



**GUIDE TO  
MANAGING CHANGE  
FOR  
URBAN MANAGERS  
AND TRAINERS**

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## FOREWORD

Effective urban management is needed all over the world, but scarcity of resources and a rapid rate of urban growth make this need most pressing in developing countries. Rapid change and the necessity of "doing more with less" require especially competent urban managers. To assist member countries in responding to this challenge, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) has been offering, during the past decade, a variety of training programmes directed at closing the principal skill gaps and at promoting new approaches, methods and techniques.

Subjects covered by these programmes, usually implemented jointly with national training institutions and with assistance of agencies such as Economic Development Institute (EDI) of the World Bank or the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), can be divided into two main groups: (a) specific techniques and methods in areas such as urban local government revenue generation, budgeting, expenditure control or project preparation; and (b) general management and organizational development skills needed by urban managers. Strengthening of training in both areas is urgently needed, but the lack of training materials seems to be particularly pressing in the second - general management and organizational development for urban managers. This publication is an attempt to fill this gap.

The Guide to Managing Change for Managers and Trainers have been developed by Dr. Fred Fisher, Director, International Development Institute for Organization and Management (IDIOM), in collaboration with the training staff of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). Dr. Fisher has had many years of experience as a city manager, training executive, management adviser and university professor. The Guide has been tested during training courses in Africa and Asia directed by Dr. Fisher for UNCHS (Habitat) in collaboration with USAID and EDI.

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# INTRODUCTION

This *Guide for Managing Change*, as you can see from the cover, is directed to two distinct audiences, urban managers and trainers. No, it's not a mistake. We believe both of these professionals can benefit from reading and using this Guide. It is designed and written to help others learn about the management process and to develop skills in applying the overall strategy and individual tactics to problems and opportunities in organization and community settings. Given these objectives, the Guide is a valuable addition to tool kits of both local government managers and trainers.

Since the use of this Guide by trainers is more obvious than its use by managers, let's look first at how it might be used by managers. Senior managers are in a key position to help their subordinate management staff members learn through doing. When middle managers and supervisors are allowed to carry out their roles and responsibilities without the benefit of systematic learning about what they are doing, how they are doing it, and the consequences of their actions, they are denied the opportunity to experience personal and professional growth - and to contribute more effectively to the goals and objectives of the organization. "But", you ask, "how can this Guide help me, as a local government manager, carry out a training role in my organization?"

First, you and your management team can use the Guide as a resource for learning more about the management process, more specifically, how you can manage the change process within your own organization. This can be as simple as convening a weekly staff meeting where you conduct a guided discussion about the various steps in the change process as outlined in the Guide.

From my own perspective of someone who has been both a local government manager and trainer, this discussion approach is a bit too passive. More interesting and productive is the use of the Guide to engage in team building, problem solving, project planning or organizational development opportunities. Many of the learning events in the Guide are designed to help managers carry out these kinds of staff activities.

If you haven't incorporated staff training and development into your role as a local government manager, you may find the idea of doing this a bit daunting. Or, you may feel you have not been doing something you should be doing. Not to worry. Many managers, in the past, have not seen staff training, or human resource development, as a direct senior management responsibility. The attitude toward the role of learning facilitator for the manager is changing rapidly. With momentous chance such as given in most organizations and their working environments, we can hardly ignore the need for continuous learning on the job. More importantly, most organizations have such a dearth of middle and supervisory management capacity that responsible senior managers must consider ways to grow their own management talent, in-house and on-the-job.

As for becoming a competent learning facilitator (or someone who helps some one else learn largely through their own initiative and effort), it has been my experience that the competent manager can become a competent trainer, if they aren't already. Furthermore, the Guide is designed to make the learning facilitation task as easy as possible. We will come back to how to use the Guide in a moment but now, let me say a word or two about the trainers who are contemplating the use of this Guide for Managing Change.

The Guide offers opportunities for management trainers to operate in a variety of different modes. While the materials in this workbook can be used in a more traditional classroom mode, you will discover they are really more action oriented than the usual management text. While it includes the usual concepts and strategies that define the management process, there are many exercises (what we call experiential designs) to help the trainer and trainees (or manager and management team) apply these concepts and strategies to real problems and work situations. There are also training notes that suggest different ways for the learning facilitator to use the materials, either in the classroom or on the job.

As a trainer, I have used the learning designs in this Guide in a variety of ways. For example, I have conducted two-week residential workshops for senior managers who were each asked to bring a problem statement and data about the problem with them to the workshop. These problem statements, when applied to the problem diagnosis-solving cycle of events outlined in the Guide, became case studies from which everyone learned, including me! I've also used the concepts and strategies in the Guide to: help managers take a structured look at their organization and how it is operating; engage in management team building (resulting in better working relationships among key officers); and help management teams carry out action planning for new projects.

These kinds of training interventions are both exciting and productive because they engage the learners in a process, which is reality based and the fruits of the learning immediately evident - and usable.

To reiterate these opening remarks, the Guide is designed to meet the needs of both local government managers and trainers who work with local governments. They include concepts and strategies about the managing change process, a variety of exercises and experiential ideas on how to apply the conceptual materials to the experiences of the trainees and their work environment, and trainer notes on how to plan, implement and manage the various training events.

Before looking at some underlying assumptions and values about the learning process and training, as a management strategy, let me reassure both the urban manager and trainer that this kind of training rarely fails. While the training may be conducted at varying degrees of competence (meaning some learning facilitators are better than others and some groups of training participants are more committed and active than others), it is reassuring to know that this kind of action oriented, client centered, performance based training is almost always successful.

### ***Some underlying assumptions and values***

The training materials in this Guide are based on certain assumptions and values held by the author. Some are based on conventional wisdom about how organizations operate, managers manage and learners learn. Others are, perhaps, less common to the reader's understanding of these processes, or experiences with them.

Let's look briefly at some of these underlying assumptions and values.

- (a) The most effective learning experience involves theory, practice and the opportunity to relate the theory and practice to the participant's own work setting experiences. The concepts and theories are either preceded or followed by opportunities to test or reflect upon them in some structured way, based upon the participants' own management and organizational experiences.
- (b) The effectiveness of the training experience is optimised when the trainer can combine knowledge enhancement, skill building attitudinal change and help the trainee emerge from the training with a "product." The product can be an action plan to be taken home for implementation or a problem solved, in one way or another, using the knowledge and skills gained in the workshop.
- (c) The learning experience is not successful if it fails to tap the knowledge and experiences of those involved in the training. This means the trainer must plan time for considerable interaction among the training participants. Most trainers programme too many activities or information for dissemination into too short a period of time. The trainer should leave enough time in the design for the participants to share ideas and experiences as well as time to reflect upon them.
- (d) Adult learners not only need time to reflect upon their experiences but stimulation to do so. The trainer's role is to create opportunities and stimulants for reflection. You will note as you use these materials that they include a number of questionnaires (instruments) to help the participant look at his or her own experience within the work setting (organization) in a systematic way.
- (e) If you do not like the way the materials are designed, you should feel free to change them. In fact, you should feel an obligation to change any training design so it will work for you and your participants.
- (f) The effective trainer is someone who can work with a minimum of training techniques, trusting that the participants will take responsibility for their own learning.
- (g) The bottom line in management training is behavioural change. Some trainers get nervous about this assertion - but think about it for a moment. If the workshop participant (manager) does not behave differently when he or she gets back on the job, the training experience and investment have been wasted.

### ***Action research and management***

The training materials that follow are organized into two broad categories. The first is "Action research and planning" - a systematic process designed to help the participants sharpen their decision making and problem-solving skills. Most managers are not as proficient as they could be in making decisions and solving problems. The Action Research and Planning sessions are designed to address deficiencies in managerial skills and performance. They are covered in **Part I** of the Guide.

The second category of topics is much broader, more eclectic and less systematic as presented. They are designed to help the individual participant reflect upon his or her own experiences as a manager and to increase their understanding and

appreciation of the complexity of contemporary organizations. These training materials are included in **Part II** of the Guide. **Part III** is short. It includes only one learning event, *Planning Reentry*. This module is designed to help bridge the gap between the learning experiences this Guide provides and the task of going back into the organization and picking up the reins of responsibility.

These two broad categories (“Action research and planning” and reflective topics) provide a juxtaposition of practical skill-building sessions and more reflective, philosophical, conceptual matters that engulf the work setting. By playing one off against the other, it is possible to enhance the quality of the learning experience.

In each of the sessions, it is also important for the trainer to focus attention on the individual and group work habits of the participants. If the training participants are being unproductive, disruptive, or engaged in other types of non-learning behaviour, it is important to help them understand their behaviour. More often than not, such behaviour mirrors their own work styles. By ignoring such behaviour, we tend to give it legitimacy, thus reinforcing it. Management courses should provide opportunities to increase individual awareness of unproductive behaviour and explore alternative approaches to becoming more effective as a manager and organizational team member.

Individual and small group work sessions provide opportunities to highlight various attitudes and behaviours that reflect the reality of the work place environment. The trainer's challenge is to help the participants recognise these attitudes and behaviours and devise alternatives to overcome the negative ones and reinforce those that are positive.

### ***Having options as a measure of success***

It has been said that effective management is having options. Without options, it is doubtful whether the manager, in fact, can manage. He or she may, under those circumstances, react only to the inevitable.

Effectiveness in training is also dependent upon having options, particularly if we believe training or human resource development, is a serious venture in the processes of nation and organizational capacity building.

*The Guide To Managing Change For Urban Managers and Trainers* is designed to help managers and trainers become more proficient in creating their own options and, therefore, becoming more effective and competent in performing their individual roles. To illustrate this point, we would encourage those who use this Guide to think about the many options that are available to use these materials, both in the classroom and on-the-job. While there are options suggested in each of the training modules that follow, they only scratch the surface of what is possible. Having options is the sign of a competent manager. The same is true of those who help others learn.

### ***A final author's note***

The *Trainer's Notes*, preceding the *Concepts and Strategies* for each training session, have been written from my own personal experience. While some would argue that writing in the first person is unprofessional, I believe it is important to share some of my own experiences in using these materials over the years. Such personalization, I hope, will also send the signal that training is an individual effort and not subject to routinization. Each trainer needs to alter the materials and design to meet their own needs as well as those of the training participants.

## **PART I**

### **INITIATING THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

The man who has ceased to learn ought not to be allowed to wander around loose in these dangerous days  
M.M. COADY

#### ***Trainer's notes***

Topic: Expectations exercise

Time required: 1 - 2 hours, depending upon number of participants

Most training sessions of more than three or four days can benefit from an initial exercise (after the opening session) to bring out the participants' expectations about the forthcoming training.

While this small group exercise on course expectations makes some people nervous, experience with it has been positive. The biggest problem can be the amount of time it takes. This one has been designed to be less time-consuming by using

smaller groups that combine their expectations and report them as a small group. It begins the self-reflection process, prompting such questions as "What is important for me to learn during this programme?" It also gives the trainer information for evaluating progress as the course proceeds.

In spite of its potential usefulness, if you do not feel comfortable using such an exercise, don't. However, it is often valuable to take some risks, to experiment. When I used this expectation exercise with a management team many years ago, it turned into a lengthy series of monologues about each member and his or her background. I was anxious when the discussion went far beyond the time allotted to it. When an attempt was made to hurry the participants along, they were very harsh with me. As it turned out, this management team had worked closely together but never really knew each other as persons. It was an opportunity they did not want to forfeit. As the team-building workshop progressed, it became clear that the time was well spent. Sometimes the group has to be trusted to say what is important and valuable to it - and the trainer needs to be responsive to their needs.

### **Tasks**

1. Brief the total group on the exercise and ask each participant to spend 5-10 minutes responding to the statement "This management course will be a success for me personally if ...."
2. As stated in the work sheet, groups of four to six should join together to discuss their individual responses and to put together a summary to report to the total group. Twenty minutes should be adequate but monitor the groups and time the session accordingly.
3. Bring the small groups together and have each group make a short presentation. As they progress from the first report, to the second, etc., group representatives should not repeat what has already been said by previous groups. This is a good time to start modelling effective group behaviour! Effective group behaviour includes putting a value on time as a scarce resource and how it can be used effectively.
4. Bring the session to a close by summarising what you see as key expectations and how the course is designed, or can be altered, to meet these expectations. If some expectations are clearly outside the realm of possibility, this is the time to say so. Many years ago at an executive course one person came to the course with only one goal in mind, to learn about zero based budgeting (ZBB)! ZBB was not on the agenda and no one else wanted it added as a topic for discussion. Luckily, it proved possible to locate a book on the subject and loan it to him. The trainer arranged to meet with him at a mutually convenient time to discuss the approach.

### **Exercise**

Take a few moments and complete the following statement. This management course will be a success for me personally if:

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When you have finished writing, join three to five others who are also finished and share with each other your criteria for a successful course. Be prepared, as a group, to summarise the most important criteria for making this time together productive and professionally rewarding. (Use the following space to summarise your small group's discussion).

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Record in the following space the most important criteria to be applied to this course if it is to be successful in meeting the learning needs of you and your colleagues (based upon small group and plenary discussions).

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# THE URBAN MANAGEMENT CHALLENGE

The secret of managing is to keep the guys who hate you away from the guys who are un-decided  
Casey Stengel

## ***Trainer's notes***

Topic: The urban management challenge

Time required: approximately 1 1/2 hours

The overall purpose of this session is to help the participants think about: (a) what it means to be effective either as a manager or an organization designed to serve specific audiences; and (b) the various factors that contribute to individual and organizational effectiveness. It is also a good icebreaker to help get participants into an experiential, interactive learning mode. (This exercise was designed to be used within an urban management course. If the participants you are working with represent a different work setting, change the exercise accordingly).

## ***Tasks***

1. Brief the total group on the rationale for the session and the tasks they are to perform.
2. Break total group into four smaller working groups of similar size. Two groups are to address the individual dimension of urban management and two groups the organizational dimension. All four groups will be requested to carry out two specific tasks:
  - (a) To define "effectiveness" from either an individual or organizational perspective;
  - (b) To list those factors they believe contribute to individual or organizational effectiveness.
3. Give each group newsprint and markers; they should have 30 minutes to complete the two tasks.
4. At the end of the 30 minutes bring the four groups together to report their results. Each group will have approximately 10 minutes to make their presentations when they return to the plenary discussion.

The trainer should ask each group to comment briefly on how they worked together as a team. How did they decide to address each task? Were they frustrated by the tasks and the way they worked together? If they had to do it again, would they address the tasks differently?

Compare, to the extent possible, the responses of the two groups working on the same tasks and the differences and similarities in respect to individual and organizational effectiveness.

Training outcomes should include:

- a. A greater awareness of what is meant by "effectiveness"
- b. What contributes to individual and organizational effectiveness
- c. Whether or not the total group sees these two approaches to effectiveness as being fundamentally different or the same
- d. Some discussion of the consequences of the exercise regarding their work together during the workshop (the "so what" factor).

## ***Exercise***

### ***Topic: The Urban Management Challenge – Part I***

#### **Task assignment - Groups 1 and 2**

Your group has two tasks to perform within the next 30 minutes.

Task 1: Agree on a definition of "Managerial Effectiveness" as it would apply to an urban situation.

Task 2: List those factors your group believes contribute to the manager's effectiveness.

Your group is free to use whatever method you believe will be effective in accomplishing the two tasks stated above.

#### **Task assignment - Groups 3 and 4**

Your group has two tasks to perform within the next 30 minutes.

Task 1: Agree on a definition of "Organizational Effectiveness" as it would apply to an urban situation.

Task 2: List those factors your group believes contribute to the organization's effectiveness.



Your group is free to use whatever method you believe will be effective in accomplishing the two tasks stated above.

**Exercise**

**Topic: The Urban Management Challenge – Part II**

Summarize, briefly, each group’s definition of effectiveness.

Group 1: Managerial effectiveness

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Group 2: Managerial effectiveness

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Group 3: Organizational effectiveness

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Group 4: Organizational effectiveness

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**Exercise**

**Topic: The Urban Management Challenge – Part III**

Summarize each group’s list of factors, which they believe contribute to “Managerial Effectiveness”.

<b>Group 1</b>	<b>Group 2</b>

Summarize each group’s list of factors, which they believe contribute to “Organizational Effectiveness”.

<b>Group 3</b>	<b>Group 4</b>

# ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE: CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES

There are only two choices in life: to accept things as they are or to take responsibility for changing them

## ***Trainer's notes***

Topic: Organizational change

Time required: approximately 1 hour

The following materials entitled, "Organizational Change: Concepts and Strategies", are designed to provide a theoretical basis for the follow-up sessions on action research and planning. It is suggested that you prepare a short 20-30 minute lecture based on the concepts and strategies outlined in the article and follow this by a general discussion. During the discussion, encourage the participants to talk about their own experiences in trying to bring about changes in their organizations. The more specific they can be, the more meaningful the discussion will be. Ask questions such as:

- Why was it so difficult to bring about the change?
- Was the change organization wide or confined to one department or project?
- What could have been done differently to have increased the effectiveness of the change?

## ***Concepts and Strategies***

The idea that organizations can "plan and manage change" has been a management theory and practice for many years. Management literature is infused with expressions like planned change, managing change, organizational change, change agents and, more recently, change masters. They are attempts to categorize and make available in usable forms a collection of theories, principles and practices about change and how it can be more effectively harnessed to serve the needs of organizations and their clients. The basic underlying assumption which fuels all the rhetoric and energy that goes into managing change is that, in fact, change can be managed. It is assumed that organizations, and their managers, can have more influence and control over the changes that are taking place in their midst. Organizational change, as a management strategy, assumes a pro-active stance toward events rather than mere reaction to events.

Two questions immediately come to mind regarding the possibility of planned organizational change as a potential management strategy:

- a. Are the references about planned change in organizational settings merely empty rhetoric to be bandied about in classrooms and management publications, or do they, in fact, represent important ideas and strategies for managers to consider in their day-to-day operations?
- b. More importantly, are these concepts and strategies of organizational change so culture bound that they have little or no relevance in developing country settings?

Regarding the first question about the legitimacy of organizational change in the work place, managers can manage the change process and, therefore, the literature about organization development and change is potentially valuable to the practising manager. Like all bodies of knowledge and experience, it should be approached with a critical mind.

As for the cultural-boundedness of organizational change strategies and their potential effectiveness in diverse settings, I am less certain. Too often it is assumed that management concepts, principles and practices are generic and applicable to almost any situation, regardless of the geographic or cultural setting. Much more care needs to be taken in the adoption of new management or organization strategies in cultural settings where they have not been fully tested.

It is true that there is a tendency to dismiss new ideas because they "didn't originate here". Cultures do change, norms and values become altered, and management and organization practices are constantly being challenged from within the organization and from the larger environment. Because organizations and their environments are dynamic and ever changing, the manager can hardly ignore the need to manage the change process. This often means adapting (not adopting) ideas that have been successful in other settings.

Before considering specific organizational change strategies, comments will be made on the role of organizational change within the larger context of national development. As well as the genesis of organizational change and development as a major theme in management theory and practice.

## ***Development and organizational change***

The act of development has as its central theme the management of change. Unfortunately, development, as a change strategy in developing countries, is too often defined in broad policy terms (abstract statements of desired future states) or

as specific projects and programmes (end-products adhering to a prescribed cycle of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities often imposed by outside institutions).

Because orientations to development are largely concerned with producing a final product or a future condition, opportunities to nurture individuals and organizations as agents of change are largely ignored. In fact, the concept of a change agent, within a specific organizational setting, may be antithetical to much of development in its present context. What is required, on the part of those who control the development process in developing countries, is a greater awareness of several fundamental issues integral to planned change.

First, the process of change is as important as the outcome of change. How change comes about, at all levels of society, will determine whether change can be sustained after external resources are no longer available.

Secondly, development involves many simultaneous changes including economic, social, political, cultural and behavioural. While it is readily admitted that economic, social and political changes are integral to the national development process, there is often reluctance to acknowledge that development also requires cultural and behavioural changes. Yet, cultural and behavioural changes may be the most critical factors in development and the most difficult to manage.

Thirdly, changes that result from development will be: (1) intended and unintended; (2) planned and unplanned; and (3) managed and unmanaged - even, on occasion, unmanageable. Managing change, as a function of development, should be designed to anticipate and minimize the unintended, unplanned and unmanaged aspects of development.

Finally, organizational change must be seen as a keystone of national development. Organizations, both public and private, are the places where development happens. Those who take on the responsibility to provide leadership and management within operating organizations should recognize their role in overall national development.

To summarize, the successful management of change and development will require clear attention to the process as well as the products of development and ultimately involve changes in the organization's culture and behaviour. Change will also involve unintended, unplanned and unmanaged events and consequences. The key to managing organizational change is to anticipate and minimize these events and their consequences to the extent possible.

Just because everything is different doesn't mean anything has changed

### ***Historical perspective***

Organizational change, and the broader theme of managing change, have a well documented history. The following is a brief review of the roots of planned change and how they grew.

While there have been major practitioners and writers of managing change concepts and strategies over the centuries, the focus here is on one individual who has had a major influence on much of what we know about managing change at the present time. This person is Kurt Lewin, a social scientist who emigrated to the United States of America in the early 1930s.

At the core of Lewin's concerns was the challenge of bringing about attitudinal and behavioural change without the usual manipulation that underlies many of these effects.

At least five of Lewin's research interests and contributions have found their way into contemporary organizations and form the basis for much of modern management theory and practice. These include:

- a. The role of democratic leadership in non-political settings including the sharing of power, authority, responsibility and decision making at all appropriate levels of organizations and societies;
- b. Group dynamics (human relations) and their impact upon the effectiveness of individuals and teams in task-oriented settings;
- c. Experiential learning (learning by doing) as an approach to developing skills and changing attitudes and behaviours;
- d. Action research, as a practical decision-making and problem-solving process;
- e. The analysis of forces at work within and among social systems - an important contribution to the concept of organizations as open systems. Open systems are those that are influenced by, and in turn influence, their external environment.

These five major themes in the management of complex socio-economic/political systems (usually known as organizations or institutions) did not always fall on fertile ground in the years following Lewin's initial research and writings. In fact, it has taken decades for the combination of Lewin's efforts and contributions to make their mark on a significant number of operating organizations.

The period from 1950 to the present has been fertile with the blossoming of new ideas and approaches to management. Those who have followed and, on occasion, immersed themselves in the latest management fad have witnessed the rise and fall, or at least, the faltering of such movements as sensitivity training the managerial grid, organization development, system analysis, team building matrix management, operations research, sociotechnical systems, management by objectives (MBO), worker democracy, The One Minute Manager, and many more. Management theorists have experienced their own "green revolution" when it comes to planting new approaches to effective management and organizations. The problem arises at harvest time when it is often difficult to tell the maize from the weeds.

### ***On a more positive note***

While it is easy and sometimes appropriate to administer a dose of healthy cynicism to the probing and flailing that has characterized management/organization theory and practice in recent years, one must also applaud the tenacious manner in which managers and theoreticians have struggled to find "a better way".

Those who come from harder disciplines (science, engineering economics) often scoff at the "softness" of management techniques and strategies. However, their attempts to rationalize and quantify the workings of complex organizations often demonstrate a naivete about management and have at times resulted in disastrous consequences.

Unfortunately, the management of complex organizations is a messy business. It is fraught with ambiguity and uncertainty. It is also constrained by outmoded theories and practices, which were devised in a previous century. Most of the world's formal organizations cling to Weber's bureaucratic model. It is characterized by the hierarchical pyramid, the definition and assignment of specific work tasks, sharp distinctions between workers and managers, and formalized and rigid patterns of organizational behaviour and practices.

When it is realised that these managerial and organizational systems are undergirded, and often undermined, by a rich tradition of local culture or cultures, it is little wonder that there are many questions and few answers about how one should go about managing organizations, projects, programmes and services in societies and multi-societal settings that are rapidly changing.

For those who are charged with the task of "managing", this rich contextual stew of concepts and techniques can be of little comfort. The real challenge of management is learning to live temporarily with the inherited "system" while beginning to change it so it works for the manager, and not against him in carrying out the responsibilities of the position.

### ***Planned change strategies - the high road***

Before bringing this discussion to a close it would be well to include a brief look at: (a) an academic categorisation of planned change strategies that has been generally accepted over the years; and (b) a more practical set of change techniques designed for the manager.

One widely accepted academic taxonomy of planned change strategies is by Robert Chin and Kenneth Benne. It includes three broad categories: (a) empirical-rational; (b) normative-re-educative; and (c) power-coercive.

**Empirical-rational.** This approach assumes that individuals are rational and follow their rational self-interests once these are revealed to them. It further assumes that decisions can be made from a data base which adheres to rational arguments and provides a strong semblance of predictability. This approach includes basic and applied research and the dissemination of knowledge through general education, administrative decisions based on merit or recognized standards, systems analyses and operations research as management tools for decision-making and the installation and use of quantitative informational systems to guide management actions.

**Normative-re-educative.** This category of change strategies assumes that patterns of action and practice are supported by socio-cultural norms and by commitments on the part of individuals to these norms. These strategies do not deny rational thought but go beyond rationality in determining what influences commitments and behaviour. It assumes the capacity to unlearn old norms, values, attitudes and behaviours and to learn new ones. It further assumes a transactional relationship between the individual and his or her environment. This approach includes many of Lewin's early efforts, such as experiential training and action research, individual development approaches such as psychotherapy, counselling and

coaching and organizational activities designed to foster growth of individuals and the problem-solving capabilities of the system, through such activities as team-building and organization development.

**Power-coercive.** This approach to change assumes the application of power in some form, political or otherwise. The influence process involved is one of compliance by those with less power to the plans, direction and leadership of those with greater power. This category of change strategies includes: the use of political institutions; the composition and manipulation of power élites; non-violent confrontation as employed by Gandhi and Martin Luther King; conflict management; economic sanctions; and the making of power coalitions.

To these three categories of change strategies, proposed by Chin and Benne, a fourth might be added - that of technological-structural change. While Chin and Benne would, no doubt, argue that their three categories encompass changes of a technological and structural nature, these are too important in today's managerial environment to risk being lost under the trilogy of approaches listed above.

**Technological-structural.** These changes assume the infusion of new technology into systems and their environment and the alteration or re-ordering of social systems to achieve certain goals. Included under this category are such activities as: the installation of computers; the deployment of new equipment and materials; and the structural alteration of organizational relationships.

### ***From the theoretical to the practical***

French and Bell, in their book Organization Development, provide a succinct look at the major families of types of organizational change interventions. These are strategies designed to help managers put into practice many of the concepts associated with planned change:

- a. **Diagnostic activities:** fact-finding activities designed to ascertain the state of the system, the status of a problem, the “way things are”. Available methods range from projective devices like “build a collage that represents for you your place in this organization” to the more traditional data collection methods of interviews, questionnaires, surveys, and meetings.
- b. **Team-building activities:** activities designed to enhance the effective operation of system teams. They may relate to task issues, such as the way things are done, the needed skills to accomplish tasks, the resource allocations necessary for task accomplishment; or they may relate to the nature and quality of the relationships between the team members or between members and the leader. Again, a wide range of activities is possible. In addition, consideration is given to the different kinds of teams that may exist in the organization, such as formal work teams, temporary task force teams, and newly constituted teams.
- c. **Intergroup activities:** activities designed to improve effectiveness of interdependent groups. They focus on joint activities and the output of the groups considered as a single system rather than two subsystems. When two groups are involved, the activities are generally designated intergroup or interface activities; when more than two groups are involved, the activities are often called organizational mirroring.
- d. **Survey-feedback activities:** related to and similar to the diagnostic activities mentioned above in that they are a large component of those activities. However, they are important enough in their own right to be considered separately. These activities center on actively working the data produced by a survey and designing action plans based on the survey data.
- e. **Education and training activities:** activities designed to improve the skills, abilities, and knowledge of individuals. There are several activities available and several approaches possible. For example, the individual can be educated in isolation from his or her own work group (in a T-group comprised of strangers), or one can be educated in relation to the work group (when a work team learns how better to manage interpersonal conflict). The activities may be directed toward technical skills required for effective task performance or maybe directed toward improving interpersonal competence. The activities may be directed toward leadership issues, responsibilities and functions of group members, decision making, problem solving, goal setting and planning, etc.
- f. **Techno-structural or structural activities:** activities designed to improve the effectiveness of technical or structural inputs and constraints affecting individuals or groups. The activities may take the form of: (i) experimenting with new organization structures and evaluating their effectiveness in terms of specific goals; or (ii) devising new ways to bring technical resources to bear on problems. Included in these activities are certain forms

of job enrichment, management by objectives, socio-technical systems, collateral organizations, and physical settings interventions.

- g. **Process consultation activities:** activities on the part of the consultant "which help the client perceive, understand, and act upon process events which occur in the client's environment." These activities perhaps more accurately describe an approach, a consulting mode in which the client is given insight into the human processes in organizations and taught skills in diagnosing and managing them. Primary emphasis is on processes such as communications, leader and member roles in groups, problem-solving and decision-making, group norms and group growth, leadership and authority, and intergroup co-operation and competition. Emphasis is also placed upon learning how to diagnose and develop the necessary skills to be effective in dealing with these processes.
- h. **Third party peacemaking activities:** activities conducted by a skilled consultant (the third party), which are designed to "help two members of an organization manage their interpersonal conflict". They are based on confrontation tactics and an understanding of the processes involved in conflict and conflict resolution.
- i. **Coaching and counselling activities:** activities that entail the consultant or other organization members working with individuals to help them (i) define learning goals, (ii) learn how others see their behaviour; (iii) learn new modes of behaviour to see if these help them to achieve their goals better. A central feature of this activity is the non-evaluative feedback given by others to an individual. A second feature is the joint exploration of alternative behaviours.
- j. **Planning and goal-setting activities:** activities that include theory and experience in planning and goal-setting, utilising problem-solving models, planning paradigms, ideal-organization versus real-organization "discrepancy" models, and the like. The goal of all of them is to improve these skills at the levels of the individual, group and total organization.

Within each of these broad categories of organizational interventions is a wide range of activities and exercises that managers and consultants can use to address organizational problems and concerns.

### **Summary**

The potential for organizational change should be at the core of every manager's thinking and strategy. With the necessity to work within a dynamic environment, where uncertainty and rapid changes are everyday events, the manager cannot afford to maintain the status quo.

Once the manager has decided to enter into an organizational change effort, it is important to ensure that it is compatible with the organization's current cultural norms and values. This does not mean that those norms and values will not change through development. If they do not, then one can assume the change effort has not been successful. It is important, however, to have an initial success when entering into a long-term investment in organizational development. This, more often than not, requires the manager to start the change process at the point where the organization and its members are at the time. Effective change agents do not work uphill anymore than they have to.

Few managers realize, how much little will do

## **PERSONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS**

Action springs not from thought but from a readiness for responsibility  
Dietrich Bonhoffer

### **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Personal and organizational effectiveness

Time required: approximately 2 – 2 1/2 hours

This bridges the gap between the discussion of "Organizational change" and the beginning of the sessions on "Action research and planning". It is designed to help course participants look at their personal readiness to engage in decision-making and problem solving as well as the readiness of their organization. The questionnaire is written to reflect various steps in the "Action research and planning cycle" which is covered in subsequent sessions. Odd-numbered statements in the

questionnaire are designed to cover organizational readiness factors and even-numbered statements, the individual readiness to make decisions and solve problems within the organization.

### Tasks

1. Distribute the questionnaire and ask each individual to complete and score it.
2. Have participants, as they finish the questionnaire, form small groups of three to discuss the results of the questionnaire.
3. In these groups of three, one person is to act as a consultant to another and the third is to observe the discussion and feed back information about the content and process of the discussion to the other two.

The purpose of these discussions is twofold: (a) to help each individual better understand what problems might be affecting his or her individual and organization's performance when it comes to day-to-day operations, based upon the results of the questionnaire; (b) to practice individual skills in helping others in a coaching, problem solving situation. The role of the observer is to give the other two participants feedback on their ability to clarify the issues and concerns outlined in the assessment questionnaire. The intention is not to determine ways to improve the individual's, or his or her organization's, state of readiness but to understand these states of readiness. Each round of discussions and feedback should take approximately 20 minutes (15 for discussion and 5 for observer feedback).

After each participant has had an opportunity to perform all the roles, the total group should be reconvened to discuss the experience. The trainer might, during the three person discussions, gather the individual scores for personal and organizational readiness and post them as part of the final discussion.

4. Convene a plenary session to discuss the exercise and to summarize the small-group discussions. For example, ask the group such questions as: What problems seem to be most common? Least common? Is the individual or his/her organization, more ready to engage in problem solving? Given the results of the questionnaire and the small-group discussions, what does the group think the course should focus on to improve individual and/or organizational readiness?

### Exercise

A checklist to assess personal and organizational readiness

The following checklist is designed to help you assess your personal, as well as your organization's, readiness to make decisions, solve problems and bring about desirable planned changes. For each statement, circle the number you believe reflects your and your organization's operational reality. If you believe the statement is not important, check the column on the far right.

	Fully	Mostly	Partly	Slightly	Not at all	Not important
1. Top management expectations for the organization are clearly defined and communicated through-out the organization	5	4	3	2	1	
2. I understand what my immediate supervisor expects from me on the job	5	4	3		1	
3. The underlying values which guide and drive my organization and its performance are clear	5	4	3	2	1	
4. If asked what my organization values most, in terms of its overall operation, I could respond immediately	5	4	3	2	1	
5. The ground rules my organization uses to make decisions and solve problems are understood throughout the system	5	4	3	2	1	
6. While I understand these ground rules I am willing to confront them and my supervisors when they are not working to foster decision-making and problem solving in the organization	5	4	3	2	1	
7. The roles and responsibilities of each unit in the organization are clearly defined and understood	5	4	3	2	1	
8. I clearly understand what my role and responsibilities are within the organization	5	4	3	2	1	

9. Organizational resources are adequate to get the job done	5	4	3	2	1	
10. I have all the resources I need to perform my job responsibilities effectively	5	4	3	2	1	
11. Timely and accurate information is readily available in the organization for making decisions and solving problems	5	4	3	2	1	
12. I have access to the kinds of information and data I need to perform my responsibilities effectively	5	4	3	2	1	
13. My organization has clearly established goals and objectives that guide the day-to-day operations and provide long-term direction	5	4	3	2	1	
14. I understand the goals and objectives of my work unit and have a commitment to fulfilling them	5	4	3	2	1	
15. It is common in my organization to consider various options before pursuing a course of action	5	4	3	2	1	
16. I personally consider the consequences of my actions before I carry out a project or task	5	4	3	2	1	
17. Programme and budget targets are set for the organization and, in most instances, met	5	4	3	2	1	
18. If someone asked me to define the performance target of my work unit for the fiscal year, I could answer immediately	5	4	3	2	1	
19. The organization has a system for maintaining and evaluating programme and financial performance	5	4	3	2	1	
20. My work unit routinely assesses its performance and uses the information to make improvements	5	4	3	2	1	
The sum of all the numbers you circled for the uneven-numbered statements (1,3,5,7,etc.) represents your assessment of your organization's readiness. The total score of the even-numbered statements (2,4,6,etc.) is your assessment of your own readiness to make decisions and solve problems. The maximum score in each category is 50.						
In either case, a score of 40 points or above indicates a healthy state of readiness. A total score of less than 20 in either category indicates serious deficiencies that should be addressed to achieve a state of organizational or personal readiness.						
If you checked more than 5 of the 20 statements as not being important, this workshop will either prove to be a peak experience or a total waste of time.						
Organizational readiness						Total Score
Personal readiness						Total Score
The "not important" factor						Total number checked

## ACTION RESEARCH AND PLANNING

No action without research: no research without action  
Kurt Lewin

### **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Action research and planning

Time required: approximately 1½ - 2 hours

This session is designed to provide participants with an overview of the Action Research and Planning process and to form work groups around performance deficiencies common to their individual organizations.

