

Corporate Power

The relationship landscape structure revealed

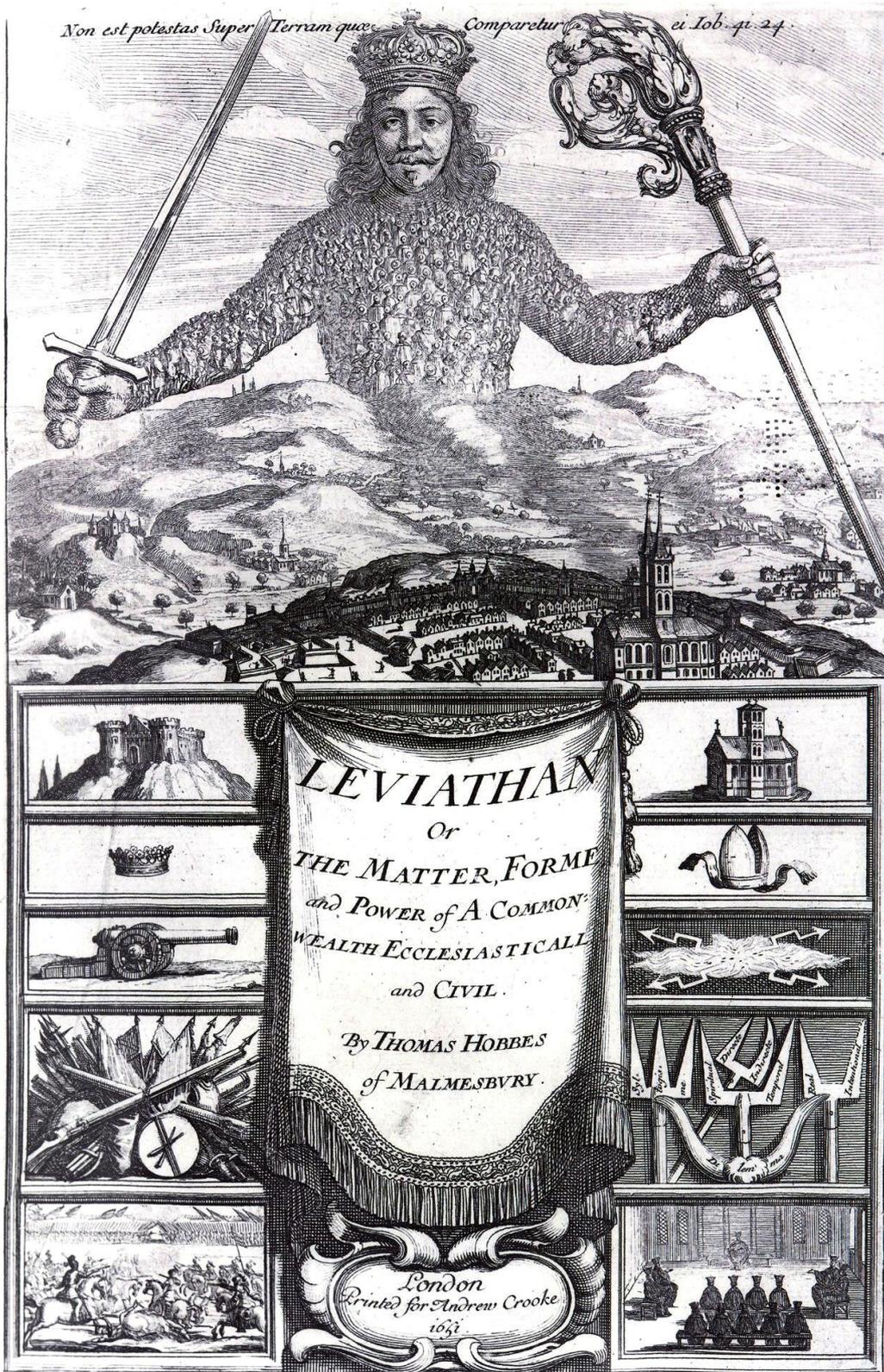
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'No Rainbow without The Sun'

© Hatfield House

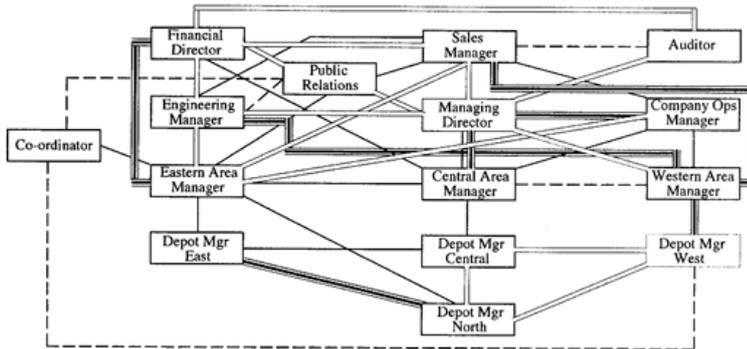


'There is no power on earth to be compared to him'

The Information Landscape

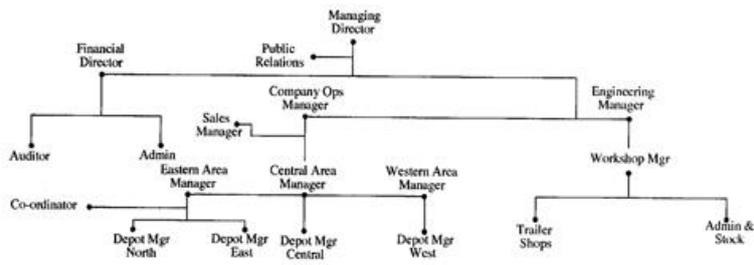
Line	Relationship	Value
Dotted	Contact	5
Single	Acquaintance	1
Double	Friend	2
Triple	Good Friend	3
Four	Crawler/ secret lover	4

eg. For Depot Manager East:
Information Status = 1+1+3=5



and the

Authority Structure



permit power

THE POWER STRUCTURE REVEALED

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THE POWER STRUCTURE REVEALED

INTRODUCTION

Need

We are in a disturbing and mercurial world with so many advances in science and human development adding to confusion and, sometimes, causing dismay. So many advances should have done so much for us. Great things have been done, and yet we still seem in some areas, to have not really advanced at all over decades or even centuries.

Things are changing but some are advancing much faster than others. The laggards are acting as dead weights to progress and could, if not attended to, negate vast areas of discovery, development and advancement so wonderfully reached over the last 100 years. We live in dangerous and confusing times.

It appears a Quixotic ambition to tilt at such a massive and strange windmill. Here I can take out of my pocket a device to play scrabble with anybody almost anywhere on the face of the Earth for little more than the price of the electricity and the device itself. The banal is alongside the incredible. Invention and sharing information has gone through the roof with new technology. Long gone are the days when academics felt threatened and were none too pleased when their students actually went to the library and, if they could find an original text, actually read it. In those pre-internet days the ideal for lecturers was for their students to read the approved books of criticism, analysis and then regurgitate received wisdom in their offerings in examinations and other written submissions.

Many information walls have been breached and we are all beginning to benefit from what will be a far greater advantage as the years pile one on the next. The effect on humanity will be cumulative, the momentum created by information sharing on the internet has only just started.

This wash of information has also hit the Political World (capital P) with a vengeance. The old ways of politiking have been mauled as the march of the internet, new ways of communicating and the sheer speed of events tore into dated conceits of lazy often quite inflexible time-serving politicians. Modern web based communication has had an even greater impact than the arrival of the telegraph and the telephone and later wireless and television communication over a hundred year period from around 1850 to 1950.

The new advance was not so much an advance in technology, putting aside fibre optics but more in the sophistication of devices receiving and transmitting information and the marshalling and handling of information flows on the transmission network itself. Much of the early internet was highly dependent on wire technology that would not have surprised someone from the 1920s.

Information flies around all over the place where, once, it needed a trip to the library, perhaps a visit to a professional or spending money to buy a book about what you wanted to know. So much

secrecy that held up progress for the selfish gain of those who stood to lose if things became known, has been swept away. Centuries of keeping secrets and the common attitude that the best default approach is to keep secrets and act only on 'the need to know' is ended.

Old attitudes and habits die hard especially when individuals feel, perhaps know, that they have much to lose if secrets are revealed. Why, they may reason, should they tell others so enabling them to do what you would do for them at a price? Why should they do themselves out of an easy life by telling others secrets saving them cost to your cost? Far better to keep secrets. Fiercely fight anyone who tries to blow your cover and suggest that society as a whole can no longer pay for the luxury of keeping costly and needless secrecy focused on the objective to disempower others who could easily do things for themselves, if only they knew.

The argument that a generally held attitude that keeping secrets should be the default approach is, in the long run, self-defeating usually falls on deaf ears. It seems sensible that if the default approach were to be, instead of 'the need to know', 'the need *not* to know'. This would release information so all could benefit from doing things for themselves gaining a mutual advantage where, before, each would tax the other diminishing productivity and introducing, in effect, a large costly parasitic chunk to a national economy.

This chunk erodes productivity and is costly. Hundreds of thousands of people found a living and were ferociously secretive about their occupations to keep the money rolling in. In effect, the national economy was forced to pay for hundreds of thousands of unnecessary servants who manipulated information to ensure the rest of the economy was ignorant of what they knew. The aim was to make sure that their knowledge was not shared around and then to exploit the manufactured ignorance. The attitude of Medieval Guilds is alive today in all its restrictive, destructive and taxing nature.

At the heart of all this is how information flows and how it is permitted to flow. Social, political and commercial arrangements are shaped, prosper, decline and fall depending on how humans deal with information.

The frontis piece of Hobbes Leviathan features a giant in the form of a King. Closer, you will see that the body of this creature consists of people in the form of a monarch. All are part of and also create the state in the embodiment of The King. It is a telling visual metaphor in that it departs from the common depiction closer to what we know so well for organisation charts, which are still with us today in Western Business.

The Monarch might be at the top then you can draw lines to show how everyone relates to him. Confusingly, a similar method of depiction appears in family trees. How much they all tried to show that their titles and grandeur emanated from William The Conqueror. These charts try to prove right, status and authority by blood as if William the First were still alive in the blood in their veins. If you could show, or con people, that your blood was the same as that of King William, you could then have a chance of demanding that they respect you accordingly. Authority, however won, is essential to expect that others might consider doing what you request of them; in other words, that they should obey you.

Returning to this strange Leviathan, we do not see a chart, like either the bloodline chart or one more like the typical military style plan of organization still alive and well in the West. Instead, we see a jumble of all kinds of functionary as well as common people jammed together to form the state. The king is not, strangely, an individual in this picture but is a product or creation of a mass of individuals all accepting the authority they have and that they must show to participate in the state. Their acceptance not only ensures their position but also goes towards the form of the very system that confers them authority in the first place. People know that by fitting in to a position and accepting their lot they help create and preserve those gifts that they are given in the process.

This strange composite creature appears to stand awkwardly between two key features of any successful organisation and its strangeness is highly appropriate to the times it was created. Mid-17th century England was a frightening time for many with civil war and the ultimate horror of the age, the English removing the head of a reigning Monarch. Such a thing was incredibly radical for the times, indeed, even to suggest anything else but a monarchical system in many parts of the World was little more than fancy talk.

The times were awash with uncertainty. Cromwell tried to find a way of governing without returning to the system he had overthrown. He failed. His son lasted only a few days before the monarchy was restored. In those few years, long established ideas about how a country should be run and controlled were radically challenged. The country bled appallingly with a significant proportion of the male population hurled into eternity in the process of trying to sort out a better system of government. The sheer waste, brutality, injustice and wanton cruelty employed all for want of settling things in other ways beggars belief.

Sadly, such habits did not end there as the appalling wars of the 20th century illustrate.

During that time, some interesting advances were made in organisation structures. Many feel that Cromwell laid the foundations of what was later to become the British Army. Standing armies were not usual so their organisation and control was often channelled through individuals raising troops on a one-off basis... to start with. It was only later that regiments were formed which lasted from one war to the next. During this time what we now see as a typical plan of organisation began to form. It worked very well in military application, so well, that it was transferred to business activity in the 19th century. However, where it was particularly effective for military purposes, it gradually became a poison to productivity in civilian activity.

