entry point?
- Recognising one's own agenda
- Training or consultancy?

#### Diagnostic

- Check the person you are involved in contracting with is 'high' enough to forward the process
- Tools include individual interviews, group interviews and paper responses
- Check who is asking the questions: how many identify with the questions?
- It is important to gain a sense of the underlying question: who decided the solution? Who clarified the issue?
- Ensure client and developer are jointly committed to creating: it is always about finding agreement on a shared process
- To this end, build in regular review of roles and working relationship to check how and what we thought was possible and what needs to happen to develop the relationship
- A highly political environment can be very tough: if the 'political' nature is not addressed then no development is possible

- If there are differing diagnoses between internal players, or internal players and the consultant, then no process is as yet possible
- One step at a time: the first step is to increase awareness of shared issues; this requires skills in facilitation and questioning.

**Exploring the vision often requires deepening questions:**

- How does that translate into behaviours?
- What is that team's/group's purpose?
- What agendas do you have for that meeting... and your previous ones?
- How are they prepared?
- What do the repeat items reflect?
- Who attends?
- What's their behaviour?
- Do you want that kind of response? (This assists the consultant to gain access to the 'shadow' politics of the organisation.)

NB: This phase involves influence and authority questions. It may highlight competitive and collaborative attitudes in organisational players and consultants.

**Diagnostic Evaluation**

In making a diagnostic evaluation, it is necessary to create 'chunkable' areas to manage what could otherwise be overwhelming phenomena collected by the change agent. It is important to remember that the more the organisation does its own diagnosis, the more it 'owns' the diagnosis. Some areas to explore that provide pointers to assisting a diagnostic process and also in establishing the motivators for change are:

1. **Age:** what stage or phase is the organisation in? This may uncover that the unit or group is at a different phase to the larger organisation. This creates tensions that are often tricky to manage.
2. **Sector:** what are the changing patterns within the sector?
3. **Product:** is the organisation facing a product crisis through internal learning or others creating new products?
4. **Position:** are other factors, i.e. competitive others, affecting the nature of the organisational position within its market?
5. **Relationship of parts:** are functions within the organisation creating challenges to other systems, e.g. IT?
6. **Positional players:** changes in CEO or key players affect organisational diagnosis.
7. **Relational aspects:** how do teams function, with what remit, for what purpose and what contribution do they make to the wider organisation?
8. **External demands:** such as legislation, health and safety regulations and so on.
9. **Sub-system relationships:** what is the level of development within the sub-systems of the organisation? How do they influence each other and the organisation (physical, relational, cultural)?

At some point, an overall assessment needs to be created making sense of the different phenomena collected. Further issues include:

- In flat organisations where is the power structure?
- It is more risky to ignore the Shadow than managing the hidden, unspoken issues

- What procedures are there for aspects of organisational life, e.g. for hiring and firing?
- The only way to work is to have guidelines and policies in place
- What are the groupings?
- How specific are their functions?
- Who speaks?

### **A Reflective Process for the Consultant**

- Describe, briefly, the organisation/team with which you are/were involved
- How did you get involved?
- What was the presenting issue/question?
- What was initially agreed?
- What was the focus of the intervention?
- Who else was involved?
- What happened?
- What was the outcome?
- What were the consequences for:
  - You
  - The team/organisation
  - The wider community?
- Looking back at what have you learned about:
  - Yourself
  - Your approach
  - Other...



## 30: Developing the Change Agent

“A consultant is a very ordinary person a long way from home.” Douglas Pride

As we have already noted, the consultant/change agent who is going to be effective in enabling others to move through a process of change will be consciously looking at their own process, seeking to understand more about how they operate and to gain further understanding of the change process. To this end, there will be a willingness and commitment to exploring and reflecting upon their work, how it impacts on them, how it might influence their later work and how such reflection will further develop their personal and professional life. The three dimensions through which this can be explored are:

1. The **personal**.
2. The **professional**.
3. The **organisational**.

### 1. The personal dimension

- a. Self-responsibility: you are very largely your own source of authority.
- b. The wish to be accountable: you have to find ways to make yourself accountable.
- c. Developing appropriate forms of explanation: road maps and sketches are more useful than encyclopaedias – and none of them are accurate.
- d. What do you mean by ‘change agent’ or ‘consultant’? What role are you seeking and how do you define it to those who are asking you?
- e. What is your organisational history? How has your experience of life been shaped by organisations?
- f. What issues do you bring to the work? How far does your experience shape and influence your underlying stance to organisations and the work you do with them?
- g. How do those ideas fit, or not, with your worldview? Do you have a worldview, need one or want one?

### 2. The professional dimension

- a. How much experience do you have?
- b. What do you use to make an assessment?
- c. Where has your experience been gained? In what kind of organisations, performing what kind of functions?
- d. What kind of role do you want to develop, who with and what for (over what range of organisations and what organisational issues)?
- e. Moving from oracy to literacy: the need to define what you are going to do, to keep track of what is happening, to review it as it progresses and to manage it through the ending.
- f. The loneliness of practice: you may be the most important person in the room whilst you are there but you are instantly forgettable once you leave. This raises issues of vanity and neglect.