The assumption is made for this session and following ones that it is most effective to have the training participants apply the various steps in the Action Research and Planning process to specific performance problems they are experiencing in their organization.

### **Tasks**

1. Give a short lecture on the seven steps involved in Action Research and Planning and how it can prepare participants to be more effective decision makers and problem solvers. Leave time for questions and discussions.



2. Ask each participant to fill out the Performance Discrepancy Indicators Checklist, entitled “Taking the Temperature of Your Organization”.
3. Divide the total group into smaller groups of 3 to 5 participants based upon common interests. You may want to list the most common discrepancies from the individual checklists on newsprint or a blackboard to facilitate the formation of groups.
4. If there is time, each group can spend the remainder of the session clarifying the discrepancy indicator they will address during the remaining sessions on AR.

### **Overview**

Making decisions and solving problems are two of the most important tasks that managers perform. They permeate day-to-day operations and affect the long term health of any organization. In spite of the common nature of these two activities in organizational life, many managers are under skilled in carrying out the processes of decision making and problem solving. Skills, of course are only one aspect of performance in these two vital areas of concern. Motivation, resources, timing, and the overall environment of the work setting are also important to the acts of making decisions and solving problems.

On the other hand, one can argue that all of these factors are integral to decision making and problem solving. The effective manager's “skilfulness” should not only include a well-honed set of tactics but an overall philosophy and strategy of management.

The manager's effectiveness will be judged not only by his or her ability to make decisions or to solve problems, but to perform these " within the larger context. Mature judgement, consideration for others, involvement of colleagues, attention to long term as well as short term consequences and many other factors and qualities make for good management.

As basic as decision making and problem solving skills are to the effective performance of all managers, they are often overlooked in management courses and woefully absent in many organizations.

### ***The action research and planning connections***

What do research and planning have to do with the manager's ability to “make” decisions or to “solve” problems. After all, research and planning sound a bit academic and most organizations relegate these activities to staff personnel - not line managers.

Since many managers hold these perceptions of research and planning, I believe it is important to look at these two management strategies in some depth.

The act of planning, in most organizations, has been misunderstood, misallocated and misused. Sometimes, planning is seen as “the thing to do”. Your organization is not considered a modern organization if it doesn't have a “planning department. Planners are frequently viewed as staff functionaries far removed from the day-to-day action. Consequently, top managers often ignore their advice when it comes to making decisions.

Planning is all too often seen as a pre-management function. How often have you seen the terms “planning and management”, “planning and implementation”? On the other side of the planning conundrum is the belief that making decisions is an integral part of implementation. Decision making is management work. Planning is planner's work. WRONG! Planning is decision making. When managers are engaged in determining what the potential problems and opportunities are in their organization, and sorting among the best options to be considered in addressing them, and figuring out how to allocate scarce resources, they are not only planning, they are making decisions. Planning is decision making - and managers should plan. It is too important to be left to staff personnel who are labelled as planners.

### ***Action research***

While you may be convinced that planning belongs in the manager's tool kit, research is a very different issue. If we are talking about basic research, or even applied research, I would tend to agree with you. But, the issue on the table is action research. It is, as the saying goes, a horse of a different colour. Action research is very much an operating strategy. As an operating strategy, it produces both knowledge and change. In the dynamic world in which most organizations and their managers operate, increased knowledge is critical and planned change is expected. Action research is an approach that can accomplish both.

Action research, as a management strategy, involves more than just a set of working tools. Action research is a conceptual framework for thinking about problems as well as a managerial philosophy that can be used to center all activities.

Action research, because it is both conceptual and practical, philosophical and pragmatic, must be embraced not only as a logical sequence of steps to be taken (seven, in the case of these training materials) but as an overall strategy for improving individual and organizational performance. Consequently, action research is different from most approaches to decision making and problem solving. The differences are worth noting.

- **Action research involves widespread participation**

Everyone who is involved in the problem is seen as capable of making a contribution.

AR is based on the fundamental belief that people are more likely to change if they participate in exploring the reasons for, and the means of, change.

- **Action research puts a premium on learning**

Training is built into the heart of the process. The intent is not simply to solve immediate problems, but to help those involved to gain the knowledge and skills needed to solve future problems. This is critical in organizations that are thin on management capacity.

- **Action research is practical and direct**

It is carried out within the context of real issues and concerns defined by those involved; and involves practical research as a means of gathering the information which can be use immediately to enhance the process of problem solving.

- **Action research is developmental**

A major task of AR is to develop individuals, organizations and communities to help them become more self-reliant.

- **Action research is experimental**

It is an approach, which is flexible and open to new changes. It encourages experimentation and practice; recognizing the importance of using that which is learned to guide that which is yet to be done.

- **Action research is dynamic**

It attempts to comprehend an ever widening range of factors and consequences in an effort to be congruent with the needs and environment of the client system.

### ***Action research: a seven step process***

Action research involves seven interrelated steps, or tactics, within the overall strategy. These steps are summarized as follows:

(a) **Building a Problem Solving Relationship**

Like the foundation of a house, the relationship of the people engaged in problem-solving is the base upon which all future actions rest. When that relationship is one of mutual trust and understanding, the process of making decisions and solving problems is greatly improved.

Building the relationship means:

- Sharing people's expectations and values
- Setting ground rules
- Assuming useful roles and responsibilities
- Learning how to work as a team

(b) **Identifying Problems and Opportunities**

This is the initial process of determining what problem the group is trying to solve or what opportunity it hopes to capture. Sometimes this also means redefining the problem or opportunity. This step generally involves:

- Identifying potential problems and opportunities
- Discussing and sorting out those items
- Deciding which items are most important and which can be ignored

(c) **Analysing the Problem**

Once the critical problem area is determined, the problem solving team needs to:

- Explore the nature and extent of the problem
- Translate the problem into an objective statement
- Analyse the forces working for and against the achievement of that objective

(d) **Planning a Course of Action**

Having analysed the problem, the next step is to decide how best to tackle it. This entails:

- Identifying a full range of options
- Analysing each option
- Developing a plan of action (usually one, or a combination of options)
- Devising a method of evaluating the proposed action

(e) **Experimenting and Redesigning**

Too many promising solutions are “implemented” without a trial period and, in effect, are never successfully implemented. AR calls for a period of experimentation and practice. This allows the problem solving team to assess how effective and workable its proposed plan of action will be, and to redesign it if necessary.

(f) **Implementing the desired course of action**

This is doing it for real; it is putting into effect the plan of action and managing the changes that accompany that plan. Even at this stage there is room for modifications and improvements.

(g) **Evaluating the Results**

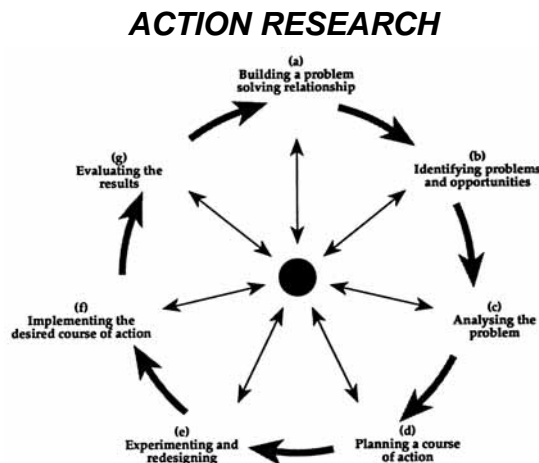
At various points during the implementation stage, the plan of action is evaluated against the original objectives established in Step C.

While each of these steps will be more detailed in the materials that follow, it may be helpful to review a graphic representation of the total process, following this discussion. The Action Research process is deliberately shown as a cyclical and not a straight line process. There are reasons for this:

- (a) The idea of recycling is built into the approach. Once the cycle is complete, it should lead to another cycle, based upon what has been learned and accomplished.
- (b) The process can be entered into at any stage in the life of an organization or community.
- (c) The process is often untidy, moving back and forth between the steps as required in any particular situation. This is represented by the arrows that connect the various parts with the hub of the cycle.

It is often necessary to return to a previous step for one reason or another. One may realise, for example, that it is impossible to set objectives (c) without a better understanding of the problem or opportunity (b). At other times, steps in the process might be skipped. For example, the course of action (d) maybe so clear and the time so short that experimentation (e) doesn't make sense. The important point is to view the process as dynamic, one which is flexible and responsive to the needs and desires of those who use it.

Think like, a man of action; act like a man of thought



## Exercise

### Topic: Performance Discrepancy Indicators: A Checklist

Time required: 30 minutes

The following exercise is designed to highlight performance discrepancies common to most organizations. It is also a way for the trainer(s) and workshop participants to identify a number of problems/issues to work on as they go through the various steps in the action research process (which represents a major focus of the workshop).

By using this exercise to form workshop groups, you can be more assured that the participants are working on performance discrepancies they are also experiencing in their individual organizations. Anyway you, as the trainer, can make the training more relevant to the participants' experience back on the job will not only have an impact on their motivation to learn, but have an impact on the potential application of the learning.

The tasks to be undertaken by the training participants, in completing the Performance Discrepancy Indicator Exercise, are outlined on the sheets that will be provided to the trainees. Review these tasks before using the exercise in the classroom. Better yet, complete the checklist yourself before you use it. This is good advice for all training exercises of this kind. To paraphrase the "golden rule" - don't do to others what you haven't done to yourself beforehand.

## Tasks

1. Ask each participant to complete the Performance Discrepancy Indicator Questionnaire and score their responses. Explain how the scoring works. After each indicator is a scale of 0 to 50; 1 means there is no discrepancy and, therefore, no action is needed at this time. At the other end of the continuum is 50 which indicates a discrepancy of the highest order. Do something immediately! In between are 49 other choices, depending on the participant's perception of the particular discrepancy and its state of existence in the organization. After scoring each, the participant is to total the scores and divide by 10. This will give each respondent a "temperature" score to record on the thermometer.
2. After they have scored, convene the participants into small groups of two to four to discuss their individual scores further. You can also ask them to give you their scores so you can do a group profile of temperatures for later discussion.
3. Close the session by reflecting on the importance of looking at performance discrepancies as a management tactic.

### Taking the Temperature of Your Organization A Checklist of Performance Discrepancy Indicators

- I. Indicators of Known Discrepancies  
Check each on the scale of 0 to 50 and record your response on the line at the right.  
Remember: 0 = no problem; 50 = serious problem

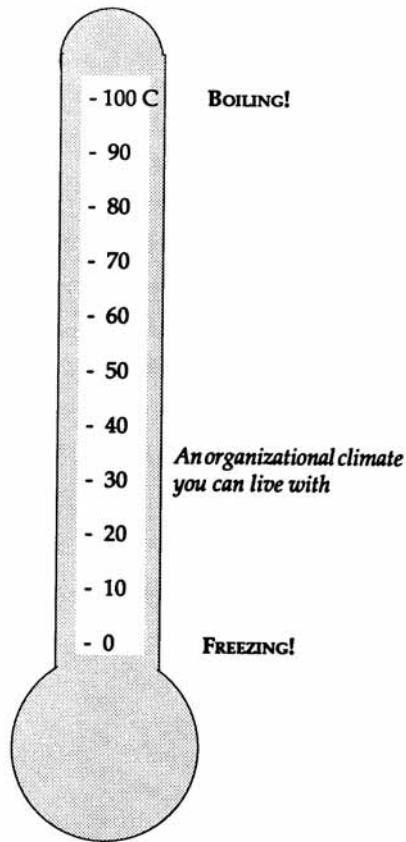
1. Costs are rising in relation to output	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
2. Work quality is below expectations	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
3. Short term goals are not being met	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
4. Employee grievances are increasing	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
5. Customer complaints are increasing	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
6. Work loads are not evenly distributed	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
7. Employees are not getting needed information	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
8. Equipment failures are common	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
9. Work is running behind schedule	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
10. Staff turnovers/vacancies are higher than usual	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
11. Employee morale is declining	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
12. Personal conflicts are common	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
13. Creative ideas or suggestions are rare	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
14. Employees are unwilling to take risks	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
15. Non-compliance with regulations is common	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
16. Accident and injury rates are high	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	

17. Co-operation among work units is low	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
18. Mistakes are often repeated	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
19. Equipment and material shortages are common	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
20. Misuse or misappropriation of funds, equipment and supplies is common	0 ... 10 ... 15 ... 20 ... 25 ... 30 ... 35 ... 40 ... 45 ... 50	
RAW SCORE - Total 1-20		
EFFECTIVE SCORE - Divide the raw score by 10 and record here		
<b>This represents the "temperature" of your organization</b>		

**Exercise**

Take the temperature of your organization

Take the effective score from the previous page and mark it on the thermometer. Discuss it with your work colleagues.



**Exercise**

II. Pick the highest scoring performance discrepancy, based upon the organizational assessment you just completed and list it below. (Alternative: Pick a discrepancy which is particularly troubling to you personally as the problem you want to address in the problem solving session.)

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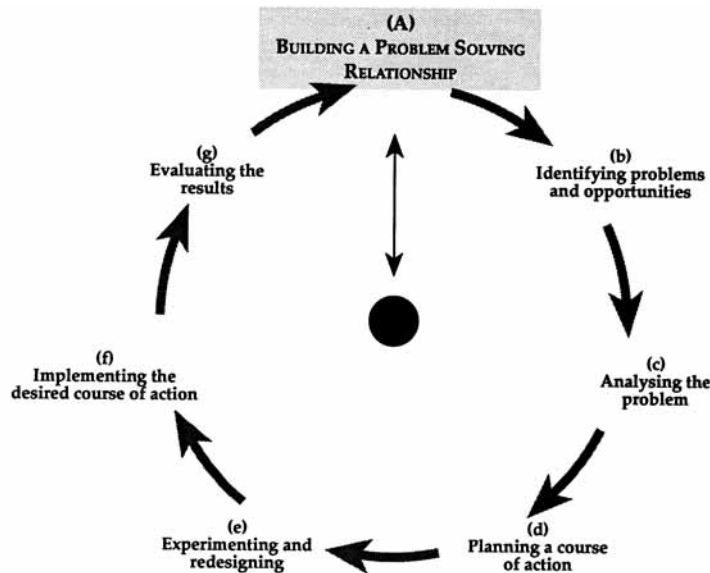
III. Identify up to four other individuals in the course who have identified the same performance discrepancy as being indicative of a problem in their organizations and form a work team. This team will work together for the next few days to apply the action research process for decision making and problem solving. The course instructor will assist with identifying and organizing teams around specific performance discrepancy indicators.

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## BUILDING A PROBLEM SOLVING RELATIONSHIP



Man is bundle of relationships, a knot of roots, whose flowers and fruitage is the world  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

### ***Trainer's notes***

Topic: Building a problem solving relationship  
Time required: approximately 1 - 1½ hours

This session is designed to help the participants understand the importance of reaching out to others who should be involved in problem solving (or tapping opportunities) and how to build an effective working relationship with these individuals, groups and organizations. Two issues are important to convey in this session. The first is the importance of collaboration and participation. Few problems and opportunities are best addressed alone. Most involve others. Involving others in the problem solving process early saves time and resources in the long run. The second issue has to do with clarifying assumptions, values, roles and responsibilities as quickly as possible in the problem solving process.

### ***Tasks***

1. Deliver a short lecture based upon the written materials and your own experience in working with others. An alternative is to pose the question, "What are the critical issues you need to think about in building a problem solving relationship with others?" Follow the query by asking "Why are these issues important?" Once the training participants have contributed to the discussion, you can fill in the missing pieces from your own knowledge and the notes provided in the workbook.
2. Many alternatives are possible as a follow up to the previous task. I would probably ask each individual to construct a list of important collaborators who might assist in overcoming the performance discrepancy identified in the previous training session, stating why they are important to the problem solving process. You might also use a three way discussion as a way of soliciting information on the who, why, and how of building problem solving relationships. In this training approach, one person discusses his or her problem, another acts as the

consultant/coach, and the third monitors the discussion and gives both feedback on the substance and the process of their dialogue.

3. Once the training participants have discussed, in one way or another, who is important to the problem solving process you might want to stage a role play between the person with the problem and a party who can contribute to its resolution. For example, ask for a volunteer who would like to seek assistance in solving the performance problem identified in the previous session. The person should identify in broad terms for the training group the essence of the problem and someone they believe can help solve it. The potential collaborator needs to be described in some detail (e.g., Who is it? What is his or her role? What is the relationship between the two?). The reason for soliciting information, which is as specific as possible regarding the collaboration role, is to prepare another participant to play this person's role in the discussion that follows.

Once you have enough information about the problem and the potential collaborator, ask someone from the group to play the role of the problem solving collaborator. You will want the role play to clarify: the problem and its ramifications; assumptions about working together; values that each party might hold that are important to the problem solving venture; and the roles and responsibilities each can be expected to fulfil.

The role-playing should continue until you believe optimum learning has been achieved from the discussion or it raises questions, either in content or process, that could benefit from an open discussion involving all course participants. There is no magic formula for determining this point in a role play. Let your judgement and intuition guide your actions.

One final comment about the above notes: They are written to give you general ideas about how to handle the session, not detailed step-by-step procedures to follow. I believe training sessions are more effective when the trainer has flexibility in both design and content, given the needs of the trainees. Too often training designs are written in a rigid lock-step fashion which give the trainer little room for adaptation. Such designs deny creativity and input from the trainees, as well as the trainer.

## **Overview**

### ***Step A: Building a problem solving relationship***

Whatever the situation whether (meeting as a management team to address performance problems and plan major changes or working with community groups), the relationship among members of a group has a great deal to do with the group's ability to solve problems, to learn, and to plan new programs. Like the foundation of a house, the problem solving relationship needs to be built, and sometimes rebuilt, since almost every other action depends upon the strength of this relationship.

Factors to consider in building an effective problem-solving relationship are:

- **Expectations**

What expectations do various parties to the problem-solving process have about their working together? Within a training session, for example, it is important for the trainees to know the expectation of the trainers and the sponsoring organizations. Likewise, the trainers need to know what the trainees expect from the program. If these expectations are very different, it could lead to serious problems in communicating and working together. To the extent possible, it is important to work toward a common set of expectations. The expectations of large groups of employees in many organizations never get surfaced. They continue to be hidden and the organization's ability to make decisions and solve problems is thwarted.

If a pickpocket meets a holy man, he, will only see his pockets

- **Values**

People who join organizations and groups often have strong values, e.g., things they prize or place a high value on. For example, many trainers value shared responsibility for, and involvement in, learning - the belief that people are not taught - they learn. This suggests active involvement in setting learning goals and contributing to the learning of others. The participants also come with their own values and they may be in conflict with those of the teaching staff. Values are a part of every interaction we undertake they need to be mutually understood if people are to work well together.

- **Ground Rules**

A good problem solving relationship involves establishing ground rules that are understood and agreed upon by all parties. How many times have you gone into a situation when you did not know what the ground rules were? Not a comforting feeling, is it?

A group that strives to make quality decisions and to solve complex problems needs to establish ground rules on how it is going to operate. These include:

- ♦ How it will go about analysing and solving problems
- ♦ How it will make decisions
- ♦ How it will set agendas, keep notes, share information
- ♦ Whether it will have a regular group leader or rotate that responsibility among the participants.

- **Roles and Responsibilities**

The roles and responsibilities of each party involved, and how these are viewed by others, are important issues to be considered in establishing an effective problem solving relationship.

People play various roles in group - some helpful, some not so helpful. We will be looking at those roles in this course and how they affect each group's work.

- **Resources**

Any task to be undertaken requires resources. It is important to initially assess whether or not you have the necessary resources available, or whether you can acquire them if and when they are needed. Nothing stops problem solving more quickly than a lack of resources or the belief that they are not available.

Building a problem solving relationship is getting to know the territory in which decision making and Problem solving should take place. It would include raising and answering questions that help develop a level of trust and understanding among those who should be involved. To assure a high level of congruence between the ideas being taught in the course and the behaviour of the instructors, certain things should be done to aid building such a relationship. For example, the objectives of the course should be explained, along with the proposed schedule. There should be an opportunity for you (the participants) to discuss the objectives and make changes if they feel this is necessary. The trainers, should talk about some of our own values about learning why we believe they are important, and what they mean in this program.

The training program also provides an opportunity for you to express their expectations about the training and your particular needs as operating managers and trainers.

Finally, the training program is an opportunity to increase knowledge and skills in group work - all of which should contribute to a solid relationship. These are discussed in more detail in the following section.

## ***What to look for in building effective relationships***

- **Group Values and Behaviours**

What people do in the problem solving relationship is important and may have a greater impact on what happens than anything else. Here are some things that are helpful in building a strong working relationship.

- (a) **Empathy.** It is important to try to see the situation from another person's point of view - to "tune in" on the other person. Managers often forget what it was like to be a – "worker". Reflecting upon those experiences can be important in becoming a more effective manager.
- (b) **Honesty.** Being honest will contribute to effective problem solving. While direct communication has different connotations in different cultures, it is a value worth considering.
- (c) **Respect.** Having a positive regard for others and respecting their feelings, experience and potential for contribution is important to effective relationships and problem solving.
- (d) **Commitment.** There are a number of ways that commitment can be measured, including presence and involvement in the task.
- (e) **Flexibility.** Above all, the effective problem-solver is flexible, willing hear others and to change his or her mind when a better idea is presented or a better way is found.



- **Group functions**

Another important part of effective problem solving is an understanding of how groups function. How we interact with others is a complex, interesting part of everyday life. Here are some things to know about working together that can be useful in making our interaction with, others more productive.

### ***Content and process***

In all human interactions, there are two major ingredients - content and process. The first deals with the subject matter of the task upon which the group is working. In many interactions, the, focus of attention is on the content.

The second ingredient, process, is concerned with what is happening between and to group members while the group is working. In many interactions, little attention is paid to process, even when it is the major cause of ineffective group action.

Sensitivity to group process will better enable one to diagnose group problems early and deal with them more effectively. Since these processes are present in all groups, awareness of them will enhance a person's worth to a group and enable him or her to be a more effective group participant.

### ***Participation***

One indication of involvement is verbal participation. Look for differences in the amount of participation among members:

- Who says a lot; who doesn't?
- Do you see any shift in participation, e.g., "talkers" become quiet; quiet people suddenly become talkative?
- How are the silent people treated? How is their silence interpreted? Is it seen as consent, disagreement, disinterest, fear?
- Who talks to whom?
- Who keeps the discussion going? Why?

### ***Influence***

Influence and participation are not the same. Some people may speak very little, yet they capture the attention of the whole group. Others may talk a lot but are generally not listened to by other members.

- Does anyone make a decision and carry it out without checking with other group members? (self-authorized). For example, he/she decides on the topic to be discussed and immediately begins to talk about it.
- Does the group drift from topic to topic?
- Who supports other members' suggestions or decisions? Does this support result in the two members deciding the topic or activity for the group?
- Is there any evidence of the majority pushing a decision through over other members objections? Do they call for a vote (majority support)?
- Is there any attempt to get all members participating in a decision (consensus)?

### ***Group roles***

For a group to work effectively, a number of functions or roles must be performed by both the designated leader and/or the members of the group. The performance of these functions permits the group to satisfy the needs of its members and to move toward achievement of its objectives. There are two main categories of leadership/membership functions: (1) those required to meet needs on the level of task achievement; (2) those required to meet needs on the level of group maintenance. A third category of composite roles helps the group both to do the job and also maintain and strengthen itself as a group.

### ***Task functions***

The following task functions are necessary if a group is to operate effectively. If any of these roles are omitted, the effectiveness of the group declines.

- (a) **Initiating Activity:** Proposing solutions; suggesting new ideas; providing new definitions.
- (b) **Seeking Information:** Asking for clarification of suggestions; requesting additional information or facts.
- (c) **Seeking Opinions:** Looking for an expression of feeling about something from members; seeking clarification of values, suggestions, or ideas.

- (d) **Giving Information:** Offering facts and relating one's own experience to the group problems to illustrate points.
- (e) **Giving Opinions:** Stating an opinion or belief concerning suggestions others might make.
- (f) **Elaborating:** Clarifying; giving examples or developing meanings; trying to envision how a proposal might work out if adopted.
- (g) **Co-ordinating:** Showing relationships among various ideas or suggestions; trying to pull ideas or suggestions together; drawing together activities of various subgroups or members.
- (h) **Summarizing:** Pulling together related ideas or suggestions; restating suggestions after the group has discussed them.
- (i) **Testing Feasibility:** Making application of suggestions to real situations; examining the practicality and workability of ideas.

### ***Relationship functions***

In this category are described those functions which are required to strengthen and maintain the life of the group and its activities. They are necessary in order to alter or sustain the way in which members of the group work together.

- (j) **Encouraging:** Being friendly and responsive to others; praising others and their ideas; agreeing with and accepting the contributions of others.
- (k) **Gate-keeping:** Making it possible for another member to make a contribution to the group; or suggesting limited talking time for everyone so that all will have a chance to be heard.
- (l) **Standard Setting:** Expressing standards for the group to use in choosing its content or procedures or in evaluating its decisions.
- (m) **Following:** Going along with the decisions of the group; thoughtfully accepting the ideas of others.
- (n) **Expression of Group Feeling:** Summarising what group feeling is sensed to be; describing reactions of the group to ideas or solutions.

### ***Dual functions***

This category of leader/member roles represents functions which accomplish a dual purpose. They help to integrate the group, while at the same time, releasing its energies toward the achievement of its task or solution to its problem.

- (o) **Evaluating:** Submitting group decisions or accomplishments for comparison with group standards; measuring accomplishments against goals.
- (p) **Diagnosing:** Determining sources of difficulties and appropriate steps to take next; analysing the main blocks to progress.
- (q) **Testing for Consensus:** Tentatively asking for group opinions in order to find out whether the group is nearing consensus or a decision; sending up trial balloons to test group opinions.
- (r) **Mediating:** Harmonising; conciliating differences in points of view; making compromise solutions.
- (s) **Reflecting Expressed Feelings:** Recognizing and accepting feelings expressed by members of the group; restating what has been said, thus freeing a member of the group for further self-understanding, insight and participation.

### ***Disruptive behaviour***

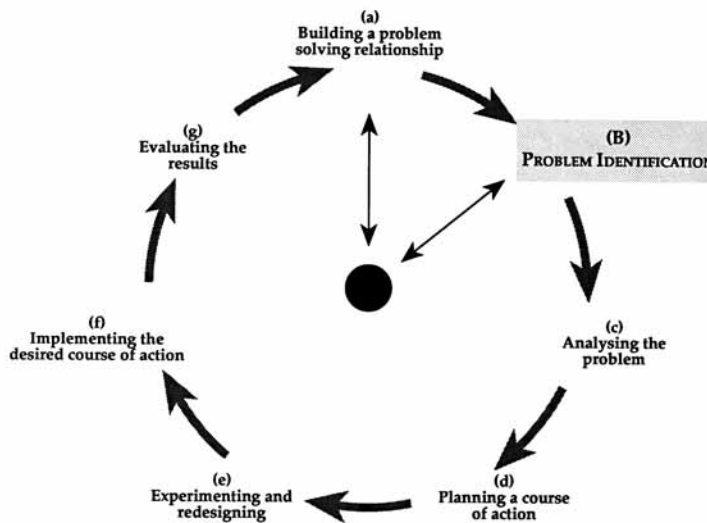
Often in groups, one can observe behaviour that does not fit any of the above mentioned categories. This is likely to be self-centered behaviour, sometimes referred to as “non-functional” roles. This is behaviour that does not contribute to the group but only satisfies personal needs. The following non-functional roles are to be avoided in one's own behaviour.

- (a) **Being Aggressive:** Working for status by criticising or blaming others; showing hostility against the group or some individual; deflating the ego or status of others.
- (b) **Blocking:** Interfering with the progress of the group by going off on a tangent; citing personal experiences unrelated to the problem; arguing too much on a point; rejecting ideas without consideration.
- (c) **Competing:** Vying with others to produce the best idea; talk the most; play the most roles; gain favour with the leader.
- (d) **Special Pleading:** Introducing or supporting one's own pet concerns or philosophies; lobbying.
- (e) **Seeking Recognition:** Attempting to call attention to one's self by loud or excessive talking; extreme ideas; unusual behaviour.
- (f) **Withdrawal:** Acting indifferent or passive; resorting to excessive formality; day-dreaming; whispering to others; wandering from the subject.

**Problem solving relationships and group process**

It is important for managers to understand group process and its impact on managerial decision making and problem solving. Managers rarely work alone. Their average day is filled with meetings - from one-on-one counselling of valued employees - to small work sessions - to large group settings. In every case, those involved must consider how best to develop the relationship, whether temporary or long standing, so it will be productive. Those who know how to build problem solving relationships in a variety of interactive circumstances have mastered one of the keystone skills for effective management.

**PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION**



One sometimes finds what one is not looking for  
Alexander Fleming

**Trainer's notes**

Topic: Problem identification

Time required: approximately 2½ - 3 hours (can vary given, the way this exercise is processed)

This session is designed to help participants understand how to identify problems more precisely. On the surface, this may seem unnecessary. After all, a problem is a problem. Unfortunately, many managers encounter difficulty in carrying out their responsibilities because they do not take time to identify problems more accurately or have the necessary skills to do so. In either case, this is an important step in the problem solving process and merits attention in management training.

## **Tasks**

1. Present a short lecture based upon the written materials in the workbook and your own experience. Focus on the differences between problems symptoms and solutions. This is an area where many managers encounter difficulty in the problem solving process.
2. If you have small groups of participants working on performance deficiency indicators identified in an earlier session, have these small work groups (3 4 participants) use the problem identification exercise to verify the problem and to increase understanding about the problem. Since the performance deficiency will vary in its particulars with each participant's work situation, I would have each individual complete the questionnaire and then hold a discussion, within the small work group, of the similarities and differences in their perceptions of the problem.

An alternative option is to have the total group identify a problem common to most organizations and work through the questions outlined in the exercise in a plenary session. Each step in the process can be discussed regarding its implications to problem solving.

3. The small group discussions can be followed by a plenary session to reemphasize the key points in problem identification and to answer remaining questions.

## **Step B: Identifying problems and opportunities**

In the action research cycle of events no step in the process can be as difficult as identifying problems and opportunities. Of course, there are times when the problems we face, or the opportunities that can be tapped, are crystal clear. No one questions them and they can be addressed directly.

There are other times, however, when problems are fuzzy, ambiguous, difficult to describe. They even go around masqueraded as something else. While opportunities can also fit these descriptive terms, they are more often limited by the imagination and the courage of the organization and its leaders. First, a look at problem identification.

Thinking is preparation for action. People who are afraid of action, increase, the preparation  
Otto Fenichel

## **The “how to” of problem identification**

Problems are those things that keep you or your organization from getting from where you are to where you want to be. This suggests that you know where you want to be - which is not always the case. Sometimes problems defy identification, let alone solution, because we are not clear about what we want to achieve.

Setting goals, or defining end results (what would the problem look like if it were solved?), becomes an important task early in the problem solving process. Without knowing where we want to go, it is difficult to determine: (1) how we want to get there; and (2) whether or not we have arrived. If we don't know where we want to go, it doesn't help to buy a road map.

Another “problem” in identifying problems is the tendency for problems to mask themselves as symptoms, or even solutions. Symptoms are those visible aspects of a problem that often bring the problem to our attention. Symptoms rarely explain a problem; they are only manifestations of the problem. For example, a headache is a symptom of something else. The problem could be eyestrain which, in turn, may be a symptom of something else - a problem within a problem. We could treat the headache (a symptom) but the next time we read, the “problem” returns. Effective problem solvers need to dig beneath the surface, where symptoms reside, if satisfactory results are to be achieved. Solutions also masquerade as problems. In a workshop of this kind, a management team from an East Africa city was asked to identify a problem. They said they needed to install water meters throughout the community. Problem or solution? Solution, of course, but what's the problem? When they took the mask off their “problem”, they discovered two different faces. Water meters would: (1) raise revenues and (2) save water - a scarce resource. In this case, the management team was faced with two legitimate problems: (a) a revenue deficiency and (b) a limited water supply. Once the management team “identified” the real problems, water meters were no longer seen as a problem, but a solution. The team quickly realized that the installation of water meters was only one solution to the two-faced resource problem. There are many ways to raise revenue or conserve water. Identifying a solution as the problem often denies the consideration of other solutions.

One of the first questions to ask in the problem identification stage of problem solving is: “Have we defined the problem or have we identified a solution?”

## ***The problem dialogue***

One way to understand your problem is to talk to it - ask it a series of simple questions. This dialogue with your problem is perhaps the easiest way to understand whether you have a problem and whether or not you want to do something about it. Sometimes the best solution is not to solve the problem.

Here are some questions to ask your problem.

- What is the problem?
- Why is it a problem?
- Why should the problem be solved?
- When is it a problem?
- Where is it a problem?
- Whose problem is it?
- Are others interested in the problem?
- Do they see it as a problem?
- Would they be willing to contribute to its solution?
- Who is sufficiently unhappy with the problem that they are willing to try and solve it?
- Who will be opposed to solving the problem?
- What, really, is the problem, and why? (It is important to continue to come back to these fundamental questions even though you thought you had the answers earlier?)
- Is the problem, as we defined it, a symptom of something else? (A problem within a problem?)
- Have we defined the problem as a solution?
- What would happen if we didn't solve the problem? How many times have you been so perplexed by a problem that you simply ignored it - and it slowly went away? Sometimes the best solution to a problem is no solution.

These questions, when taken seriously, will trigger a flow of information that will: (1) help you understand the complexity of the problem; and (2) begin to suggest alternatives for solution.