Today, the general view of organisations is astonishingly primitive. We have plans of organizations, which could be seen as skeletons and flesh. On these plans, we can see who reports to whom and have a good idea of the relative levels or amounts of authority vested in each person. But where we say who reports to whom should really be turned on its head and understood as how much each person has the right to expect others to do as they request. The chart is not an information flow system. Who reports to whom, at best, means who is responsible to whom for carrying out requests and instructions.

The way the system works with information is illuminating. This shall be considered in detail later. We now have a skeleton and flesh. However, there is little or nothing about information flow. Conventional wisdom says that information flows along the lines on the chart and that is how the

system works and ought to work. If you break out of that arrangement and, say, speak to someone further up the system without the knowledge of your boss, such an offence is considered very serious and can easily lead to dismissal.

It is interesting, however, to note that the offence, often described as 'going behind your bosses back' is unknown on a million job descriptions. This telling omission points to a why the body with its flesh is motionless in front of us as if a Frankenstein creation, lifeless, useless and hopeless. Of course, business, commerce, politics and organisations are alive and everywhere. The body can only come alive with a nervous system, brain and a mind. Our skeleton and flesh as forming the organisation chart and those perched on its lines only comes alive with information flow. The information flow concerned is not that much related to operational information such as machine fuel consumption, accountancy (although money flow is a highly interesting study in its own right) or in the day-to-day issuance of guidance or instruction to staff. This flow is related to the social systems and communications that are the nerves and brain of what some call the body corporate.

We stand back and once these are put into the corpse, it comes alive. The hundreds of tiny people that make up Leviathan suddenly communicate, negotiate, and find ways to make the primitive plan of organisation work. In this process of animation, instead of disrupting the plan of organisation, they make it work by creating another structure, which wraps in and around the plan of organisation bringing it to life.

Both systems rely on one another in an intimate, symbiotic manner. Neither could exist without the other and, together, they bring the body corporate to life by creating the power necessary for this strange and magical transformation. As your eye is deceived by a Leviathan constructed of a thousand people so the meeting of an information structure and the plan of organisation enables a metamorphosis and the creation of commercial, social and national power.

Material

The aim of all this is to get to grips and understand what animates human organisations. Sometimes simple yet radical shifts in approach and the way things are explained are necessary to make major advances. Newton managed this by supposing an invisible force, which, at the time, must have seemed to be little more than something plucked straight from his imagination.

Until then, people thought that things fell to the ground because they had weight. The tendency to fall was part of their nature. As this was so, the heavier an object, it was supposed, the sooner it reached the ground. This seemed intuitive and correct and the idea was so strongly held that it remained uncontested twenty centuries from Aristotle onwards.

Newton appeared to 'invent' gravity. Things fell not because they had weight but because this invisible force generated by the mass of the earth worked on the object to attract it. In this view, up and down is not really the point any more where objects are attracted to one another by the gravity they possess. The famous experiment at the Tower of Pisa, replicated centuries later on The Moon proved another flaw in the old idea of weight. When a feather and a hammer fall, they accelerate at

the same speed in a vacuum. Their weight does not determine how fast they fall. The old way of explaining how and why things happened was proven one of the most gigantic and long running mistakes of all time.

Meanwhile, Newton marched on and found a way to mathematically model acceleration. Leibniz discovered similar mathematical advances at about the same time. They both came close to solving a problem similar to squaring the circle. From Principia Mathematica and Leibniz the modern world was given Calculus. It is interesting that Leibniz had a very different view of space and time compared to Newton with the former seeming to hark back to Parmenides in relation to extension suggesting a world without extension created by monads in a strange inside seeming outside existence.

From the moment Newton showed that the objects are inter-related by an intangible and strange force of attraction, and then modelling the way this force behaved, Physics and the foundations of all the science of the modern world were created. Although the actual leap was made by one, perhaps two minds, the implications of this leap were gigantic. Even so, the old ways lingered.

As science marched on with the new understanding and mathematics areas such as medicine clung on to treatments based on the old view involving humours. Illness was caused by imbalances in a person so it was necessary to restore the balances. The idea that illness could be caused by microbes and other outside interventions which in turn would need specific treatments to remedy what they were doing to someone was quite beyond doctors, even in the late 18th century. The dying hours of George Washington saw treatment including the application of Spanish Fly and bleeding removing no less than four pints of his blood. Such primitive beliefs tended to side with the microbes and other causes of illness; instead of curing, they often killed.

Something very similar seems to be going on today with human organisations. Consultancies proliferate offering 'this and that cure' for companies, government departments, public services and so on. Their approach is often as mistaken and damaging as that applied to George Washington. There are dozens of examples of futile reorganisations, wasteful tinkering and wild, unfocused ideas, which have all done repeated damage. The astonishing thing, just as with the primitive medical practices of the 18th century, rather than noticing the quackery, the mind-set is the same. Simply apply more of the same. Faced with a problem, the urge to do something about it is so strong that rather than do nothing because no one has the answer yet, people prefer to do worse than nothing and make things even worse because they just can't resist the lure of action in spite of their patent ignorance. A thousand organizations have been brought down by leaders thinking they must do something, later to regret the day they acted when 'doing something' turned out to be vastly worse than 'doing nothing'.

The Catch 22 is, of course, that in a changing World doing nothing is not an option in the long run. If there is a problem if you do nothing, unless it corrects itself, in the long run indecision is a wrong decision in itself. Nearly all managers and leaders know this. This leads them to tempt fate and become decisive and quite determined applying the only 'solutions' that they know which, all too often, do little more but make the present situation worse or transform a damaging situation into a lethal one.

Authority

Those in authority, not knowing what to do, often have to take risks. Every decision has an element of risk. There is no such thing as a risk free decision. Obviously, the ideal is to reduce risk to a reasonable level and to maximise the value and net return of any action. The key of this work is to offer a way of minimising risk when someone in authority makes a decision and maximise the positive result or outcome. Referring back to what seems a quagmire of complications and views of how things work in the world of Science and seeing how business and understanding organisations appears to be equally infected; the first big question is to look at what it is to have authority.

In the world of business quackery, the word 'authority' is taboo. It puts fear into their hearts because they know they do not really understand what is going on and are terrified of making their efforts seem, in any way, to threaten the status quo. At once, they claim to offer magic bullets to cure the ailments of business and organisations whilst posing as unthreatening, safe and cuddly people. The extent this has developed in recent years is astonishing and some of their presentations appear to approach employees and their genuine challenges employing almost infantile techniques. Sorting out organisations is a huge challenge; any compromise in meeting this challenge is a disaster. Today, we appear to have one disaster after the next.

The plan of organisation usually indicates the relative authority vested in individuals depending on what level they appear on the chart. The MD / CEO or Chairman appears at the top and you work down through directors, divisional managers, senior managers, managers, supervisors and the operative staff. Verticals are drawn between the levels with horizontal lines to indicate different authority peer groups.

The way this is thought to work is that each manager has people reporting to them and that manager has the right to expect their staff to follow instructions or respond to requests that things are done. The origin of this chart comes from command and control. Its historical origins and weaknesses will be covered later. Authority itself is the matter here.

Authority has to be accepted by people before it can exist. Methods to do this vary from naked threat through to the earned respect reached by those who are known to manage well and make the working lives of staff happier, more productive and, although not absolutely necessary, more profitable. In extreme, you have the authority of someone with a gun contrasted to the authority of someone who is a top quality manager. The ideal is, of course, the latter but in the present day quagmire of primitive quackery when it comes to running or trying to improve organisations, degrees from decent kind behaviour through to arrogant threat exert or ensure the presence of authority.

The way authority is established is the mark of the corporate culture of an organisation. The relationship between motivation and authority is intimate and close. Some understand 'authority' as the ability or, even, the right to say something and to have it unquestioned on the basis of standing, status and qualification. This is mistaken. There should never be restriction on asking questions trying to understand. All too often, the reason why 'authority' is supposed to suppress

criticism is that those with such an attitude may lack the management understanding, skill and ability to address criticism and incorporate it into the way of managing.

Authority is a complex construct. It is a product of organisation; in many, it is closely related to management grade. The less people are aware of it the better and happier and organisation runs. It should be like the bricks or structure of a house: essential, always there, yet never imposing its existence or any demands for attention on the inhabitants as they go about their lives.

For the purposes of this short book, it might be worth considering Authority as the ability to request and expect some other people to do things. Its roots are social and embedded in relationships. However, to do anything positive with authority, you need information. The ignorant use of authority can quickly transform a mutual respect based authority into authority by threat, which is an ugly scene.

Given the primitive and shambolic way many organisations are handled today, perhaps, this is why so many consider 'Authority' a taboo word. The problem has caused people to shy away from an essential part of the solution. Understanding the nature of authority is an absolute necessity if we are ever to reanimate half-dead organisations littering Western economies.

Information

To use authority effectively, you need the right information. Sources of information, trust, delegation, the ability to listen, process and much more are essential. Knowledge differs from information in that it is conscious or potentially conscious information. Not all information is potential knowledge. For instance, a massive table of numbers, which might describe electronic configuration to create an image, is not really knowledge. It is the necessary information supplied electronically to generate the image. Memorising such information is not the same as being conscious of it in its entirety. The distinction between information and knowledge is important, underlining the importance to access to information.

This is dry stuff. We all know that information flits around an organisation in many forms. Electronic data moves around from machine to machine. Written documents move around. Accounts tracks money flow and creates financial views catering for the demands for differing perspectives. People talk to one another.

The last most obvious one is one area where there has been an almost total absence of methodical study, analysis and understanding. The common excuses for this failure to consider such information flows are:

'soft skills cannot be taught';

'there is no particular problem so why bother investigating or theorising?';

‘problems related to gossip and ‘people talking’ are negative so it is best not to address them’;

‘it is a waste of time trying to address such problems because they cannot be solved’;

‘managers bringing this stuff up seek excuses for their incompetence and inadequacy’.

The causes of these refusals to address the problem are covered later. They nearly all rotate around ideology and vested interest.

So, grabbing the bull by the horns, what use is it to consider how and what people say to one another? Strictly, the area of interest is not really information as such, but how much people rate or respect each other. The significance of the information exchanged or traded is massively influenced by the level of mutual respect. This can lead to some quite surprising contrasts.

A new MD may have a far higher mutual regard for a doorman he knew when he first joined the company 20 years back than for his financial director. The doorman may only communicate, most likely indirectly, with the MD through a PA, but that one communication could be critical. It could, for instance, be the fact that he saw the FD visiting the office on a Saturday morning looking highly stressed and worse for wear. Such intelligence, made possible by high mutual respect and trust, even if only a few words can be of huge importance. Information flow should be measured not only in the freedom of flow but also in the significance of what is imparted. In this case, the effective flow of the information carried by a few words, is as a tidal wave compared to a mass of data related to last month’s ice cream sales in Blackpool.

Information should be understood in relation, not to the time it takes or the amount of print required to communicate, but by the significance of what is said. Words used in a simple but highly compressed manner can convey vastly more than low compression lengthy explanations and descriptions. The latter are not necessarily incorrect but are usually the mark of less expertise, experience and ability. Two time-served professionals can discuss a problem and come to a solution in minutes where if one or both were less able, reaching the same conclusion, if they have the capacity, could take many times longer.

Strong mutual respect often carries this aspect of high compression along with it. A few words from the doorman could speak volumes to the MD, because the MD would trust him and know he would never have dared tip him off about that strange event of the Financial Director coming in on a Saturday morning when such an act would have been utterly out of character. The MD would be able and willing to read vastly more into the few words due to the regard both held each for the other.

This is the nature of the information that features as the key to this short book. It is not necessarily the quantity but the quality that is the measure of the information. Behind all this is trust and respect which are equally significant in respect to Authority. This common factor binds them together in an amalgam creating that absolutely necessary key to all success in business, public service and even to government: the creation of power.

Power

One of the most common and incorrect statements heard time and time again is that 'information is power'. For some reason, it seems acceptable to say this sort of thing without any care for precision. This sloppy, inaccurate approach covers obscures more than it reveals.

An early statement of this came from Sir Francis Bacon: "*ipsa scientia potestas est*" (knowledge itself is power) and it has been repeated in one form or another ever since then. It was easy enough for them because they took Authority as granted. If you are not in the happy position to have the authority to act, you may know all there is to know but as no one will act when you ask them to act, the information you have does nothing to give you power.