### 3. The organisational dimension

- a. What constitutes expertise? How do you know you have enough of what is required to do the work you are deciding upon?
- b. How do you ‘read’ an organisation? How do you know you’ve read it accurately and can help the client understand it?
- c. What are the phases of the work, from initial contact to completion?
- d. What is your sense of the progression of the work?
- e. What constitutes success – for whom?
- f. How do you know what you did? What ways do you have of assessing the value and the strength of your contribution?
- g. How far do you need to understand the individual, the group/team, the system/organisation?

### 4. Issues

- a. The legitimisation of credibility: by and large you are on your own and no one can vouch for you.
- b. Who is the client and how do you know?
- c. What is your relationship to the system and the people within it? Where is your ally, critical friend, passionate advocate?
- d. How far do you want to recognise your own pathology and not just that of the organisation?



## 31: Questions for the Change Agent

All of us are faced with questions in the work we do in organisations. We may call them 'demands', 'pressures', 'issues' and we might first notice them as wearing these labels. However, if we are to seek **development**, then out of the starting point, which may feel like a 'problem', we will begin to work more deeply. We can contemplate the circumstances and the features; attempt to define the characteristics of the situation in a way that helps us formulate a question about what this is asking of me.

It helps to hold such a phrase in mind when entering into a new reality, meeting with a new organisation or attempting a new project, because as well as working with what is 'out there' – the reality you find – there is the reality you bring to it; your hopes and aspirations.

If you don't take these into account, you may be labouring against yourself, or chasing dreams that have no basis in the circumstances or the hopes of those with whom you are working.

### Finding my Questions

#### Where do the questions arise?

- Inside: as a result of my task and role?
- Outside: from beyond the service?
- Within myself: my own need for development?

#### How do they live in me?

- What strength of motivation do I have to do what?

#### What are my general responses and reactions?

- To begin with and over time?

#### What is my impulse?

- What would I like to see happen and why?

#### How would I like to work with these questions?

- How much freedom do I have to work in the way I would like?

#### What holds me from engaging fully with the issues?

- What constraints (real or imagined) are holding me and others up?

#### What would I be willing to attempt?

- What would represent a useful first step toward action?

#### What do I share with others?

- How much support is there and where does it come from?

#### What steps could we take together?

- Is there a shared trust and commitment to do anything?

#### How might we begin?

- What would be a good way to test it out safely for all concerned?

#### How does this come to be my work?

- What is the rationale for starting out – how convincing is it?

**What is the benefit of me taking it on?**

- To me and those I will be assisting? Is it enough?

**What are they asking for?**

- What are the hopes of those involved? How realistic are they?

**What do they need?**

- What would most help them and is that possible?

**How far am I acting out of personal interest?**

- What are the shadow elements involved in this assignment?

**What are the questions I need to ask about myself, those involved, the work they do?**

- Am I prepared to gather the 'right' kind of information?

**Are we doing this together?**

- Is this a collaborative venture?

**What is there already to build on?**

- How robust is the system and the relationships?

**What links and connections already exist and what are needed?**

- How far is there a structure to support the kind of work required?
- What is the culture about change?

**What communication patterns are used most often?**

- How do people relate: face-to-face, indirect etc.?

**What structure are people working in?**

- Are you familiar with the 'rules' and norms of the system as well as its formal properties?

**What strategy have they agreed to follow or not?**

- How far is there ownership for a joint approach?

**What sequence do I follow?**

- Have I thought out the steps involved and how far ahead? Who do I talk to about it all?

## 32: Worksheets

### 1. Reading the Organisation

- Where are we now?
- How did we get here?
- What are the forces acting upon us?
- How could we respond?
- What would make the most sense to us given what we know?
- Can we commit ourselves to work together?
- How might we begin?

#### Draw the organisation as you see it, look at it and explore:

- Spatial relationships
- Boundaries and barriers
- Power, authority, influence
- Who is there/not there?
- Size
- Significance
- Pressures, influences
- Lines of connection
- Movement and stability
- Stuckness
- Personal support system

### 2. The Stuck Situation

There will be occasions where the situation seems to be stuck: perhaps that 'going round in circles' feeling and the key to shifting things is elusive. When this happens, it is not the time to stop and give up but the time to stop and reflect. This process can be done internally, with the group/organisation concerned, with two or three independent people or any combination of these. This worksheet highlights a process and appropriate questions to get the group beyond its sense of being stuck.

Find two or three others to help with the process. Two of them to observe the whole. It is imperative to observe and not to hold judgements.

- Illustrate stuckness: give an emblematic example
- What preceded it?
- How did you enter it?
- What happened?
- What did the client do?
- What did you do or not do?

#### Pause

- Helpers characterise the situation
- Individuals extract essence of client/change agent relationship
- Observers review the process
- Don't listen for what connects: listen for what is characteristic and it will speak
- Reassess the situation.