For example, questions regarding individuals or groups who are involved in the problem and their commitment to resolving it may, in fact, begin to tell you that the time is not right to spend your energies trying to solve the problem at this time. Just because a problem exists, doesn't mean those involved are willing to do anything about it.

On the other hand, solving the problem may require a redefinition of both the problem and those who can help bring about a solution. As mentioned earlier, identifying the problem can be the most difficult step in the action research process.

A problem well stated is a problem half-solved

## ***The opportunity game***

Effective managing not only involves making decisions and solving problems. It also requires a pro-active stance by the manager to search out and seize upon opportunities, both within the organization and its external environment. Problem solving by its very nature, is reactive. The manager has a problem he or she reacts to solve it. Opportunities require a proactive style - reaching out for a course of action that is important but not urgent. Problems are urgent, or they would not be seen as problems. On the other hand, they are not always important.

There are other distinctions one can also make between problems and opportunities.

- Problems are often oriented toward maintenance (fix it, solve it, get on with it). By contrast, opportunities are focused on development.
- Opportunities as problematic, they always involve some risk and uncertainty. Is it feasible? Will it work? If it works, will there be any benefits? If there are benefits, will they outweigh the costs? Problems on the other hand, only become risky and uncertain when they are not solved.
- Opportunities live in the future and the risks must be calculated against a future that is not always predictable. Problems live in the past, resulting from actions or in actions that have or have not already happened. The results of solving the problem or not solving the problem is often more predictable.
- Opportunities require foresight - a vision about what can be. Problems more often than not require hindsight - determining what went wrong.
- The critical question, when tapping opportunities, is: What if? The important question, when solving problems, is: why?

- With problems, you seek solutions. With opportunities, the search is for benefits.
- Finally, opportunities can be ignored. Problems, more often than not, cannot be ignored.

The optimistic manager sees an opportunity in every problem while the pessimistic manager, when presented with an opportunity, only sees problems in trying to take advantage of it. The difference between a problem and an opportunity is sometimes only a state of mind.

**EXERCISE**

**Topic: Problem Identification**

The following questions are designed to help you define your problem in more detail. (If you have decided to pursue an opportunity, many of the following tasks would also apply.)

1. What is the problem? (Start with a rough description and underline the key words and phrases.)  


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2. Why is it a problem? What would the problem look like if it were solved?  


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3. Whose problem is it? Who owns it? (Once you have determined who the problem belongs to, go back and underline all those you believe are willing to invest in its solution and, finally, circle the individual, group or organization you believe is the most important in the problem solving venture).  


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4. Where is it a problem? Is it localised and isolated, or is it widespread and pervasive?  


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5. When is it a problem? (e.g., every Monday morning at 8 a.m.; once in a full moon; only when it rains; when the boss is in town). As with other questions, be as specific as possible in your answer.  


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6. How long has it been a problem? If it is a long standing problem, this may say something about the ability, will or priority to solve it  


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7. Really now, what is the problem? Go back to your statement in task one and determine whether: (a) the problem you defined is a symptom of a bigger problem; or (b) a solution to what you think is the problem. If you decide you are dealing in either symptoms or solutions, go back to Step 1 and try to identify the real problem

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8. Finally, what would happen if nobody did anything to solve the problem?

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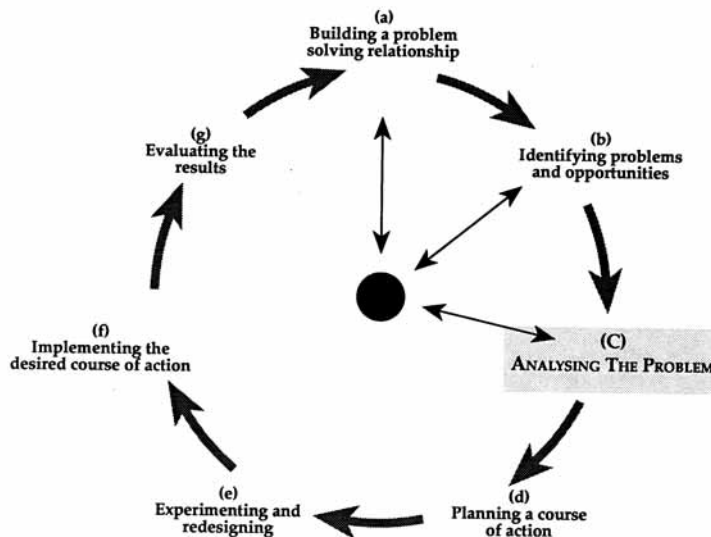


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## ANALYSING THE PROBLEM



He, was in logic a great critic, profoundly skill'd in analytic, he could distinguish and divide, a hair 'twixt south and south-west side. On either which he would dispute, confute, chance hands, and still confute  
Samuel Butler

### ***Analysing the problem***

#### ***Trainer's notes***

Topic: Analysing the Problem: Part I

Time required: approximately 3 - 4 hours

After the participants have identified and verified the problem sufficiently, it is time to: (1) translate the problem into an objective (the end result); and (2) analyse the forces working form and against the objective. This session is designed to accomplish these steps in the problem solving process.

## **Tasks**

1. Working with the total group, help them identify criteria for setting objectives. (These are listed in the written materials.) While participants will be able to identify most of the essential criteria for determining objectives, you may need to complete the list based upon your own experience and those criteria outlined in the training manual. (I find getting the participants to identify the points one would cover in a lecture more effective than providing it for them).
2. Ask someone from the group to volunteer their problem statement. Still working in the plenary group assist the participant to translate the problem statement into an objective statement. The other participants should be encouraged to join the discussion.
3. After the plenary discussion, ask the participants to reconvene in the small groups they have been working with and spend a few minutes (no more than 20) writing an objective statement that meets the criteria defined in the plenary session. If you have been following the routine of working shared performance deficiencies in small groups of participants, ask them to write the objective based upon the performance deficiency they have agreed to work on.
4. Reconvene the total group, have each small group report their statement of the objective to be achieved, critique the statement and move quickly to the next task. Problem analysis exercise sheet: Part I should be completed by each participant to help them reinforce the points to be learned about setting objectives.
5. Demonstrate the use of the force field analysis technique. This can be most effectively presented by taking one of the group's stated objective and analysing it in a plenary session, soliciting ideas and comments from the participants. Follow up with questions for clarification about the process before moving to the next task.
6. Reconvene the small work groups to analyse the forces impacting upon the achievement of their stated objective. The workbook form, Problem Analysis. Part 2 (Exercise), is designed to help small groups and individuals work through this analytical process. Problem analysis can be a time consuming task, so plan accordingly. I hesitate to put specific time frames on each of these task since so many variables enter into the completion of training events. just remember that time is a scarce commodity and the task ALWAYS expands to fill the time allotted!

## **Step C: Analysing the problem**

As suggested in Step B, there is a tendency in the problem solving process to pursue symptoms (mini-problems masquerading as the real thing) or to jump to conclusions (solutions). In the first case, the symptom may be solved but the problem continues to exist. When the solutions are defined as problems, they immediately eliminate all other options for problem solving. More importantly, jumping to solutions may have you chasing after the wrong problem - or no problem at all.

Analysis is the bridge between Step B (identifying the problem/opportunity) and Step D (planning a course of action). Talking to your problem as suggested in Step B begins the analysis stage of problem solving.

Identifying the problem, in a precise way, is half the challenge of problem solving. No one understands the importance of this better than Japanese managers. They have a tendency to spend, at least in the minds of many Western managers, an inordinate amount of time on "problem finding". This means, more often than not, getting agreement on what the questions are that need to be asked. Implementation, in Japanese organizations, results from consensus decisions that emanate from in-depth discussions and reflections on the issues involved, starting with the all important step of defining, as precisely as possible, the problem they are confronted with.

By contrast, many Western managers, particularly Americans, have the tendency to rush into situations - to solve the "problem". The rush to solution often has the American manager spending valuable time in what might be called backward planning. Backward planning, more often than not, has the manager redefining the problem to fit the solution. It is not a recommended approach to problem solving.

## **Analysis is a two-step process**

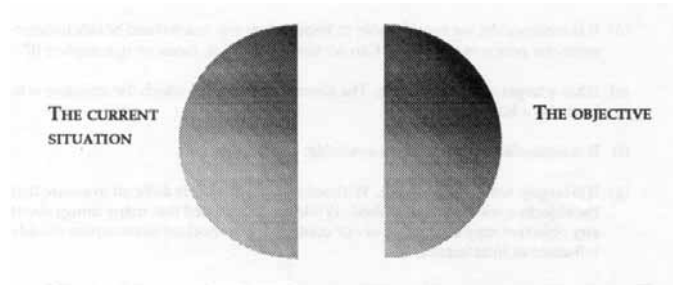
Problem analysis, as I have defined it, is a two-step process: (1) translating the problem into an objective; and (2) analysing the forces working for and against that objective.



- **Setting Objectives**

One can view a problem as two split halves with a gap in between, as shown below. One half is where we are now, the other, where we want to be. The problem is the discrepancy between the two.

**Problem solving is the art of closing that discrepancy:**



**Problem Solved**

Setting objectives may be the most difficult, certainly the duller, part of the problem solving process. It requires a kind of discipline that some of the other steps do not. If you don't know where you want to go, it is impossible to decide how you want to get there or whether you are there when you think you have arrived.

An objective is a statement of where you want to go or what you want to accomplish. It is specific about who will do what, with whom, when, and how we will know it has happened.

***Some criteria for setting objectives***

For an objective to be well written (or stated) it should meet most or all of the following criteria:

- (a) It is specific. It states what is to be accomplished in the shortest possible terms.
- (b) It states an end result, not an activity.
- (c) It must be something the individual, group, organization wants to do - otherwise it will have a tendency to slip away.
- (d) It is measurable; we must be able to know when we reach it and be able to determine our progress toward it. Can we time it, count it, measure it, complete it?
- (e) It has a target completion date. The absence of a date by which the objective is to be met is a license to ignore it.
- (f) It is attainable within the time available.
- (g) It is largely within our control. Without some control, it is difficult to assure that the objective will be accomplished. While it is recognized that many things about any objective may be outside of our control, it is important to minimize outside influence or interference.

The real problem in setting objectives is to state them in such a way that we will know whether or not we are moving toward them. Our tendency is too often to state objectives in a vague way, to make them “fuzzy”.

As you begin to write objectives, ask yourself are they:

- Measurable?
- Specific?

- Result oriented?
- Realistic and attainable?
- Time bounded?

You should also ask:

- What do I want done?
- Who will do it?
- Who will it benefit?
- When will it happen?
- How will I know if I have been successful? (What is the measure of success?)

When a man does not know what harbour he is making for, no wind is the right wind  
Seneca

Once you have defined where you want to go (your objective), it is time to analyze the forces surrounding that objective and the changes you want to bring about.

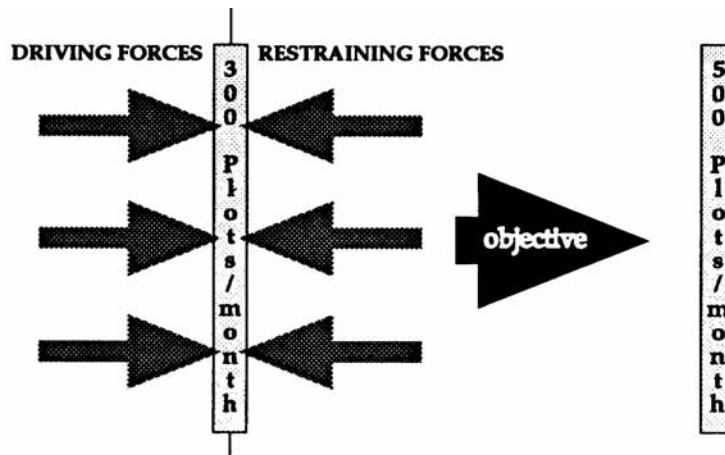
### **Force field analysis**

Force field analysis is a tool for assessing a potential change and the forces in the environment that influence that change. (It is important to remember that the solution to nearly every problem requires some change).

Again, we owe a debt to Kurt Lewin, its creator. Lewin discovered that you could take any situation that a group would like to change and identify a field of forces - political, Social, organizational - which keep the situation as it is. The forces are of two kinds: driving forces those that push us towards our objectives, and restraining forces - those that stand as obstacles. In the diagram below, these forces are displayed with different length arrows, which signify the relative strength of each force.

At the center of the field is the point of equilibrium (where we are now), which means the situation is held in tension by the opposing forces, but quite susceptible to shifts. An unbalancing of forces can cause the equilibrium to shift either in the direction of the objective or in the opposite direction, indicating slippage.

For example, if a local authority has as one of its objectives to allocate 500 low income housing plots per month in a housing project, instead of the present average of 300 plots, the force field would look as follows:

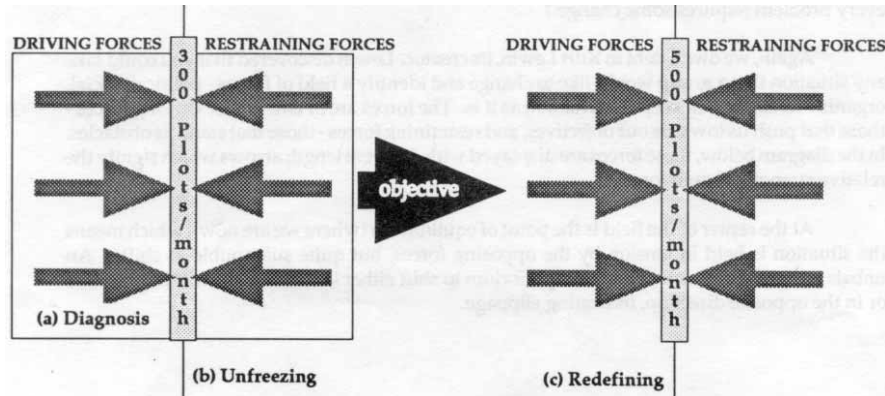


The driving forces are the things the local authority has working for it to meet its objective. The restraining forces are obstacles that stand in the way.

Problem solvers need to determine how to unbalance the forces and shift the equilibrium in the desired direction. Three processes are involved:

- (a) **Diagnosis:** Identify all the forces, driving and restraining, that are helping to maintain the current level of activity.

- (b) **Unfreezing.** Changing the different strengths of the individual forces, both pro and con.
- (c) **Redefining:** Stabilising the forces at a new, desired level.



Going back to the diagnosis, it is helpful to assess the relative strength of each force. One technique would be to give the driving and restraining forces each 100 points and then divide these 100 between the various forces on either side of the status quo.

Once their relative individual strengths have been assessed, there are three basic strategies for bringing about change.

- (a) Add to the driving forces. This generally is less desirable since adding driving forces usually results in more opposing forces, which increases tension.
- (b) Remove, or reduce restraining forces. This is usually more desirable and less obvious.
- (c) Add driving forces and eliminate or reduce restraining forces. This is probably the most frequently used strategy.

### **SOME GUIDELINES FOR USING FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS**

Not all forces are easy to influence or change. Some are so rigid that they are almost impossible to move. These factors need to be taken into account as you review:

- (a) Which of the forces should you dismiss as being impossible to change?
- (b) Which of the forces are most vulnerable to change? Which of those are also more important?

Once the forces have been identified as significant and vulnerable to change, consider which ones you want to attempt to change. In this process, it is helpful to ask the following kinds of questions.

- (a) Who has access to the force you want to change?
- (b) Which force, if we change it, will trigger other forces (for example, influencing a key leader may automatically influence his or her followers)?
- (c) What are the resources we have available or can find to bring about the desired change?
- (d) Where do we have the most leverage to influence the forces?
- (e) What new resistances can be expected to develop as we begin to strengthen or diminish other forces? How can they be countered?
- (f) Who needs to be involved or informed to either lessen the resistance to change or to provide support for the change?

The force field analysis prepares us to carry out our next step (Planning a Course of Action) because it begins to suggest various options - various ways to meet the objective.

### **Exercise**

#### **Topic Problem Analysis**

Topic: Analysing the problem: Part 1

Time required: 15 minutes

#### **Defining objectives**

1. The problem to be solved is:
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2. Given the problem, the objective is to:

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3. Is the above stated objective:

- |   |     |    |
|---|-----|----|
| (a) Specific  | yes | no |
| (b) Measurable  | yes | no |
| (c) Realistic (within our resources)                      | yes | no |
| (d) Attainable (within our will)                          | yes | no |
| (e) Results oriented                                      | yes | no |
| (f) Related to the organization's overall mission         | yes | no |
| (g) Challenging enough to make it worthwhile              | yes | no |
| (h) Something you personally would like to be involved in | yes | no |

If the answer to any of these questions is no, you need to continue to work on your definition of the objective.

Remember, a concrete, measurable, result oriented objective is not necessarily realistic

**Exercise**

**Topic: Problem analysis**

Topic: Analysing the problem: Part 2

Time Required: Approximately 1 hour

**Force-field analysis**

- (a) State the current situation (where you are now) above Driving Forces on the following chart.
- (b) State your objective (where you want to be at some future date) just above the Restraining Forces.

-----	-----
-----	-----
-----	-----

DRIVING FORCES	CURRENT SITUATION	RESTRAINING FORCE	OBJECTIVE
→	←		
1	1		
2	2		
3	3		
4	4		
5	5		
6	6		
7	7		
8	8		
9	9		
10	10		
11	11		

- (a) Identify the forces which will both help and hinder you in reaching your objective. Write them on the diagram above. Restraining forces block our progress; driving forces help us reach our goal.

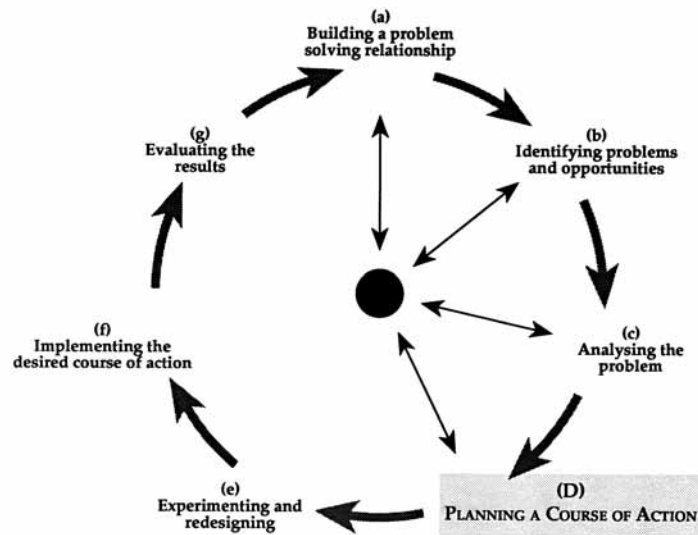
- (b) Identify the strength of each force by drawing arrows under each force. The length of the arrow should indicate the strength of the force.
- (c) Identify the specific forces (restraining and driving) which you believe are most important. Once you have identified them, answer the following questions (criteria):
  - (i) Can you realistically change this force? (Influence)
  - (ii) Can it be changed to your advantage within the time required to help you meet your goal? (Time)
  - (iii) Do you have the resources to bring about the change? (Resources)
  - (iv) Will you be able to get the commitment of others needed to bring about the change?

In the columns provided on the following chart, check either “yes” or “no” for each of these criteria as it applies to each force.

(A) List of Restraining Forces	Influence		Time		Resources		Commitment	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								
5.								
(B) List of Driving Forces								
1.								
2.								
3.								
4.								

- (d) From the lists above and your assessment of how feasible it will be to either decrease the restraining forces or increase the driving forces, you can develop options that will help you reach your stated objective. Remember, removing restraining forces may be more effective than increasing driving forces. In many cases, the removal of restraining forces turns them into a driving force (e.g., lack of training may be a restraint but once people are trained, they becomes a driving force).

## PLANNING A COURSE OF ACTION



Only that which is provisional endures  
French proverb

## **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Planning a course of action: Part I

Time Required. Approximately 4 - 5 hours

Following problem analysis, the participants are requested to generate a list of various options that might be considered in achieving the defined objective. These are ultimately narrowed to the best option with, perhaps, a back-up strategy. Once the best alternative is determined, the next step is to put together a plan of action. Three sessions (or 4.5 hours) have been allocated to carry out the option generating and narrowing processes. It could take less time, depending on the number of reports to be given and critiqued.

## **Tasks**

1. Given the participants' understanding of the various forces that will work for and against the accomplishment of their objective (completed in the previous session), the next step is to consider various options available to accomplish the objective. If you have not used a brainstorming technique earlier in the course, this is a good time to introduce it. The objective is to generate as many ideas as possible that can be considered to accomplish the objective. (The brainstorming technique is outlined on pages 80-81 in the training materials.)

There are a number of ways to identify options and the task can be accomplished in different sized groups. Mould the process to your needs and those of the group. Be flexible.

2. Once your participants have generated a list of options to be considered in achieving the objective, it is time to narrow them down to the one to be ultimately implemented. This process can be achieved in two steps. First, eliminate the ideas that are clearly not achievable and choose the two or three alternatives that are obviously viable. Since the participants have given considerable thought to the problem and its environment (the force field analysis), the best alternatives will literally pop out for further consideration. This narrowing process can be done in the smaller work groups that have been working together during past sessions. When the possible options have been narrowed to two or three, the individuals in each small group should complete the questionnaire (Impact analysis: Narrowing the Options) which is included in the training materials. The Impact Analysis Exercise should be completed for each of the final options to be considered. (Make sure you have photocopied enough forms.) Impact analysis involves assessing 5 criteria and a number of consequences for each option. The assessment exercise results in a gross score for each option being considered. These can be summarized on the Summary of Impact Analysis sheets (also provided in the training materials). The higher the score, the better the option. While this exercise is unlikely to be used back on the job, it points out the criteria and consequences that are important to consider in assessing any potential course of action.
3. Ask each small group to prepare and present a short report to the total training group for critique. The report should briefly describe the final 3 or 4 options considered; the one ultimately selected for implementation; and a discussion of the process used to reach decisions.

## **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Planning a course of action: Part 2

Time required: approximately 3 - 4 hours (depending upon the number of reports)

This session is a natural follow up to the Impact Analysis. Each small work group will design a plan of action to carry out their best option for achieving the objective determined earlier.

## **Tasks**

1. Give a short lecture on the steps to be considered in putting together an effective action plan. These are outlined in the readings, under the section entitled, "A detailed plan" (p.83).
2. Have each small group prepare their plan of action using the forms available.
3. These plans should be reported to the total group for critique and discussion.

The forms designed for the action planning process (pages 85-91) are detailed and require one sheet for each task to be completed. This may seem a bit cumbersome (and probably not something that would be used often back home) but

certainly the substeps represent an important sequence of decision making thinking in formulating an action plan. While the process is detailed and may seem too time consuming it is worth pursuing for those who want to become better managers.

## **Overview**

### **Step D: Planning a course of action**

In the prior three steps, time has been spent defining problems and opportunities, establishing objectives to address these problems, determining the importance of various objectives and analysing the forces that influence the accomplishment of selected objectives. This phase of the problem solving cycle has three distinct steps designed to put the objective into action. These include: (A) generating and evaluating options; (B) narrowing the many options into one; (C) developing a detailed plan of action, and (D) determining a flow of activities.

### **A. Generating and Evaluating Options**

At this point, it is desirable to generate as many options as possible to solve the problem and meet the objectives. As a start, it would be useful to look back at the “force field” created earlier. Options are often suggested by the forces in the field. Sometimes an option will focus on reducing one or two critical restraining forces. Sometimes it's a combination of reducing restraining forces and taking advantage of driving forces. This is the point in the problem solving process where creativity is important. The management team should be looking for new ways of thinking.

One approach to generating options for problem solving is “brainstorming”. Because Brainstorming has proven to be such an effective management tool for helping work teams be more creative, the process is described in the following paragraphs.

### **The Brainstorming Technique**

A facilitator writes the topic or question to be brainstormed at the top of a large sheet of paper, then asks the group to call out their ideas in short phrases which can be written down quickly. In order to set a creative, high-energy tone, the following guidelines should be stated to the group from the onset.

- **No judgements.** No idea or suggestion, however unusual, is to be dismissed, or edited. (There will be a time to evaluate the ideas later.)
- **Anything goes.** Offbeat, unusual, humorous, and bizarre ideas are encouraged.
- **Go for quantity.** The more ideas, the greater the possibility for coming up with a winner.
- **Building on other people's ideas** is fine.

The facilitator of the brainstorming can help to keep ideas moving, if necessary, by: (1) setting a time limit - commonly 3 to 10 minutes, depending on the topic and size of the group - so that people will know they can't afford to sit on an idea; (2) giving a few examples to start things off; (3) coaxing (gently); or (4) asking for different sorts of examples if the group starts to develop a “one track mind”.

The conventional approach is to have one person record the group's ideas on newsprint or a blackboard for all to see. Sometimes, two recorders work as a team writing alternate items, so the group does not have to wait for the recorders to catch up.

Another variation that is especially useful if you have several topics to brainstorm is to write each topic on a separate sheet of newsprint or blackboard, and provide each participant with a marker or chalk so they can go up to the lists and record items “graffiti-style”.

Some researchers and trainers have suggested that brainstorming is not necessarily the best technique to generate lots of creative ideas. The problem seems to be that a group of people can go off on one tangent without exploring the full range of possibilities. This suggests several variations of the brainstorming process.

### **Variation 1**

Instruct each group member to brainstorm individually on the topic, writing down ideas on a small piece of paper. Then, share the ideas by reading off the lists (or compiling the lists later).

### **Variation 2**

Divide the group into two or more teams, each to brainstorm on the same topic. The “parallel groups” approach has some of the advantage of Variation 1, plus the sense of group cooperation which is an important side-effect of brainstorming.

Despite its limitations, brainstorming remains a popular technique. For many groups, it has provided a first clear picture of their potential to think creatively together and to move off in new directions. It also lets everyone know where the ideas have come from, thus setting the stage for consensus and action.

Having many good ideas improves your chances of having a good one

### **Synectics**

Synectics, another popular approach to creative thinking is a composite method, or series of methods, to help individuals and groups think more creatively - to generate new ideas - to unearth ways of doing things that are different and more productive. J. Gordon, author of the synectics approach, defines it as “the joining together of apparently different and irrelevant objects”. Synectics uses analogies, metaphors and similes to break out of the boundaries we often put on our own thought processes. These boundaries have a tendency to restrict our freedom to explore other possibilities as we continue to dig deeper into the routine of our experience.

Gordon suggests both learning (making the strange familiar) and innovation (making the familiar strange) as processes for fostering creative planned change. To better understand these processes, he defines four psychological states in the creative process:

- (a) Detachment and involvement. Seemingly contradicting efforts to either get outside of the problem or deeply into it.
- (b) Deferment: Tolerance for new ideas. In the case of problem solving deferring action until all reasonable (and some unreasonable) options have been considered.
- (c) Speculation: Including a flurry of questions, suppositions, intuitive responses, “thinking the unthinkable”.
- (d) Autonomy of object: Or, as Gordon suggests, the end product (goal) sought becomes the process experienced.

Synectics operates from the psychological stance that it is easier to solve other problems than it is to solve our own. We need to get “outside of our problem” so we can get deeper into it - to develop insight by using “outsight”. The key is to go beyond the boundary of our conventional experiences in order to understand day-to-day events.

Creating new options for problem solving is enhanced by the ability to:

- (a) Suspend judgement
- (b) Tolerate ambiguity and sometimes frivolity
- (c) Give up treasured positions and attitudes
- (d) Set aside position and authority so others can contribute freely
- (e) Think intuitively in an environment that honours rational thought
- (f) Turn things upside down and inside out
- (g) Look over our own shoulder to process the process, and
- (h) Always keep the big picture in mind, even when we are coping with the minute details.

Intuition is the subconscious accumulation of past experiences

### **Satisficing optionization**

Generating options, as a manager, can sometimes become a trap. After all, it's fun trying to figure out all the various ways to solve a problem. It can also give the manager an excuse for indecision. (“I haven't looked at all the alternatives”.) The challenge is to open the door to new ideas, new ways of doing things, without becoming overwhelmed.

The manager is someone who must make decisions and solve problems in imperfect conditions. There is seldom time or resources available to find and implement the perfect solution. More often than not the manager is obliged to accept the first satisfactory solution, to not let the “best” become the enemy of the good.

Herbert Simon, who has written extensively about decision making in public settings calls this the “satisficing” solution. It is impossible to know all the options that are potentially available in any complex situation. It is also impossible to foretell future consequences accurately (although we must try to foresee the consequences of our decisions to the extent we can). Nor is it always possible to put values on events that have not yet occurred. So, all decision making is imperfect and subject to limits of rationality.

Having said this, and recognizing the reality of “satisficing” behaviour by managers, it is important to resist the pressures that often force us to take the first available satisfactory solution to a problem. Finding new options to old problems is how



the future gets invented. The effective manager is one who has one foot firmly planted in the present situation and the other gently searching for a solid piece of ground in the territory yet to be trod.

### **B. Options to one**

While most problems can be solved in more than one way, the manager must “bite the bullet” and decide which option he or she is going to use. Sometimes the “best” option is obvious. Other times, it is more difficult to decide among various alternatives. These are the times when it is necessary to ask some fundamental questions about the various options so a reasoned judgement (decision) can be made.

- (a) Will this option clearly help us reach our objective? (In other words, is it goal directed?)
- (b) Is it feasible? Can we do it? Will it work?
- (c) Do we have the resources to carry it out? People? Funds? Equipment? Time? Leadership? Organizational capacity? Motivation?
- (d) Is it adequate to meet the challenge? Given the size of the problem, will this option result in change to make pursuing it worthwhile?

### **C. A detailed plan**

Once the manager has decided on the “best” option, (one which satisfies the criteria stated above), it is time to put together a detailed plan of action. This plan should answer the following questions:

- (a) What are the activities involved (steps to be taken)?
- (b) Who will take primary responsibility for each action? (Someone needs to be in charge).
- (c) Who else needs to be involved?
- (d) What resources will be needed (people, materials, money, equipment, skills)?
- (e) When will each action be complete? (Not only how much time will be required, but a realistic date of completion).
- (f) How will we know progress is being made toward carrying out our option and meeting our objectives? How are we going to evaluate success? What are our verifiable indicators?

### **D. Sequencing events**

The final stage of action planning is putting the various activities into sequence – some sense of what needs to be done in what order. Certain activities are dependent upon others and some activities are more critical than others.

A well known procedure for charting the sequence of activities is called PERT (Program Evaluation and Review Technique). Basically, in using the PERT procedure, one starts at the end point (the completion of a project) and works backwards through the activities and events that must occur in reaching that end point. For example, if the end point is a 3-session training program for homeowners to teach them building techniques, we can work backwards in this fashion:

- The week before the program, we will need to make sure last minute preparations (i.e., the training materials are ready, the instructors are ready, the list of homeowners is complete).
- Even before that, we need to secure a training site - e.g., a demonstration house in the initial stages of construction.
- To secure a site we will need to check out several possibilities.
- At about the same time, we will need to assemble training materials (a construction booklet, building materials, tools, etc.).
- Before all that, we will need a training design.
- And so forth until we arrive at the starting point.

Developing a PERT chart is generally a group activity. Each party to the project begins to see how his or her tasks fit into the overall plan. The group also begins to see how things could be done differently which would save time.

PERT is also a method that permits revisions in the plan when things don't work out like the original plan said they would. Plans never work out quite right. But the planning process is indispensable.

A low income housing management team in Zimbabwe developed a simplified version of PERT which helped them determine the sequence of activities to initiate a large complex shelter project. Once each work group within the team (e.g., building liaison officers, community development workers, administrative officers) decided what they needed to do over a set period of time to carry out their roles and responsibilities within the project, they put these tasks on 5x3 cards. These were attached (by using masking tape) to a large matrix, which covered an entire wall of a local community centre. The matrix listed all the various work groups, or individuals, responsible for carrying out various tasks on the vertical axis. On the horizontal axis (across the top of the chart) was listed a three and one half month timetable, week by week. After each of the critical actors on the implementation team posted their tasks in the sequence they believed they should carry them

out, they negotiated with other individuals or work groups a sequence and timing which took into consideration the interdependency of their actions. The building liaison officers, for example, told the community development staff they needed to schedule their training two weeks earlier than planned so the building liaison officers could begin meeting with individual plot holders.

By the end of the negotiation session, the implementation team had created a 30 foot long PERT chart with over 200 individual tasks. Each of those tasks had been negotiated (in terms of the overall time frame) against all other interdependent tasks. More importantly, the individual work groups began to realize the importance of teamwork and communication.

PERT charts don't need to be fancy, they just need to work to the benefit of all concerned.

Good decisions are seasoned by projecting them into the future to see if they work

### **Exercise**

**Topic: Impact Analysis: Narrowing the options: Step 1, Option No. \_\_\_\_\_**

(Complete this form for each major option being considered.)

- The OBJECTIVE to be achieved is:

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- The OPTION for achieving this objective is:

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### **Assessment criteria**

Check one numerical response for each of the following criteria:

**(1) FOCUS:**

- \_\_4 option is focused directly on achieving the objective
- \_\_2 option is focused more on another issue but will help achieve the stated objective
- \_\_0 option is not focused on achieving the stated objective

**(2) FEASIBILITY:**

- \_\_4 option is very feasible to implement
- \_\_2 option is questionable in terms of its feasibility of implementation
- \_\_0 it is highly doubtful that we could implement this option

**(3) RESOURCE AVAILABILITY:**

- \_\_4 option can be implemented within the resources already available
- \_\_2 resources could be garnered to implement this option but it would be difficult
- \_\_0 it will be impossible to get all the resources required to implement this option

**(4) ADEQUACY:**

- \_\_4 option is very adequate in meeting the challenge stated in the objectives

\_2 it is barely adequate to meet the challenge

\_0 option will not meet the challenge

**(5) COMMITMENT:**

\_4 top leadership will commit immediately to this option

\_2 getting leadership commitment is questionable

\_0 top leadership will not make commitment to this option

Assessment Criteria: Record the number of: 4 scores  x 4 =

2 scores  x 2 =

0 scores  x 0 =

Total

Potential Consequences: This option, if implemented, will have the following consequences (circle appropriate number):				
		Favourable	Hard to say	Disastrous
Economic	Short-term	2	1	0
	Long-term	2	1	0
Social	Short-term	2	1	0
	Long-term	2	1	0
Political	Short-term	2	1	0
	Long-term	2	1	0
Environmental	Short-term	2	1	0
	Long-term	2	1	0
Cultural	Short-term	2	1	0
	Long-term	2	1	0
<b>Totals</b>				

**Exercise**

**Topic: Impact Analysis: Summary of impact analysis: Step II**

For each option being considered, transfer criteria and consequence values assigned earlier.					
		Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
<b>Criteria</b>					
Focus					
Feasibility					
Resources					
Adequacy					
Commitment					
<b>Consequences</b>					
Economic	short term				
	long term				
Social	short term				
	long term				
Political	short term				
	long term				
Environmental	short term				
	long term				
Cultural	short term				
	long term				

<b>Total points</b>				
It is possible to score a total of 40 points: Any option scoring less than 32 should be seriously reconsidered before any decision is made to implement it.				
Any score of 10 or less (in either of the two categories) should prompt a reconsideration of the option. Low scores may require (1) new options be generated; (2) the expectations (objective) be readjusted to be more realistic, or (3) a redefinition of the problem.				