Yes, you may say, but you can withhold information. This does not give you power, it only disempowers or reduces the potential power for someone else. It is true that passing the information to someone can then cause change but the act of passing information is not power it is influence. Influence is not power.

This is a crucially important distinction. It can be quite hard to get out of the habit of thinking and saying 'information is power'. The provision of information can enable someone with authority to use that authority to a greater extent and radically more efficiently. They can be empowered by sources of information. The crude expression applies:

'Information and Authority permit the exercise of Power'

This is not a complete formula but it is massively more accurate and useful than 'Information = Power'. This is as hopeless and mistaken as if Ohms law were truncated to Volts=Resistance simply leaving out that pesky Current. In many respects, the modern day attitude and approach towards information in organisations and how it behaves is primitive and medieval.

Power is a construct. Without Authority you can know the secrets of the Universe but the very best you may be able to achieve is to influence someone else who will then be empowered being able to use what authority is at their disposal. The doorman knew some very useful information, his quiet word *did not make him powerful* but, for an instant, he became massively influential.

Looking back at the plan of organisation, it would be really useful to know where these potentially highly influential people are situated and whom they might be able to influence. It would be very useful to see how people relate to one another and the patterns of relationships. Perhaps these patterns could hint of activity, positive, neutral and negative. Perhaps the way influence works might relate to authority and power.

Potential or actual influence does not necessarily relate to management grade, authority or status. There are formal indications of status and authority are provided so that it is possible, at a glance, to work out how much someone is considered worth paying attention to in the eyes of the organisation. Thus, in business, the type of company car, the location of an office, type of office

chair and so on are very quick status signs that anyone working in that environment can interpret and act accordingly. Similar effects can be had from wearing expensive or highly fashionable clothing. It shrieks out, 'look at me', 'take me seriously', 'listen to what I have to say', 'pay me attention'.

This is the world of confusion and messages that surround people in many organisations. Information is flying about all over the place in its many different forms, compressions with signals abounding. Human organisations are highly complex and we have only just started to go beyond the skeleton and flesh to look at the nervous system, and brain.

The creature is not yet animated, it still lies flat and lifeless. At least, now, we have established the need for a nervous system and some of its strange characteristics. The next step is to consider the point of this creature. Why do we bother with organisations and why do we put up with the discipline, restriction and work they impose to the extent that most of us spend well over half our lives working in the body of a strange and, sometimes, upsetting corporate entity? What is the point of doing this?

Objective

Productivity and happiness

Economists have their own definition so it is worth returning to a more simple appreciation. You can produce by creation, by processing, by invention, by manufacturing, by the workings of your own body, and by luck. There may be a few more categories but this list is sufficient to indicate that production is no simple matter. Production can simply 'happen' by the workings of nature. The narrow money based view of Economists is entirely inadequate even when considering a tiny part of all creation being human productivity.

Creativity, inventiveness and the production of ideas, (either new or rediscovered) is a key aspect to all our lives. It is to do with thoughts and how they meet each other. This is a vast subject in its own right; one observation, in a way, says it all. The ability to create new ideas is the key to our freedom in determination; it is as astonishing as the demonstration is simple; harnessing imagination enables us to have ideas and to enjoy being productive as well as to get a genuine pleasure sensing the freedom the grim and humourless determinist behaviourists say cannot be ours.

Take one idea and combine it with another idea to create a third idea. The process that made the meeting of ideas may be determined but the resultant idea *is not* the sum of the two ideas that it came from.

This freedom often arises from association with other people by way of a meeting of minds. Freedom can arise from thinking in your own head orchestrating meetings of thoughts, which are separate. We have the freedom not to be obliged to resolve contradictory or inconsistent thoughts in our memories causing the capacity of thought meetings to generate new ideas. In a manner, we

can converse with ourselves. We can think non-logically and this ability orchestrated by consciousness elevates above the iron laws of causality and the laws of matter.

Productivity is a highly complex affair. From Creativity, invention by the use of non-logic at one extreme, through to the shaping of wood with machinery to make tables at the other. Some productive activity cannot be measured, although it is often very highly valued such as the work of artists; other productive activity is easy to measure such as the number and quality of tables produced from raw materials in a given time. The Economists will insist on placing a momentary value on these tables so declaring that the sweat of the carpenter is more or less productive depending on what others will pay for what is produced.

This is an attractive idea but it is hopeless at dealing with creativity and invention. It also neglects respect for those who are productive and for the fact that values change depending on the market. Should the tables be stored and demand change so that they become more valuable a year later are we to say that the carpenter has managed to be less and then more productive long after he has gone on to do other things? This sort of anomaly soon crushes the economists' money based view when considering the contribution and productivity of people in society and organisations within. Things are not so simple as the money people would like to suggest they are. They are more interesting, involved and sophisticated.

Productivity depends on information. The productive use of authority cannot tolerate ignorance. Whether it is information inside our own heads, partial ideas, contradictory beliefs, part formed ideas, half thoughts, illusions and ghosts in our imaginations, the building blocks of all are information. In conversation or association we talk, demonstrate, laugh, discriminate, get angry, fond, hopeful and merry but all depends on information in one form or another. Information can be consistent, sensible, logical and correct and fully formed. Likewise, it can be inconsistent, nonsense, non-sense, illogical, incorrect and half-baked. This is the material for creativity, invention, the production or rediscovery of new thought and much more. There can be a massive elation when all these meet and new ideas, thoughts and solutions to problems appear to come from out of the ether as if they had come from nowhere.

Simple productivity depends on information. A carpenter needs to know how to do things, needs to know where and how to acquire the materials and needs to know how to look at the work, process what is seen, use the right tools and techniques to create a table. It is a process of creation because the physical properties of the wood and its utility as a stack of lumber are radically different when that lumber is used to produce a table. There is no logical link between the utility of the raw unprocessed wood, which could, for the sake of argument be used as scaffolding planks, to the table, around which you can eat meals. The work of the carpenter, the glue, the wood the sawing and the rest cause a metamorphosis of utility. Objects are modified, combined, processed to create a single new object, in this process something useful has been created or produced. Scaffolding boards have been transformed into a table.

Productivity in a society works in very much the same way. Whether it be ideas combining to create another idea different from the sum of its parts or whether it be individual and collective productive effort to create a society that is not the sum of its parts the magic nature of productivity is, essentially, the same. From this, we can see a significant difference between addition and

production; between accumulation and creation. The miser afflicted by the illusion that accumulation is production lacks the creativity and imagination to understand the value and appreciate the process of production.

Society could not exist without constant production by people of ideas, thoughts, objects, and by the employment of imagination and appreciation and pleasure gained from being creative. Organisations, likewise, depend on these features but they also depend on the appreciation of others for what an organisation does or what it makes. The means to be productive are key to the survival and prosperity of organisations.

An economist may say this boils down to 'manpower, materials, space and time' and, of course, capital. The economist fails to get the heart of the matter failing to seek out fundamentals of production without which all the capital in the World would simply drain away to futile waste. What makes organisations work, how they work, what makes people happy and productive is massively more sophisticated and interesting than the imagination of a committed economist can permit.

This is one of the key flaws in Marxist analysis in Das Kapital: he fails to get to the heart of the matter offering up a dim rather shallow and cruel view of humanity in the process. His complete and utter failure to address the nature of freedom is testament to the unnecessary iron bands that restrict his view. It created a self-justifying dangerous political conceit that has caused unimaginable human suffering and destruction for over a century. There is no happiness in his words.

Happiness should be the aim of all organisations and all societies.

APPROACH

Observation

This is a rather glum activity, so it will be kept to a minimum. The point is to focus on the present state of affairs and how we try to manage organizations including some attempts to mend them. It is glum because it is a story, largely, of complete and utter failure, missed opportunity and the waste not only of resources but also of human lives degrading their happiness and, often, creating avoidable misery. This is about injustice, waste and fraud.

These things corrode and destroy society. They do not exist because of the nature of humans but because things are not properly arranged and managed. It is a common error to blame those who behave as they do because things have not been arranged to prevent or obviate such behaviour. A criminal may commit a crime and, if the police and the justice system is effective, can be caught and prevented from other crimes. But, if the system is inadequate, the delinquent could easily remain at liberty to turn one crime into many. When eventually caught, what justice is it that the wretch should face more severity only to pay for a system that failed to do its job as it should? I do not argue that a criminal should find excuses for crimes but that a society that fails to do what it needs to do is also at fault as are all those in authority who could have prevented one crime from turning into many.

Evidence of this problem is clear in today's justice system. Things are badly managed and those responsible escape being held so in a way that is as offensive as any convict not facing the punishment that they deserve. Bad management by those capable of better is as offensive as the waste and destruction it causes. It is easy to look at vast healthcare institutions and see the result of bad management and a refusal of the authorities to hold responsible those who failed to do their duty.

They do this mainly because they do not know and cannot see what is going on. Managers faced by what they see as impossible demands or those intent on private profit to public cost beyond what they deserve are a curse. They abuse their positions to protect themselves from responsibility by engineering ignorance in politicians or investors. So we are brought back to information, authority and power.

Engineering impotence is how this new management class has created its niche. It exploits the primitive and hopeless view of organisations, which has been around for a century or more. Any weapon it can use for this project, it does use; it is shameless in its pursuit of personal gain. This new class has no wish for responsibility and no wish to rule. Its aim is to acquire all the personal benefits of great responsibility or ruling without the need for either. It is the Holy Grail of all dedicated profiteers to have authority without responsibility. Meanwhile, responsibility is shunted elsewhere.

Responsibility does not evaporate when someone shuffles it away but it is foisted onto others who are held responsible but can do nothing because they do not have that authority assigned to the profiteers. This is a nasty scene and is common in all sectors of the economy. The extent authority is divorced from responsibility is a mark of how rotten or corrupt an organisation has become. In

extreme, this can boil down to one person or group throwing blame and expecting another person or group to catch it in the form of guilt. The most corrosive side-effect of this monstrous act is that guilt has the strange effect of causing gullibility so opening up people held responsible but unable to do anything about it to a curious form of impotence deprived of an ability to act or think systematically when faced with an avalanche of blame. Their minds are, in effect, partly paralysed by the expectation of guilt applied by unpleasant users intent on the avoidance of responsibility and personal gain at any cost.

This whole affair turns out shockingly wasteful and creates untold stress and unhappiness for millions of well intentioned people (as well as a fair share of not so pleasant people) in thousands of organisations. Any time-served manager who has worked in several organisations will know of happy people on low pay and wretched and miserable people doing much the same sort of work on much better pay elsewhere. They may be just as productive but the happiness produced for one group is radically less than that produced for the others.

The aim of productivity, which is enabled by organisation and society is, for all of us, happiness.

Waste

This can be generated by simple mistake, incompetence, deliberate manipulation or ignorance.

The ability to make mistakes is a freedom we all possess. If we were logic machines, it would be impossible to make mistakes on the basis of the information in our possession. Every decision would be exactly 'right' from what we knew. This would remove the capacity to be right for the wrong reasons, our capacity to be right by sheer good luck or our capacity to be right on the basis of judgement proving we had taken the right decision, had we known, with hindsight.

Mistakes are not necessarily all disastrous. It is quite possible to make a monumental mistake when acting on the basis of all that could be known at the time. It is equally possible to end up taking a superb, inspired decision on the back of poor information and immense uncertainty. Some of the best managers have an almost magical ability to take decisions on partial information employing imagination to make up for a lack of information.

Our minds can not only leave contradictions unresolved but they can bring two internally inconsistent or contradictory thoughts together to create not only a new idea but one which can resolve all the internal contradictions of the ideas from which it sprang. In classical logic, the rule is: 'a and not a' implies anything. We can appear to break the laws of physics in our heads and theorise several different possible outcomes to any suggested decision. This process radically transforms a lack of knowledge and generates judgements as to what might happen. They are not based on information but on the outcome of thinking or discussion with others. As such, they are not facts and so any action on surmise is, at best, risky and is, strictly, mistaken because it is to fail to act logically based on fact and certainty.