**Exercise**

**Topic: Action Plan: Step I**

- A. The objective to be realised is:
- B. The best option for achieving the objective is:
- C. The tasks required to carry out the options are (list all the tasks below):
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
  - 4.

Use an additional sheet, if necessary.

**Exercise**

**Topic: Action Plan Step II**

List each task to be completed below (from Step 1) and answer the following questions.

Task No.1 is:

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Which will be the primary responsibility of \_\_\_\_\_  
(be specific)

Who will also need to involve \_\_\_\_\_

The total time required to complete the task is \_\_\_\_\_  
(in hours, days, weeks)

and it should be completed by \_\_\_\_\_  
(a specific date)

The following resources will be needed (funds, equipment, materials, manpower, etc.):

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The verifiable indicators of success in completing this task are (how will we know the task has been accomplished satisfactorily):

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**Exercise**  
**Topic: Action Plan: Step II**

Task No.

TASK

---

---

WHO:

---

---

WITH WHOM:

---

---

TOTAL TIME REQUIRED:

---

---

COMPLETION DATE:

---

---

RESOURCES REQUIRED:

---

---

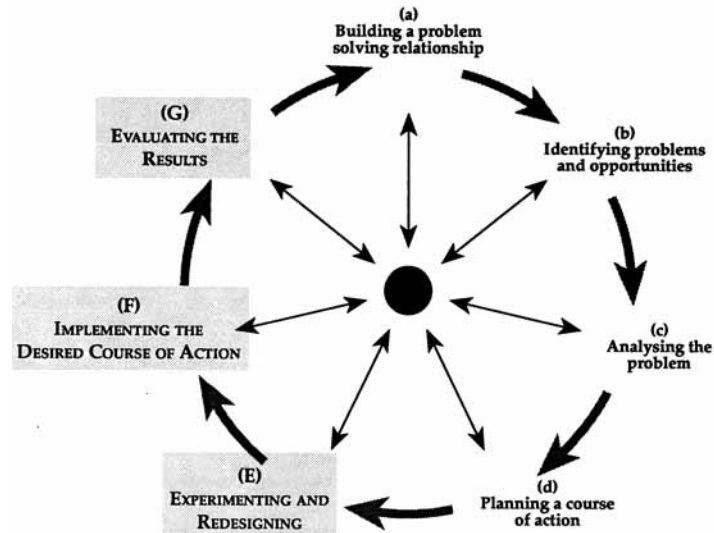
VERIFIABLE INDICATORS:

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Use an additional sheet for each additional task.

# EXPERIMENTATION AND REDESIGN, IMPLEMENTATION, EVALUATION



Note: The first four steps in the Action Research and planning process lend themselves to practice within a workshop setting. The final three steps of the process [E Experimentation and Redesign; F Implementation; and G Evaluation], do not. The format of the following materials is changed somewhat to reflect the shift in emphasis.

## Overview

### Step E: Experimenting and redesigning

This phase of the Action Research and Planning process is an opportunity to try out your new approaches and strategies in a relatively safe environment. It is the time to: “work the bugs out of the system”; check for commitment and acceptance; get feedback on what you are doing and how you can do it better; and make adjustments in preparation for a full-blown implementation.

For example, in developing training programs to meet the needs of new staff members, it is often helpful to design the program and test it with a small group of participants. There should be mutual agreement to give and receive feedback to strengthen the training for use with larger audiences.

Another opportunity for experimentation might be the initiation of a new approach to low income housing. Rather than commit totally to a new approach, it would make sense to try using it on a trial basis with a commitment from all concerned to develop good data on the experiment for further decision making.

Experimentation is an opportunity to:

- (a) Assess the desirability of the proposed change
- (b) Correct unforeseen problems before the change becomes fully operational
- (c) Give participants in the effort an opportunity to deal with any unexpected consequences, and
- (d) Train those who will be involved in later implementation. Not only does it provide an opportunity to train organizations or community people in important skills and knowledge for later use, it also builds understanding and commitment through their early involvement.

During the experimentation stage, it is important to collect good data about what is happening so there can be a thorough analysis of the results. This analysis addresses such questions as:

- Are we doing what we said we would do as well as how we said we would do it?
- What new information or resources do we need?
- What was the overall reaction to the change? How did we feel personally about the experimentation?
- Should a total implementation be planned; should the effort be scrapped; or is there a new design that would best serve our needs?
- What can we do to make the proposed effort more effective?

This is a time when everyone involved should be consulted for their insights and assistance. If it is a field test of a training program, trainees need to be heard from - not just the staff. If it is a new approach in working with low income groups involved in a new housing project, they need to be brought into the analysis process.

Finally, this stage of AR may involve redesign based upon the results of the analysis. Much of what has gone on previously should be helpful. For example, the results of the earlier force field analysis and development of options can be a good resource in any redesign that might be necessary.

### ***Analysing the experiment***

Following is a list of questions to ask about the experimental stage, which will help in considering whether a redesign is in order.

- (a) Did you meet the objectives you set for yourself? If not, why not?
- (b) What went well in the experimentation that should be continued in any final effort?
- (c) What did not go well that should be discarded?
- (d) What kinds of changes should be considered to strengthen upcoming implementation?
- (e) Who was not involved that should have been? What can be done to get them involved in the implementation phase?
- (f) What resources were lacking to make the experiment as successful as originally expected? How can they be acquired to support total implementation efforts?
- (g) Was the timing right for the experimentation? If not, why not?
- (h) Given the results of the experimentation, does it make sense to go ahead with the implementation phase?

Half the difficulties of man lie in his desire to answer every question with yes or no.

Yes or no may neither of them be the answer.

Each side may have in it some yes and some no.

### ***Step F: Implementation***

Implementation is, in theory, the action phase of the action research and planning process. Implementation means to carry out, accomplish, fulfil, produce, complete. But there must be some things prior to implementation - a policy, program, resources, and, above all, decisions.

In reality, implementation relies upon all of the activities we have considered up until this time: building a problem solving relationship; identifying problems and opportunities; the analysis stage, and, finally, planning a course of action.

If your efforts up to this point have been successful, you should be in a good position to begin implementation. This is not to say there will not be delays, problems and stumbling blocks put in your way. If you remember what was said very early about the recycling nature of action research, you can expect a little backtracking to previous steps.

Some decisions to be made along the way to implementation include:

- Do we need to adjust the “mix” of resources
- Will it take more resources to do what we said we wanted to do?
- Should we continue to use our current plan, modify it, or develop a new one?
- When we accomplish our objectives, will we know enough “to get out of business” - or create new objectives?

If the first four steps in the Action Research and Planning process have been carried out effectively, implementation will be relatively easy.

### ***Step G: Evaluating for results***

Evaluation is an ongoing process - not something you do at the end of a project or activity. Nevertheless, a final evaluation (summing up) is important and oftentimes a Requirement of funding agencies and higher authorities.

Action research and planning as a process has evaluation built into it every step of the way. In many ways, it is a guidance system that keeps us on track and moving from one step in the process to another with reassurance.

A small workbook called the [Hip Pocket Guide to Planning and Evaluation](#) has a good set of evaluation criteria. They include:

- Adequacy - Is your plan of action big enough and bold enough to accomplish your objective? Is the objective “big enough” given the size of the problem? Do you have sufficient resources?
- Effectiveness - Was the plan of action carried out, and has it resulted in the objective being met? To what extent has the objective been met and the problem reduced?
- Efficiency - Could the resources be combined differently or different resources used so that the same activities could be produced at lower costs? How costly is the plan of action compared to the benefits obtained? Would another plan of action accomplish the same objective at lower cost?
- Side Effects - What are the good and bad side effects of the actions you implemented? What anticipated side effects occurred?

These four evaluation criteria are most effective when they are applied to:

- Resources - people, funds, materials, equipment, time technology
- Activities - that which is done to carry out goals and objectives (what is done)
- Strategies - the “how” of the “what”
- Objectives - planned and expected result

When the criteria stated earlier are applied to each of these “ingredients”, they provide an excellent management guidance system, to determine if your efforts are on track and moving toward the objectives that have been established.

Two other issues important to evaluation are:

- Measures: How are you going to measure what it is you decide to do?
- Sources of Information: What different sources do you have available and how will you tap them?

## ***Measures***

A measure is the amount of something that exists at a certain time.

The most difficult part of evaluation may be determining what kinds of measures to use for each of the criteria and inputs to problem solving that have just been discussed.

Some things are easy to measure (number of houses built, cost per house), while others are much more difficult (attitudes of building officials toward builders, effectiveness of a community awareness program).

Two important principles to remember about measuring are:

- Design your measurement tools after you know what it is you want to measure. (Just because something is countable, doesn’t mean you should count it.)
- Be stingy about what you measure - measure only those things that give you the information you need.

## ***Sources of information***

Measurement data can be abundant so pick and choose with care.

Example of Measure: The number of Building Liaison Officers who have improved their knowledge of building materials.

Data are the numbers you get when you take the measure.

Example of one piece of data: Fifty Building Liaison Officers have improved their knowledge of building materials.

If the objective was to improve the knowledge of 100 Building Liaison Officers within a specific period of time to a certain level, then our evaluation tells us we were only 50% effective.

Data comes in many forms and can be obtained through:

- Interviews
- Questionnaires
- Observation
- Ratings (by peers, staff, experts, the community)
- Tests
- Records and Reports
- Statistics



- Documents
- Examination

For the manager and community worker, evaluation is an on-going process - not a one-time end event. It is the guidance system that keeps resources, activities, strategies, and objectives on track.

Evaluation is a time of accounting for specific actions and their consequences; for plans and making improvements; for planting the seeds of future challenges.

### ***A slightly different perspective***

Finally, some ideas are included about evaluation from *The Universal Traveler*.<sup>(1)</sup> It gives a slightly different perspective about evaluation and additional ideas about carrying out the process.

<sup>(1)</sup> Dan Koberg and Jim Bagnall, *The University Traveler* (Los Altos, William Kaufmann, Inc., 1974) pp. 80-84.z

**Three Phases of Evaluation:** In a most systematic view, an evaluation is a comparison of objectives with results. It initially asks, “What did you hope for and plan to happen?” and then measures those dreams against what actually did happen. From the measurement, the problem solver can discover the quantity and quality of progress and make plans for improvement in the future.

Example: Guide to Evaluation

- **Statement of Goals:** Objectives described in measurable terms
- **Achievement and Measurement:** How far did I go? (the quantitative perspective) How well did I do? (the qualitative dimension)

Were there unplanned contingencies? (e.g., unforeseen benefits outside the objectives; unforeseen problems outside my intention; additional objectives discovered late in the process.)

- **Comparison of Goals with Achievement:** Point by point comparison
- **Plans for the Future:** Review and enforcement of behaviour changes

**Progress Chart:** If you have tried making a chart relating your defined objectives (tasks) with your available time, you have already found a simple way to keep a running evaluation. When you keep the chart up-to-date it allows you to see, at a glance, how far along you are in terms of meeting your objectives. This method usually works best for quantitative measures but quality can be added in the form of side notes or comments made as in a journal.

**Who else has an opinion?:** Being objective about our own achievements is tough enough without also having to depend on our own frame of reference. Others, who view the same world with different perceptions, can often open our eyes to a truth or reality, which was there all the time but unseen. For the opinions from outside to be more effective and less hurtful, they must be understood - not just dropped on you without follow-up explanations.

**Step outside for a minute:** Making plans and setting out to achieve them is positive behaviour. The relevance, social value and possible negative consequences of the success or failure of such behaviour, is another matter. If our self-image is good, we know that our intentions are good and that our behaviour is the result of good intentions. When those “good intentions” are challenged - as in an evaluation - we become self-protective and often offensively defensive.

Evaluation calls for stepping outside of our self-image - at least for a moment - to look objectively at what transpired. The purpose is positive, to make plans for improvement. As for any problem, it requires Acceptance. When the evaluator realizes that it is attainment and not “self” being studied, measurements can proceed.

## **GROUP EFFECTIVENESS**

After enlightenment – the laundry  
Zen Saying

### ***Trainer’s notes***

Topic: Group effectiveness

Time required: approximately 1 - 1 1/2 hours

The following two questionnaires are designed to help the participants assess their work in small groups. They should be used, independently, after the workshop participants have had an opportunity to work together for at least 3-4 hours in small groups. They would be useful to interject into the Action Research and Planning exercises at a time you consider to be appropriate, given the progress of the small groups.

### **Exercise**

#### **Topic: Analysing Team Effectiveness**

Analyse your team by rating it on a scale from 1 to 7 (7 being what you would consider to be ideal) with respect to each of these variables. Then, with the rest of your team, discuss the situation with respect to each variable, paying particular attention to those for which the average rating is below 5 or for which the range of individual ratings is particularly wide.

1. My satisfaction with our team's progress so far.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Dissatisfied Satisfied
2. My feeling of freedom to express my ideas.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Dissatisfied Satisfied
3. The extent I feel my ideas and opinions are heard.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Dissatisfied Satisfied
4. The way decisions are made.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Dissatisfied Satisfied
5. The degree of trust and openness I feel exists in our group.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Dissatisfied Satisfied
6. How we are managing our time.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Dissatisfied Satisfied

This form is designed to help you think about your behaviour in groups. First, read over the scales and, on each one, place a check indicating the place on the scale that describes you best.

After marking all the scales, pick out the 3 or 4 areas of personal behaviour which you would most like to change. On these scales draw an arrow above the line to indicate the desirable direction for changing your behaviour.

1. Ability to listen to others in an understanding way.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Low High
2. Ability to influence others in the group.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Low High
3. Tendency to build on the previous ideas of other group members.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Infrequent Frequent
4. Likely to trust others.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Unlikely Likely

5. Willingness to discuss my feelings (emotions) in a group.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Unwilling ..... Willing
6. Willingness to be influenced by others.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Unwilling ..... Willing
7. Tendency to run the group.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Low ..... High
8. Tendency to seek close personal relationships with others in a group.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Low ..... High
9. My reaction to comments about my behaviour in groups.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Reject ..... Welcome
10. Extent to which I am aware of the feelings of others.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Unaware ..... Aware
11. Extent to which I understand why I do what I do.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Low ..... High
12. Reaction to conflict or disagreement in the group.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Low tolerance ..... High tolerance
13. Reaction to opinions opposed to mine.  
1 ..... 2 ..... 3 ..... 4 ..... 5 ..... 6 ..... 7  
Low tolerance ..... High tolerance

## PART II

### THE URBAN MANAGER: EVOLVING ROLES FOR MANAGING CHANGE

Consistency is the last refuge of the unimaginative  
Oscar Wilde

#### ***The urban manager: evolving roles***

#### ***Trainer's notes***

Topic: The urban manager: evolving roles

Time required: approximately 2 hours

This session is designed to help those participants, who are managers or supervisors in local governments or urban agencies, take a closer look at the various roles they perform.

#### ***Tasks***

- (1) Ask participants to spend about an hour reading the essay on The Urban Manager: Evolving Roles for Managing Change. One possibility is to assign the essay for the evening before the training session when it is scheduled to be discussed. (As a trainer, I do not allocate enough time during training events for participants to read materials that are made available. While this non-practice probably represents a personal bias about the importance of

experiential learning, I must admit it is equally important to provide reflection time during residential training programmes. So, as a trainer, give your trainees an opportunity to read and reflect.)

- (2) Start the training session by giving each participant five white 3"x5" cards and two of a contrasting colour. Instruct them to spend a few minutes alone to record five management roles they believe they perform very well on the white cards and two management roles they would like to improve their skills in performing on the other two cards. To reiterate, record on the white cards five of the roles they do well and record on the other two cards those roles they would like to improve upon (one on each card).
- (3) After each participant has completed the tasks in step 2, instruct them to stand up, circulate among their fellow participants, discuss what is on their cards, and try to find another person who performs a role very well that they don't. In other words, if someone has a management role listed on a coloured card which they want to learn how to perform better, they should try to find a person who has that same role listed on one of his or her five white cards.
- (4) Give the participants about 15-20 minutes to circulate and find a match between their coloured card role learning interest and a white carded resource. At this point, ask if there are any participants who have not found another person who can help them, have them state what is on one or both of their coloured cards, and ask for white card matches. If it is not possible to match each participant one-on-one, put them in small groups of three or four.
- (5) Also announce at this time that they will have about 45 minutes to discuss those roles they would like to improve upon, using as resources those who do it well. (Yes, I'm aware that this exercise can create some confusion if everyone wants to be a learner and not a resource - but that's part of the challenge of being a creative trainer, isn't it? Use your own creativity to make it work effectively.)
- (6) After this 45 minute free-for-all, reconvene the total group and ask them to talk about their experiences in the free-for-all discussions. You may also want to find out which roles they want more help on as well as those they, as a group, believe they currently do well. Some of this data can be collected by the trainer by also circulating among participants during their one-on-one conversations.
- (7) Bring closure to the discussion of urban manager roles by asking the participants how well they thought the session went, and why. It's an opportunity to obtain some feedback on a training approach we haven't suggested earlier in the manual.

Final Note: There are many other ways to discuss the ideas that are put forth in the following essay on urban management roles. For example, you could take the six roles I have suggested as critical to the urban manager's role in developing countries and have each participant allocate the 100 percent of their work time among those six roles. In other words, do they spend 10% on policy, 23% on being a strategic planner, X% on resource management, etc.? It is another way to encourage individual training participants to reflect on their own experience vis-à-vis ideas put forth by others. If the six roles are not all-encompassing the participants can be encouraged to create additional roles they believe they perform on-the-job. To assist in this option, a short check list has been provided at the end of the essay.

## **Overview**

Lots of folks confuse bad management with destiny  
Frank Hubbard

There are at least two grams of thought about the universal application of management and organizational theory. One stream contends that managerial and organizational issues and solutions have become increasingly similar as commerce and development expand across national boundaries. The other argues that national, and even local, cultures still have a dominant influence on the way managers and organizations behave. The truth is probably somewhere between these two points of view. The intent, herein, is not to take a stand on either side of this ongoing academic exercise but to draw from the writing of others and my own experience to help you better understand the role of the urban manager and how it can be enhanced through training and development.

Early attempts at defining the urban manager's role were both insightful and simplistic. Luther Gulick's acronym POSDCORB, coined in the 1930s, has withstood decades of theory bashing by other academics. POSDCORB stands for Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting and Budgeting. Gulick saw these functions as the core responsibilities of the local government manager.

Later, theorists divided the management function by employee and production centered styles (Rensis Likert) and people and task oriented management (Robert Blake). These two dimensional concepts of management dominated in the 1950s and 60s but were seen as a bit simplistic as we entered the decade of the 70s. The academic community, concerned with such things, then began to talk about “contingency” theories of management. In other words, “It all depends on the situation”.

At a minimum, one can say that management is a complex business. Urban management with its added dimensions of community involvement and local politics is very complex - even impossible at times.

As stated earlier, the intent is not to take a stand about what urban/local government management is, or should be, but to shed light on it. Peter Drucker, in a paper about public administration’s deadliest sins, said, “In public service, increasingly we start out with a “position” - that is, with a totally untested theory - and go from it immediately to national, if not international application”. Unfortunately, “Successful application still demands adaptation, cutting, fitting, trying, balancing”. The application of these “tailoring” strategies is good advice as we try to find a set of urban management ideas to fit our own particular situation.

### ***The big picture***

Henry Mintzberg, in his classic look at The Nature of Managerial Work, published in 1973, identified eight approaches to managerial work that have dominated the literature over the years. These wide ranging “schools of thought” about management account for the equally diverse conclusions their proponents come to in “helping” us understand what we do, or should do, as managers.

These schools, according to Mintzberg are:

- (1) The Classical school, which emphasizes composite pictures or sets of functions that characterise all management jobs.
- (2) The Great Man school, which selects “effective leaders”, observes them, and presents them as models for other would-be great men.
- (3) The Entrepreneurship school, which focuses on the manager as innovator, creative thinker, and opportunity finder.
- (4) The Decision Theory school, which focuses on how managers make decisions in a complex environment.
- (5) The Leader Effectiveness school, which looks at personality traits and management style as the factors that lead to effective performance.
- (6) The Leader Behaviour school, which looks at what some managers actually do on the job to draw conclusions about management behaviour and required skills.
- (7) The Leader Power school, which zeros in on sources of power, managers can use to maximise their control.
- (8) The Work Activity school, which relies on diaries of practising managers, paying particular attention to time, as a way to identify trends and draw conclusions about management activity.

Most contemporary management literature falls into the leader behaviour school focusing on what managers do - how they behave in given situations. It recognises behaviour as the bottom line of management. Paul Appleby, who wrote some of the early texts on public administration, had a behavioural prescription for what the manager should ask him or herself before acting: “Who’s going to be mad? How mad? Who’s going to be glad? How glad?”

### ***The Mintzberg view***

Mintzberg carried out a comprehensive study of chief executives from a variety of organizations and concluded there were some “organized sets of behaviour” common to most management jobs. While they may be somewhat culture bound (his research was limited to Western managers and institutions), the way he defines the various managerial roles are useful in helping managers think about what they do, regardless of the cultural or organizational context.

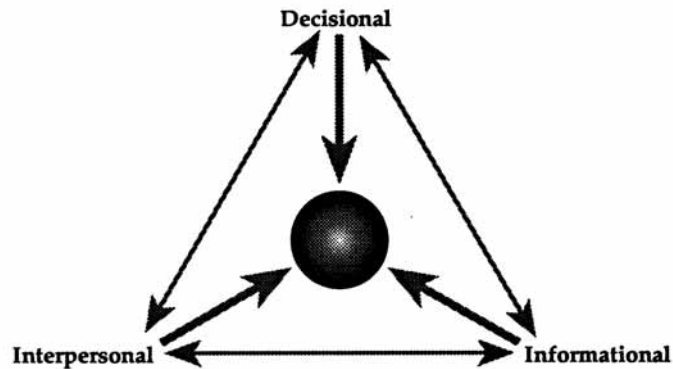
The managerial roles Mintzberg identified fall into three major categories, interpersonal roles, informational roles, and decisional roles. Here is a more detailed description of these roles and their subsets.

- I. **Interpersonal Roles**, related to the manager's formal authority and include:
- (a) **Figurehead:** carries out representational and ceremonial duties
  - (b) **Leader:** performs the role as formal head of the organization, someone who directs and motivates subordinates to achieve organizational goals
  - (c) **Liaison:** works with people outside the formal chain of command in efforts to bring information into the organization and to gain favour from others.

It is through these roles that the manager builds a network of support within and outside the organization.

- II. **Informational Roles:** Put the manager in the "nerve center" of the organization. These include:
- (a) **Monitor:** The manager continually scans the environment to receive and collect information
  - (b) **Disseminator:** Passes along special or privileged information that subordinates may not otherwise be able to obtain
  - (c) **Spokesperson:** Speaks for the organization and repeats it to others.
- III. **Decisional roles:** How the manager uses available resources, personal and otherwise, to take action. They include:
- (a) **Entrepreneur:** Works to improve the organization, bringing about planned, voluntary, controlled, positive changes
  - (b) **Disturbance Handler:** Takes corrective action in response to pressures or changes that are beyond personal control
  - (c) **Resource Allocator:** Decides who will get what resources
  - (d) **Negotiator:** Discusses and bargains with other organizations, or work units, to obtain advantages for his or her own unit or organization.

The overall responsibility of the manager is to use each of these roles individually, or in combination, to get things done for the organization and its members.



### ***Skills of the effective manager***

Robert Katz defines managerial effectiveness in terms of skills. These skills are needed in varying degrees, depending upon the level of the organization at which the manager is operating. I would also argue that the degree to which the manager exercises these skills depend on the size of the organization and its programmes and services. Katz defines managerial skills as:

- (a) **Technical Skills:** The methods, processes, procedures, and techniques required on the part of the manager to carry out managerial functions. They include specialised knowledge of various internal processes, whether they are infrastructure, maintenance, budgeting, or administrative in nature, and analytical abilities to break down these processes into "manageable" pieces. Normally, the closer to the line the manager is (e.g., first line managers), the greater the need to be proficient in technical skills.
- (b) **Human Skills:** The skills which not only help the manager "get along" with employees but help them manage the employee's productivity, conflicts, motivation, and development in an effective manner. People management skills may be the most difficult to learn as a manager. It takes a full measure of awareness about our own attitudes, assumptions and beliefs as well as those of others. Communication is at the heart of human skills - not just the ability to speak effectively, but to listen with understanding and empathy. Effective human skills serve all levels of management and are particularly telling at the first line and middle management levels where officers must work constantly with subordinates and superiors to get their tasks accomplished.

- (c) **Conceptual Skills:** The final category of skills are those involving the ability to see the organization as a whole, recognizing how various functions depend upon each other, and visualise opportunities which aren't evident to others. Conceptual skills enable the manager to envision new opportunities and perceive new ways of tackling old problems.

Many believe that technical skills become less important as managers move into positions of greater responsibility. In large organizations this is often the case, but it does not hold true in smaller organizations - or in many larger organizations in less developed countries. In such organizations, there is often a scarcity of technical skills and managers, and senior managers, are called upon to fill the technical void. My experience as a city manager in a small community in the United States provided considerable insight into this problem and created opportunities for me to learn new skills. In one small community where I served, the financial and personnel systems were in shambles. It was necessary to design new budget systems and procedures and to carry out comparative analyses of job responsibilities and pay levels. I also learned to develop routine street and sewer maintenance programmes. In a larger organization, these would have been delegated to others who already had the skills and experience.

Many urban managers in developing country settings may have to "get their hands dirty" by learning and applying technical skills that aren't in the management curriculum of most colleges and universities. More importantly, it is the manager's responsibility, in these situations, to help others learn to do what they should be doing.

The application of technical skills can be rewarding to the manager, particularly first line supervisors, because it provides the satisfaction of getting things done. Unfortunately, it is often doing what some one else can and should be doing. Technical tasks often put the manager in a position of neglecting other more important responsibilities.

Most managers in developing countries, no matter how high they climb in the organization, have heavy responsibilities for developing others in the organization. While employee development is time consuming and sometimes frustrating, it may be the urban manager's most important role. Unless they develop more self sufficient, self reliant, stronger organizations, their legacy as community leaders will be empty.

### ***Habits of mind***

Peter Drucker, a world resource on management practices, believes being effective is what the manager's job is. "Whether he works in a business or in a hospital, in a government agency or in a labour union, in a university or in the army, the executive is, first of all, expected to get the right things done. And this is simply that he is expected to be effective". Drucker says effectiveness is a "habit" or a complex set of practices. Here are five "habits of mind" the manager needs if he or she is to be effective.

- (a) Managing the portion of their time that they can control and knowing where their time goes.
- (b) Focusing on outward contributions, gearing their efforts to results rather than work.
- (c) Building on the strengths they have at their disposal, including their own strengths as well as those of their colleagues, subordinates, and the situations they face.
- (d) Concentrating on the few major areas that will produce the most outstanding results by setting clear priorities and sticking with them.
- (e) Making effective decisions, knowing that a decision is "a judgement based on "dissenting opinions" rather than on consensus on the facts".

Drucker's "habits" are worth re-emphasising. The effective manager: manages his or her time and knows where it goes; focuses on results rather than work; builds from strengths (their own and the organization's); concentrates their efforts on the most important issues and concerns, and makes effective decisions.

On this later point he emphasizes the importance of "creative dissent" within the organization. Drucker does not trust "consensus based on the facts".

### ***The ICMA perspective***

The International City Management Association (ICMA) has always been the bellwether of opinion regarding what constitutes effective urban or local government management in the United States and Canada. Its voice is increasingly heard in other countries as it defines systems and standards for improving local government performance.

The following is a summary of some of their pronouncements about effective local government management over the last decade, starting with a synopsis of views expressed in their 1983 publication, The Effective Local Government Manager.

### ***The urban manager's role***

In the 1983 publication the authors defined the urban manager's role and responsibilities as: (1) relating to the community; (2) working with the governing body; (3) managing with effectiveness (getting the right things done), efficiency (accomplishing them in the right way), and economy (limiting the use of scarce resources); (4) creating conditions for excellence in the organization; (5) promoting the community's future; (6) representing the community with other governments; and (7) maintaining personal effectiveness. Cutting across these management responsibilities are four themes: managing people, managing change, building and maintaining relationships; and managing publicity.

When we compare this vague list of responsibilities with the practical POSDCORB of the 1930s, we can't help but wonder what has prompted the dramatic shift in definition. Is it because most urban managers in the United States and Canada have the basic knowledge and skills to carry out the POSDCORB mandate? Do they have a depth of staff that allows them to be more "conceptual" in their approach to the role of urban manager? Or, is it in response to a growing trend to describe the manager's role in increasingly vague behavioural terms?

ICMA, a year after publishing of The Effective Local Government Manager, launched a research effort to define the basic elements of local government excellence. This effort was in response to the Peters and Waterman best seller, In Search of Excellence, that described the characteristics of successfully managed private sector organizations. The "local government excellence" criteria defined by ICMA at that time are:

- (a) Action orientation: Excellent local governments identify problems and deal with them quickly, fighting through structural, political, legal, and environmental constraints that make action more difficult than for private companies.
- (b) Closeness to citizens: This attribute includes establishing and maintaining a variety of dose linkages with citizens being served, including those who are regulated against their will. Excellent local governments listen and are sensitive and responsive to public input.
- (c) Autonomy and entrepreneurship: Excellent local governments have developed a climate conducive to thinking up and doing new things to solve problems and have a track record of implementing creative solutions even in the face of declining resources.
- (d) Employee orientation: For a local government to be excellent, this criterion requires more than lip service to employees and their needs. Excellent public organizations insist on intense, pervasive treatment of employees as human beings and adults.
- (e) Values: Excellent local governments have defined a set of values. Their thrust is toward being the best - providing superior quality and service to the public. Their values are communicated and demonstrated to employees and provide the source of enthusiasm and inspiration.
- (f) Mission, goals, and competence: Mission is the underlying premise of the organization. Excellent local governments have evaluated their missions based on changing resource levels and down demands and have used mission statements as the foundation for establishing community and/or organizational goals. Within their mission, excellent local governments provide consistent, uniform levels of service.
- (g) Structure: In excellent local governments, the potential negative effects of antiquated, bureaucratic structures have been minimised. These organizations have fewer management levels and fewer central and support staffs and provide firm central direction while giving maximum autonomy to employees.
- (h) Political relationships: This criterion departs most radically from the Peters Waterman model - but it is perhaps the most important of the attributes. Political relationships in excellent local governments have three characteristics: (a) they involve positive, open, respectful relationships between policy makers and management staff, (b) they deal openly, forthrightly, and effectively with their environments; (c) they possess environmental stability at the political level.



## ***Other conceptual roadways to managerial excellence***

At the risk of burdening you with too many “snapshots” of the manager’s role, I believe the following are also worth a brief look. They represent different perceptions of what is involved in effective management and together convey a pattern of consistency about the manager’s role.

### ***“The competent manager”***

Richard Boyatzis examined, in depth, the functions, responsibilities and expectations of over 2000 managers in 12 organizations representing 41 different management jobs. From his findings he isolated and identified 19 competencies directly related to successful managerial performance. He describes effective job performance as “the attainment of specific results (i.e., outcomes) required by the job through specific actions while maintaining or being consistent with policies, procedures and conditions of the organizational environment”.

To define the characteristics of managerial competence, Boyatzis categorises the competencies he isolated and studied into five clusters: (1) goal and action management, (2) leadership; (3) human resource management; (4) directing subordinates; and (5) focus on others. Here is a brief description of the components of each cluster.

- I. The “Goal and Action Management” Cluster
  - (a) Efficiency orientation represents a concern for doing something better
  - (b) Proactivity, a disposition toward taking action to accomplish something
  - (c) Diagnostic use, of concepts is a way of thinking that identifies or recognises patterns from an assortment of information, by bringing a concept to the situation and attempting to interpret events through that concept. The person has a framework or concept of how an event should transpire
  - (d) Concern with impact is the use of symbols of power to have impact on others. For example, such people dress in a fashion and style considered desirable and attractive in their surroundings.
  
- II. The “Leadership” Cluster
  - (a) Self-confidence, often called decisiveness or presence. People with self-confidence feel they know what they are doing and that they are doing well
  - (b) Use of oral presentations, a competency with which people make effective verbal presentations, whether in one-to-one meetings or before an audience of several hundred people.
  - (c) Logical thought, a process in which the person places events in a casual sequence.
  - (d) Conceptualisation, the ability to identify or recognize patterns in an assortment of information. This individual develops a concept that describes a pattern or structure perceived in a set of facts.
  
- III. The “Human Resource Management” Cluster
  - (a) Use of socialised power to build alliances, networks, coalitions, or teams
  - (b) Positive regard is belief in others and a positive belief that people are good
  - (c) Managing group process, the ability to stimulate others to work together effectively in group settings
  - (d) Accurate self assessment, the capacity to see one’s own strengths and weaknesses and to know personal limitations, a characteristic sometimes called self objectivity.
  
- IV. “Directing Subordinates” Cluster
  - (a) Developing others is a competency with which managers specifically help someone do his or her job
  - (b) Use of unilateral power is the ability to use various forms of influence to obtain compliance. Others see such people as “being in charge”.
  - (c) Spontaneity, expressing oneself freely and easily.
  
- V. The “Focus On Others” Cluster
  - (a) Self-control is the ability to inhibit personal needs or desires in service of organizational needs. People with this trait constantly weigh costs and benefits to themselves and the organization before expressing or acting on personal needs or desires
  - (b) Perceptual objectivity is the competency to be relatively objective and not limited in view by excessive subjectivity or personal biases, prejudices, or perspectives
  - (c) Stamina and adaptability describes those people who have the energy to sustain long hours of work and have the flexibility and orientation to adapt to changes in life and the organizational environment
  - (d) Finally, concern with close relationships is seen as a characteristic of the competent manager who cares about and builds close relationships with individuals.

The competencies outlined above go far beyond commonly accepted managerial skills and knowledge. They are described as “underlying characteristics of a person which results in effective and/or superior performance on the job”. These competencies, or underlying characteristics, may be motives, traits, skills, aspects of one’s self image or social role, or a body of knowledge which he or she uses. While they may seem abstract and somewhat idealistic, the American Management Association has used the Boyatzis competency model as the basis for a graduate degree programme in management.

### ***What managers say is important***

One final perspective to be shared at this time is that of managers. What do they perceive as the characteristics of the effective manager? In a workshop for urban managers from East and Southern Africa, we asked the participants, in two different task groups, to identify the characteristics associated with effective managers - and ineffective managers. These are presented below without editing although the lists have been reorganised to provide some parallel comparison.

In addition, the list includes a third column of characteristics from a survey conducted with managers attending a series of executive development programmes in California. These participants were asked to identify those characteristics they associated with superior leaders. Over 2600 managers completed the survey and their responses were rank ordered in terms of frequency (1 = most frequently mentioned; 2 = second most, etc.). The twenty most frequently mentioned characteristics from that survey are also listed in the following chart.

<b>Effective Managers from East and Southern Africa Workshop</b>	<b>Ineffective Managers from East and Southern Africa Workshop</b>	<b>Superior Leader from California Workshops</b>
• good communication	• gossips	
• good listener	• antagonistic	
	• mistrusting	• inspiring (4)
• fatherly/motherly	• dictatorial/brash	• supportive (11)
		• caring (13)
• makes decisions	• indecisive evades making decisions	• determined (17)
• public/human relations – skills	• does not care about welfare of workers	
	• excessively critical	• honest (1)
• has integrity	• blames others when things go wrong	
• intellectually honest	• dishonest	
• exudes confidence	• lacks self confidence	• courageous (12)
	• looks for cheap publicity	
• patient	• unforgiving	• cooperative (14)
• knowledgeable	• technically incompetent	• competent (2)
• knows what needs to be done	• theoretical/not practical	
• develops staff	• does not motivate others	
	• lacks motivation	
• “contented”	• divisive (divides and rules)	• dependable (10)
• generous	• favouritism/not fair	
• dynamic	• resists new ideas	• forward looking (2)
• good contact	• lacks coordination	
	• lacks follow up	
• firm and fair	• doesn’t discipline	• fair minded (6)
• practical	• lack of direction and purpose	• straight forward (8)
• delegates responsibility	• does not delegate	
• sense of humour		

The California list of characteristics also included the following (for which there were no close parallels in the African lists: intelligent (5); broadminded (7); ambitious (16); self-controlled (18); loyal (19); and, independent (20). These lists are replicated here because they offer some insight into what managers look for in their peers’ behaviour as managers and perhaps their own behaviour as well. While there are some significant differences between the two lists, I was surprised at the commonality.

More importantly, the list of characteristics of the ineffective manager, as generated by the African participants, provides insights about where to target training and development investments. Among other things, the ineffective manager's shortcomings suggest that interpersonal and personal traits of behaviour are critical to effective managerial performance - and, therefore, legitimate topics for training. *[Note to trainers: the exercise of generating data about managerial effectiveness (or other aspects of the managerial process) is easy to perform in a training programme. As a trainer never hesitate to tap the knowledge and experiences of the participants as one legitimate source of ideas and insights from which all can learn.]*

## SIX CRITICAL ROLES

We have looked at a variety of concepts and ideas about the role of the effective manager. Some of them apply directly to local government administrators while others are more general. In closing this discussion, I want to share with you some of my own thoughts about the roles and responsibilities of the urban manager. They are based on first hand observations and what I believe would be most beneficial in building strong, viable local governments in developing countries. The six roles encompass many other sub-roles and are, at times, overlapping. They are: the policy advisor; the strategic planner; the implementor, the human resource developer; the communicator; and the resource manager. These roles are not presented in any order of importance. They all are important. Some are just more important than others at certain times. The competent manager is also one who knows when it is more important to perform one role at the expense of others.

### ***The policy advisor***

There is a tendency among urban managers in less developed countries to deny any role in policy formulation. Most, it would seem, believe policy is the sole purview of the local elected leaders - or the national government. There is a tremendous policy leadership void at the local level and urban managers can help fill the void. With their experience, knowledge about urban problems and opportunities, and access to data and information about problems and trends in the community, they have a responsibility to advise elected leadership about policy matters.

There is also a tendency to elevate "policy" to such a lofty plane that it immobilises many, appointed officers. What is policy? Well, it's many things - statements of intent, an expression of some desired outcome, agreed upon community goals, and programmes and services that have been given greater priority than others. Often policy evolves out of an accumulation of many operational decisions or responses to problems first perceived at lower levels in the organization. City askaris (guards) who routinely take action against hawkers without direction from the city council are, in fact, making policy. A decision by the Town Clerk to provide better and more frequent sanitation services to the business community may be setting a policy. Policies involve inaction as well as action. The Town Clerk who ignores infrastructure maintenance, which has long term service and economic implications for the community, is involved in policy development - albeit negative in its tone and consequences.

The skills involved in policy advising are not inconsistent with those of strategic planning. They involve: being aware of community and organization problems and communicating them to the policymakers; looking for opportunities to capitalise on opportunities that will benefit the organization and community and communicating them to the council; collecting data on critical services and programmes, projecting their trends, and assessing their consequences, and, helping councillors and other local leaders gain a clearer vision about the future of the community so better policy decisions can be made. Few individuals are in a position to be more helpful in the policy arena than chief local government officers. They understand what is happening in and to the community and have access to data and information that can be used to formulate alternative courses of action. The manager, as policy advisor, has his or her finger on the community pulse and constantly scans the environment for its impact on the community. Policy advising is a managerial prerogative and responsibility. Whether or not it is spelled out in the job description is irrelevant. It is inherent with the role.

### ***The strategic planner***

At the heart of management is decision making. And decision making is synonymous with strategic planning. While the act of making decisions is usually associated with implementation, (getting things done within the organization), I believe decision making is integral to the planning phase of management. Planning is decision making. Implementation should result from planning decisions and not represent a time when planning decisions are made. To state it differently, implementation is the act of carrying out decisions arrived at through planning.

When we think of decision making as a skill associated primarily with the planning process, it forces us to redefine our thinking about planning and implementation as management events. In this context, the true output of planning is a set of decisions it causes to be implemented.

Recent comparisons of Japanese and American management styles are interesting and instructive in terms of decision making as planning or implementation. Japanese managers have a tendency to spend, at least in the minds of most Americans, an inordinate amount of time on “problem finding”. This often means getting agreement on the questions to be asked. In Japanese organizations implementation results from consensus decisions which emanate from in-depth discussions and reflection on the issues involved (problem finding).

American managers, by contrast, tend to rush into situations with the mind set of problem solving. Solving problems is where the action is (or, at least, that is the myth), and the American manager wants to be remembered as someone who gets things done. Unfortunately, this approach to problem solving ignores, even denies, the planning (decision making) phase of management we’ve been talking about.

What often results from this precipitous behaviour on the part of the American manager is an enormous expenditure of time and energy after the decision is made, either selling the solution or justifying it to others. The American manager often arrives at his answer to the problem while the Japanese manager is still trying to figure out what questions need to be asked. The results from these two approaches are becoming increasingly clear to those who research managerial and organizational behaviour. The Japanese, once a decision is made (largely through widespread consultation and consensus building), are in a position to implement it quickly. They can move knowing there is agreement on the statement of the problem or opportunity and the planned solution or course of action to be taken.

The American, on the other hand, has confused problem solving with decision making. Consequently, the American manager spends valuable time in what I would call backward planning. Backward planning is the act of validating or justifying decisions (planning) already taken on the job.

### ***The implementor***

Project implementation, and the ongoing operation and maintenance of programmes and services, are the bane of Third World development. Some of the blame falls on donor countries and international agencies that loan funds and put projects into place with little concern for future operation and maintenance. Sometimes they build, or support the building of, inappropriate high tech facilities that cater primarily to the needs of their own country’s commercial interests. One major donor recently completed a “state of the art” water purification plant and distribution system in Bangladesh. Less than a month after dedication by the President of Bangladesh, the plant stopped functioning requiring spare parts and technical assistance from the donor country.

More attention must be given in the planning (decision making) stages of project development to such issues as ongoing operation, maintenance, cost recovery, the appropriateness of the technology (both social and technical), and the development of more viable, responsible institutions. While the ability and the will to implement projects, programmes, and services is critical to local government development, they are given short shrift by almost every agency involved in the development business.

Implementation means to carryout, accomplish, produce, fulfil, complete, maintain and operate. Implementation is doing what was said would be done in the local government’s strategic plan, budgets and policies in terms of community projects, programmes and services. The emphasis is not on initial construction of facilities or the initiation of new programmes and services but the ongoing operation and maintenance of these new efforts and those that are already on line. Implementation doesn’t just happen. It must be managed aggressively and continuously.

The key managerial roles that support implementation are: (1) strategic planning (decision making) to assure that inappropriate and unnecessary projects and programmes are not brought on line in the first place; (2) human resource development to assure an adequately trained and motivated cadre of employees to operate and maintain the investment of programmes and services; and (3) resource management, making available adequate funds, time, personnel, materials, and equipment to implement, operate, and maintain projects, programmes, and services.

### ***The human resource developer***

One of the most pervasive problems afflicting local governments in developing countries is the lack of qualified personnel. There are many culprits.

- (a) Most local governments do not have adequate funds to employ and retain competent and qualified personnel
- (b) Working for local governments, particularly those located in rural areas, is often perceived by public managers as detrimental to their long-term career goals

- (c) Training institutions and programmes are not geared to effectively serve the training needs of local governments. They tend to be too academic and wed to traditional modes of curriculum development and delivery. Local governments need hands on, practical, problem solving approaches to training.
- (d) Most urban managers do not have a commitment, strategy, plan or the resources to develop their organization's personnel.

Human resource development tends to be seen by many managers as an external function, largely the responsibility of training institutions. I would argue otherwise. While developing subordinates involves many things, there are three interrelated activities that are solely in the hands of the supervising manager. They are: direction, support, and delegation.

- (a) Direction involves telling subordinates what to do, where to do it, when to do it, and how to do it. It also involves the close supervision of performance. Is the subordinate performing tasks according to agreed upon standards? If not, what does he or she need to do to improve their performance?
- (b) The managers support of the subordinate is the second major feature of effective on-the-job training and development. Support involves personal interaction with the subordinate: listening providing encouragement, and increasing the subordinate's involvement in decision making. Supportive behaviour is characterised by: active listening honest praise, and interaction - the give and take of mutual decision making and problem solving.

Managerial support of subordinates goes beyond the personal realm. It assures the availability of resources to perform at the standard agreed upon. Depending upon the situation, it may require manpower, equipment, materials, time, expertise, and much more - whatever it takes to get the job done.

Supportive behaviour doesn't end with good personal interaction between the manager and subordinate and the resources required to perform adequately. It also involves managing the larger work environment to assure that policies, procedures, rules and regulations support effective job performance.

- (c) The final key to developing subordinates is delegation – pushing decision making to the lowest level in the organization. Tom Peters says, “The plain fact is that nine of ten managers haven't delegated enough”. My experience in working with managers in many parts of the world confirms this. One gets the impression that delegation is not only seen as unnecessary but forbidden in many organizations.

The human resource developer role is crucial in countries where there is a shortage of qualified personnel and a dearth of competent mid-managers and supervisors. Contrary to popular opinion, human resource development is a management responsibility not a task to be relegated to training institutions. While these institutions have a supportive role, and an important one, human resource development begins and ends in the work environment.

### ***The communicator***

The urban manager needs to be an effective communicator. This not only means getting information and ideas out to the council, employees, and community, but the ability to listen actively and uncritically to the many messages that flow to the manager who is open and accessible. The urban manager's position is, or can be, akin to the nerve center of the community, but only if the manager makes a conscious effort to manage this aspect of his or her role. Effective community and organization development involves constant efforts to gather, process and disseminate information from and to all corners of the municipal organization and community.

### ***The resource manager***

The local government manager must manage scarce resources. Again this role is tied to others discussed earlier. For example, it is impossible to talk about human resource development without recognizing this is a major aspect of overall resource management. So is strategic planning.

But resource managing is much more. It is: the mobilisation of new and continuing revenue sources; the effective allocation of resources among the many programme and service responsibilities of the local government (budgeting); attention to infrastructure and equipment maintenance needs, preferably by setting up preventative maintenance programmes, seeing that equipment, tools, and materials are available to do the job; and managing the time variables. Time is one resource that is equally available to all managers and organizations, no matter how rich or poor they might be in terms of other resources. And yet, time is often poorly managed. Because resources are so scarce in most local governments, it becomes even more crucial to aggressively manage them. The ideas stated above are only a few of the ways the manager can maximise the resources at his or her command.

## IN SUMMARY

The roles of the urban/local government manager are many. I have reviewed several commonly recognized definitions of managerial roles and briefly commented on what I believe are six of the most important roles of the urban manager in developing country settings. They are: policy advisor, strategic planner, implementor, human resource developer, communicator, and resource manager. You may already be saying that the roles I have identified are incomplete, not the most important, and inadequately defined. I hope this is the case. The important issue is not whether you agree or disagree with what has been said about the role of the urban manager, but how to develop a highly qualified and dedicated cadre of urban managers. The task is complex, difficult, challenging, and critical to strong viable, and responsive local governments. While developing competent urban managers involves training and, therefore, training institutions, the task demands, above all, self development on the part of the manager.

### **Exercise**

#### **Topic: Urban manager roles**

#### **How do you spend your time as urban manager**

The following exercise is a quick check on how you, as a manager, spend your time working on the six urban manager roles just outlined above. Spend a few minutes and list in the right column the percentage of your work time you believe you allocate to each of these roles. If the total of the six roles does not add up to at least 80%, list other roles you perform which consume major blocks of time.

Urban manager roles	% of time spent on each of these roles
1. Policy advising	
2. Strategic planning	
3. Project, programme and service implementation	
4. Human resource/staff development	
5. Communicating with Council members, employees, citizens, and other major stake holders	
6. Managing scarce resources (If you still have more than 20% of your work time unaccounted for, list below other major roles you are performing)	
7.	
8.	
9.	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>

## STRATEGIC PLANNING: CONCEPTS AND STRATEGIES FOR PLANNED CHANGE

Where there is no vision, the people perish  
Proverbs

### **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Strategic planning

Time Required: approximately 3-4 hours (can vary depending upon size of training group and number of reports)

This training event is designed to help participants better understand strategic planning as a management process. The exercise involves the writing of proposals by an external consultant to assist a local government develop a strategic plan for the organization. The training participants would be divided into several small work groups depending upon the number of trainees in the workshop. One group would act as a proposal review team for the local government and one or more groups would be organized to develop proposals to assist the local government in developing a strategic plan. Another variation to this two party exercise would involve a third task group that would observe the presentation of the proposals to the management team and the management team's response, assess the presentations and responses and give feedback on both the content and process of the presentations and critique.

## Tasks

- (1) Provide time for the training participants to read the accompanying essay on strategic planning
- (2) Prepare written task statements for each role group: (a) the management team; (b) the teams that will develop the proposals; and (c) (if you decide to use a third group) a team to evaluate the work of the other two.

Here are some thoughts on what these task statements might include:

- (a) **Local Government Management Team:** Your team represents a local government that has decided to develop a strategic plan for the community and will be hiring a planning consultant/facilitator to assist in the process. (The planning is to be conducted by local officials and, perhaps, citizen representatives - not by an outside firm or group of planners.) Your role is to develop a set of criteria for evaluating the consultant's proposal to the elected council and management team of the local authority and to conduct a meeting where the proposals will be presented. After the proposals have been presented, your team will hold a short discussion to decide which of the consulting groups you will offer the contract.
- (b) **Consulting Teams:** (The training exercise is designed to provide a bit of competition among planning consultants so the exercise should include at least two consulting teams and ideally three. Processing more than three would be too time consuming and difficult to discern qualitative differences in the proposals).

Your team(s) is to develop a proposal to assist the local government develop a strategic plan. (Assume a city of 100,000 population, council-town clerk type of government, and the usual amenities and problems for an agricultural service centre of this size). The strategic plan is to be developed primarily by local officials and citizens. Your role is to facilitate this process.

Since time is short, you are expected to only outline your approach (the process of planning) and the outcomes you hope to achieve - not to write a full-blown proposal. Given these parameters, you will want to concentrate on: how you would organise and facilitate the strategic planning process; who you would want to involve; how long it would take; the goals and objectives of the planning process; the expected outcomes to be achieved; resources required; and any other details you believe would make your proposal competitive and attractive.

- (c) **Evaluation Team** (if you decide to form a small group for this purpose): Your team will be expected to observe the presentation of proposals by the consulting teams, their interaction with the management team and the final discussion when the management team decides who they will recommend be employed as the planning consultant. To prepare for these tasks, you will want to develop criteria for evaluating the plans and the final selection of the consultant to help carry it out.
- (3) Assuming you have written the task statements, you are ready to divide the training participants into the various groups listed above. Each team should have no fewer than 4-5 participants and no more than 8 or 9. This means you can adjust the training exercise to accommodate as few as 16 (4 x 4) and as many as 45 (9 x 5 - assumes 3 planning consultant teams of 9 each).

Describe briefly what the exercise is to achieve and give them time goals (45 minutes to prepare their presentations or other pre-role play tasks; 20 minutes for each presentation of the plans; and 20-45 minutes to select the winning consultant proposal and to allow feed-back by the evaluation team).

- (4) Divide the training participants into the various task groups: one management team; two or three planning consulting teams who will compete for the contract; and an evaluation team, if you decide to create one. Brief each team on their tasks, role and responsibilities; restate the time constraints; assign them a space to work; and, finally, give them the task statement in writing along with any training aids they might need to both plan their presentation and to give it.
- (5) Reconvene the groups after 45 minutes. (In the meantime, you should set up the training room to resemble a meeting place where such presentations might be made to a review committee. The evaluation team should be located in an unobtrusive manner but close enough so they can hear and observe what is happening).
- (6) Have the groups carry out the role plays including the evaluation by the third task group (if it is assigned). Either way, lead a full group discussion about the exercise, bringing into the discussion relevant points and ideas from the essay on strategic planning.

## Overview

Donor agencies have “discovered” strategic planning or corporate planning, as it is sometimes called. Organizations vying for external development funds can expect to see strategic planning as an increasingly frequent requirement in their project applications. Given this trend, it is important to more fully understand what strategic planning is - and what it is not.

First, and foremost, it is not development planning, as reflected in those multi-year political statements that have become ubiquitous in the development process. As one author wrote nearly 25 years ago, “The national plan appears to have joined the national anthem and the national flag as a symbol of sovereignty and modernity”.<sup>(1)</sup>

Development planning deals with the long term allocation of scarce resources. Development plans are typically stylised, formalistic, even ritualistic, global statements of intent that have little to do with day-to-day operations, or reality. They are based on predictions and forecasts, and spell out goals for which there is little hope of accomplishment.

Strategic planning is, or should be, a management tool. Strategic planning is a process to guide and foster institutional development and change in anticipation of, and response to, organizational and community needs as they relate to more immediate operation and implementation concerns. It is future decision making in the context of current reality. While strategic planning also involves the allocation or manipulation of scarce resources, the exercise is carried out within the realm of what is managerially realistic, not what is politically ideal. Strategic planning as a management strategy, is not new, nor has its use been bound by culture or geopolitical boundaries. Over the centuries, great leaders have engaged in strategic planning (I would rather call it strategic thinking and there is much to learn from their endeavours. Mao Tse-Tung, Napoleon, and Alexander The Great are remembered for their phenomenal accomplishments. They not only planned strategically but carried out their strategic plans. By contrast, how many contemporary leaders will be remembered for their five year development plans?

When Philip of Macedonia and his son Alexander (who went on to be known as Alexander the Great) planned a strategy to rid their homeland of influence by the Greek city-state in the third century B.C., they engaged in the kind of thinking and tactics that are very much a part of the rhetoric we hear today from academics and others when they talk about strategic planning. Philip and Alexander set goals, built coalitions, assessed the relative strengths and weaknesses of different alternatives, used training as a tool to develop the human resources they needed to expand their empire, and put together contingency plans. The strategic thinking and planning Philip and Alexander engaged in over 2000 years ago is not only fascinating but relevant to this discussion. James Brian Quinn, in his book Strategies for Change (and incidentally, one of the best books written about the subject), includes an excerpt from another book about Alexander the Great and I’ve done the same.<sup>(2)</sup> It puts strategic planning into a historical perspective and highlights the timelessness of certain concepts and principles that provide the foundation stones for effective leadership.

Let me suggest that you take a few moments now to read and ponder this classical approach to strategic planning and management.

<sup>(1)</sup> Albert Waterston, Developmental Planning, Baltimore, John Hopkins Press, 1965, p.28

<sup>(2)</sup> The excerpt entitled “A Classical Strategy” is from P. Green Alexander the Great. Praeger Publishers, New York, 1970. Modified with the authors permission by James Brian Quinn who includes it in his book Strategies for Change: Logical Incrementalism, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Ill., pp. 156-158

## A grand strategy

Philip and his young son, Alexander, had very *clear goals*. They sought to rid Macedonia of influence by the Greek city-states and to *establish dominance* over what was then essentially northern Greece. They also wanted Athens to *join a coalition* with them against Persia on their eastern flank. *Assessing their resources*, they *decided to avoid* the overwhelming superiority of the Athenian fleet and *chose to forego* attack on the powerful walled cities of Athens and Thebes where their superbly trained phalanxes and cavalry would not have *distinct advantages*.

Philip and Alexander used an *indirect approach* when an invitation by the Amphictyonic council brought their army south to punish Amphissa. *In a planned sequence of actions* and *deceptive manoeuvres*, they cut away from a direct line of march to Amphissa, *bypassed* the enemy, and *fortified a key base*, Elataë. They then took steps to *weaken their opponents politically and morally* by pressing restoration of the Phocian communities earlier dispersed by the Thebans and by having Philip declared a champion of the Delphic gods. Then *using misleading messages* to make the enemy believe they had moved north to Thrace and also *using developed intelligence sources*, the Macedonians in a *surprise attack* annihilated the



Greeks' positions near Amphissa. This *lured their opponents away from their defensive positions* in the nearby mountain passes to *consolidate their forces* near the town of Chæronea.

There, *assessing the relative strengths* of their opponents, the Macedonians first *attempted to negotiate* to achieve their goals. When this was unsuccessful they had a *well-developed contingency plan* on how to *attack and overwhelm* the Greeks. Prior to this time, of course, the Macedonians had *organized* their troops into the famed phalanxes, and had *developed the full logistics* needed for their field support including a longer spear, which helped the Macedonian phalanxes penetrate the solid shield wall of the heavily massed Greek formations. *Using the natural advantages* of their grassy terrain, the Macedonians had developed cavalry support for their phalanxes' movements far beyond the Greek capability. Finally, using a *relative advantage - the command structure* their hierarchical *social system* allowed - against the more democratic Greeks, the Macedonian nobles had *trained their personnel* into one of the most *disciplined and highly motivated* forces in the world.

### **The battle strategy**

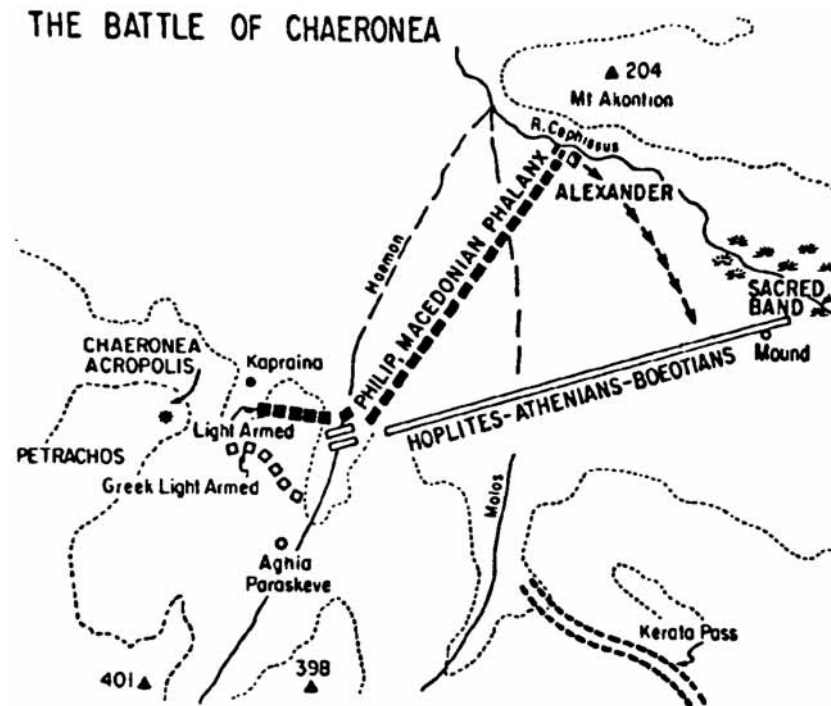
Supporting this was the battle strategy at Chæronea, which emerged as follows. Philip and Alexander first *analysed their specific strength and weaknesses and their opponents' current alignments and probable moves*. The Macedonian strength lay in their new spear technology, the *mobility* of their superbly disciplined phalanxes, and the powerful cavalry units led by Alexander. Their weaknesses were that they were badly outnumbered and faced-in the Athenians and the Theban Bandsome of the finest foot troops in the world. However, their opponents had two weak points. One was the Greek left flank with lightly armed local troops placed near the Chæronea Acropolis and next to some more heavily armed – but hastily assembled - hoplites bridging to the strong center held by the Athenians. The famed Theban Band anchored the Greek right wing near a swamp on the Cephissus River. (See map.)

Philip and Alexander *organized their leadership to command key positions*; Philip took over the right wing and Alexander the cavalry. They *aligned their forces* into a *unique posture* which *used their strengths and offset their weaknesses*. They decided on those spots at which they would *concentrate their forces*, what *positions to concede*, and what *key points they must take and hold*. Starting with their units angled back from the Greek lines (see map), they developed a *focused major thrust against* the Greek left wing and *attacked their opponents' weakness* – the troops near Chæronea - with the most disciplined of the Macedonian units, the guards' brigade. After building up pressure and stretching the Greek line to its left, the guards' brigade abruptly began a *planned withdrawal*. This feint caused the Greek left to break ranks and rush forward, believing the Macedonians to be in full retreat. *This stretched the opponents' resources* as the Greek center moved left to *maintain contact* with its flank and to attack the "fleeing" Macedonians.

Then with *predetermined timing*, Alexander's cavalry *attacked the exposure* of the stretched line at the same moment Philip's *phalanxes re-formed* as planned on the high ground at the edge of the Heamon River. Alexander *broke through* and *formed a bridgehead* behind the Greeks. He *refocused his forces against a segment* of the opponents' line; his cavalry *surrounded and destroyed* the Theban Band as the *overwhelming power* of the phalanxes poured through the gap he had created. From its *secured position*, the Macedonian left flank then turned and *attacked the flank* of the Athenians. With the help of *Philip's planned counterattack*, the Macedonians *expanded their dominance* and overwhelmed the *critical target*, i.e., the Greek center.

### **Implementation**

Then came final implementation. Realising their defeat, the Greeks surrendered. *Keeping their goals in mind* and with a sense of time horizon rare in those days, Phillip and Alexander *called off* their rampaging troops and *used the victory to achieve their broader aims*. In a magnanimous settlement (for those times), they allowed the Athenian prisoners to return home and agreed to return the ashes of the Athenian dead. In return Athens was to abandon all territorial claims in Macedonia, dissolve the Athenian Maritime League, and become Macedonia's ally. As noted, this great victory was the touchstone and model for Macedonia's later conquest of the known world. Although its authors doubtless did not conceive and prescribe its actions and relationships with such immaculate precision prior to the battle, its precepts were enduring and have constantly reappeared both in other successful "grand" and "battle" strategies and in the mainstreams of strategic thought over the next 2,300 years.



### ***A road map and a few biases***

Before going any further, it will be useful to say how I plan to cover the subject of strategic planning and alert you to my own biases about the process. First, I will include, from other sources, statements and reflections about strategic planning as a management tool. As I do, I will try to highlight their importance in relation to their use in developing country settings. Second, I will relate several case examples of strategic planning, some specifically related to local governments. Finally, I will provide a blueprint for using strategic planning as an action strategy for development.

Now, for those biases. I am sceptical about long range strategic planning. For one thing, there is a tendency for it to be put into the hands of professional planners. Tony Killick, reflecting on his experience in planning in India – says planners are frequently politically naïve if not presumptuous: “Temperamentally they are more at home quantifying problems than negotiating about them. Their training leads them to make unrealistic assumptions about political behaviour, which in turn increase the gap between planning in theory and actual performance”.<sup>(3)</sup>

Planners have a valuable contribution to make to the planning process but when it is relegated to them, almost exclusively, it undercuts the chance for successful implementation. Plans have a great capacity to gather dust.

Another personal bias has to do with quantitative data and the use of models for manipulating data. Planners love data and models. Since these statements will, no doubt, attract the ire of those engaged in such behaviour, let me call in some reinforcements. Peter Drucker says strategic planning is “not a box of tricks, a bundle of techniques. It is analytical thinking and commitment of resources to action”. He goes on to say that “model building or simulation may be useful, but they are not strategic planning”.

Furthermore, “strategic planning is not forecasting. It is not masterminding the future. Any attempt to do so is foolish; the future is unpredictable. We can only discredit what we are doing by attempting it”.<sup>(4)</sup>

Russell Ackoff, a highly regarded management specialist who has written extensively about strategic/corporate planning, also weighs in with some critical thoughts about the use, or misuse, of data. Ackoff, who started his academic career in operations research and the quantitative sciences, gradually moved away from these more precise roots to become a sceptic of management information systems and an advocate of such concepts as “mess management”. Ackoff describes mess management as that process which deals with “systems” of problems. When we try to unravel the messes, or to disaggregate them, which often happens in attempts to quantify them, they lose their essential properties. For strategic planning to work, says Ackoff, it must deal with the mess as a whole and with the interaction that created the mess. According to Ackoff, the most critical need of managers is not more relevant information but less irrelevant information.<sup>(5)</sup>

Unfortunately, Ackoff says, most managers are not equipped to evaluate the mathematical models that technicians apply to their problems or the solutions these models yield. Too many managers accept these models and solutions because of their blind faith in “quantitative methods”. Managers should never use “solutions” that are extracted from models they do not understand. Nor should they stand in awe of mathematics. Rather they should be aware of how awful its products can be.

James Quinn is another academic scholar who shared, earlier in his career, the view that more formal and rational planning structures could improve decision making in large organizations. While there were obvious benefits to be derived from the process, he also noticed some disturbing tendencies. From his in-depth survey of nine large multi-national corporations and their planning process in the late 1970s, he began to gain a different perspective about the use and misuses of strategic planning.<sup>(6)</sup>

First, the formal planning activities carried out by these organizations often tended to become bureaucratized, rigid and costly paper shuffling exercises. In many of the companies he surveyed, the primary impacts of planning were: to expand the scope of capital and generating budget procedures; to introduce formal measures to new areas of development; and, to achieve greater central control over operations.

<sup>(3)</sup> Coralie Bryant and Louse G. White, Managing Development in the Third World, Westview Press, Boulder Colorado, 1982, p. 233

<sup>(4)</sup> Peter F. Drucker, Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices, New York, Harper and Row, 1973, p. 123

<sup>(5)</sup> Russell L Ackoff, Management in small Doses, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1986, pp. 20-30

<sup>(6)</sup> James Brian Quinn, Strategies for Change: Logical Incrementalism, Richard D, Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Ill., 1980, p.2

Second, Quinn found that most major strategy decisions seemed to be made outside the formal planning structure, even in those organizations with well accepted and established planning processes. When large expenditures were made to plan the future direction of the corporations, the products of the formal planning process were ignored.

While much of the management literature and techniques associated with strategic planning have, over the years, concentrated on developing more sophisticated models of analysis and forecasting Quinn concluded that they simply do not work the way the model builders thought they should. “Their purported “normative” solutions began to appear highly questionable, if not actively destructive, in many instances”.

In place of the formal planning process, which relied heavily on planners and sophisticated economic and social technology, Quinn saw something quite different happening in the name of strategic or corporate planning. In those organizations he studied, the full strategy was rarely written down and the processes used to arrive at a corporate, or strategic plan, were typically fragmented, evolutionary and largely intuitive. “The real strategy”, according to Quinn, “tends to evolve as internal decisions and external events flow together to create an new, widely shared consensus for action among key members of the top management team”.

My own scepticism about strategic planning comes from many years of helping create plans for others. In most cases, these plans did not go anywhere, or they went in the wrong direction.

These biases are part of a philosophy about strategic planning that increasingly recognises planning as a management prerogative and responsibility. This doesn't deny the importance of planners, economic models, and quantitative data in the planning process but it does suggest we put them into proper perspective. Strategic planning, as Drucker reminds us, is “the continuous process of making present entrepreneurial (risk taking) decisions systematically and with the greatest knowledge of their futurity; organizing systematically the efforts needed to carry out these decisions; and measuring the results against the expectations through organized, systematic feedback”.<sup>(7)</sup>

<sup>(7)</sup> Drucker, p. 25

Strategic planning is, intrinsically, a political process. It requires continuous learning intense interaction between those who control the resources and those who need them, and the on-going examination of underlying values and basic assumptions that lead to administrative and political behaviour (ergo: strategic plans and their implementation).

## ***The Ackoff perspective***

I want to return to something Russell Ackoff said about the planning process in a book he wrote about corporate planning nearly two decades ago. His thoughts put into perspective some of the oft unspoken assumptions that either drive strategic planning, or should. At that time, Ackoff was saying that most planning is dominated by one of three points of view: satisficing, optimising, and adaptivizing. Having said this, he quickly admitted the terms were not very good because their connotations were vague and ambiguous. “Satisficing” a term coined by Herbert Simon, means to “do well enough but not necessarily as well as possible”. The level of attainment that defines “satisfaction” is one the decision maker is willing to settle for.

“Optimising” is an effort to either: (a) minimize the resources required to obtain a specific level of performance; (b) maximise the performance that can be obtained from resources that are, or expected to be, available; (c) to obtain the best balance of costs and benefits.