Without this ability, we could easily become paralysed and unable to address the World and its every changing nature. Use of judgement is not optional. We use non-logic and surmise every day and throughout our conscious lives. Our minds are vastly more sophisticated, flexible and imaginative than modern day organization theorists and 'experts' would have you believe. Our ability to be mistaken is evidence of our freedom and evidence that we are not slaves to logic but are massively more intricate, thoughtful and free than any logic bound system. We can engage with change and handle the future as it hurtles towards us because we are able to use what we know to prepare for what may be coming by breaking out of the static, rigid and vice-like grip of logic and pure facts. Imagination and creativity are at the heart of all this.

Waste raises its ugly head when the future constantly arrives to confront us. Organisations process their part of the future as it rolls into the present and humans do much the same thing. If we get it wrong and our attempts to be productive fail, waste is the result. In a manner of speaking, we process a tiny bit of the future and create a tiny bit of the past.

Waste can take many forms. An engineering error can consign a thousand cylinder blocks to scrap; a tiny microbe can destroy tanker loads of milk; years of academic research into an obscure theory could turn out to be magnificently futile; healthcare can be wrecked by bad organisation; but beneath all these and causing virtually all waste in organisations is the simple fact of bad management. Productivity can be transformed by good management; productivity follows happiness as much waste is associated with misery and hopelessness.

To understand waste, you need to understand what it is to be productive and how this can be organised.

Fraud

This ugly little word has a huge amount to say for itself. It is a process of deception and relies heavily on the ignorance of others. Generating ignorance by exploiting or creating secrecy is at the heart of all fraud. However, the best frauds arise from fertile imagination and, yes, creativity. Although creativity is an aspect of freedom, its use is not restrained to productive objectives.

There are a myriad of variations of fraud but I shall illustrate a couple here, which should illuminate things sufficiently.

The reflux fraud has existed in one form or another for a very long time. In modern times, it is particularly useful because it is ornately simple and has the remarkable facility, if employed carefully, to be virtually undetectable to auditors lacking operational experience and local knowledge. This instance was detected by someone in the National Freight Corporation in the 1960s, just before the UK de-nationalised its road freight interests. The junior manager who detected what was going on established his career at that point and, later, did well with de-nationalisation.

The management trainee was assigned to work at a road transport depot. About 60 heavy lorries (trucks) were based there and loaded and unloaded goods at a general warehouse, complete with loading dock and all the odds and ends of warehousing including fork trucks, etc.:. Widespread use of pallets was a relatively new innovation in those days. The depot was very busy and humming with activity.

He was assigned to work in the traffic office. This is where work is allocated and business taken on. A traffic office is the heart of any road transport operation. If well run, it can radically improve profitability and, sometimes, can even receive the begrudging respect from drivers whose occupation is, by its nature, demanding, lonely and stressful.

Something did not seem right. The rates for loads seemed quite good but there seemed to be a huge amount of activity and not much profit. He applied his imagination and made several enquiries, which would have seemed to be 'off the wall' and the product of a mind prone to 'conspiracy theory'. He then tested out his theory and uncovered what had been going on for several years.

A local manufacturing company had contracted transport from the depot at a very high rate. The traffic operator, instead of simply taking the work and carrying the goods hit upon a clever trick. He contacted a small transport company and subcontracted the work to them at a slightly reduced rate. At this stage, he still had spare trucks in the yard that could have done the work but, instead, it was sub-contracted. Then, the small company immediately subcontracted the same transport requirement back to the main transport depot but in a different name and at a substantially lower rate for doing the work.

The owner of the small company split the profit with the traffic operator, which effectively tripled his pay. An outsider, unaware of how these frauds can operate, finds it almost impossible to detect what is going on because the depot was, indeed, so busy that it did have to subcontract work... so it seemed. Paper trails revealed nothing because the corrupt subcontractor's name was not the same as the name of the supposed company contracting the same work back to the transport depot.

The only way this could be detected, short of someone blowing the whistle, was to analyse the traffic, where it came from and the rates and, then, to ask why poor quality work was being taken on when high quality work was being subcontracted out. The paper trail and all the usual checks an auditor might undertake would reveal nothing. Operational experience and an ability to see beneath appearances is essential when dealing with such frauds. Transport is a particularly vulnerable area because it requires more experience than in many other areas to keep this sort of thing in check, partly, because the product it offers is time based and not physically ascertainable. Transport cannot be warehoused and the normal physical checks such as counting stock or checking its quality are not available. This disarms many of the standard methods, checks and techniques used by auditors trained with models using physical products such as in the manufacturing, processing or trading of items.

Checking and keeping an eye on what is going on would be vastly helped if the way information flows were considered and if there was some way of revealing what was happening.

Some frauds can be astonishingly simple and are often generated by wrongheaded ideas from senior management. In the 1980s in Express Dairies in Ruislip, there was a large milk distribution depot for both carton and glass bottle doorstep deliveries. Management came up with a bonus plan for the outside fork truck drivers based on the number of pallets of glass bottles each person loaded onto a trailer on each shift. The idea was, of course, to increase productivity and focus the will to work hard. Almost immediately, the drivers found a flaw in this plan and mercilessly exploited it for several weeks before senior management finally realised their error.

In those days, there was no way of identifying one pallet of glass bottles of milk from the next. They came off the end of the bottling line, were picked up by forklift trucks and placed on semi-trailers to be coupled to tractor units for transport to local distribution depots. One pallet of the most common type of milk was indistinguishable from the next. Sometimes, depots did not want all their milk so part loads were returned to be re-despatched elsewhere, later in the day. This often called for transshipping. During the weeks before the management twigged, trans-shipments went through the ceiling. Again, there were no records of this because the logic was that it was all internal work so paperwork would be unnecessary.

What was really happening was that the drivers, in league with the yard shunt vehicle which moved trailers to a pickup area and away from the loading bay, were loading up semi-trailers, moving them to the pickup area. Then, the shunter was returning the same trailer, they were unloading it to the loading bank to then reload the same milk straight back onto another trailer.

The fork truck drivers were using the system to make money, even though they were being utterly unproductive in the process. They were being wasteful so that they could acquire bonuses under the wrong-headed incentive plan instigated by inexperienced and incompetent managers.

Very much the same has happened right across senior levels in both the public and private sectors in the UK and, I suspect, in the US. Bank staff, (the play on words was unintentional) have found ways of generating vast bonuses with no care, whatsoever, for whether their efforts genuinely benefit their organization or destroy it to the point of total elimination. The lure of personal gain creates a management world where greed comes first so excluding that large chunk of humanity which does not and will not respond in that way. As management by greed takes hold, so the bad drives out the good and recruitment becomes focused on those who appear to best respond to 'incentives'. The lie is that bonuses show respect for efforts and people... they actually treat people as if they were selfish robots quite incapable and unwilling to do a job for a set salary and doing it well. An application of a bonus system that overshadows basic salary or pay degrades individuals; worse, it tends to exclude all those who do not respond to such 'donkey and carrot' schemes.

Management by greed is a form of fraud in as far as it appeals to selfishness, disloyalty and encourages a lack of regard for the long term collective benefit for individuals and the organisation when things are well managed and collective results are good. Management by greed is caustic and brutally assaults corporate cultures based on collective effort and pride in collective results.

The need to bring hundreds of selfish greed focused people under control can be a matter of life or death for many organisations. There is no great harm in providing some incentive to better performance, but when this extends too far, the nature of high performing staff can change from

employee into something, which is neither employee nor owner or employer. They are neither upper class or ruling class and no longer behave as employees. This greed soaked class considers bonuses as a right. Their selfish focus leads them to use the protections of employment legislation coupled with systematic suppression of information flow to engineer an often almost impregnable position between owners and the activity of the organisations that once considered them loyal employees.

The new structure created by these parasitic people could be seen as Owners – Barrier Class- Managers / employees. They construct an information barrier between owners and the organisation whilst posing as being part of the organisation. The process relies on intimidation by use of that famous but unwritten rule 'you shall never go behind your bosses back'. Anyone daring to do this will see their careers destroyed by any method convenient to the Barrier Class.

Meanwhile, the owners are blackmailed by the Barrier Class because they depend on the information released by these people to be able to take decisions. If the Barrier Class decides to cut off the information flow, owners are rendered impotent. In this way, the Barrier Class can selectively render owners impotent, at will, by cutting off the information flow, or they can manipulate the owners into making decisions to enrich the Barrier class quite oblivious to the fact that they might be damaging the organization they are supposed to care for. They have, as it were, taken control of the eyes of the corporate body.

This gigantic fraud has the insurance all highly effective fraudsters always include. Whenever someone decides on fraud, the more efficient operators always make preparations in case they are found out or in case their superiors decide to punish or dismiss them. These 'guarantees' or insurances can take many forms. Another story about a fraud, again from the dairy industry, illustrates a delightfully simple 'guarantee' and the myopia that still prevents management from appreciating and controlling information flow.

A junior manager at Unigate in East London in the 1980s had established a fiefdom and had strong relationships with part of the trade union, which was very powerful in those days. The company still benefited from The Milk Monopoly and so profits were easy making for weak management who were not highly pressurised; they preferred to buy off unions rather than confront excessive and wasteful behaviour.

Senior management knew the supervisor had been enjoying several years of the proceeds of theft but could not pin him down. The company did not use delivery paperwork for its consignments to distribution depots thinking this was all internal transport, so the process was little more than an extension to a conveyor belt. Trucks were loaded and delivered pallets of milk to be sold by local distribution depots. The supervisor arranged to put one or two extra pallets on loads to several depots each week. They were not documented. On arrival, the depot managers were expected to keep stock control and the 'extra' pallets were ignored. The milk bottles on these pallets were then sold to the public and, instead of accounting for the proceeds, the cash was distributed to the depot manager, the lorry driver with the lion's share going to the milk plant transport supervisor.

Similar fraud was engineered for carton deliveries and even the gas bottles used for some of the primitive refrigeration were expropriated. His fraudulent activity was known across the plant.

Management desperately tried to recruit slightly more senior managers and to then to make the transport supervisor 'redundant'. He was no fool and could see what they were up to a thousand miles away. He also knew about an ideological blind spot that management suffered from. It is astonishing that this blind spot still exists today.

A succession of new managers were seen off using a very simple ploy. It works on the same principle of withholding information to disempower. In those days, Union agreements were central to the running of such a plant and they were particularly strict, complex and involved in the transport department. Agreement types were Formal and unwritten. The latter, for some very strange reason, were considered to be unwriteable.

When new managers asked the tricky supervisor about 'unwritten union agreements', he would say that you could not write them down and that it all depended on the situation. If you asked for a full verbal explanation, the same answer would come back. Equally strange was that managers appeared to think this was completely acceptable. They were in the position of manager so it was their job to know about all this sort of thing, by definition. If a new manager asked the supervisor what he would do he would respond, 'I do not know, it is your job to decide'. Again, this astonishing attitude was considered unassailable.

Manager after manager was led like lamb to the slaughter. Each time, the Union would utter howls of faux outrage when one unwritten agreement or another was breached by a new manager who was deliberately kept ignorant of what they were. Meanwhile, the shop steward who was in on the corrupt deal, the transport supervisor and several depot managers continued happily with their frauds and theft. The process lasted for several years as one new manager after the next was sent packing. Astonishingly even the site convenor, who should have known better, took this poisoned chalice towards the end. He was destroyed by an alliance between the union who saw him as a traitor and the transport supervisor. They made a few more 'unwritten agreements' with the union so setting up, even, the ex-local full time union boss. He suffered the same fate engineered for so many other quixotically hopeful recruits trying to bring the situation under control.

For all its faults, the cost of the fraud was considered preferable to a more efficient and more dangerous trade union. I was one of those failed new managers and, later, when my career accelerated encountered the head of Unigate Personnel when judging an awards ceremony. We met annually over six years before he announced his retirement. I took the opportunity to ask him why they tolerated the thieves' kitchen in East London. He simply said that it the site was profitable and they thought it better to turn a blind eye to the theft and mismanagement so as not to 'rock the boat'. Inside, I wanted to punch him in the face and we parted, hopefully, never to meet again.

It turned out that the useful arrangements for the purposes of fraud and theft coupled with the regular display of what the clique could do to those who tried to clean things up provided a form of discipline. Fraudsters and systematic thieving need a fairly well organised arrangement to make sure their operation is not disrupted. They want predictability and control. Any driver daring to breathe a word about what was really going on knew that it would be days before they lost their job. It took longer for the clique to remove new managers but very similar and, equally inevitable, rules applied.