“Adaptivizing” when Ackoff was writing about it nearly two decades ago, was, by his own admission, “not prevalent ... because we have neither developed a dear and comprehensive concept of it nor a systematised methodology for carrying it out”.<sup>(8)</sup> While adaptive planning was not generally practised at that time, according to Ackoff, he nevertheless defined its main characteristics:

- (a) It is based on the belief that the principal value of planning does not lie in the plans that it produces but in the process of producing them. From this follows the notion that effective planning cannot be done to or for an organization or its managers, it must be done by them.
- (b) Since planning needs often arise out of the lack of effective management. Ackoff contends that most of the messes that planning tries to eliminate or avoid are man made), the principal objectives of adaptive planning would be to design management systems and processes that minimize the future need for “retrospective” planning. Planning in this context becomes directed toward creating a desired future - not fixing a current mess created by past endeavours.
- (c) Adaptive planning recognises that our knowledge of the future falls into three categories: (i) certainty; (ii) uncertainty; and (iii) ignorance. Each of these requires a different kind of planning. When certain aspects of the future are virtually certain (e.g., increased levels of pollution), we should carry out commitment planning. When there are aspects of the future we are relatively certain are uncertain (e.g., shifting patterns of drought), then we should engage in contingency planning - the “what if” kind of getting ready to exploit the future when it makes up its mind.

Finally, there are things about the future that we cannot anticipate (e.g., political catastrophes or technological breakthroughs). While we can not prepare for them directly, we can do so indirectly through *responsiveness* planning. This kind of planning directs its attention to designing organizations and management systems that can more quickly detect deviations from the expected and respond to them more effectively. Responsiveness planning builds into the system a greater ability to detect the subtle nuances of change and prepares the organization to be more responsible and flexible in its operating behaviour.

## ***Adaptive planning - satisficing and optimizing***

It seems that a realistic approach to strategic planning in most developing countries is one that adheres to the tenets of adaptive planning in its variations as defined by Ackoff, with a strong orientation to both satisficing (decisions and actions we can live with) and optimising (getting as much out of our resources as possible to achieve a satisficing level of performance).

Adaptive strategic planning is based on some fundamental values and assumptions about the management process and how things get done in complex organizations. By “getting things done”, I don’t mean the creation of comprehensive, multi-year planning documents that make their first and final stop on the shelf behind the chief executive’s desk.

Tom Peters, who co-authored *A Passion For Excellence* and followed it with a “handbook for a management revolution”, *Thriving on Chaos*, says that a good strategic planning process: “(1) gets everyone involved; (2) is not constrained by overall corporate “assumptions”; (3) is perpetually fresh, forcing the asking of new questions; (4) is not left to planners; and (5) requires a lot of nodding time and vigorous debate”. As for the planning document, per se, Peters says it “is succinct,

emphasizes the development of strategic skills, and, is burned the day before it is to go to the printer - that is, it is a living document, not an icon".<sup>(9)</sup>

This sounds a bit heretical, I suppose, but Peters has been taking the pulse of a wide range of organizations in the Western world for some time now and is convinced that flexibility is the necessary, watchword for strong and vibrant organizations.

<sup>(8)</sup> Russel Ackoff, A Concept of Corporate Planning New York, Wiley - Interscience, 1970, pp. 6-22

<sup>(9)</sup> Tom Peters, Thriving on Chaos, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1987, p. 510

### ***Flexibility, not predictability***

Flexibility, rather than predictability, is important to the strategic planning process. Here are a few reasons to remain flexible.

- (a) There are multiple goal structures within every large organization. If there aren't, there should be. Otherwise, the system becomes top heavy, stodgy and ultimately moribund.
- (b) Strategic decision making is a politicised process that involves competing for scarce resources by a myriad of individuals, work units and organizations.
- (c) As the stakes increase, so does the managerial bargaining and negotiating for position, power and access.
- (d) Satificing becomes a norm in decision making. Realism set in. Managers recognise the importance of getting something rather than nothing and, therefore, strive for a position of relative satisfaction.
- (e) Coalitions become increasingly important in the act of making large scale decisions. The world is increasingly messy as more and more institutions, organizations, groups and individuals lay claim to the development process and the shrinking resource base. If things are going to happen in development, it means cutting a deal or, maybe, cutting many. This doesn't mean corruptive deal cutting but rather a realignment of territorial and resource boundaries based upon the shifting nature of the development process. (Unfortunately, "cutting a deal" has negative connotations in much of the world today because it has been, and continues to be, a corrupt and corrupting process). Building coalitions and engaging interactive, intertwining strategies is critical once the resources reach the point where they attract attention beyond the boundaries of the manager's office.
- (f) Finally, "muddling through" has, in large measure, become the norm in large scale public decision making. This process, among other things, assumes an incremental building on to that which exists. (Rarely do we have the luxury of starting anew. Nor does it try to separate the ends from the analysis of the options because "one doesn't know what he wants until he knows what he can get")<sup>(10)</sup>

<sup>(10)</sup> Charles Lindblom, "*The Science of Muddling Through*", Public Administration Review, (spring, 1959) p. 87

If we accept these assumptions about how organizations and managers operate, then we begin to appreciate the breakdown of logical, formalized planning processes constructed largely through the analytical manipulation of information and data in the hands of staff planners rather than operating managers. It also provides a springboard for constructing a model of strategic planning that is more dynamic and responsive to the needs of operating organizations.

To help understand how the strategic planning process is being used in other places and contexts, I have included the following examples. The first "case study" is a review of strategic planning as it is **advocated** for local governments in the United States (by a national organization responsible for providing local governments with technical assistance) and **practised** by many of those governments.

### ***A strategic guide for U.S. cities and counties***

The process of strategic planning has become more important in recent years in the management of cities and counties in the United States. Public Technology Incorporated (PTI), a non-profit organization created to serve local governments' needs for access to new technology, has published a strategic planning guide for use by its members. The following is a summary of the main points covered in Strategies For Cities And Counties.

According to PTI, “Strategic planning is a systematic way to manage change and to create the best possible future. It is a creative process for identifying and accomplishing the most important actions in view of strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities ... implementation is the key to strategic planning, as opposed to long range planning and goal setting”.

PTI clarifies their definition of strategic planning by spelling out the following characteristics:

- (a) It is a focused process that concentrates on selected issues.
- (b) It explicitly considers resource availability.
- (c) It assesses strengths and weaknesses.
- (d) It considers major events and changes occurring outside the organization and community.
- (e) It is action oriented, with a strong emphasis on practical results.

Another way to express these criteria is to say that strategic planning, as they advocate it for use in U.S. cities and counties, is practical, realistic and focused. By contrast, the “comprehensive planning” movement which was funded by federal government grants and embraced by U.S. local authorities in the 1960s was: all encompassing; often times idealistic; didn’t always take into consideration the environment in which it would be implemented; and was characterized as a planning document, not a management tool for achieving practical results.

PTI sees the strategic planning process as a useful technique to broaden understanding of available resources and to stimulate fresh thinking about options and resources, not only within the control of the local government - but the broader community, including the private sector. It also defines resources broadly to include tangible ones, like funds and equipment, and intangible resources (e.g., authority, political influence, historic characteristics of the community, and civic spirit). The process, as defined by PTI, is designed to integrate activities and resources - not to supplant the obligatory financial budgeting process.

The PTI approach to strategic planning, as defined for American local authorities, includes seven steps:

- (a) Scan the environment: The process begins by identifying key factors and trends important to the future of the organization and community. It looks at the potential impact of external forces on local events.
- (b) Select key issues: On the basis of the environmental scan, those involved in the process select a few key issues whose successful resolution is critical.
- (c) Set mission statements or broad goals: General goals are set to establish the direction for the strategy development process.
- (d) External and internal analysis: This step looks at outside forces affecting achievement of the goals and identifies strengths and weaknesses of the organization and community along with the availability of resources.
- (e) Develop goals, objectives and strategies: Based on the external and internal analyses, decisions are made regarding what can be achieved with respect to each issue and how it will be achieved.
- (f) Develop implementation plan: Specific timetables, resources and responsibilities for carrying out strategic actions are determined.
- (g) Monitor, update and scan: The final step ensures that strategies are carried out, adjusting them as necessary in response to changing circumstances. Finally, PTI advises their clients to be prepared to update the plan when major changes occur in the environment.<sup>(11)</sup>

<sup>(11)</sup> These Notes and others are from Strategies Cities and Counties: A Strategic Planning Guide, Public Technology Inc., Washington, D.C., (undated)

### ***The benefits of strategic planning***

PTI outlines the following benefits to be derived from strategic planning.

- (a) Strategic planning helps accomplish the important things. By putting the spotlight on longer term, high priority concerns, it puts day-to-day operational problems into perspective. In San Francisco, for example, there was widespread agreement that deferring infrastructure maintenance and replacement was unwise. And yet, it was not seen as a pressing problem. During development of a strategic plan for the City, the business community

documented the growing backlog of infrastructure requirements and the Mayor, with private sector support, was able to make a case for spending \$45 million more on infrastructure the following year.

- (b) Strategic planning enhances community education and consensus building. Philadelphia, a city with racial, economic and ethnic diversity and attendant problems, made community education and consensus building an integral part of a strategic planning process that was tied to its 300th anniversary as a city. By creating twelve task forces (each formed to examine key issues such as economic development and housing) with 20 active members at the “core” and another 60 to 100 people in an outer “ring” of less active participants, they were able to involve over 1000 citizens directly in the strategic planning process. Each task force included representatives from business, government, civic institutions, universities, labour, neighbourhoods and other community organizations. The major strength of the effort was inability to bring a diversity of citizens together to sit at a single table to compare information and perspectives. As they met, a degree of consensus began to emerge about actions the city needed to take to move forward.
- (c) Strategic planning helps to develop a shared vision that extends beyond “the next election”. In this respect two issues are important. One, the need for a shared vision about what the city should be; and two, a process that minimises the inertia that often accompanies elections and a change of local government. One secondary city in the United States had lost its primary economic base (rubber manufacturing) and used the strategic planning process to determine how they could rebuild a more stable and diverse economic base. It was essential to “paint a picture (vision)” of what the future might look like without the economic base they had taken for granted over the years - one which disappeared rapidly as a result of world wide shifts in manufacturing systems.
- (d) Strategic planning helps position cities to seize opportunities. Peter Drucker says, “The first thing to do to attain tomorrow is always to be sloughing off yesterday”. While this is not as easy to do in public organizations, it is still good advice. Strategic planning must be proactive if it is going to serve the organization in the future, even the near future. San Antonio, Texas, used strategic planning as a way to position themselves more favourably to attract high-technology business. Their economic plan was both strategic (e.g., developing research parks and attracting foreign investment) and tactical (e.g., publicising the city through speeches by the Mayor and other officials as they travelled around the country).
- (e) Strategic planning can shed new light on important issues through rigorous analysis. Strategic planning is a process that is supported through good data collection and analysis (as opposed to a process driven by data). Often the unearthing of data can help cities gain a new perspective on thorny issues. Mombasa Municipal Council (Kenya) through an action research project which featured a large number of interviews and a survey questionnaire, learned that nearly all sectors of their community, including the formal business sector, believed the informal economy is important and should be supported. Actual confirmation of this consensus should help their political leaders take further action to provide such support.
- (f) Strategic planning helps to identify the more effective use of resources, including public funds. By focusing on projects and programmes that have been identified as “most important” and have widespread support, the local government can optimise the effective use of all resources. Strategic planning should provide answers on the relative costs and benefits (not just monetary) of alternative approaches to define problems and opportunities.
- (g) Strategic planning can provide a mechanism for public-private cooperation. Involving key decision makers and opinion leaders from major sectors of the community in the formulation of the strategic plan will: (a) increase their understanding of the issues and opportunities; (b) heighten their commitment to addressing them; and (c) surface new alternatives for decision making and problem solving, including more active involvement by the private sector. More and more cities in developing countries are recognizing the potential and benefits of involving the private sector more directly in the delivery of public services. The strategic planning process is a way of exploring these alternatives and their consequences before decisions are made.

### ***The strategic workshop***

The use of seminars or workshops has become an important means of carrying out strategic planning efforts for key leaders and executives. The Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) uses its Leadership Effectiveness and New Strategies (LENS) planning seminar to help organizations world wide formulate strategic plans. Their clientele have involved a diversity of organizations, including: Quantas Airways; The National Small Industries Corporation, India; Barclay’s Bank, Zambia; Mayor’s Office of Employment and Training, Chicago; and National Plantations, Indonesia. The seminar combines team building and decision making based on the assumption that practical solutions to issues and constraints within an

organization are to be found within the organization itself. They focus on a much shorter time frame than most strategic planning efforts, with action for implementing key plans to be carried out within a 90 day period following the seminar. LENS consists of five, 4 hour sessions. Session topics are:

- (I) **Practical vision:** Based on a *focus statement* (the specific purpose for which the seminar is being held), the participants in small and total group work sessions describe a 3 to 5 year picture of where the organization or community wants or needs to go.
- (II) **Underlying contradictions:** Through small group and total group exercises, seminar participants identify the major blocks to effective action in achieving the visions outlined in Session I. From individual insights about constraints that will hinder action, the group aggregates and categorises them and prepares a chart of the organized data. Major blocks to effective action might include such issues as inadequate manpower development policies or unclear consensus on role or purpose of the organization.
- (III) **Strategic proposals:** The third step is to brainstorm individual suggestions for effectively and strategically responding to the contradictions from the previous sessions and organizing these into future actions.
- (IV) **Scheduled tactics:** From strategic proposals the group moves to practical activities by: (a) giving priorities to the proposals from Session III; (b) defining specific actions required to implement the proposal (with emphasis on practicality and catalytic effects rather than sequential steps); and (c) organizing the tactics into “tracks”, actions that are similar either in nature or intent.
- (V) **Focused actions:** The final step in the process is to organise teams to take one track from Session IV and write focused action paragraphs. These are the initiating programmes that describe in detail the activities to be pursued in the first three months following the seminar. These paragraph statements include: (a) the name of the programme or project; (b) the intent to be addressed; (c) anticipated benefits; (d) detailed components of implementation (who, what, when, where and how); and (e) what is at stake if the programme or project is not done.

### ***A personal experience***

I have had many opportunities to help organizations and communities carry out strategic planning efforts. One of my more interesting experiences involved a Regional Planning Commission in a medium sized, mid-west city in the United States. The Commission asked me to help them organise and conduct a strategic planning conference on economic development for the metropolitan area. The overall mission of the conference was “to provide a forum within which public and private leaders in the Miami Valley could reach consensus on (a) the major economic development challenges and opportunities to be addressed within the next five years; and (b) a strategy for further consideration and action”.

The conference was two days in length and involved just over 200 leaders, representing public organizations, private corporations, neighbourhood groups, elected officials, non-profit agencies, the media, professional and business organizations, and agricultural associations.

The conference was initiated by a formal presentation and open discussion about the economic conditions of the metropolitan area. The past decade was reviewed in terms of. shifts in employment (they had lost several thousand jobs in primary manufacturing over a 7-8 year period); retail and service trends; and the role of support institutions (e.g., government, education, social service) during that period. The presentation, which was based on a research document, also framed the regional economy within the context of national and international economic trends and made certain projections about the near future.

Within this background, each individual participant was asked to identify the five most important economic development challenges or opportunities facing their region at that time.

The terms *challenge* and *opportunity* were defined in the following manner.

**A Challenge** is an economic circumstance, which is currently detrimental to the short term and/or long term viability of the region and needs to be eliminated or diminished (an economic liability).

**An opportunity** is an economic circumstance, which is currently advantageous to the short term and/or long term viability of the region and needs to be exploited (an economic asset).



Twenty small work groups of about ten members each were formed with the task of discussing their individual lists for clarification and understanding and reaching a group consensus on the five most important economic development challenges and opportunities for the region. Each subgroup presented their list to a plenary session, which involved all 200 participants.

As you can see, there was a potential of 100 different issues. As it turned out, there were many duplications and the final list involved 31 different statements. These were organized by the workshop staff into a survey questionnaire (during the late afternoon tea break!) and each participant was asked (following the tea break and prior to adjourning for the day) to once again vote for what he or she considered the five most important from the combined list of 31 and to rank order them from one to five: one being most important; two, next important, etc. The staff tabulated the results that evening by cumulative weight (e.g., a number one vote was given a weight of five) and by the number of individuals voting for any single statement of challenge or opportunity. From the voting results, eight issues were clearly top priority, taking into account both methods of calculation.

On the following day, the results of the voting and tabulation were announced to the group and eight work groups were formed to address each of the top priority issues identified in the previous day's sessions. Each participant was given an opportunity to self-elect the topic he or she wanted to help address based on their interest, experience and potential contribution to its resolution. As it turned out, we had one very large group, several medium sized groups and one with only "a handful" of participants. While this concerned me (I tend to think groups of more than 10 participants are a bit unwieldy and unproductive), each group performed to our expectations and satisfaction, and carried out the following tasks:

- (a) identified the desired outcome of the challenge or opportunity their group was considering (the goal or objective to be achieved);
- (b) identified alternative courses of action that could be taken to achieve the desired outcome;
- (c) developed an action plan for achieving their desired outcome or goal.

Each work group reported its recommendations to the total membership of the conference toward the end of the second and final day. At that time, there were discussions about each of the recommendations and proposed action plans. Decisions were made to assign responsibilities to specific officers and organizations to begin implementing the recommendations.

The final proceedings of the conference were published and made available to the participants and a wide range of citizens and organizations in the region. The strategic economic development plan, forged in those two hectic days of discussion, became both policy and a work plan for the Regional Planning Commission. In a return visit to the region nearly a year later, I learned that many of the recommendations had already been implemented while others were still in progress.

### ***Reflections about this experience***

Conferences, of this kind, do not happen serendipitously. They take careful planning, and rigorous managing once they are underway. This conference was particularly difficult because it involved so many people with varied backgrounds, experience and expectations. Some of the things that were done in preparation for the conference (which are applicable to most planning conferences) were:

- (a) To be clear about roles and responsibilities (who will do what when)
- (b) To enlist help and to train them in what I wanted them to do. (In this case, it meant identifying and training 20 small work group facilitators who would be responsible for helping each group accomplish the tasks assigned them.) The training only took two or three hours on the afternoon before the conference opened because most of the facilitators already had experience in leading small task group discussions.
- (c) To be clear about the group tasks and to be certain they would be conveyed to each group in a consistent, clear and unambiguous fashion. If the group tasks are unclear or ambiguous, the products of group efforts will probably be unclear and ambiguous. If the group facilitators each describe the task differently, the products become impossible to assemble into a coherent plan.

- (d) To adhere to the overall time table. Because the schedule was tight, the difficult and the expectations of a successful conference high, it meant we had to manage not only the task groups but also the time allotted to each task and conference event.
- (e) To be willing to make changes, as needed, as the conference progressed. While it is important to plan in a rigorous manner, it is just as important, at times, to change those plans as they are being carried out. There is nothing like the implementation of a well laid plan to expose its frailties. Planning workshops and conferences of the kind just described, have a way of creating a life of their own. The effective facilitator must not only be aware of what is happening but to take advantage of it. For example, we had assumed that work groups for the final day should be fairly uniform in size to work effectively. As it turned out, the participants wanted no part of being assigned to a group arbitrarily. They preferred to self select around their individual interests. To have insisted on uniform groups would have demotivated many individuals who had a valuable contribution to make to the discussion and final recommendations. Given this, we made changes in our own thinking about what was important and how the conference should be managed.

Conferences and workshops are excellent vehicles for helping organizations and communities carry out a strategic planning process. They can become the center piece of the planning process, as was the case with the Miami Valley Regional Planning Commission efforts, or they can be one of a number of events organized to facilitate the overall strategic planning process.

### **Why plan?**

We have looked at many different interpretations of strategic planning, and even some ways of doing it. Nevertheless you may be still asking the question, “My plan?” The question is not naïve given the history of planning in developing countries – or elsewhere, for that matter.

One study of national planning and budgeting efforts in a dozen poor countries <sup>(12)</sup> concluded that the efforts at comprehensive planning had done more damage than good, and communist countries, noted for their ability to carry out comprehensive, centralised, multiyear planning efforts, have also been notorious for their ability to create high levels of economic and social stagnation. So, why plan? If we’re talking about centralised, planner dominated, rational-analytical projections of current needs and public assets into an uncertain future, as a means of influencing the allocation of scarce resources, then perhaps there is little reason to do so, based on past experience. If, by contrast, we see strategic planning as a management process, one which determines allocation priorities and designs realistic implementation strategies, then planning makes sense and the time invested in doing it will be well spent.

<sup>(12)</sup> Naomi Caidem and Aaron Wildavsky, Planning and Budgeting in Poor Countries. New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1974

The key to effective strategic planning is in the *process* not the product - or the plan. For *the process* to be effective, it needs to be:

- (a) participative (being done by decision makers and problem solvers, not for or to them);
- (b) interactive (involving a confrontation of what is and what can be);
- (c) integrative (fusing bottom up with top down thinking about what should be done, how it should be done and who should do it); and,
- (d) continuous (recognizing that purposeful systems and their environments are continuously changing and no plan retains its value over time).

As John Friedmann reminds us, “planning is not merely concerned with the efficient instrumentation of objectives, it is also a process by which a society may discover its future”. <sup>(13)</sup> I might also add, a process for organizations and communities to discover their future.

<sup>(13)</sup> John Friedman, Retracking America, a theory of Transactive Planning. New York, Doubleday, 1973, p.4

## **Who should plan?**

Who should be involved in the strategic planning process depends on what is to be accomplished. If the plan is to address only the implementation of projects or programmes already approved by the policy body, then it may be appropriate to involve only the management team. Of course, “the management team” concept is elastic, depending on how far down in the hierarchy the chief executive decides to reach in the decision making process. There is increasing belief that first line supervisors, and even workers, have valuable contributions to make in decisions affecting the day-to-day operations, and there is concrete evidence to support their involvement. The manager who does not tap the experience and ideas of the work force in the planning process is denying the existence of a valuable resource. The question is not whether to include them but how. Obviously, it makes little sense to take the entire organization to a remote site for a three day strategic planning workshop. On the other hand, the manager needs a strategy for communicating with line personnel on a routine basis.

When the strategic planning process involves the longer term definition of community goals and the allocation of scarce resources among various programmes and services, it is advisable to go beyond both the management team and the elected leadership. As we have seen from the examples stated earlier (from those detailed in the PTI manual on strategic planning and the Miami Valley Economic Development Conference), the net can, and should, be cast broadly to involve all sectors of the community. It is a recognition that good ideas about community development and strategic planning are not limited to a few chief officers and elected leaders. It also recognises the importance of involving others who have a stake in the successful implementation of programmes and services. Active participation by those outside the formal organization not only brings good ideas and experience to the planning process, it assures greater understanding of the plan once it is adopted. This understanding in most cases, gets translated into commitment to the plan.

Local customs and traditions about who makes decisions on behalf of the organization and community will dictate, in large measure, who gets involved in any strategic planning process. Nevertheless, it is important to recognize that cultures, norms and customs are not only reinforced but also invented by those who practice them. If past decisions have been held tightly by a few key individuals, it may be time to “invent” a new way of decision making in your organization or community, particularly when it comes to planning the future.

## **What should strategic planning involve?**

Strategic planning, in its most basic form, is the articulation of future goals and objectives and the allocation of resources to meet them. But, to arrive at these decisions should involve much more. Here are a few of the elements that go into effective strategic planning.

- (a) The organization and/or community needs to analyse its own internal situation - its strengths, weaknesses, capabilities and problems.
  - (b) It also needs to look at the external environment and what it means in terms of challenges and opportunities. No organization or community operates in a vacuum. They are constantly being challenged, supported, threatened, and affected by outside influences and forces. To plan in isolation of these influences and forces, is initially naive and ultimately disastrous.
  - (c) Strategic planning requires vision - not just analysing *what is* but dreaming about *what can be*. It requires, as Drucker says, “sloughing off yesterday” and inventing the future. Strategic planning requires innovative thinking, new ideas, risk taking into the unknown. As I sit here writing about strategic planning, my thoughts are drawn to contemporary events. The Communist world is in ferment and it presents two radically different pictures of the planning process. Russia, under the dynamic leadership of Gorbachev, is currently plunging into the unknown, fuelled by a vision of what that country can be, given new ideas and direction. Gorbachev is practising pro-active planning in its most dynamic form. Far to the east of Moscow, in the Peoples Republic of China, we see a very different brand of planning - what Ackoff brands “reactivisim”. “Reactivists prefer a previous state to the one they are in, and they believe things are going from bad to worse. Hence, they not, only resist change but they try to unmake previous changes and return to where they once were ... Reactivists are moved more by their hates than their loves ... they do not ride with the tide; they try to swim against it back to a familiar shore”.<sup>(14)</sup>
- <sup>(14)</sup> Russel Ackoff, Redesigning the Future, New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1974, pp. 24-25
- (d) Strategic planning identifies the gaps between where we are and where we want to be - as organizations and communities.
  - (e) It communicates. It gathers ideas, data and insights from up, down and across the organization and community and communicates them back as assumptions, goals, strategies, and policies that make up the plan.

- (f) Strategic planning generates proposals from those who are destined to carry them out and formulates them into viable alternatives for action.
- (g) Strategic planning puts a high premium on institution or capacity building to assure that those who have the responsibility for implementing the plans also have the necessary resources. The greatest and most consistent fault of strategic plans is the inability of organizations and communities to carry them out. Strategic planning must involve *planning for implementation* (including the on-going operation and maintenance of programmes, facilities and services) not just the pleasant experience of announcing to the world what great things we *plan to do*. Long range plans often spell out the need for future funds to meet specific, and sometimes not so specific, goals and objectives but ignore such details as the numbers and quality of personnel required to carry out the goals and objectives and the equipment and materials required to maintain and operate facilities and infrastructure projects once they are built.
- (h) This means multi-year budgets as an integral part of long term plans. Capital and operating budgets are required to assure that projects can be built, according to plans, and can be maintained and operated for the life of the project.
- (i) Strategic planning, as a process, focuses on implementation strategies and the formulation of action plans. It outlines tactical steps for near future events and broader strategic plans for projects and programmes, defined over a more distant time frame.
- (j) Finally, strategic planning add the monitoring and evaluation of performance within acceptable time and resource parameters. Monitoring is an ongoing effort to determine if you are doing what you said you were going to do. Evaluation, also an ongoing event, is the act of judging performance against predetermined standards and criteria. Both are important management tools for maintaining initiative and progress.

### ***How should strategic planning be carried out?***

Several steps are involved in the strategic planning process. While they are described below as a sequence of events, the process is, or should be, dynamic and therefore not always predictable. This could mean moving back and forth among the steps outlined below as the strategic plan evolves from ideas and data into decisions and actions.

**Phase I: Organizing:** This is the pre-planning stage - a time when you plan to plan. It requires decisions about:

- (a) Who should be involved in the strategic planning process? As mentioned earlier, it depends on what you want to achieve.
- (b) What kind of information and data will be required to develop an effective strategic plan? While an analysis of past performance is important, so is the ability to project one's experience into the future, the unknown.
- (c) What is the most effective way of assembling the information, data and ideas required to assure a successful planning venture?
- (d) How long should the strategic planning process take - and when will it be completed? While strategic planning is an ongoing process, it also requires a concentrated, time bounded effort to make those major decisions that will guide future actions. Planning to plan includes determining how many person days of involvement will be required by whom and establishing a realistic deadline for accomplishing the planning task.
- (e) What kind of "plan" is required - or most desirable? Strategic plans range from comprehensive statements of future intent about the organization or community to more specific strategies, such as economic development - to implementation plans for operating agencies.
- (f) What kind of resources will be required to carry out the planning process? Will you require an outside consultant-facilitator? Do you plan to hold meetings in a facility that will need to be rented? Will those individuals involved in the planning process require overnight accommodations? What about clerical assistance? Printing costs? Others?
- (g) What will be required to staff the planning effort? Who will chair work sessions? Who will be responsible for writing the final document?

These and other questions need to be answered before you begin the actual planning effort.

**Phase II: Assessing:** Strategic planning requires an assessment of past efforts and future opportunities. These two assessment perspectives require two different organizational and leadership skills - awareness and vision. Awareness often requires hindsight - the ability to analyse past efforts and to assess their role in future plans. Vision operates with foresight - the ability to see a future which is not yet invented.

Awareness often requires convergent thinking - focusing in on data, or information which exposes patterns and trends requiring future attention. Vision, on the other hand, is best achieved when our thoughts diverge from the beaten path.

Strategic planning, to be effective, must have one eye on the past, using its experience as a bench mark for what is. The other eye must be future oriented, not necessarily based on past experience. The past is often problem centered while the future is seen as targets of opportunity.

Most strategic plans, realistically, are a blend of problem solving and opportunity tapping. One is reactive - the organization or community has a problem and we react to solve it. Opportunities require a pro-active style of thinking and behaviour.

- **Problems** are often oriented toward maintenance (fix it, solve it, get on with it). By contrast, opportunities are focused on development.
- **Opportunities** are problematic. They always involve some risk and uncertainty. Is it feasible? Will it work? If it works, will there be any benefits? If there are benefits, will they outweigh the costs? **Problems**, on the other hand, only become risky and uncertain when they are not solved.
- **Opportunities** live in the future and the risks must be calculated against a future not always predictable. **Problems** live in the past, resulting from actions or inactions that have or have not already happened. The results of solving the problem or not solving the problem is often more predictable.
- **Opportunities** require foresight - a vision about what can be. **Problems**, more often than not, require hindsight - determining what went wrong.
- When tapping **opportunities**, the critical question is: *What if?* The important question, when solving **problems**, is: *Why?*
- When dealing with problems, you seek solutions; with **opportunities**, the search is for benefits.
- Finally, **opportunities** can be ignored. **Problems** cannot be ignored.

The assessing phase of strategic planning requires both a look at the past, based on concrete data and experience, and a projection into the future, based on wisdom and vision.

**Phase III: Deciding The Big Picture:** After assessing the past and the potential future (using quantitative and qualitative data, information and ideas) it is time to make decisions about what is important, and what is not, regarding the future direction of the organization or community. This means transforming problem and opportunities into goals and objectives, statements about future outcomes. Goals and objectives, to be effective, must be specific, realistic, measurable, results oriented and time bound. Once future goals are defined, using these criteria, the next step is to consider the various options or alternatives available for achieving your stated goals. Focusing in on goals, and alternatives to meet your goals, are the critical decision making stages of strategic planning. They set the course of action to be taken and determine the ultimate allocation of scarce resources. This is also the time to think about the consequences of your goals and alternative actions.

**Phase IV: Deciding The Details:** Strategic planning also involves specifying who needs to do what with whom, at what resource cost, within what time period to achieve goals (end results) as stated in the strategic plan. While some strategic plans do not spell out these details, the danger of not doing so results in plans never being implemented. Non implementation is the scourge of the strategic planning process.

**Phase V: Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation:** While implementing plans is theoretically not planning, it is, nevertheless, the most important step in strategic planning. Plans which remain plans are not worth making.

## **Conclusion**

Strategic planning is a potentially powerful policy and management tool. The potential is only realised in concrete actions which result from the planning process. It is a process which requires active involvement of many individuals and groups, including key officials and officers, as well as those who may be outside the formal boundaries of the organization or community.

Finally, it requires active communication - the communication of ideas and information as inputs to the plan and the communication of goals and action strategies resulting from the planning process. Without effective communication, there is no way to assure wide spread understanding of, and commitment to, your statements of future intent. Without understanding and commitment, plans often remain just plans. And, plans are not development.

## CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT

Every country has its own version of vegetable soup

### **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Organizational culture and managerial effectiveness

Time required: approximately 2 - 3 hours

This session is intended to help the participant better understand the concept of culture as an organizational phenomenon and how it impacts on the effectiveness of organizations and individuals within organizations.

### **Tasks**

1. Prepare a lecture from the written materials and your own experience to highlight the various aspects of organizational culture. Encourage the trainees to express ideas about the culture of their work organizations (e.g., What aspects of its day-to-day operation are traceable to the nation's culture, or various ethnic groups within the country. If the country was a past colony of another country, what emanates from this source of influence?). The various approaches that can be used to bring about change in an organization's culture should also be covered at this time.
2. Following the lecture and discussion, there are many options to consider. The course materials include an exercise as one option. If you use it, you may be asked whether the first word in the statements listed on the first page was "strategy" or "culture". It was STRATEGY in all four statements! The exercise is designed to help individual participants reflect about their organizations, so it is important to give them sufficient time to respond to the questions in the exercise. The training process can be as simple as individual time to respond to the exercise, small group (3 or 4 participants) discussions and a short plenary session to pull major ideas together.
3. Another exercise you might consider is developing a list of behaviours which are common to the various participants organizations. Once these are posted, have the participants: (a) identify the roots of these behaviours, (b) whether or not they are negative or positive to the organization's effectiveness; and (c) what might be done to bring about desired change.

### **Overview**

#### **Culture and management**

"Organization culture" is one of the latest fads in American management. Dozens of books have been published recently on the topic and management training programs can hardly ignore the subject if they want to be considered up-to-date. Culture, as a management issue, is not being raised in this series because it is currently a "trend" in the Western world. In my opinion, one has to be cautious about adopting the latest management idea being used in a very different setting.

Having said this, let it be said that culture is, nevertheless, an important factor in the management of organizations, particularly in developing countries. There are many reasons but let me mention just a few.

First, most developing countries, whether or not they were previously under colonial rule, have adopted Western industrial models of organization and management. If the country was previously under colonial rule this adoption process has been exacerbated even further by the underlying rationale of the colonial system. The **raison d'être** for colonization was, after all, control and exploitation, not development.

Secondly, many developing country organizations may have a contemporary facade but underneath is a system driven by centuries of societal and cultural experiences. In Africa, and other parts of the world, the duality of managerial processes at work in an organization is further complicated by tribal traditions that vary greatly, one from another.

Thirdly the cultural implications in organizations and management are both opportunities and impediments to the development of effective production and service systems. They become even more critical when the environment, in which the organization must function, is in a constant and accelerating state of social, political, economic, and technological change.

Finally, managers and organizations cannot optimise their effectiveness without confronting the issues of culture. Culture, as an organizational reality, includes overlapping patterns of basic assumptions that emanate from: (a) colonial rule, (b) Western industrial models of organization and managerial behaviour, (c) the societal fabric of the geographic region, and (d) the experiences of sub-units within the larger society (in an African context, this requires a look at not only what it means to be Kenyan, for example, but Kikuyu, Luo, or a member of one of the other 40 some tribes that make up that heterogeneous and dynamic society).

### ***What is culture?***

Richard Weaver has described culture “as a complex of values polarised by an image that contains a vision of its own excellence”. Culture provides its members with

a coherent world of shared meanings, a set of values that differentiate cultural roles and guide appropriate behaviour. A culture is an orientation system from which its most powerful and humble members can borrow to give dignity, direction and a sense of belonging to their lives. <sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> Richard Weaver, Vision of Order: the Cultural Crises of Our Time. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1964.