Now, here's the insurance part. In my later career as one of the first specialist recruitment agents for senior management in Logistics, someone, all credit to them, rang me from Unigate in East London. It appeared that that supervisor was still there and has seen off several other 'new managers' since my time, including the ex-site Convenor. You can be certain that all the drivers were absolutely silenced after this coup. The manager asked me how they might deal with the supervisor as they knew I had been a victim.

Revenge is always most satisfying if the target has no idea who engineered their 'misfortune'. In this case, my revenge was about as sweet as could be. I instructed the plant manager to summon the supervisor to a meeting with another senior manager present. First, they were to ask: 'Please could you tell us all about custom and practice and unwritten management / trade union agreements'. I said to the manager that the supervisor would give his stock answer saying it could not be written down and as it was not absolutely certain so he could not repeat it. The next question would counter this: 'We expect you to know significant amounts about custom and practice, what you tell us or write down is for management only and this matter is strictly private to management only. We will understand if some aspects are not 100% but it is clear that you should be well informed. We therefore, again, make a reasonable management request that you write down and tell us all about unwritten management / union agreements.' As I predicted, he refused, again.

The next instruction I gave to the site manager was to state that 'a reasonable clear and sensible instruction was given for critical management information and refusal to provide an adequate answer was to directly refuse to provide senior management with information and to directly refuse to obey a key instruction.' 'Would the supervisor like to reconsider and do as requested?'

At this point, the supervisor knew the game was up. The management blind spot that he had so mercilessly exploited for over a decade was gone. Making the best of his situation, he turned to the two senior managers and bluntly negotiated a payoff three times his annual salary. He turned to the senior managers listing every fraud and trick he had been up to over the last decade. There was absolutely no compunction in betraying his accomplices, they were, now, useless to him in this negotiation except as firewood to stoke this final ambition.

The two managers were astonished at the extent, implications and massive cost of the frauds and theft. It spread across the years and it had been going on under the auspices of several plant managers who were now in more senior, national management positions. Blowing the fraud and making the whole thing public would draw the wrath of senior management down on those who had finally sorted out something that they had either ignored, or had failed to deal with or which they had been unaware. Their triumph would turn to ashes, theirs would be the same fate of the bully and thief they had successfully removed.

Fraudsters and thieves' insurance can take other forms. Sometimes, access to the personnel department can permit knowledge about the contents of job applications. Lies on these are always useful bargaining chips... especially if the liar suspects the information is out there. Sometimes, knowledge of small thefts can be used to enforce silence. Most sophisticated frauds integrate 'insurance' into their plans before setting out.

The supervisor was paid off. Two depot managers were dismissed but the Union steward was untouched on the principle that he had better toe the line otherwise, he, too would be held to account. The men, seeing that the clique master had been removed quickly voted out the delinquent shop steward and he was set up for another offence and dismissed a few months later. In this way, natural justice cleared up the remaining members of the clique. The drivers were very angry. They had been obliged to work in a nasty atmosphere for close to a decade, all because of a blind spot in management refusing to recognise that the deliberate withholding of operational information is tantamount to theft and is an elementally disloyal, anti-organisation act.

It took only a simple phone call to provide the necessary approach to break the clique. This subject of this small book is equally simple and will have an equally radical impact. Fraud, theft and so much more feeds on distortion, interference and manipulation of information flow. The shame of some frauds is that the imagination, control and implementation needed is often so good that the originator(s) might have done even better if they had focused on advancing as standard, honest managers than ever choosing the more exotic, wasteful and dishonest route. Then, again, perhaps that was the lure.

Challenges

Vested interest

Those doing well are often fear change the most and will do what they can to thwart it, be it for the better or worse. If you have a family, the first priority for virtually everyone is not the good of the organisation but that that you can, with the help of your pay, benefit your family as much as possible. 'Family first' puts the organisation, at best, second. If someone comes along who threatens your family, that 'someone' has to be dealt with, if it is in your power to do so. If it is not, you will use all the influence at your disposal. In this manner, one-time top quality managers, once married to other objectives, can be compromised and should be understood to be this way.

The thought of, say, being unable to finance extra tutoring for a child or having to take them out of private education would be anathema. In this situation, a previously sound and dedicated manager can easily convert to one with more malign attitudes and motives in relation to colleagues and to the objectives of the employer. 'Family first' has turned millions of people from good employees into begrudging, manipulative and quietly desperate individuals. The two focuses can create a tension inside the better sorts, where those who are more easily bent will happily dispense of one set of priorities to full dedication to another.

This tendency is played on, mercilessly, by those staff who have become highly adept at office and business politics so they bend and compromise others to their ends. Vested interest creates a febrile, fertile environment in organisations for manipulation, control, betrayal and lost productivity.

Meanwhile, those working the system, politicking, manipulating, abusing and controlling information flow develop networks, which are disciplined and formed by fundamental interests such as family,

career aspiration, fear of unemployment, greed / obsession and so on. They play individuals as if musical instruments appealing to their particular weaknesses, leanings, ambitions and fears.

These people find massive opportunity from the hidden landscape of the nerves and the brain; they make hay from the myopia of those trying to keep the corporate entity, the animated corpse acting as it should. They disrupt existing communications and then set up their own, instead. But these new nerves do not always go to the brain but are used to animate the body so it flails around as if parts of its body had a mind of their own. This is the aim of politiking managers. They work for personal gain and scheme to disrupt and bypass the brain of the corporate body so that the company can, in effect, act on their behalf to their advantage. In this way investors, be they private, public or charitable are cheated.

Private capital, investment in public sector activity, in charities, in government departments and so on is hijacked. Those doing this, especially those at senior management levels, see personal gain as the 'be all and end all'. If they can syphon, take a cut or extract what they see as a rightful dividend on the back of the investment of others, this is quite in order. This vested interest is so developed that it could be thought as a form of destructive capitalism. Individuals benefit from the investment of others extracting income properly belonging to investors whilst those doing the extracting are taking no risk. The risk is taken by investors who are robbed of what they should receive in return by this Barrier Class.

They are a real and potentially lethal danger and represent a perverted form of profiteering capitalism intent on the destruction of productive capitalism. This is a battle between vested interest and the future of investment. It is a battle between cheats and respect for those contributing to our future. The Barrier Class stand for manipulation, profiteering and waste and the costs are carried by both public and private investors alike.

Vested interest will fight tooth and nail to prevent the effective animation of the corporate body. They profit well from its flailing around as if some Frankenstein creature terrified, half blind and incontinent with fear and desperation. The Barrier Class has no regard for the capital they hijack or the organisations they work for, except that they remain sufficiently intact to enable their continuing selfish and socially corrosive activity. They find excellent material in the vast majority of managers and staff living in a difficult world doing their best for their families; there is, of course, the usual proportion naturally imbued with selfishness and greed.

All this rushes towards good managers trying to mend and improve organisations, much like a huge wave. But in amongst everyone are those who will do the right thing, *regardless*. They are as numerous as those who are elementally selfish or just plain bad. Neither extreme will change, whatever is thrown at them. Between are the majority who go with the wind. The Barrier Class works on these people, whilst they employ whatever inducements are necessary to ensure alliances with the worst of people. Those who will not behave poorly are a thorn in their side and they often move heaven and earth to dispose of the grit of honesty, kindness and sound hearts from bringing the engines of selfishness they have so carefully constructed to a grinding halt. A small number of honest and determined people can wreak havoc on the most sophisticated schemes of Barrier class people. Truth and honesty has the irritating feature of being difficult to disprove except by the use

of lies, threat or bluster. On the other hand, manipulation, deception and lies are always open to being found out and all tempt fate to a greater or lesser degree.

Vested interest will dismiss any attempt to reveal how organizations really work with several excuses not to listen. They vary, but here are some gems:

‘You cannot teach soft skills’

‘Those complaining or talking about this sort of thing are seeking excuses for personal failure’

‘There is no need for this because the problem of politics does not exist in our organisation’

‘Politics should not be in business or in this organisation so we should not talk about it’

‘It is nasty and negative. So talking about it is nasty and negative. So don’t talk about it’

‘There is no solution and you cannot ever reach one, so even mentioning it is plain futile, negative and a waste of time’

‘We do not talk about that sort of thing’

These excuses have been rehearsed and repeated ten thousand times, over many years. Vested interest has no interest, whatsoever, in others finding out how things really work. They have worked the system and used their social skills to develop networks and alliances and see vast disadvantage in transparency. Some of the better intentioned are quite frightened that if transparency arrives their carefully constructed ad hoc communications system will collapse replacing a half animated half-efficient corporate creature with one with as much life and productive potential of a lifeless corpse or a skeleton and flesh with all its nerves and brain destroyed.

This fear is very strong even from the well-intentioned, let alone the selfish Barrier Class managers. The latter will have a straightforward hatred of the implications of this book which are to support productive investment and to eliminate the futile wasteful destruction caused by those intent on robbing money from investors who shouldered the risks.

On several occasions, I have briefly talked about a technique to reveal the nervous system of the dysfunctional half living corporate entities that litter our economic world to, sometimes, quite senior people in the world of management. On every occasion, there’s a moment where the penny drops. It is elemental. Either denial rolls out or they go quiet. You can hear the cogs turning. Each time that I see this, it lends encouragement but also warns me that this project will be extraordinarily difficult to ‘sell’. The only comfort that I can take is that the times are turning less tolerant of the old ways of business. The behaviour of the Barrier Class is fast changing from a drain on resources into a potential lethal cancer, threatening to destroy productivity; millions may feel they are being taxed to pay for the undeserved gain of what they could conclude are those out to wreck society and the good management necessary to assure prosperity.

It is ironic that vested interests may cause many times more damage, waste and loss of wealth through their machinations to emulate organisations to suit their profiteering than ever their gain. The cost to society is massively more than the amounts expropriated from investors. This is often seen in the damage to the value of investors' capital as they threaten the future of organisations free from any personal risk by hijacking the capital investment of others.

The strength of interest is so great that there is no business management course of any repute, perhaps in the World, that deals with office, business or corporate politics. Any academic suggesting it can be taught would be asking for approval for wholesale uncovering of the private worlds of privilege, manipulation and control which have assured the position of hundreds of thousands of middle and senior staff in organisations. To encourage opening up and revealing this taboo land might seem, for many, as good as turkeys voting for Christmas.

A real and dangerous threat would be to open up senior management positions to those good souls who were technically highly competent and did their jobs very well but who were never promoted because they could not survive the political heat in the World of senior management. It is a sad fact that recruitment of senior staff nearly always depends on the key ability to be able to avoid being set up, manipulated or simply being thwarted by others abusing or using political skill contrary to the objectives of the organisation. If people think that someone in authority might be open to being persuaded to doing their bidding, you can be sure that numbers of them will set out to make this happen.

Skill in working and creating bits of the nervous system is absolutely essential for all senior managers in today's half-secret organisations. The twilight world of denied but actual information systems, stratagems, plots, cliques, information highways, and so on is full of traps for the unwary and the untutored. This helps explain why, too often, the apparently competent are left behind as those less openly deserving find that promotion favours their ambitions. These less deserving creatures, often with very limited operational expertise, have the golden key of political skill.

They can work the informal, secret and denied information landscape of an organisation and 'play tunes' on people to avoid being manipulated, set up, framed or left hopelessly ignorant and without allies. Such a person, if sufficiently politically adept, will ensure that others will always be on tap to advise and cover for their lack of operational knowledge, skill and expertise. At meetings, they will prepare the ground well in advance either by setting the agenda or responding to an agenda and lining up agreements so that the meeting, if handled well, turns out to rubber stamp conclusions already determined in advance. The politically untutored person may think certain meetings are for discovery and constructive efforts to that end. For sure this is the case for many meetings, but it is certainly not so for all. When very contentious matters are involved, going into a meeting without preparing the ground and having a good idea of the outcome in advance is a desperate mistake leaving managers open to manipulation and possible failure.

This is a complex matter.

This is a vague word but it relates to large areas of pre-established tacit agreement about the way things are done. The spread is from how meals are conducted through to clothing (even down to which side a badge may be worn depending on whether male or female) through to religious observance and genuflection towards superstition, history and humour. Laughter can be, partly, in genuflection.

Culture has an inherently conservative nature. Assumed agreement between many is not something that individuals can easily challenge without bringing upset to many who feel that their observances have been brought into question. The key benefit of 'culture' is to bring a harmony and predictability into society so making everyday life significantly less fraught and, at times, plain difficult. Culture can act to oil the wheels of trust and cooperation in society. Anyone threatening its tenets, sometimes, anyone even bringing its tenets to the fore, demanding the tacit should be questioned and subject to active agreement, is very often considered an awkward, difficult boat rocker. Where such people consider themselves improving things by questioning assumptions, unchallenged ways of doing things and implied attitudes, others consider them disruptive, selfish and a danger to society.

There is a strong pressure not to question cultural imperatives. Those that do so, right or wrong, risk social oblique or even exclusion. So, anyone suggesting that we have been so foolish to put up with primitive and wildly inadequate views of how organisations work is very likely to be considered radically anti-social. If we start to understand organisations as they really work, if we start to consider its nervous systems and information flows so the monster will transform into well controlled and a massively more productive creature. But to do this will challenge the culture that has grown up to cater for the mess causing its tenets to fight with all their might to preserve, by way of self-preservation, the culture in its present form. This is one of main causes of opposition to change.

Just as office, business and corporate politics has developed, in part, to overcome problems caused by the primitive approach and understanding how organisations work, so compromised and warped cultures have developed to overcome some of the problems posed by imperfect and often critically flawed societies. When revealing and studying this more sophisticated approach to organization, it will be inevitable that the culture that helps make our current compromised society work and in turn enables organisations to operate, will cut up very rough and will do whatever is necessary to stop change.

Cultural pressures will, for self-preservation, strongly oppose this simple step from the dark ages to a modern vastly more useful and sympathetic view of how organisations work and how to make them work well. In this process, not only will organisations have to change but culture will have to reform to suit improved aspects of society which will inevitably follow.

"When I hear the word 'culture' I reach for the safety catch of my Browning." Yes, in the play he thought certain approaches to culture were threatening. Another more awful line was: "Some years ago—some horrible years ago—the Nazis used to take out a pistol instead of a check book." But, culture is a product of a society; it does not form a society. If you start to think this, societies can become their own justification so opening the doors to an infinite variety of behaviour from the

most appalling to the most perfect. It neuters and declares as irrelevant any attempt to mend things or break this self-feeding, self-justifying self-consuming conceit.

Once in situ, it can block progress, but culture is a creation of people and not its master. It only appears to become the master if people think it so; this is, paradoxically perhaps, a cultural attitude further reflecting its self-justifying nature.

The resultant quagmire is a most perfect place for quacks, manipulators and people on the make. It give them carte blanche to ignore and ridicule attempts to break out of the iron cage of cultural self-justification. Culture becomes an end in itself. It turns from an aid and product of humans to help make the world an easier place to navigate and to improve cooperation and manners to a device useful to prevent change or upsetting any existing useful arrangements for the purposes of personal enrichment, status and all the other goodies that some fortunate members of society enjoy. Culture on a pedestal dominating and controlling is wonderfully effective at baulking attempts to explain, reveal and contribute to changes for a better way of doing things.

Many doing very well now have absolutely no wish to see things change. Employing culture as master and culture as its own justification is a wonderful aid to silence and block anyone trying to improve things. Those receiving 'easy money' are doing so to the detriment of others, by definition. It is no surprise that the very same people will use whatever devices, approaches and adopt whatever attitudes appropriate to that end.

When I hear the word 'culture', I grab the arm of the fool with the Browning, take his gun away and destroy it. When reaching for a chequebook, just that appears. There is no doubt that both the malign and many innocent, well-meaning people will quite strongly oppose the arrival of a more sophisticated view of how things work.

In the 19th century, surgeons were still hacking at patients operating without aesthetic (pain, apparently, was good for you) and considering washing hands a total waste of time. The wretched medic who first pushed for Doctors to wash their hands was side-lined and ended his life as a mental patient, despite the fact he had shown by results what such basic hygiene could do for the survival of mothers in maternity hospitals. 'Culture' has a lot to answer for and some people will fight furiously, despite overwhelming evidence, that the old ways of ignorance (and ignoring so as not to listen) are the right ways. Legions of excuses not to listen are usually signs of cultural self-preservation at any price. Cultures can and do change, but they do not take kindly to individuals making the pace, especially if they conjure up dull truth, discovery, invention and demonstration.

Forcing those with vested interest to listen when what is said runs against their personal interest is bound to cause serious upset. This is why the truth for most philosophies, theories, invention, discovery and creativity is 1% inspiration, 19% perspiration and 80% timing. Fortunately for this contribution, although the cost is staggeringly large for the World, the times are right for a new view of how things work... in particular for a huge step forwards to understanding how organisations work and how to make them work radically better than the vast majority do now.

These are exciting times.

Fear of change.

Some of this was covered above considering culture. We have developed methods to make sense and to make faulty and poorly arranged things work.

A good lathe operator will know his machine and, after many years, will know the slop in his machine and at what settings and will know how to compensate for this to enable equally accurate machined results as if the lathe had just arrived, (let's take a very old example), from Herberts. This skill involves judgement. The marks on the vernier or the lathe adjustments are useful to a point where slop becomes a factor. A good operator will set the lathe to the marks and, then, slightly set off the exact mark. They know, by judgement and experience, how far to make a tiny move from the indicated setting to what appears to be a wrong setting but which will actually create the exact machining, had the slop never been there and the lathe were new.

Many of us will never have this skill. With lathes it can be down to the individual operator who knows the machine to make it work as it should. Likewise, when making things work in everyday life and engaging with society, it is inevitable that some adjustment for slop becomes necessary. Society is worn and struggles to keep up with change. There are many who grow tired of this irritating 'change' and wish it never happened at all. It is a hopeless ambition for no change in a changing world and it would be certain that if those idealists had a taste of the implications of their ambitions, they would very quickly abandon such a hopeless plan.

Change marches on, regardless of what individuals or society may wish. It is inevitable that any organisation, individual or society has to accept that failure to address change in a positive way will damage society. Opposition to change most often comes from vested interests; their ambitions and schemes for personal gain damage society twice over. Society is less able to engage with the world and, in some cases, those who control wealth in an unproductive manner are wrongly tolerated.

Change brings uncertainty and a constant need to listen, adapt, learn etc.:. If you stop pedalling and do not put your foot on the ground, it is only a matter of time before you fall off a bicycle and all progress comes to a halt in what can be quite a painful manner. Fear of change can create something far worse. It can lead to a denial of reality in favour of imagined causes of the reasons for change offering excuses to return to an impossible 'no change world', its certainties and, for some, the rather pleasant personal gains to be made in that flawed idyll.

'FORMULA' FOR POWER

The 'formula'

Timing and conditions will determine if this advance will release a gigantic stored potential. The power to get things done, the power to change things will ensure that good organisations will run better and be vastly more productive so making not only themselves richer but also making the cumulative wealth of entire economies vastly greater and more secure.

The expression is: Information with Authority permits power.

Although very simple, it can be quite a struggle getting some people to abandon centuries of cultural assumptions and other unconscious leanings to appreciate the implications of this very simple expression. There is a persistent belief that information is power. The two are not the same. A junior employee can know of something which, if not brought to the attention of the right person, could prove to be critical, even vital, information for the business. Poor maintenance of a tank holding hundreds of thousands of gallons of aircraft fuel might be known to a junior manager but if that information is not in the hands of the right person who is aware of the looming catastrophe, it only is a matter of time before just that happens.

The junior manager would look on, helplessly. For all his information, because it could not reach someone with the authority and wit to act accordingly, it was as useless as if he had never known it. Information is not power by itself. It is certain that in modern poorly managed or half decent organisations there is a vast reservoir of useful and, sometimes, vital information sloshing around which is simply 'forbidden access' to those who should know to be able to use their authority to its maximum potential.

Information is hierarchy neutral. Some information may be more sensitive than other information but the need for secrecy or sensitivity, again, does not necessarily mark any status to that information beyond the fact it is part of the necessary knowledge to run any business. (Knowledge is conscious or potentially conscious information).

If you were to attach a value to information, it would reveal some radical distortions in some organisations with relatively junior people apparently being very highly informed and quite senior people being virtually in the dark. Information is critical to be able to make the best use of any authority at your disposal. Deprived of information, authority is either unused in the form of indecision or it is abused in the form of decisions made based either on guesswork or the mistake that the information used was complete and correct.

Someone exercising their authority who is ignorant is as impotent and dangerous to an organisation as a terrified blinded machine gunner, firing at friend and foe alike. In the vast majority of cases, senior managers and directors choose not to fire at random in all directions, instead, they choose to take no decisions and to shift responsibility for consequent failure and its effects onto others unable to contest allegations. Management by blame is a common side effect arising from our primitive and grossly inadequate understanding of how organisations work. It is the evil twin of management by greed.

The side effect of such bad management behaviour is to further weaken organisations and disrupt, even strangle, information flow to assure accurate and competent decision-making. How convenient the information bubbles become and how useful is the unwritten law of 'not going behind your bosses back'. It is all too easy to redistribute responsibility and muzzle anyone who has the temerity, including the victim, to point this out. The excuse is that if the boss was not told of what was going on by an incompetent subordinate the fault, (aka blame), was with the subordinate who is then dismissed. After all, the boss did not know so they could not be considered accountable.

Ten thousand junior managers, supervisors and others have bitten the dust unjustly by use of this very simple device. Any incompetence was not, on the face of it, to do with the boss, but the failure was down to incompetence on the part of one of the more junior staff. This travesty is considered, it seems, quite in order, because business still considers organisations and how they work in a radically wrongheaded and primitive way.

Of course, the boss was at fault. If the boss did not know the key information, they *should* have known. This brings us back to that wretched milk plant supervisor but from a different perspective. The supervisor was a strong believer in saying 'it's your job to know that and it's your decision'. Senior management, with a similarly primitive and wrongheaded attitude, ties itself into knots avoiding, almost on an ideological basis, to address the key rule that any deliberate withholding of information or deliberate ignorance is deeply offensive and tantamount to the theft of a physical asset or commercial property from the organisation. There is symmetry: the process that made blame shifting okay also enabled the supervisor in the milk plant to play the 'it's your job' card.

Deliberate ignorance is a very common device used by managers to dodge potentially career-damaging situations. Not knowing is thought an acceptable excuse to dodge responsibility that leads to blame being conveniently shifted to others. There are cases of managers of production plants not walking the factory floor from one week to the next. The excuse is that, rather like the children of the owners of a great house ordered to stay away from the kitchens, so it is a good idea for a big boss not to stomp around upsetting supervisors and junior managers, out there making things happen.

Long ago, in large houses if you felt peckish and went to the kitchen and took some food out when the servants were away for a couple of hours mid-afternoon, the danger was that the Cook would then have to work out who might have pinched the food. An innocent act could cause inadvertent mayhem in what was a productive workplace requiring control, a fair hand and day-to-day self-discipline as much as any required arising from performance shortfalls.

The big boss found a convenient excuse for their own ignorance and this doubled up as an excuse to blame others when things go wrong. By giving those on the work floor 'a free hand' necessary to avoid micromanagement or interference they clearly failed to flourish and produce the goods despite the sensible and trusting management style of their boss. But when something serious goes wrong, it seems absolutely fair and just to seek out someone junior who clearly abused the trust and good management of the office bound boss and so deserves to be replaced by another potential scapegoat.

This rather nasty arrangement is all too common. Management by blame thrives on excuses made by senior managers apparently saying that it is a strength not to walk the factory floor, despite the fact that it leads to their greater ignorance which leads to poor management, unnecessary junior management turnover and, sometimes, desperately poor morale, avoidable stress and misery. Many private sector employees in the UK laugh at public sector staff on massively better conditions and pay complaining about stress. What they do not realise is that, though they may suffer from aspects of poor management in their occupations, many public sector staff live in a world swamped by negative office politics which turns what should be highly rewarding, productive work into a quagmire of waste, insecurity (despite apparent unsackability) and unhappiness.