D. Gutnecht, in linking the larger issue of culture to organizational theory, sees three functions that are consistent with the conceptualisation process, whether we are viewing culture as a societal phenomenon or as a factor in organization life. Culture, according to Gutnecht, provides its members with:

- (a) Socially legitimate patterns of interpretation and behaviour in dealing with relevant problems;
- (b) A hierarchical motivational structure that links their identity to relevant roles and values; and
- (c) A symbolically integrated framework that regulates social interaction and goal attainment through the creation of cultural meaning. <sup>(2)</sup>

<sup>(2)</sup> D. Gutnecht, “Conceptualising Culture in Organizational Theory”, an unpublished paper (Honolulu, East-West Center, 1982).

Organizations, and societies, operate within the framework of these functions: legitimacy, motivation, and integration. Without them, we suffer the potential of anarchy, social degradation and chaos.

### ***Cultural differences: A rich, and sometimes confusing, relationship***

To study culture means to look at how things, events and interactions have meaning. There are many different ways to construct the world we live in-to make sense out of it from our evolving experience. One anthropological study, that was conducted on the North American continent, has relevance in understanding cultural differences and their implications in terms of managing organizations. The following is taken from a discussion of that study by Linda Smircich.

The example comes from Walter Miller’s study of the central Algonkian Indian tribes of the western Great Lakes region (Miller, 1965). When Europeans encountered the central Algonkians around 1650, they proclaimed that the Indians had an absence of authority. The Europeans saw no leadership and no visible forms of government. They also noticed that any comment that carried the appearance of a command was instantly rejected with scorn. The Indians seemed to be too independent to be controlled.

These Europeans were accustomed to a society with highly centralised authority, which was assigned to position holders. They were socialized to distinguish between people on the basis of assigned authority with such terms as master-servant, student-teacher, leader-follower, officer-enlisted man, coach-team member, foreman-worker, pastor-parishioner, and parent-child. To Europeans at that time and to many of us today, this ordering of relationships seems natural. The vertical authority relationship is a fundamental aspect of European society; the functioning of our organized institutions depends on this kind of ordering.

As Miller points out, however, to a member of seventeenth-century Algonkian society such authority would be oppressive and intolerable. The Algonkians did have co-ordinated collective action in the political, economic, military, and religious spheres, but this collective action was based on such a different conception of authority that the Europeans saw no authority. In Algonkian society “each individual participating in organized activity related himself directly to the body of procedural rules governing that activity. He was free to select and execute appropriate modes of action: His access to procedural rules was not mediated through another person who transmitted these rules to him” (Miller, 1965:774).

Miller observes that in the European cultural tradition, authority or power is conceptually equated with height or elevation. It originates in some elevated locus and passes down to lower levels.

This metaphorical way of thinking about authority is closely tied in with European religious conceptions, many of which utilise the notion that power originates in a supernatural being or group of beings located in the heavens, or some elevated location. The equation of authority with altitude is finery built into European linguistic systems; e.g., the terms of **superior**, **inferior**, and **superordinate** and **subordinate**.

By contrast, the central Algonkian religion places its deities at the four corners of the universe, and on the same plane as humans. It is possible for an individual to possess some power from a “manitu” (a kind of generalised essence of supernatural power), but such power is never possessed permanently. It is always temporary, the result of ongoing interactions between individuals.

In the European cultural tradition, authority is reified (pictured as a liquid-like substance). “We speak of the “flow” of authority, of “going through channels,” of the “fountainhead” of authority. As a substance, authority can be quantified, and thus, we speak of a great ideal of authority, little authority, no authority” (Miller, 1965:678).

To the central Algonkian, power is universally available and unlimited; it is everywhere and equally available to all. “Power is not hierarchical; since its possession is temporary and contingent, fixed and varying amounts of power are not distributed among a group of beings arranged in a stable hierarchy. The control of power is dangerous; powerful beings are to be feared, not adored or admired” (Miller, 1965:771).

The central Algonkian’s different conception of power and authority meant that they organized collective activity very differently from the Europeans. In fact, their organization of village life, with its consensus decision making, facilitative leadership, and individually interpreted normative modes of social control, was very similar to the organization of many autonomous work groups in industry today.

What I find interesting in this encounter between European explorers and the Algonkians over three centuries ago is its contemporary relevancy. American and Japanese corporate executives have experienced the same kind of puzzlement, even confusion, in their attempts to work together in the past two decades or so. More importantly, the Algonkian experience highlights the timelessness of certain managerial concepts. It also brings new meaning to the issues of “appropriate” organizational behaviour and the overblown and unfortunate impact Western industrialised concepts of management have had on the rest of the world. The perfection of consensus decision making, by the Algonkian in the wilds of the 17th century North American continent, is a concept that modern corporations struggle with today. It should be a sobering thought to those who worship the social machinery of Western industrialisation.

### ***The paradox of organizational cultures***

If culture is a social construction that both reduces ambiguity and facilitates social interaction, the modern organization, as a cultural entity, is often the antithesis of these norms.

Part of the dilemma is our lack of understanding about how organizations are constructed and the roots from which they have grown. Public organizations, as a general rule, have their roots in bureaucracy. Bureaucracy, in turn, has its roots in the Prussian military establishment of the 19th century. It is hardly an auspicious heritage or necessarily an appropriate model for modern day management. Nevertheless, we cling tenaciously to this pyramidal perspective of the “ideal” organization and perpetuate it with great frequency in far flung corners of the world.

Organization is a metaphor for order and orderliness ( why else do we organise?). And yet, as the organization interacts with various cultures, within the organization and the larger environment, the end result is often un-orderliness, tension and confusion. Organizations are constructed for purposes of order and orderliness, on the basis of rational and conscious



patterns of behaviour. They operate, more often than we like, in both an irrational and unconscious manner. Karl Weick suggests that “organizations don’t have cultures, they are cultures and this is why culture is so difficult to change” (1983).

It may be folly to believe that we can, in fact, change culture, even the culture of an organization. What is possible is the opportunity to understand its identity and from that understanding facilitate an evolution of change. In order to do this, as a manager, it is necessary to better understand what we mean by organizational cultures, what they represent as opportunities and constraints and what we can do to manage them more effectively.

### **Organizational culture defined**

Edgar Schein, who has studied and written about organizations for over 30 years, defines organizational culture as:

The pattern of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered or developed in learning to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, and that have worked well enough to be considered valid, and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to those problems. <sup>(3)</sup>

<sup>(3)</sup> H. Schein “Coming to a New Awareness of Organizational Culture, “Sloan Management Review, Winter 1984 p.3

William Dyer, following up on Schein’s description of the various levels of analysis one can engage in to better understand an organization’s culture, describes these levels. They tend to progress from the concrete to the abstract and the conscious to the unconscious. At the concrete and conscious levels of analysis and understanding are artifacts and perspectives while the more abstract and unconscious cultural manifestations are values and assumptions. Dyer describes these levels in the following manner:

**Artifacts:** The tangible aspects of culture shared by members of an organization. These verbal, behavioural, and physical artifacts are the surface manifestations of organizational culture. Language, stories, and myths are examples of verbal artifacts, while behavioural artifacts are represented in rituals and ceremonies. The technology and art exhibited by members are where physical artifacts are found.

**Perspectives:** The socially shared rules and norms applicable to a given context. Perspectives may be viewed as the solutions to common problems encountered by organizational members; they involve how members define and interpret situations of organizational life and prescribe the bounds of acceptable behaviour. Perspectives are relatively concrete, and members are usually aware of them.

**Values:** The evaluational basis that organizational members utilise for judging situations, acts, objects, and people. Values reflect the real goals, ideals, standards, as well as the sins of an organization and represent members’ preferred means of resolving life’s problems. Values are more abstract than perspectives, although experienced members sometimes articulate them more or less in statements of organizational “philosophy” and “mission”.

**Assumptions:** The tacit beliefs that members hold about themselves and others, their relationships to other persons, and the nature of the organization in which they live. Assumptions are the non-conscious underpinnings of the first three levels - that is, the implicit, abstract axioms that determine the more explicit system of meanings. <sup>(4)</sup>

<sup>(4)</sup> W.G. Dyer, Jr., Culture in Organizations: A Case Study and Analysis, (Cambridge, Mass., Sloan School of Management, MIT, 1982).

Artifacts are those things that are visible, easily seen or experienced, in the organization. These include office layout, technology being used, manner of dress, public documents and statements about the organization and patterns of behaviour. (e.g., tea time in former British colonies). Artifact data are easy to obtain but often difficult to interpret. We can easily construct the “what” and the “how” of an organization’s artifacts - those things they openly display -but often it is difficult to understand “why” they exist.

Perspectives held by the organization and its employees are also visible but manifested a bit differently from artifacts. Perspectives get concretised through rules, regulations, acceptable boundaries of behaviour (the norms of the organization) and other operating modes, e.g., how decisions get made and problems solved.

Values are more abstract than perspectives and are not necessarily reflected in the overt behaviour of the organization and its human capital. Values are often what people say is the reason for their behaviour, what they ideally would like those reasons to be, and what are often the rationalisation for what they do. In other words, values are sometimes espoused but not followed.

To understand an organization's culture, according to Schein, you must delve into the underlying assumptions that determine how groups or individuals perceive, think and feel about themselves, their organizations, and the world around them.

Underlying assumptions tend to be very powerful because they are less debatable and confrontable than espoused values. They are learned responses. They are also typically non-conscious and determine the more explicit manifestations of the organisation's culture.

To bring about fundamental changes in the way an organization operates then, it is important to analyse the "culture" of the organization at these various levels. The further down we dig, (underlying assumptions being the deepest strata of organization reality) the more difficult it is to unearth these aspects of the culture and to understand why they exist. And yet, organizational changes will not be effective in the long run unless we can:

- (a) Identify the underlying assumptions that drive the system;
- (b) Analyse those assumptions in relationship to current and desired performance (behaviour); and
- (c) Formulate new assumptions that are more in keeping with both present day reality and the anticipated and desired future state.

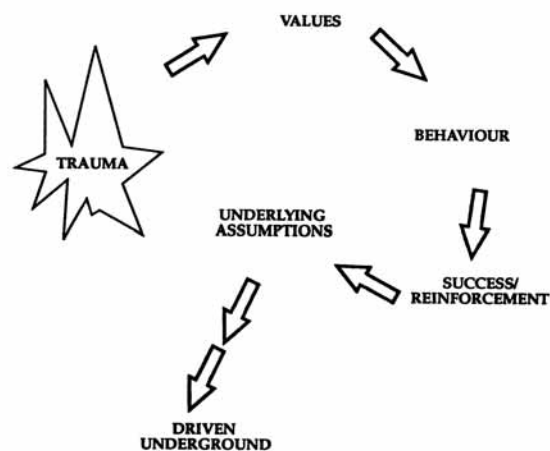
Central to the challenge of understanding an organisation's culture is the cyclical nature of events which lead to the solidification of cultural patterns.

Espoused values lead to behaviour; when the behaviour is successful in solving the problem that prompted it, it evolves into assumptions. When the behaviour is repeated often enough with desirable results, the assumptions sooner or later are taken for granted (driven underground). Only when they no longer work (organizational trauma) are they dug up and re-examined. The re-examination of the organizational trauma and its genesis can lead to new values more consistent with the contextual realities and demands of the organization and on the organization.

To summarize, organization culture is the complex, overlapping, ambiguous, often contradictory, pattern of artifacts, perspectives, values and assumptions that manifest themselves, consciously or otherwise, rationally or otherwise, to the organization itself and to others. Furthermore, these patterns of artifacts, perspectives, values and assumptions are invented, discovered and developed as the organization evolves from one state of being to another in its attempt to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration.

### ***From the "what" to the "how"***

We've examined the what of organizational culture now it is time to look at "how" that culture gets invented or constructed and how it might be influenced to change.



Edgar Schein has identified 10 ways in which cultures form, develop and change. They are worthy of note for those who both want to better understand their organization's culture and how it might be influenced to change. I have used the term "influenced" rather than a more positive executive type directive because Schein reminds us the "organizational culture evolves through shared history not through managerial decisions".

### ***How organization cultures change***

Schein's typology of cultural change mechanisms include the following:

- (a) **Natural Evolution:** When alteration is based upon what works, and doesn't, over the years, we are experiencing evolution.
- (b) **Self-guided evolution through self awareness:** Schein calls this approach organizational therapy.
- (c) **Managed evolution through hybrids:** Some organizations deliberately foster alternative systems and norms in an experimental manner to determine whether or not they represent an improved state of operation.
- (d) **Managed "revolution" through the infusion of outsiders into key roles:** This is one of the more common strategies for influencing changes in an organisation's culture, although not always effective. The United States Department of State, under President Kennedy in the 1960's, performed radical surgery on the bureaucracy - cutting out layer after layer of the hierarchy between Washington and various embassies around the world. The changes caused great consternation within the bureaucracy but changes were made. Once the administration changed hands and those responsible for the structural alteration of the organization were gone, every single layer of the bureaucracy that was pruned away grew back. It took several years but the bureaucrats prevailed over the policy makers.
- (e) **Planned change/organization development:** These are conscious efforts to alter the organization's culture through a variety of approaches, including data collection and feedback, team building, and something called socio-technical interventions.
- (f) **Technical seduction:** This involves the introduction of new technology such as word processors, computers in offices, and electronic typesetting machines in printing plants.
- (g) **Change through scandal, explosion of myths:** There are numerous examples of this unplanned approach. The demise of the Nixon Presidency in the United States is one. In fact, one could argue that the culture (assumptions, values, perceptions as well as artifacts) began to change with the Watergate break-in and continued unabated until Nixon was forced to resign.
- (h) **Incrementalism:** The incremental approach to change is experienced when ongoing decisions are biased toward a new set of assumptions with each decision bringing about or encouraging a relatively minor alteration of the ongoing reality.
- (i) **Coercive persuasion:** When the President of a country decides to encourage more accountability to the management of parastatals and the managers know their leader has the power to make necessary changes in leadership and other aspects of their operation, that is coercive persuasion.
- (j) **Reorganisation, sometimes even destruction and rebirth:** Reorganisation is a common ploy to bring about change or at least to think one is bringing about organizational change. While it is a strategy, sometimes the more the boundaries of an organization are moved about, the more it remains the sane. Reorganisation often creates the myth that things are happening when in reality the status quo is maintained.

Be constructively discontent

### ***Rites and rituals***

Another way to perceive how the organization culture functions is to look at the rites, the socialisation processes it engages in. These processes can be used to solidify values and assumptions or they can be used to confront them. They are organized and planned activities that have both practical and expressive consequences.

Trice and Beyer have identified the following rites that might be used to bring about changes in an organization. These rites, according to the authors, are activities which involve relatively elaborate and dramatic events. They consolidate various forms of cultural expression into one episode which is carried out through various interactions, usually for the benefit of the organizational members themselves. <sup>(5)</sup>

<sup>(5)</sup> Harrison Trice and Janice Beyer, *Using Six Organizational Rites to Change Culture* p.372

- (a) **Rites of Passage:** The process of bringing new people into the organization includes such activities as induction and basic or orientation training. These rites facilitate the transition of “newcomers” into social roles and levels of status that are new to them.
- (b) **Rites of Enhancement:** These rites include such activities as: recognizing individual employees for their accomplishment; annual reports that spread good news about the organization; and promotions designed to provide public recognition of individuals for their accomplishments and to motivate others to similar efforts. For example, President Moi of Kenya, in 1986, promoted several women to high level parastatal positions. His pronouncement both enhanced the role of women in managerial positions and stressed the importance of the performance of certain social roles in the managerial process.
- (c) **Rites of Degradation:** The dismissal of key officials in an organization has the consequence of providing public acknowledgement that problems exist and offers details about them. It also re-establishes the boundaries of the organization by defining who belongs and who does not.
- (d) **Rites of Renewal:** These are activities to refurbish organizational structures (social and otherwise) and to improve the way they function. These events, sometimes known as organization development, have various consequences. They can reassure employees that something is being done about their problems by focusing attention on certain problems and away from others. Organizations often engage in re-organization - shifting boundaries between certain roles and responsibilities as a manifestation of renewal.
- (e) **Rites of Conflict Reduction:** Collective bargaining is one mechanism for reducing conflict and aggression in an organization and re-establishing equilibrium where there are disturbed social interactions. “Suggestion boxes”, the “open door policy,” gripe sessions are other less obvious and formalized rites used to reduce tension in the system and to compartmentalise conflict and its disruptive effects.
- (f) **Rites of Integration:** Organizations often engage in activities to encourage or revive shared feelings that bind employees together and keep them committed to the organization. The Japanese have refined the concept of integrative rites as a corporate strategy more than most industrial cultures. “They use a myriad of rites to integrate employees” social and recreational life space into the mainstream of corporate activities.

### ***Rites and problem solving***

Organization culture is the embodiment of solutions to a wide range of problems, both experienced and anticipated. They include mechanisms to: (1) reduce anxiety and pain; and (2) reward and reinforce appropriate behaviour.

The mechanisms designed to reduce pain and anxiety often deny testing and experimentation; are generally reactive in nature, and posited toward the status quo. On the other hand, the reward and reinforcement mechanisms tend to test the system and its environment; are more pro-active in their approach; and are posited toward change.

While these two models of organizational culture (the trauma and success models) represent polar points of view, they embody many of the same rituals, artifacts and symbols. What is different are the perspectives, values and assumptions that underlie more visible and manifest expressions.

In either case, it is possible to identify:

- (a) A common language within the organization - its mode of communicating messages of importance;
- (b) Ways of defining the organizations boundaries, and subboundaries;
- (c) Mechanisms for selecting and deflecting its members (hiring and firing);

- (d) Norms for handling interpersonal relationships and intimacy - sometimes referred to as the style or climate of the organization;
- (e) Ways of allocating authority, power, status, property and other resources within the system;
- (f) Criteria for dispensing rewards and punishment (rites of enhancement and degradation), and
- (g) Ways of coping with unmanageable, unpredictable and stressful events.

Whether the organization is pro-active or reactive in its orientation, modelled to reduce trauma or achieve success, it embodies a set of mechanisms that define social interaction within organized settings. The mechanisms are similar but the underlying assumptions, values and perspectives differ dramatically. These, in turn, get translated into behaviour, both individual and collective, which define, over time, the organization's culture.

To understand the organization's culture, we need to concern ourselves with: (1) where did "it" come from? (what are its origins?); (2) what does "it" lead to? (what are the effects and outcomes of the organization's culture?) and; (3) what does "it" look like? (what are the manifest characteristics, artifacts, norms, evidences that we can identify and hold up for analysis?).

### ***Comparing Japanese and American management***

It was stated earlier that much of the world still operates on Weberian time (bureaucracy) when it comes to organizing resources and tasks in collective settings. While this is true, the Japanese operate from a very different approach to management. This suggests that different management styles (or organizational cultures) can and do exist, based in large part upon societal preferences and norms of behaviour.

The other interesting aspect of any comparative study of Japanese and American management is the influence they have had on each other's organizational cultures, particularly in the past few years.

One idea that has had an influence on organizational cultures in Japan, the United States, and Europe over the past thirty years is that of the quality circle. The idea is simple: Small groups of workers and managers gather once or twice a week to discuss ways of improving productivity and efficiency.

The quality circle concept was originally put forth by an American management specialist but was rejected by his own country's work organizations. He then took the idea to Japan where it was embraced with enthusiasm (this was in the 1960's). It became a major work practice and contributed to the phenomenal industrial success Japan has enjoyed over the past 20 years.

In the mid-seventies, quality circles started to appear in American factories although they were seen by many union officials as a devious means of exploiting workers without "really" sharing decision making powers. Nevertheless, the quality circle movement grew. The International Association of Quality Circles counts over 2000 American companies among its members. A similar number of French organizations are using quality circles in their work settings while more than 4000 West German firms have adopted the concept.

While the overall impact of this much travelled concept is still inconclusive in its Western context, the quality circle movement does demonstrate the ability of organizations to alter basic patterns of behaviour and to borrow ideas and strategies from across very different cultural boundaries. This should be encouragement for those managers who are dissatisfied with the performance of their organizations and want to consider the possibility of influencing changes in the organization's basic assumptions, values and norms of organizing and operating. Because the Western (European-American) model of management is so prevalent in the Third World settings (and not particularly successful in meeting national or organizational needs and goals), and the Japanese model represents an alternative approach to management, it might help to look at some of the differences they represent in terms of managerial tasks.

### ***Specific managerial behaviour***

One of the more dramatic differences between Japanese and Western management is in the making of decisions. The Western manager puts primary emphasis on getting an answer to the question. Business schools spend a great deal of time teaching their graduates systematic approaches to problem solving (getting answers). To the Japanese, the element in decision making that gets priority is defining the question. Is a decision necessary and what is it all about?

The American places confidence in technical information and, more often than not, permits technicians and experts to exert considerable influence on the final decision (finding an answer). This pattern of thinking translates into a digital language of “yes-no/on-off/either-or” dichotomies. It is a prevalent feature in managerial decision making within Western organizations. This dichotomous style strains toward the extreme, avoids contradictions, and facilitates choice. Given its highly structured nature, the strong reliance on quantitative analysis lacks the dynamism of the Chinese Yin-Yang, the Japanese pattern recognition or even the European dialectic.

The Japanese do not differentiate carefully among facts, impressions, opinions, or even gossip in resolving conclusions. “Data and information,” as concepts, are very different in meaning and use in the Japanese context.

The Japanese “take” decisions rather than “make” them and, in so doing, engage in consensus building. The Japanese huddle in seemingly endless discussions, examining the question (problem) in great detail. In these discussions, there is no mention of what the answer should be and, therefore, individuals are not forced to take sides and get caught in a win-lose situation. This consultation process involves all the critical people in the organization and can start at the bottom or middle of the organization as well as the top. “Decision making” in many Western organizations is often seen as the prerogative of top management.

Only when all the people who will be involved in carrying out the agreement have come together in the need to make a decision will the decision be made in a Japanese organization. The process takes much longer in Japan but makes for very effective decisions. The Westerner, particularly the American, by contrast, is quicker in “making a decision” but spends more time “selling” it and getting people to act on it.

The “selling” process does not necessarily result in strong commitment by those who must implement the decision. In fact, the decision may even be subject to subtle or even blatant sabotage by employees down in the system.

The American decision maker bases his action on a number of assumptions that have become accepted in the management culture of many American organizations. For example, the American believes the locus of control resides in the individual. The concept of self-centeredness (being in charge of one’s fate) is very strong with the American manager. In Japan, the focus of control is with the group. In fact, “control” is too strong a term. The Japanese prefer events to shape whatever actions are required. They stand back from a developing event rather than attempt to control it by decision making.

The American manager places a heavy reliance on factual data which is the basis for “rational” decision making. The Eastern view of reality is less based upon logical realism and, therefore, less prone to weigh decisions heavily in terms of facts and figures.

These and other “cultural” norms affect basic management processes like planning, decision making, conflict resolution, and the allocation of scarce resources.

## **Conclusion**

There is much more one could say about culture and management. Rather than pursue the issues any further, it is time to ask “so what”. Several responses came to mind immediately.

It should be obvious that organizations do have their own “culture”, and these cultures impact on effectiveness of organizations and upon the lives of those who work within organizations. The culture of an organization is subject to change. It is an invented reality constructed, in large measure, by those who are involved in the organization on a day-to-day basis. If the culture of the organization is not working for the good of the institution, its constituents and its employees, then consideration should be given to changing it. There are strategies and tactics that one can use to bring about cultural change at the organizational level.

If a decision is made to influence changes in an organization’s culture, one of the first questions to ask is whether or not it is inherent within the organization’s culture to bring about such changes. Is planned change seen as “appropriate”, “legitimate” within the organization? If not, this may be the first place to begin. Any reluctance to change, as well as prohibitions placed upon employees who want to foster change, are part of the culture of the organization. Ultimately, they will have to be dealt with in any attempt to bring about change.

If one agrees with these premises, there are still the issues of: (a) what to change; (b) how to change it; (c) and what to change it to. From our earlier discussion, it should be obvious that there are many ways to affect change in an organization. Furthermore, there are many role models of change that one might choose from, although most are Western in their origins.

The dilemma, for developing country organizations interested in cultural change, is two fold. They must come to grips with the what issues: what to change and what to change to. And, they must decide how to bring about cultural change.

If an organization seriously addresses the “why”, “what”, and “how” of cultural change, it is my prediction that whatever change comes about, as a result of this inquiry, will strengthen the organization. It will also close the gap between the rhetoric of the organization and the reality of its day-to-day behaviour.

The organization’s culture should be a matter of great concern to all managers - not just what the culture represents at any given moment in time but what it needs to become in the future to help the organization remain viable and productive.

**Exercise**  
**Topic: Culture and Management**

Organizational Culture: Is it a key to strategic planning and management within organizations - or is strategic planning and management a key to organizational culture?

Life is the art of drawing sufficient conclusions from insufficient premises  
(Samuel Butler)

1. Listed below are four statements from recent management articles. The first word in each statement has been deleted. You are asked to decide whether the first word in each statement should be "strategy" or "culture".
- \_\_\_\_\_ evolves from inside the organization – not from its future environment.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ is a deeply ingrained and continuing pattern of management behaviour that gives direction to the organization - not a manipulable and controllable mechanism that can easily be changed from one year to the next.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ is a nonrational concept stemming from the informal values, traditions, and norms of behaviour held by the firm’s managers and employees - not a rational, formal, logical, conscious, and predetermined thought process engaged in by top executives.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ emerges out of the cumulative effect of many informed actions and decisions taken daily and over years by many employees - not a “one shot” statement developed exclusively by top management for distribution to the organization.

As you think about these statements and whether they define organizational culture or strategy, also consider various aspects of your own organisation’s behaviour, as described by these statements.

Are there aspects of your organization’s culture, strategy or behaviour that you believe are:

- (a) Worth keeping and building upon;
- (b) Destructive to the organization’s well being and should be overcome in one way or another, or
- (c) In drastic need of change?

After reflecting upon these questions, complete the following statements.

**Exercise**

II. One aspect of my organization’s behaviour (culture/strategy) I believe is worth keeping and building upon is:

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III. One aspect of my organization's behaviour I believe is destructive to my organization and should be overcome is:

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IV. One aspect of my organization's behaviour I believe is in drastic need of change is:

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V. Go back to items II, III, and IV and decide on a statement you are willing to commit to in helping your organization become a better place to work. Restate it below as an action statement. (e.g., I am willing to commit to .... )

*[If you are unwilling to make such a commitment at this time, think about the meaning of this for you personally, for your work colleagues, the organization and your future sense of job satisfaction.]*

VI. Given what you have learned thus far in the course, list three specific things you can do to carry out your commitment stated in the previous task.

- (a)
- (b)
- (c)

## **POWER, INFLUENCE AND PERSONAL EMPOWERMENT: MAKING A DIFFERENCE BACK ON THE JOB**

When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion  
Ethiopian proverb

### ***Trainer's notes***

Topic: Personal empowerment: making a difference Back on the job

Time Required: approximately 2 - 3 hours

Management training, if it is to have any impact, must be translated into greater personal effectiveness by the participants when they return to the organization. Key to this effectiveness is a sense of empowerment - a belief that the individual can make a difference. This session is designed to help individual participants better understand the various power bases they represent in the organization and how these can be tapped to help them be more effective.

### ***Tasks***

1. Deliver a short lecture on the various types of power that are potentially available to managers and how managers can be more effective in various relationships within their organizations.
2. Have each participant complete the self assessment instrument on Personal Empowerment. (This is based upon the various categories of power outline in the course materials, so these categories need to be explained prior to the completion of the questionnaire.)
3. Ask participants to join one or two others to discuss, in depth, their responses to the self assessment questionnaire. It is important not to rush the participants on this task. They need time to reflect on their responses to the self assessment.



4. Complete the session by reconvening the participants and asking a few individuals to comment on the exercise and how it might impact upon their effectiveness in the organization.

## **Overview**

### **Power**

It is a subject that we rarely talk about. And yet, power is at the core of most organizations and the way they operate. Let me speculate for a moment why power is a topic that often gets ignored in management training.

First, many of us feel that power is something someone else possesses in the organization, but not me.

Second, power often conjures up unpleasant experiences in each of us as organizational members. I personally have lots of battle scars to show others from my bouts with power during my professional career.

Third, the use of power, or the lack of it, often has negative consequences in organizations, resulting in control over others or denying them something they would like to have or do.

Finally, even the use of the word, POWER, puts fear into some people. Consequently, it is a topic rarely discussed during courses of this kind.

There are obviously other reasons why power, as a topic of discussion, gets swept under the management training rug but I am suggesting we address it head on. I am going to assume that power and influence are: legitimate, viable resources, potentially available at all levels of an organization; and should be used by individuals to get things done.

The first concern I have about power is how to define it so we can all be working on the same frequency. After all, power is a bit like St. Augustine's view of time in his day. "We all know perfectly well what it is - until someone asks us".

### **Categories of power**

Power resembles a pile of miscellaneous clothes at a hawker's stall. It is hard to know what is available or whether it fits, until you sort it out. Power comes in a lot of different colours and styles. Here are just a few ways to categorize power.

French and Raven have come up with some categories of power that are useful from a management perspective. <sup>(1)</sup> They categorize power as either reward, coercive, legitimate, referent, expert or information and define them in the following manner.

<sup>(1)</sup> French and Raven, "The Bases of Social Power" in D. Cartwright (ed) Studies in Social Power (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan 1959).

- (a) **Reward Power** is based upon B's belief that A can provide rewards - promotions, favours, recognition, access to material and other resources.
- (b) **Coercive Power** rests with B's perception that A has the ability to punish - to inflict pain, reprimand, demote, and take away privileges.
- (c) **Legitimate Power** is based upon holding a particular position, title or office in an organization. The position gives that person the right to exert power over others.
- (d) **Referent Power** is based upon B's identification with A who possesses personal traits that engender such responses as respect, obedience, and allegiance.
- (e) **Expert Power** comes from B's belief that A possesses some special knowledge, skill or expertise.
- (f) **Information Power** is based upon B's belief that A has information or access to information that is important to him.

To these six categories of power by French and Raven, I want to add two more that are commonly experienced in organizations.

- (g) **Connection Power** is based upon B's belief that A has connections with influential or important people.

- (h) **Catalytic Power** resulting from the ability to combine two or more bases of power, each of which, by itself, may be insufficient to produce results.

Of these bases of power, three (reward, coercive, and legitimate power) focus on the power holder and his or her ability to change the behaviour of another individual despite resistance by that individual. The remaining four types of power (information, referent, expert, and connection) place part of the success of the power holder on the perceptions that others hold about him or her.

Before we consider the more practical matter of how to work with power as an organizational and personal resource, it may be useful to look at one or more academic attempts to categorize power sources.

Mary Cavanaugh, in an in depth study of trends in literature about power, identifies five distinct approaches to power and its manifestations. <sup>(2)</sup> They are:

<sup>(2)</sup> Mary S. Cavanaugh, "A Typology of Social Power" in A. Kakababse and C. Parker, Power, Politics and Organizations: A Behavioural Science View (John Wiley and Sons, 1984)

- (a) **Power as a characteristic of the individual.** As one writer commented, "Power is an attribute of man. It does not exist without a holder". This approach to power grows out of individual motivation and recognises the importance of the individual as a catalyst in the manifestation of power. The pivotal issue, in this concept of power, is interaction with the environment rather than interaction with other people.
- (b) **Power as an interpersonal phenomena.** This concept of power places its emphasis within the boundaries of an interpersonal relationship - the ability of one individual to move forces within another. This approach requires that the role of the target in the power relation be considered. It recognises the reciprocal nature of power - that power, when exercised, can and often will result in counter-power.
- (c) **Power as a commodity.** The commodity viewpoint puts power into perspective as an investment - something to be acquired and expended in relation to its trade offs, costs and consequences. For example, the higher the costs of exercising power, the less likely it is that an individual or organization will involve its use.

*(These three conceptual frameworks concentrate on power as an individual attribute or as an attribute of interpersonal or interorganizational relationships.)*

- (e) **Power as a casual construct.** This approach links power with cause. Specific behaviour, by the source of power, will elicit certain responses from the target of the power. The greater the probability that the source of power can elicit specific responses from the target, the higher the degree of power that can be ascribed to that source. This is an attempt to put power into a quantitative perspective.
- (f) Finally, Cavanaugh describes **power as a philosophical construct.** This final category addresses several issues of power such as (a) the morality or amorality of power, (b) power in relation to values and value systems, and (c) the relationship between power and responsibility. While managerial power is often manifested in the previously defined categories, it is this one which is used, in many cases, to describe the power outcome. Philosophical constructs, as we know, tend to be: more abstract and less concrete, more qualitative than quantitative and, therefore, more difficult to address in managerial or organizational terms.

Cavanaugh's typology further illustrates the multifaceted nature of the concepts of power and demonstrates why power, as a subject for consideration, often falls outside the boundaries of most management training.

### ***Power and management - an emerging perspective***

The typologies outlined above tend to be academic, somewhat abstract and difficult to put into operation as a manager. Nevertheless, they provide a certain perspective and help to define the many dimensions of power. What is even more helpful, from my perspective, is a growing tendency for certain writers to deal with power as an organizational or personal resource for decision making and problem solving. Their perspective is more pragmatic, more positive and, often, more value laden.

John Kotter is one of those who advocates power as a driving force for “bringing about change in organizations and interorganizational settings”. The sources of power he prescribes as essential to contemporary managerial effectiveness are based on the assumptions that:

- (a) Things no longer get done in today’s complex work setting simply because someone issues an order and someone else follows it;
- (b) Most managers experience “power gaps” because their responsibilities exceed their formal authority, and
- (c) These factors require a new approach to management, one which empowers the individual beyond the limits of authority vested in the role or job. <sup>(3)</sup>

<sup>(3)</sup> Kotter, John, Power and Influence, New York, The Free Press, 1985, pp. 31-50. Many of the ideas on pages 167-169 have been influenced by this book.

Given these assumptions about the current day work setting, Kotter spells out the following bases of power the manager should cultivate to improve his or her overall effectiveness:

- (a) The manager should increase his or her information and knowledge about the social reality of the situation being managed. This includes knowing who the relevant parties are to any decision, what they want, how they view the world, what sources of power they possess, and the extent to which they are prepared to use that power.
- (b) The manager should cultivate good working relationships based on respect, perceived need, obligation, and friendship.
- (c) The manager, who wants to use power to get things done, should establish a credible reputation and track record without which it is difficult to establish the information base one needs to operate effectively, and
- (d) Finally, the manager should develop interpersonal, analytical, conceptual and influence skills which can be used to unlock the power sources that exist within all social systems but are often unused.