The illusion created by senior managers' deliberate ignorance is one of power. They appear safer in their jobs because they can easily shift responsibility in an inappropriate but accepted way. When this is done, it is often labelled 'blame'. Management by blame is a side effect of managers who are doing what they can to protect their futures in an environment where how organisations really work is not understood... worse, where there is a deliberate ignorance and opposition to learning about better ways of doing things.

The machine gunner was not blinded by enemy action. Far worse, it appears that sheer terror has created illusions so strong that he lost touch with reality. Shell shocked, other soldiers have to risk their lives to drag his desperate hands off the weapon so they can remove him in the hope that reality might again be known as he comes to his senses. When mismanagement becomes so serious that blame can no longer be used to avoid responsibility, the delicate task of removing a senior manager is, in some ways, as critical and career threatening as that faced by those rescuing the gunner from his terror.

It is absolute impotence to wildly fire with no knowledge of who or what is on the receiving end. Exactly the same applies to managers taking decisions without information. Many, refusing to walk the factory floor will use informal information channels to keep in touch with what is going on. How these are formed and the patterns they weave are vital to animate organisations. Without them, productivity would fall like a stone and all life would be gone, leaving companies hopeless and extinguished. Organisations cannot exist without information flows as much as they cannot exist without distribution of authority to request that things be done.

The Soviet Army found out very quickly that if you removed signs of rank, insignia, from military uniforms disruption quickly followed. Similar signs appear across most organisations in one form or another. Sometimes, they can appear laughable, but they do help staff to know how to negotiate and approach people within. In Unilever in the 1980s, at Birds Eye Walls, I learned this to my cost.

We were humble grade 13 junior managers whose duty it was to order large lorries around the country in, hopefully, an efficient manner. We had hundreds of them. Five of us sat in a ring passing lorries to one another and determining how goods and products were moved across the UK. Telephones rang like crazy, sometimes with all 8 to 10 incoming lines blinking like fury when things were busy. One day, two staff went off sick so I had to manage two areas of the country at the same time. This was easy enough but it did involve hurtling across the room from one desk to the other. Choosing the lazy way, I simply pushed on my desk and let the wheels on the grade 13 chair do the rest.

The plan worked well for a few hours until one of the wheels snagged on the umpteenth dash across the room to answer a phone call. Over I went, hitting my head on the corner of a desk. It was quite painful but work had to go on. Only, later, did I realise that it had narrowly missed doing serious damage. The next morning, thoroughly fed up with myself as much as with the chair, the offending object was pushed to the wall and I sat on a visitor's chair.

These things were thought fit only for the lowest of the low or for transitory use, by anyone who did not matter to the internal pecking order. I was oblivious to the looming upset. My act has caused two problems. First, it appeared that I was showing disrespect for a long established system determining status. Second, even more serious, a spare grade 13 chair was going begging.

The point of such signs in that environment is that they indicate how much individuals are *thought worth listening to*. Listening is thought to be more worthy and more valuable a behaviour depending on the seniority of the person saying something. If the signs of status are clear, and you know how to read them, then life is made easier. If some idiot grade 13 chooses to on a grade 11 visitor's chair, and a grade 12 ends up not treating a grade 13 as they should, the situation is bound to cause avoidable confusion and upset.

There were many signs of status:

a dividing partition between your desk and others;

if your office had a door;

if your chair has wheels or arms... if it has wheels and arms it was one up on just grade 12 wheels;

whether you had pictures on your office wall;

which of the 5 staff dining rooms you were entitled to use;

if you shared a PA or had one to yourself and so on;

They all spoke volumes to staff and helped them deal with what was a well-run, in the circumstances, but poorly managed company compared to the potential had the organisation benefited a more sophisticated understanding of how things really work.

The staff dining rooms were: visiting drivers' and cleaners' canteen; junior supervisors' and managers' cafeteria; grade 15 to grade (I think) grade 22 dining room; senior managers' dining room and directors' dining rooms. It is utterly staggering that such primitive arrangements persisted in the 1980s in what was one of the best run companies of those years.

They had worked for generations to finesse the nonsense required to make the business work half well. But they failed to bite the bullet and sort out the information landscape, discipline and control to master the politics which form the nervous system and brain of any animated organisation. The corporate entity of that company was relatively under control and made a clumsy but half-competent reasonably potent showing in a world full of many far worse managed organisations. Its

ability to do so well without sorting out the politics is a mark of incredible success in the circumstances.

The modernization of Organisation

If things were better organised and the nervous system of the corporate body clearly revealed, monitored and understood, so much more could be achieved. One of the huge benefits would be to remove the need for a chunk of management time, experience and developed skill making a primitive method of organisation work as well as it can in the circumstances where its nervous system is ad hoc, faulty and, even worse, unrecognised and usually secret either made so deliberately or by denial.

Organisations spend far too much time and effort keeping themselves together maintaining a ramshackle secretive and, often, faulty information system failing to maximise the potential of fiscal or human authority at their disposal. 'Fiscal authority' is, in this case, in the form of capital from investment. It lends to individuals authority to ask and expect that things are done and to acquire the necessary assets to run an organisation.

It is a shame that there should be so much stress as people struggle to make things happen and to get results. Many find their working lives blighted by the side effects of an unregulated and poorly controlled information landscape. Their lives are unnecessarily unhappy. Owners and senior managers will often say that you need an instinct to do well in their positions; they are proud of special skills which enable them to manage in an unregulated and partly secret management world. Similar pride, again suggesting instinct or 'seat of the pants' is often claimed from those who appear to have the seemingly magic ability to make better recruitment decisions than others.

Both cases share a link. Running an organisation without a revealed information landscape requires significant political skill. Managers need to sense how information flows, the strength of relationships and much more before making plans, taking decisions or preparing for the reaction of individuals, groups or, even, of other organisations reacting to the inevitable change the World imposes on human lives and their creations.

It is essential, whilst recruiting, to sense and judge the ability of the potential manager to be able to handle and come to terms with the political information landscape within they are expected to operate. Recruitment or promotion of any manager to any post where they cannot hack it would be a futile exercise. However technically competent, however good they may have been in a more junior post is irrelevant if their political skill is not sufficient to ensure success in a more senior position. Someone used to sailing a dingy across a small inland lake would be totally out of the depth in heavy ocean seas. There can be exceptions, as in the case of the small fishing boat, *Mystery* out of Newlyn that sailed from Cornwall to Australia in the 19th century. Exceptions do arise; they are rare but minds should never be closed to them.

When recruiting for management positions among the absolute necessities should be the appropriate level of political skill for the position. Making this assessment is often unconscious and

is frequently described as being 'seat of the pants' or using instinct to help pick the best person available for the job.

Running organisations using such apparently amateur and unquantifiable apparently unteachable 'skills' is a poor substitute for getting to the heart of things, revealing what is going on and then getting a thorough understanding of what needs to be done. Pages to follow will reveal the nature of the nervous system. They will show how this vital political skill can be taught, developed and used in a highly positive way, instead of the present situation where its existence is often denied. It is highly fashionable to automatically condemn any suggestion that office, organisation or company politics could possibly be considered as positive in any shape or form.

Because there is a way to uncover how things are being made to work does not mean that the system has to be employed. The point of revealing a system, in this case, is to provide mental experiment, exercise or demonstration of the existence of the political information landscape and a perspective providing the foundation necessary to counter all those who have an intuitive, ideological or vested interest to deny the absolute reality of politics in all human organisations.

The aim of politics is to obtain power and benefits from power. The material is information, its use and abuse in relation to authority to empower or disempower according to the formula: Information and Authority permit the exercise of Power. Like it or not, politics in one form or another exists from quite small organisations to the largest ones including, of course, where some naïf people think it exclusively exists, in government and major Political (capital P) activities.

Seen as an inherent part of organisations, it is easier to understand the power struggles between Civil Servants and Ministers; shareholders and directors; senior managers and trade unions and so on. The way information and influence operates and revealing how it operates, even if no particular information landscape is revealed, would be sufficient enough to consign the monstrous and negative taboo that has prolonged modern shamefully primitive and grossly mistaken views of organisation, almost wilfully persisting, over the last 100 years.

We have made massive advances in so many areas yet one of the most critical and simple advances has stubbornly and persistently refused to come to the surface. Bad management is well known and is a cancer on entire economies. Organisation after organisation is abused for personal enrichment instead of as a place to get genuine satisfaction from contributing to success whilst gaining the respect of colleagues and decent, appropriate pay in exchange.

Once the body corporate is animated with an ordered and sophisticated nervous system, information will flow efficiently enabling it to see, understand and apply knowledge, skill and judgement. Then organisations will be able to turn into an army of enterprises transforming entire economies from semi-chaos and waste to highly efficient, well-informed and productive entities.

The potential gain of bringing information under control is vast. But, first, we need to understand more about where we are now, how to reveal what is denied or missing and then, by a metamorphosis show the source of corporate power.

The trip will take us beyond what is an astonishing achievement that we can do anything at all given the present ignorance about how organisations work to what we could do if the contribution of the information landscape was revealed. That is, how information flows and influence works- to be able to greatly improve productivity, profitability and eradicate massive unhappy unnecessary stress from the lives of countless millions of people.

Yes, this is some claim.

Metamorphosis

Military structure

Origin and purpose.

In the early 1990s, I was in the US chasing up progress on what turned out to be a disastrous investment. We all make mistakes and this was one which was as large as the amount it, fortunately, taught me. The person 'working on me' to try to stop litigation and an end to his scheme, took me to various sights in his efforts to impress me and calm my natural desire to sort things out.

One of these turned out to be a rather sad imitation of an English pub. The other interested party hove into view and, after the usual introductions, we settled down to drinks. He explained how he thought the best way to manage the new organisation. I did not really understand, at the time, what he meant or intended by saying that the usual tree or plan of management was not to be used but something resembling circles would do instead.

It seemed very odd. Unfortunately, I was insufficiently competent to ask the right questions and this strange meeting lingered, as if irritated by something half understood in my mind, for a long time afterwards. It is bad news being 'done over' or conned once, although often forgivable. But being caught out a second time in the same way is a very different matter. The reason why I was in the US was to find out and to consider if we should close down the operation before all was lost.

I came home convinced that it was worth going on. This was a mistake. It turned out a futile and wasteful exercise and we all lost money, some of us, quite large sums. I had failed my partners and had been thoroughly 'done over'. This, of course, made me think very hard about what had really happened; the last thing I wanted was a repeat experience. I like to think that all was clear and that I had learnt something very valuable, albeit it at some considerable cost. However, those circles haunted me. He said he had learnt about it from his days in Japan.

With this in my mind, by coincidence, a couple of years later I joined a company which was part owned by KDD of Japan. It was involved in business publishing in the Japanese Language. I suspect my position as a non-executive director was largely ornamental but the opportunity to sort out this enigma was too great to waste.

On his many trips to Japan the MD had taken to playing squash with senior managers in Japanese corporations. After a happy lunch, he suggested they played a game whilst discussing this and that as the ball flew in that wild fashion when driven by those preoccupied in things more than the game but possessed with a burning ambition to win at whatever they do.

During the conversation, interspersed with smacking the ball around the court and the usual noise associated with such exertion, the MD managed to get a very useful bit of information which he obligingly fed back to confirm what I had suspected could explain the circles. Even better, after the game, he was given a plan of organisation for Fuji Sankei that had circles and resembled something a little like an orrery or picture of the Solar System.

The key from that game of Squash was radically simple and demonstrated my efforts to dispel the enigma of the circles were correct. This apparently alien, impenetrable way of planning and running an organisation held the key to where the standard view of such things in the UK and the USA was so desperately primitive and incompetent. The circles were not a solution to our shortcomings but in understanding how they worked, they shed a light on what we need to do to escape imprisonment in a view that has stoutly refused reform or any significant criticism for well over 100 years.

That Japanese manager should, perhaps, have kept the secret. Our MD had been prompted by our discussions and had, in those moments when both were taking a short break to catch their breath, said: "Is this the way it works?" Perhaps good manners or, simply being off guard, led him to reply... "Yes, we do things that way." It was the greatest gift of my business life and confirmed there is a way to do things better. The nature of this secret will be revealed later; it is as simple as it is remarkable.

An inherited structure from the Military.

Understanding how and why structures develop can be helped if you first consider the purpose of the organisations. The army exists to kill, terrify or deter an enemy. Ideally, it should never fire a gun or kill anyone and even better, it would be ideal if it should never need to exist at all.