The Kotter traits, knowledge, and skills are based upon the assumptions that power is both a characteristic of the individual and an interpersonal phenomena (to use Cavanaugh’s typology). Kotter further assumes that most managers are faced with making decisions and solving problems that often transcend their formal authority within the organization. This makes the direct use of reward and coercive power a limited or non-existent alternative.

In contrast to the Kotter perspective on power is the recent view of Rosabeth Kanter who takes an organizational viewpoint and builds on Cavanaugh’s characterisation of power as a commodity. Based upon her research into contemporary successful American corporations, Kanter says organization power derives from supplies of three “basic commodities” that can be invested. <sup>(4)</sup>

<sup>(4)</sup> “Kanter, Rosabelle Moss, The Change Masters, New York, Simon and Shuster, 1983, p. 216

- (a) Information (data, technical knowledge, political intelligence, expertise);
- (b) Resources (funds, materials, space, staff, time);
- (c) Support (endorsement, backing, approval, legitimacy).

Ironically, Kanter’s list of organizational power commodities is the same “capital” that individuals use to bring about innovation and change. While Kanter sees the bases of power (“power tools”, in her terms) as largely organizational in context, their acquisition and investment as commodities are carried out by individuals.

What Kotter and Kanter have in common is a positive viewpoint about power and its role in bringing about change. They also take for granted that individuals can have power and influence in organizations, irregardless of their specific role or status. They would argue that power not only flows down in an organization (or social system) according to the traditional view, but up and across. For me, it is a confirmation of something I learned the hard way as a manager - that sharing power is not the same as giving it away.

## ***Managing power relationships***

For most individuals in an organization, the challenge is not one of bringing about long term, major changes in the organization or its environment but rather one of managing more immediate superior, subordinate, and collegial relationships to get things done. Before we look at ways to use power and influences - or, more appropriately, to mobilise power in various relationships, it may be useful to consider some basic propositions about the nature of power and influence in organization settings.

- (a) While power is often perceived as a top down phenomenon to be exercised by those in authority, in reality, organizational power flows in all directions.
- (b) Contrary to popular belief, managing the power relationship downward in the organization may be more difficult than managing power relationships with superiors.
- (c) Power relationships are dynamic, not static, and subject to constant re-negotiation.
- (d) The absence of power in many organizations may be more pervasive than the use of power.
- (e) Power voids make individuals and organizations vulnerable to their environment.
- (f) Filling and managing power voids may be more effective than managing power surges.
- (g) The powerless in organizations and communities often do not recognize their own strength in any power relationship.
- (h) Power is, more often than not, a process of interaction and cooperation which involves constant bargaining between those who perceive they have power and those who perceive that they don't.
- (i) The powerful need assurance that their power is held rightfully within a relationship, which sanctions its use and validates its right.
- (j) The first power of the powerless is the orderly use of disbelief. (e.g., refusing to accept the definition of oneself that is put forth by those in power).
- (k) Individual and organizational power are bounded but the boundaries can be redefined.
- (l) Although stated previously, it is worth repeating - sharing power is not the same as giving it away.
- (m) The successful power broker is neither naive or cynical about the role that power can play in the everyday management of human events. To quote John Kotter, who teaches a highly acclaimed course on power and influence at the Harvard Business School:

Beyond the yellow brick road of naivete and the muggers lane of cynicism, there is a narrow path, poorly lit, hard to find, and even harder to stay on once found. People who have the skill and the perseverance to take that path serve us in countless ways. We need more of these people. Many more.

## ***Managing power with superiors***

Developing and maintaining an effective relationship with superiors in the organization requires:

- (a) Information about the superior's (boss's) goals, strengths, weaknesses, preferred working style, and the pressures he or she is operating under;
- (b) An honest appraisal of one's own needs, goals, strengths, weaknesses and personal style;
- (c) Creating a relationship that fits both parties' needs and styles and is characterized by mutual expectations, and
- (d) Maintaining a relationship that keeps the boss informed behaving dependably and honestly, using the boss's time and other resources selectively.

The first thing to remember about the relationship with your boss is that he or she ultimately needs you to be successful.

Secondly, the more you know about that person, yourself, and the environment in which you work, the more effective you will be in managing the power relationship. Do you really know what your boss expects of you, on a day-to-day basis, or long run? Are these expectations realistic and fair? Does he or she know your expectations about the job, the relationship, and your long term career goals?

How well do you get along? Are there obvious frictions? If so, have you figured out why they exist and how you might overcome them? Do you waste your boss's time with unnecessary issues and concerns? Do you keep your boss informed about what you are doing? Is there a feeling of mutual trust between you?

Finally, are you willing to work hard to make your boss successful without expecting much credit for initiating and fostering his or her success?

Since our efforts to foster the success of others requires unselfish dedication, it is important to remember that the goal is to increase our own power sources in the power equation with those up the line in the organization.

### ***Managing power with subordinates***

As mentioned earlier, managing those power relationships down the organization may be more difficult than managing power relationships with superiors. While supervision over others gives us legitimate access to certain powers, such as reward, punishment, and denial of access to resources, there is another perspective which is often overlooked by many supervisors. This is the amount of power subordinates as a group have over their superiors. Here are just a few of the "power chips" those who work under you have to bargain with (also recognize that these are power chips you have in working power relationships up the line).

Subordinate power comes from having:

- (a) Skills and experience that are difficult to replace (e.g., it's not easy to fire an insubordinate water plant operator if you know you will not be able to find a replacement).
- (b) Specialised knowledge and information that is important to the operation and others do not have.
- (c) Personal relationships that exist between subordinates and others that you cannot afford to ignore since they could be used against you.
- (d) The importance of what subordinates do to fulfil your own agenda and the importance of their performance on your success.
- (e) The multitude of ways the subordinate can sabotage your good intentions in complex social systems like organizations.

Given these sources of subordinate power, how does the supervisor maintain his or her own power and influence?

Here are some dues to a successful subordinate power relationship.

- (a) Develop credibility and respect with subordinates and work to maintain them. This will require a combination of personal skills and abilities, good working relationships, and access to the resources needed by your subordinates;
- (b) Keep open the channels of communication between you and your subordinates minimize "surprises" on both sides of the relationships.
- (c) Be goal directed and decisive. Nothing undermines a supervisor's power base quicker than not knowing what needs to be done and being indecisive about how to achieve it.
- (d) Recognize that coercion invites resistance and retaliations.
- (e) Model the kind of behaviour you expect from your subordinates - work habits, decisiveness, attention to quality (e.g., do not expect your workers to be on time if you are always late).

- (f) Recognize that some decisions must be made by you alone while others are best made in consultation with subordinates.
- (g) Be quick to praise and slow to criticise. Worker confidence builds worker response.
- (h) Provide opportunities for subordinates to grow and develop.
- (i) Continually remind yourself that you, as a supervisor are only half of the power relationship - the subordinates are the other half.

To recap the issues of power up and down the line, it is important to recognize that most of us are somewhere in the middle, always subject to power sources from above and below but also in a position to exercise our power relationships and to use our power tools from both perspectives.

### ***Managing power with colleagues***

In complex organizations and interorganizational systems, the ability to get things done often exists largely outside the direct power and influence of the superior-subordinate relationship. This means, of course, that we find ourselves in positions where power needs to be defined differently if we are going to be successful in achieving our goals largely through the efforts of others outside our direct control or influence.

In managing power relationships across horizontal boundaries, it requires that we:

- (a) Identify those relevant horizontal or lateral relationships that are important to what we want to accomplish.
- (b) Figure out what is in it for them to get involved in helping us do what we want to do.
- (c) Assess where the resistance will come from, why it exists, its potential and what we can do to minimize it.
- (d) Open channels of communications and involvement with lateral relationships before we need to call on them to assist in making decisions and solving problems.
- (e) Know what we are willing to bargain away to get what we want and need.
- (f) Know the territory that goes with inter-and intra-organizational relationships and maintain power by keeping options open.

### ***Summary***

If we accept power as a positive force in individuals and organizations, as intimately connected with the ability to produce, then we can define it as the capacity to mobilise people and resources to get things done. As we have seen, there are many sources of power potentially available to managers and professionals. Some sources come with the territory we occupy in organizations, some with the experience, education and skills we possess, and others get established through relationships, images, shared values, and other phenomena that characterise complex socio-economic and political systems.

Since power flows up, down, and sideways in organizations, our access to it and our resourcefulness in using it is dependent upon:

- (a) Our understanding of power and its many variations;
- (b) Our recognition that different strategies and behaviour may be appropriate depending upon whether we are managing upward, downward, or sideways relationships, and
- (c) Our ability to exercise power and to fill the voids in its absence.

If power is the capacity to mobilise people and resources to get things done, then it should be recognized as a legitimate and necessary tool of effective management and responsive organizations.

**Exercise**

**Topic: Personal Empowerment – Self-Assessment**

Each of us, as organizational members, have sources of power available, in varying degrees to help us perform our job responsibilities. The following questionnaire is designed to help you better assess the kinds of power you have available and whether or not you believe the source of power can be increased to improve your effectiveness in the organization.

	Not at all	To some extent	To a considerable extent
1. <b>Reward Power.</b> Others in the organization believe I can reward them through such things as promotions, favours, recognition, access to information and other resources.			
2. <b>Coercive Power.</b> Others in the organization believe I can punish them through such things as demotions, dismissal, reprimands, and the removal of privileges.			
3. <b>Legitimate Power.</b> My position in the organization gives me the right to exert power over others.			
4. <b>Referent Power.</b> Others in the organization see me as a person who possesses personal traits that engender such responses as respect, obedience, and allegiance.			
5. <b>Expert Power.</b> Others in the organization believe I have special knowledge, skills, or expertise that can help them and the organization carry out their mission and goals.			
6. <b>Information Power.</b> Others in the organization believe I have information or access to information that is important to them and the organization.			
7. <b>Connection Power.</b> Others in the organization believe I have connections with influential or important people that can help them and the organization.			

Review your responses to the above statements. Consider whether or not you would like to increase the extent to which others in the organization view your various sources of power. If so, what are the steps you might take to increase your organizational power and influence. Be as specific as possible.

- List the categories of power you would like to work on to increase your sense of personal empowerment within the organization.

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- Identify some specific situations in which you would like to increase your personal source of empowerment.

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- Would your increased power and influence be directed primarily toward: (check one or more categories)

- (a) your superiors?
- (b) your subordinates?
- (c) your colleagues?

- Who in the organization (or others) could help you increase your personal power sources? How might they help you accomplish this?

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5. List five specific actions you can take to assure that your personal power quotient increases to meet your expectations, as stated above.
- (a)
  - (b)
  - (c)
  - (d)
  - (e)

## MANAGING CHANGE: THE LEADERSHIP DIMENSION

To lead, one must follow  
Lao Tzu

### **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Managing change: The leadership dimension

Time required: 2 hours

The purpose of this session is to help participants begin to think about leadership as an important function in human settlement management. While there are many ways to help participants learn more about the leadership function, the following exercise helps them focus on their own experiences and those of others they believe exhibit leadership qualities.

### **Tasks**

- (1) Ask each participant to spend a few minutes working alone to identify someone they believe exhibits leadership qualities and to list the qualities or behavioural characteristics this person exhibits which contribute to their leadership role. (Ask participants to be specific.)
- (2) Ask each participant to share the name (or role if they prefer not to reveal their choice of leader by name) and the qualities/characteristics they believe contribute to the person's leadership.
- (3) Write these qualities/characteristics on newsprint or a white board as they are being described.
- (4) At the end of the individual presentations, hold a general discussion about leadership and its importance to human settlement management. Supplement the group discussion about leadership with additional information from the reading in the Guide if it seems necessary or appropriate.
- (5) Finally, ask participants to spend a few moments individually thinking about their own roles and how they might provide greater leadership within their organization or community. Ask them to write these ideas on a card or piece of paper and share the ideas with at least one other person in the group before the session ends.

### **Overview**

If the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch  
St. Matthew

It has been said, with considerable authority, that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth".<sup>(1)</sup> What we hope to do in this module is shed some light on leadership as an important factor in managing change. In other parts of this workbook, we have explored a number of ideas which are integral to urban leadership but they all fall short of defining the leading edge of this personal characteristic.

Many of the topics covered earlier in the manual (e.g., the role dimensions of the urban manager, the issues of power and influence, and the importance of strategies planning) are all critical dimensions of urban leadership, but leadership as a personal attribute is much more. There is, for example, a tendency to mistake effective management with leadership. One



can be good at such managerial activities as planning, organizing, coordinating, directing and communication without being a leader. And, it is possible to be poor at many of these managerial tasks and still be a leader. Managerial skills, as we know them, neither deny a person leadership qualities (if they are missing) nor assure the person he or she will be a leader, if these skills are in abundance. Having said this, management skills are, nevertheless, tools of leadership. Sound ambiguous? Well, leadership also has that quality about it.

Burns, quoted earlier, writes about two kinds of leadership: transitional and transforming leadership. Transitional leadership “occurs when one person takes the initiative in making contact with others for the purpose of an exchange of valued things”.<sup>(2)</sup> Leaders need followers. Without them, it is impossible to lead. Transforming leadership, by contrast, “occurs when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality”.<sup>(3)</sup> He goes on to say, “The ultimate casual impact of leadership can be understood only in the flow of specific leadership-follower interactions emerging from the clash and consequences of hierarchies of motivations”.<sup>(4)</sup> Leadership goes beyond the ability to apply administrative skills and processes in such a way that progress happens. It has much to do with creating conditions where change can take place and then encouraging a higher order of values that will facilitate the change. Managing the process of change is possible without leadership but leadership makes it much easier.

<sup>(1)</sup> James MacGregor Burns, Leadership, New York, Harper and Row, 1978, p.2

<sup>(2)</sup> IBID, p.19

<sup>(3)</sup> IBID, p.43

<sup>(4)</sup> IBID, p.439

### ***Some confusions about leadership***

Leadership is often confused with some of the characteristics of leadership for example, status. Many leaders do not have status but this does not mean that status is irrelevant. Status is often associated with position, particularly in organizations. Leadership is also confused with position or official authority. Leadership can be, and often is, exercised at all levels of organizations. Leadership is not confined to those with status or official authority. Nevertheless, one could argue that having official authority (the more, the better) makes it easier to exercise leadership. And yet, those with authority often exhibit few visible traits of leadership.

The same is true of power. Many who have access to sources of power do not have leadership abilities. Or, if they possess these resources, do not apply them. Karl Wallenda, the great tightrope aerialist, once said, “Being on the tightrope is living; everything else is waiting”.

Perhaps, the same is true of exercising leadership.

Finally, there is a widespread presumption that leaders are born, not made. Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, in their book Leaders, contend that “leadership can be learned by anyone, taught to everyone, denied to no one”. Krouse and Posner, in exploring the leadership challenge, say “Leadership is an observable, learnable set of practices”. Maybe so, but we go back to the contention of Burns and others that leadership is transactional. Leadership is conferred by followers and inseparable from their needs and goals. One fascinating perspective on this relationship is the one defined by two management specialists in their work and writings about situational leadership. Let us look at situational leadership as an interim perspective between bureaucratic managing and what Burns calls transformational leadership.

### ***The situational leader-an interim perspective***

Management theorists have a tendency to put management in leadership terms. It is understandable. “Leadership” has an additional aura of importance that “management” does not quite have. Maybe leadership sells more books in the long run. Two management research/authors, who have both benefited from the leadership phenomenon and made a major contribution to management thinking in recent years, are Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard.<sup>(5)</sup> In the early 1970s, they determined that leadership (or effective management practices with subordinates) was situational and not a question of applying some ideal style of management irrespective of the circumstances. While this idea seems rather conventional now, it was a major breakthrough in managerial thinking at that time. What makes the Hersey and Blanchard model so important, in terms of the management process in developing countries, is its focus on developing subordinates.

<sup>(5)</sup> Paul Hersey and K.H. Blanchard, Management of Organizational Behaviour: Utilising Human Resources, (3rd ed.), Engelwood Cliffs N.J., Prentice Hall Inc., 1977

There is a dearth of qualified managers in most developing countries as well as a shortage of resources to train managers. The situational model of leadership (or management) recognises the need to develop subordinates and defines a step-by-

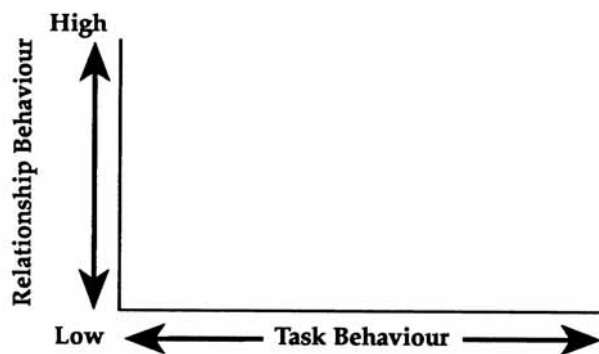
step process by which individuals can be developed on the job. Their model of leadership is built around two basic behaviours that managers exhibit toward employees. The first is task behaviour and describes the extent to which the manager engages in one-way communication; defines the roles of his or her employees; and tells them what to do, how to do it, and when it is to be done. The second is relationship behaviour, the extent to which the manager engages in two-way communication; provides emotional support; and attends to employee needs.

Because the situational leadership strategy of employee development is so important to the overall human resource development responsibilities of the manager in developing countries, we want to borrow heavily from the Hersey and Blanchard model. It not only speaks to the responsibility of developing subordinates but also provides clues about how managers can delegate authority and responsibilities to their subordinates with confidence. It is no secret that many organizations are short on competent middle managers. Consequently, the thin veneer of top leadership gets overwhelmed with work and decisions that should be handled at lower levels in the organization.

The following description of the Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard model of situational leadership provides at least one clue on how to escape this management dilemma. They contend that any leadership style consists of two dimensions:

**Task Behaviour** - The extent to which the leader engages in one-way communication; defines the roles of his or her employees; and tells them what to do, how to do it, and when it is to be done.

**Relationship Behaviour** - The extent to which the leader engages in two-way communication (that is, encourages information and feedback from employees and listens actively); provides emotional support; and attends to employee needs.

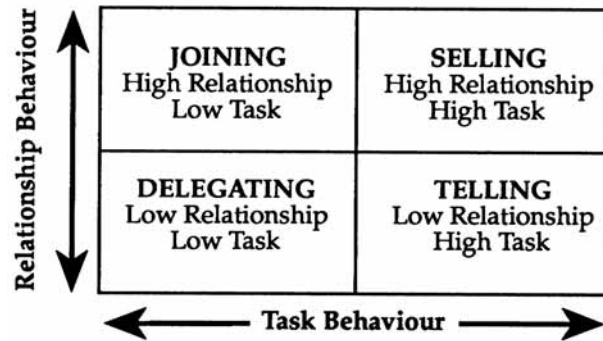


In effect, a leader’s style is determined by the mix of “task” and “relationship” behaviour. This can be displayed on a grid as follows:

Task behaviour forms the horizontal axis of the grid, going from low to high and relationship behaviour, the vertical axis, again low to high. Building upon the grid, Hersey and Blanchard identify four basic styles:

- (a) **Telling:** The telling style is high in Task and low in Relationship (this doesn’t mean there is not relationship, merely that Relationship Behaviour is low compared to other styles).
- (b) **Selling:** High in both Task and Relationship.
- (c) **Joining:** High in Relationship and low in Task (again there is some Task, but it’s a good deal lower than in the “telling” style).
- (d) **Delegating:** Low in both Relationship and Task.

The four styles can be displayed on the completed grid as follows:



### **More about the four basic styles**

A brief explanation of the pros and cons of each style (when it is useful or not) will help to clarify Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory.

**Telling Style:** A leader using this style tends to be directive, to tell employees what to do and how to do it without necessarily asking for their advice. The leader in this case is often seen as a "take charge" person who is not hesitant about assuming responsibility or making decisions. He or she is most interested in getting the task done. This is a very useful style in crisis situations requiring quick, decisive action, when others are looking for direction. It is when this style becomes overused that it is no longer helpful. When this happens, the leader becomes over-controlling, dominant, and autocratic. Employees generally have one of two reactions to the autocratic leader:

- (a) They rebel - that is, they begin to use their energy to challenge or to undermine the leader, or
- (b) They become very passive – always looking for direction, doing what they are told, but nothing more, and rarely showing initiative or making even routine decisions.

**Selling Style:** In this case, the leader places about an equal value on task and relationship. He or she is clearly interested in getting the task done. And while he or she still is in control of the situation, he or she tries to get employees to "buy into" work decisions by involving them in discussions about how to do the work and paying attention to their needs. This style is often a good mix of task and relationship, conveying to the employee the importance of meeting work goals, but also respecting their needs and ideas. However, if used continuously, it can be very time-consuming (sometimes exhausting). The over use of a selling style can also convey mixed signals to employees. Employees will sometimes wonder whether the leader (or manager) really wants ideas and reactions, or is going to do what he or she wants to do anyway.

**Joining Style:** Under this style, the leader and the employees share much of the decision making. Many decisions are made by consensus. Although the style is low in Task, it does not mean the leader is unconcerned about the task. He or she has simply determined that tasks can be completed more effectively by involving employees in the planning and decision making. This style is very effective when employees know their tasks well and do not need much direction. They generally, appreciate the fact that the manager is not looking over their shoulders. However, the style can become troublesome when it is used excessively by a manager out of a fear of being disliked or unpopular with employees. When this happens, employees tend to take advantage of the leader by not performing up to standard or by violating rules (knowing they can get away with it).

**Delegating Style:** Although a low Relationship/low Task style appears to be the least desirable, one way to view it is as a substantial delegation of responsibility and authority. The employees are given a great deal of freedom within which to operate. If employees are sufficiently mature (we will discuss maturity below), this is an excellent style, as it signals to them that the leader respects their ability to perform the work without close supervision or lots of emotional support. However, when this style is the result of a leader who has withdrawn and no longer cares about tasks or relationships, it is clearly ineffective.

### **Employee maturity**

As we indicated earlier, a successful leader is one who can use all four styles, depending upon the nature of the situation. This means the leader needs to carefully assess the situation and choose a style that is appropriate. Perhaps the most important factor in any situation is the maturity of the employee, which is defined as:

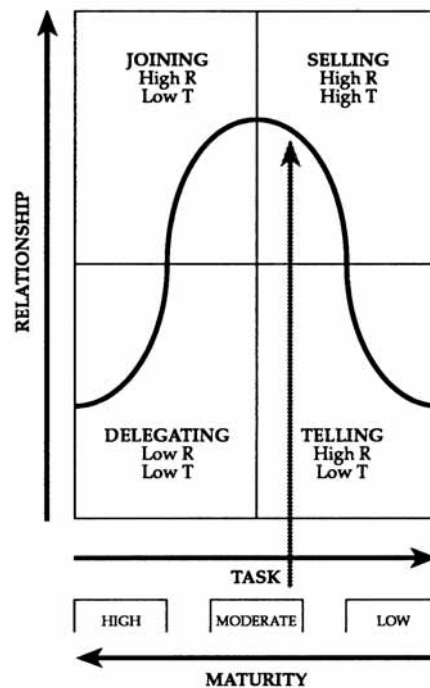
- (a) The ability to set high, but attainable goals;
- (b) The ability and willingness to assume responsibility;
- (c) Knowledge and experience needed to accomplish a specific task or job.

A few words of caution are in order. Employees are not mature or immature in a total sense; rather they have varying degrees of maturity depending upon the job they are performing. An engineer can be very mature in his normal functions of inspecting construction activities and providing guidance to contractors, but when promoted to supervisor, he may be less mature. He may need more direction and support until he learns his new role.

Also, maturity is not necessarily related to age. A young employee can be very mature in handling a specific job. It is job maturity that we will be concerned with here.

### **Maturity and leadership style**

Hersey and Blanchard suggest a gradual shifting of styles as employees increase in maturity as demonstrated by the model illustrated on the following page.



Consider the case where a new procedure is being introduced about which employees have little knowledge. Such employees would likely be seen as low in maturity. According to the theory, this would initially call for a “telling” (or high Task/low Relationship) style. The employees would require more direction from the leader and would not be in a position to offer their own ideas because of the newness of the procedure.

As those employees increase in maturity, the leader needs to gradually shift into a “selling” style. This would mean easing up on the direction a little and providing immediate reinforcement (encourage, recognition, praise) as employees begin to master the procedure. The thick line forming a bell-shaped curve on the diagram suggests how styles should shift as maturity increases.

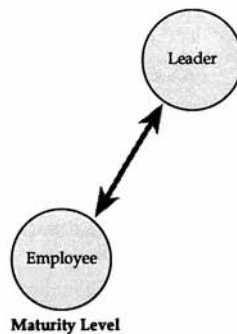
As employees become even more mature (“moderate” to “high”) the leader would shift next into a “joining” style. In many respects, this is a “leap of faith” in which control shifts from the leader to the employees. The employees begin exercising self control and begin making more judgement on their own about their work. But the leader is there to provide support, encouragement, or to step in if an employee becomes disinterested, withdrawn, or troubled in any way.

Finally, for employees who become very active in a particular set of tasks - that is, they have taken on full responsibility, they know their jobs, and require little attention - a “delegating” style is most appropriate. It might seem strange that the leader would engage in less relationship behaviour at this point. But it does not mean there is less trust and rapport; in fact, there is more. It simply takes less direct effort by the leader to prove the trust with mature employees. They tend to meet their needs for recognition through the work itself, through feedback from the people they serve, and from co-workers. This allows the leader to spend valuable time working with people who need more direction, or in planning new programs.

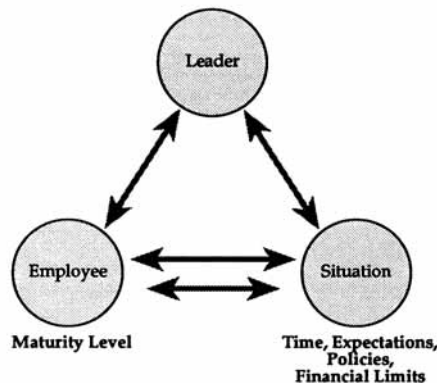
**A few concluding comments**

The situational management theory described here is based heavily on the idea of employee growth and development. Much of the leader’s success depends on his or her ability to help employees mature. Effective leaders need to become proficient at using several styles and then to apply those styles appropriately to the situation at hand.

In order to apply a style appropriately, a leader needs to assess the situation. A key element in this is assessing the maturity level of employees; leadership is always a transaction between the leader and the employee (or follower).



But the leader also needs to assess other aspects of the situation - the time pressures; the expectations of one’s boss and other key officials; the information available; and the constraints of the organization (policies, regulations, financial limits). In practice, there is a constant interplay between all three elements, as illustrated earlier:



The Hersey and Blanchard model of leadership is an important concept to consider in managing change. It is particularly relevant to developing country settings where: (1) the depth of supervisory capacity in many organizations is not commensurate with the need; and (2) where delegation of responsibility is not as prevalent as it should be to develop subordinates and to get the job done.

The situational leadership strategy, just outlined, puts a high premium on developing employees at all levels of the organization. Developing human resources is integral to the development process for nations, organizations and communities. Developing subordinates is at the heart of public leadership and essential if the manager is committed to the process of managing change.

## ***Beyond situational leadership***

The Hersey and Blanchard contributions to leadership and the processes of managing change are important. But, the focus is on the work setting and the accomplishment of organizational tasks. Urban leadership, on the other hand, very often transcends the boundaries of the organization.

Much that is written about leadership focuses on the larger-than-organization issues and responsibilities of those engaged in development. Let us look at what some other contemporary authors have been saying recently about the leadership phenomenon.

James MacGregor Burns was quoted earlier but his work on leadership is so key to understanding the process that he is difficult to ignore. Here are some of the propositions he has put forth about leadership:

- (1) **Leadership is collective.** As Burns states, “One person leadership is a contradiction in terms”. This is consistent with his view about the transactional nature of leadership and the role of followers.
- (2) **Leadership is dissensual.** Any potential change involves conflict and the leader is seen by Burns as not only a manager of conflict but also the generator of conflict. “Meaningful conflict”, according to Burns, “produces engaged leaders who in turn generate more conflict”. Conflict, rather than being destructive, helps organise motives, sharpen popular demand, and broaden and strengthen values. In spite of its many benefits, managers would just as soon avoid conflict.
- (3) **Leadership is causative.** It makes things happen.
- (4) Leadership is morally purposeful and goal oriented. It seeks direction and movement to a higher plane of human endeavour. While we would all like to think that leadership is always directed toward some ultimate positive value, our collective experience tells us otherwise.

## ***The leadership challenge***

In a more recent book about leadership within management, authors Kouzes and Posner report on a survey they conducted with nearly 2000 senior managers from both the public and private sector. Leadership, they concluded, is not the private reserve of a few charismatic men and women. “It is a process ordinary managers use when they are bringing forth the best from themselves and others”.<sup>(6)</sup> The process of leadership, which these authors discovered in their research, involves five fundamental practices that enable managers to accomplish extraordinary things. They are:

<sup>(6)</sup> James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, [The Leadership Challenge](#), San Francisco Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1990 pp.7-13

- (1) **Challenging the process to get things done.** While “bureaucracy” may be a manager’s worst enemy, few managers are willing to challenge it, or to force changes in its insidious and pervasive nature. Many management techniques, designed to help colonial officers control their local staff decades ago, have been continued, even though they are dysfunctional to the process of development and management. These techniques and practices need to be challenged.
- (2) **Inspiring a shared vision.** Leadership is the ability to describe what will be (a vision) as though it has been. Visions are future oriented and, therefore, involve what some would call an element of inspiration if they are going to be conveyed from one person to another. There is an old saying that “you can’t light a fire with a wet match”. So it is with sharing visions.
- (3) **Enabling others to act.** There is a tendency in many organizations not to share power, authority or responsibilities. When we don’t enable others to act, we deny the very essence of leadership. The situational leadership strategy by Hersey and Blanchard is designed to help enable others to act, and to do it with confidence.
- (4) **Modeling the way.** The leader is a role model for others to follow. Modeling is the process of seeking full congruence between what we say, what we value, and what we do in such a way that it is transparent to others.
- (5) Encouraging the heart. This is a quality that is more difficult to translate into a cross cultural message of any real meaning. Perhaps the authors say it well enough through examples. They suggest we recognize individual contributions and celebrate accomplishments.

## ***The uncommon gardner variety of leadership***

As a final look at leadership through the eyes of a third person, I want to turn to John Gardner. He also ties leadership to the role of management or what he calls the leader-manager. Gardner says leader-managers distinguish themselves from other managers in at least six ways:

- (1) they think longer term
- (2) they grasp the relationship of their own organization or work unit to larger realities (what some might call the external environment);
- (3) they reach and influence constituents beyond their organization's boundaries;
- (4) they put heavy emphasis on such intangibles as values, vision, and motivation and they understand intuitively the non-rational and unconscious elements of leader constituent interaction;
- (5) they have political skills to cope with conflicting requirements of multiple constituencies;
- (6) they think in terms of renewal (and we might add, development). <sup>(7)</sup>

For Gardner, these distinguishing characteristics translate into specific leadership tasks: (1) envisioning goals; (2) affirming values; (3) motivating; (4) managing; (5) achieving workable unity, or trust, within the organization and its environment; (6) explaining (helping others learn); (7) serving as a symbol; (8) representing the group in its dealings with others; and (9) fostering the process of renewal. <sup>(8)</sup>

<sup>(7)</sup> John Gardner, On Leadership, New York, The Free Press, 1990, pp.3-5

<sup>(8)</sup> IBID, pp 11-22

Most of these tasks would not be found in a basic management textbook. Some are deceptively simple (like "explaining"); others are more complex, even a bit ethereal. But then, Gardner reminds us, "Leadership is not tidy".

## ***Why leadership?***

We have just discussed a few of the characteristics of leadership, as some, significant others define them. You may be asking, "Why should I be concerned about leadership? This is a guide about management and managing change". Several reasons come to mind immediately.

First, leadership, as defined by Gardner and others, is good management - albeit, rare in practice. Developing countries need fewer bureaucratic managers and more leader-managers.

Second, leadership, the application of the characteristics and behaviours we have been discussing, is critical to human settlement development and change. Envisioning goals, affirming values, motivating others, fostering the process of renewal - all of these are essential to the development process. When the manager, who has access to physical, monetary and human resources, assumes the mantle of leadership, development is more management is development - physical, social, and human resource development, it is crucial that managers aspire to leadership roles.

Finally, leadership is that extra thrust that motivates others to do what needs to be done; the vision to define and redefine future alternatives; and the courage to reach beyond the boundaries of our own work environment to create alliances and coalitions for long term institution and community building. Without leadership, not much happens.

There is an old Persian proverb that says:

Thinking well is wise;

Planning well is wiser,

Doing well, wisest and best of all.

Wise leadership is all three-thinking well, planning well, and doing well.

## PART III

### PLANNING RE-ENTRY

The impossible is often the untried

#### **Trainer's notes**

Topic: Planning re-entry

Time required: approximately 1½ - 2 hours

This session is designed to help the participant make a more effective re-entry into his or her work setting after the course. How many times have you heard trainees say, "This course has been great but my boss needed to be here!?" This kind of remark, no doubt, expresses concern about going back into a "business-as-usual" situation and being thwarted in applying new concepts and ideas. Others may be too optimistic about their opportunities to change things when they return to the organization. This session should confront as many of these diverse perceptions as possible. The intent is to prepare the participant to be as effective as possible when they return to work.

#### **Tasks**

1. Have the total group identify all of the issues they believe they will be confronted with when they return home from the course. It is important to encourage free expression and a diversity of concern during this session. Once the list is generated and displayed, go over the points one by one and encourage discussion of their consequences and how individuals might cope with them. This discussion is important in preparing participants for the next task.
2. Ask each participant to complete the Re-entry Planning questionnaire. When they have completed it, each individual should join 1 to 3 others to talk about their plans. Allow enough time for in-depth conversations.
3. Reconvene them briefly to solicit comments about the exercise and any lingering concerns they might have about the forthcoming re-entry.

#### **Exercise**

##### **Topic: Planning re-entry**

Your notes and recollections from the course discussions and exercises should be extensive. Now is the time to spend a few moments and reflect upon these from the perspective of going back into your work environment and making the most of this professional development experience.

What are the two or three things you can do to put your development to good use - for you personally (be selfish!)

Things I want to do for me personally are (be as specific as possible):

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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Now list those things you want to do when you return home to put this professional development experience to work for your work unit and the organization (again, be as specific as possible).

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- 2. 

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- 3. 

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Given the skills you have gained in decision making, put together a strategy that will help you carry out these plans over the next 3 or 4 weeks and list the steps you need to take to carry out the strategy. Be as specific as possible, using the skills you learned in the problem solving exercises.

- 1. 

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- 2. 

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- 3. 

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