The presence and need for the military is signal of the inhumanity of the way the World is arranged today. What to do about this is not the subject of this book. The military is, largely, an organisation to process the enemy if it has to act, or an organisation to provide a warning to those who may have inappropriate or lethal ambitions. It can, of course, be abused by those intent on miserable, corrupt or simply fantastic and wrongheaded objectives. The purpose of the military is, still, to process.

From this was developed the command and control system. Authority is vested in different ranks from the Generals at the top to private soldiers at the bottom. Each rank has its signs of status and

each has its own defined part of the army over which it has authority. Planning and strategy are done by the top ranks, organising further down, issuing directions further down and before the private gets their marching orders they 'controlled' by corporals. The mantra was Planning, Organising, Directing and Controlling.

To get the information to do all this, it was necessary to use spotters, intelligence, and feedback from senior officers viewing military actions. These sources were formal and those providing this crucial information were clearly identified and were, usually, given the status necessary to be considered worth listening to either by occupation or from their rank.

Soldiers in the front line do not gather information by speaking to those they are intent on terrifying, shooting or simply taking out of action. They are often quite unable to see what is going on beyond the small view they have from the lines. Any private having 'ideas above their station' was usually severely and swiftly put in their place regardless of what they had to say. It would be impossible for one person, so the rational went, in their position to have anything useful to say beyond reporting that there was a particularly effective gun emplacement in such and such a place. Any ideas about tactics, new ways of winning skirmishes or, worse, some idea about a new way of breaking through were bound to be based on nothing more than ignorance. In this basis, 'having ideas above their station' was to recognise that the thoughts and suggestions of most soldiers on the front were best to be ignored by their officers and were, at all costs, never to be imparted to the General Staff.

Meanwhile, spotters who could see much more, passed on useful information about the location and nature of enemy forces and much more. Aircraft took pictures that were far more credible than the ideas of front line soldiers, spies provide valuable information along with useful bits and pieces arising from prisoner interrogations. Even with such useful sources of information, the military organisation needed a semi-formal method of ensuring that officers could not create information bubbles or empires hiding from their peers and senior officers the truth of what they were getting up to.

In the Middle Ages, many battles were won or lost when critical allies suddenly decided to swap sides. Richard III suffered such a fate at Bosworth Field thanks to the actions of William Stanley. The sudden switching of loyalties at critical moments have shaped history, time and time again. To do this it would be critical that not the slightest sniff of the danger should reach the King. In a smaller way, right down to small groups of soldiers, similar potential exists. This danger dogged medieval armies and created an atmosphere where confidence and fear were hugely significant factors that could easily cause a massively more efficient, well equipped and better fed army fall to radically less impressive opponents. Rumour and blind panic found fertile ground in an army so poorly controlled, dependant on the confidence and motivations of heads of the bands to whom large numbers of soldiers held absolute loyalty and who knew that the slightest disobedience to the leader of their band would be considered treason and lead to their death.

If any such person were to know of a plan to change sides, they would have no way of communicating that to those who needed to know that information. If they attempted to do so, such an act would almost certainly end up with their death administered, either by the leader of their group or, ironically, by higher authorities enraged by anyone daring to question loyalties.

A modern army could not tolerate such potential indiscipline. The change came in the Cromwellian period and the advent of the first significant standing army since the Roman occupation. The logistics of feeding a large army become more demanding, the longer any army is in one bit. It makes sense to make the best use of all food acquired by sharing it out and making sure it is most efficiently used; more than this, it is a military priority to make sure the very best use is made of food supplies. This simple priority caused the beginnings of centralised and planned messing. It was a short step to arranging different messes determined by rank.

This had the useful effect of enabling contact between different bands or groups that formed the evolving army. Now, people from one part could associate and discuss things with those from another part as they fed. The logistics of efficient foraging, processing and distribution of food had an interesting impact on the nature of information flow.

If an officer was 'out of order' or, worse, contemplating switching sides with all his subordinates, such a plan was much harder to keep secret when all reporting militia were to share their meals with others who reported to other officers. This happening, it was easy for a word or, even, a careful indirect implication for others to pick up on problems with officer loyalty. Any soldiers sensing such betrayal was afoot would be highly motivated to have quietly reported what they heard to their immediate superiors and so on up to those who shared the same mess as the delinquent.

The officers could, then, sort out one of their own. This simple development enabled the army to maintain discipline and avoid the need for soldiers to make any direct approach to deal with situations where their officers were planning something grossly disloyal and dangerous to the objectives of all. The information stranglehold was broken in a hidden but highly effective manner where it was necessary. In cases where incorrect information had been supplied, the source would pay a high price, ensuring that such avenues of information were sparingly used and only if absolutely essential.

The army had developed and partly institutionalised a system that made an apparently highly rigid command and control structure work. The shared messing system provided a key part of the nervous system necessary to ensure a highly controlled and efficient use of military potential; it enabled that potential to focus into power. Officers tempted to be disloyal were highly aware of this internal system and its presence, alone, did a huge amount to dissuade treachery. The information bubbles and enclosed information empires that so beset and corrode productivity in modern organisations were of considerably less significance and many believe that the messing system as used by the British Army for three hundred years was one of the key reasons for its success. It enabled discipline by providing for information flow from all ranks to act as a brake on any who might have had plans to act against the objectives of any military action.

Control, confidence, morale and discipline are key to military objectives. Leaders cannot manage these without good information flow. The strength of the military arrangement was that part of the information flow system existed as a consequence of organisation and how soldiers were fed. This bypass arrangement was almost overt and persisted in much the same form as soldiers of all ranks came and went. It was an excellent addition to ensure that the processing that the army had to do was performed efficiently and that the necessary control and discipline was maintained.

Discipline, a taboo word in modern management theory, is intimately dependent on information in a passive and active way. Information is vital to maintain discipline but discipline is vital to ensure good information; discipline and information flow are two sides to the same coin. Good information flow is dependent on the ability for individuals to by-pass information strangleholds when necessary. On the face of it, many would be quite upset claiming that exactly the opposite would apply. If subordinates take it into their heads to bypass their officers and speak to commanders directly, the argument goes, how can an officer take a decision if it is to be monitored and if they are in danger of being micro-managed by their commanders? The argument seems to justify that a level of ignorance in superior is justified in the name of a right to take decisions without the knowledge and / or interference from others and to be judged only on results.

This is a weak argument. Because someone more senior knows what is going on does not mean that any interference is needed, would be justified or would be wise. They can reasonably pass the information provided by a junior rank to the officer concerned with no comment and with no orders. Information has no rank or status. Some information is more critical, but that should not itself restrict its circulation.

However, there is a major difference in the way information is considered between military practice and well run civilian activity. It is a poor but all too common approach for civilian behaviour to mirror military practice in this respect. The military approach tends to be that information should be kept secret as a default position with only that necessary to meet the need to know of each soldier to operate successfully. 'The need to know' is the test. In well run civilian organisations where there is no enemy, the test should be exactly the other way around: '*The need not to know*'.

Information can appear harmless but when different bits of information are collated and are known, many apparently harmless bits of information can provide crucial military intelligence. With this in mind, it is a sensible plan to default to secrecy as a rule without seeking any justification beyond the principle of 'why risk telling people things they do not need to know?'

The command and control structure was made to work well for a long time. Armies process enemies and potential enemies, they do not talk to them thus the need for extensive information flow systems from the front line all the way back to the general staff was quite restricted. More significant was the need of the general staff to be aware, as close as possible in real time, of the state of morale, behaviour of the officers and the level of confidence in the mass of soldiery. Good information flow could smell out the lethal whiff of panic sufficiently quickly for swift action from commanders to prevent local dismay turning into a firestorm of terror fuelled by little more than almost tangible ghosts of a terrifying and unstoppable enemy assault.

Information flow is equally important in peacetime activity but it works to different ends. But the modern assumption of the command and control system in business and elsewhere creates quite radical and, often, destructive results. Organisations appear to turn in on themselves spending huge amounts of energy and wasting human lives trying to make an inappropriate system work in an environment to which it is utterly unsuited. The miracle is that, despite this, anything gets done at all and speaks to the ability and sheer dogged determination of many modern managers that they have been successful when lumbered with such wretched legacy.

How the military is organised is radically inappropriate for what makes other organisations work. Where discipline can be maintained in an army, using the similar method of organisation elsewhere causes radical damage to information flow, undermining discipline with inevitable consequent ignorance. It needs repeating: Information is vital to maintain discipline but discipline is vital to ensure good information; discipline and information flow are two sides to the same coin.

Information bubbles and Authority

As large-scale manufacturing and non-military activity developed in the 19th century, the command and control structure was adopted for want of any alternative. It created a system which often lacked the information by-pass arrangements such as in the army and lacked messing; at the same time, the objectives were different. Where the army is largely a processing device, manufacturing is intended to be a productive activity to meet existing or potential demand.

The two objectives are very different. Speaking to an enemy is absolutely forbidden for the vast majority of military personnel. Speaking to customers is a very different proposition. Successful business learns about the market from its customers and, ideally, should suck information from every employee coming into contact with customers to work out what is wanted, how the business is doing and to ensure that what is made will be made to the right quality and be saleable at a profit.

This is a very different activity. Where the army uses spotters and specialised information gathering, business can actively collect information from virtually any legal source it chooses. However, those businesses strongly wedded to the command and control system imported from military practice, often end up seeing their employees treat the customers as if they were the enemy. A military way of arranging things can, sometimes, appear as if by magic to create the attitudes and outlooks that would be healthy in serving soldiers. But customers are exactly the opposite.

They should be treated not only as the people who ensure the future of all employees and the organisation itself, but as vital sources of information to make that project more likely to succeed. The military does have customers in the same way, they are not the soldiers of those it is fighting or those it may fight, the customers are the all those back home; the customers are those who have paid for the guns, tanks and uniforms.

The difference between what the command and control structure is designed to do in military application and what is needed for success in non-military application is enormous. Yet we have been struggling for far too long trying to make what was a huge success in the army do the same thing for productive activity in civilian organisations. It is astonishing that we should be unaware that the command and control system, adapted to process and, if necessary, ensure the death of people, should be considered adequate for use in productive activity where killing people is quite out of the question.

In the middle 1980s, a large transport company was delighted to win a key contract to employ 80 on road tanker work across the UK. They had just lost a major contract and this new opportunity was hugely welcome. They thought using exactly the same equipment as used for transporting volatile

acids would be an easy conversion to use as milk tankers. After all, milk, although quite toxic to plant life if spilt in any large quantity, was hardly like fuming nitric acid. It all seemed so easy and plans were made to clean out the tanks check them over and put exactly the same kit straight onto bulk milk transport. Had ignorant managers bothered to ask or had the staff felt it possible to tell, a very serious mistake could have been avoided; but it was not to be.

The tanks sailed out and at the end of the first day all seemed to be going very well. Each time the tanks were steam cleaned and chemically cleansed before reloading. (Something like hydrogen peroxide did the job). Day 3, in that hot summer, saw the beginnings of a commercial disaster. It started off with an apparent taint in a couple of loads. Day 4 and half the fleet was delivering unusable milk. The drivers knew the reason as did the supervisors. They knew it from the moment the first tank was loaded.

Mineral tankers used to use screw valves. These operate rather like a tap (fawcett) with a stem that raises and lowers. Milk tankers should never use screw valves to load and discharge, instead, they use butterfly valves. The difference is in how they are cleaned. A butterfly valve swings so it can be cleaned. A screw valve has a stem that cannot be totally cleaned when open because the stem is partly raised in its collar.

In this way, a tiny amount of milk remained even after the most thorough cleaning. Any amount of milk can be ruined by a few rogue microbes. Exactly this happened. The organisation had more than enough experience and knowledge in its ranks but because it was thought offensive to question the directions and knowledge of a manager and even more offensive to 'go behind his back', silence watched as the inevitable commercial catastrophe unfolded.

Had someone spoken up and the catastrophe was avoided, their reward in such an organisation wedded to an utterly inappropriate management system would have been to have been effective dismissal. Loss of face is one of the worst negative features of the command and control system although, mercifully, its excesses are ameliorated depending on the cultures and practices of different areas and countries. (This problem is rampant in much of UK healthcare).

There are thousands of similar examples that are recounted by people who have been obliged to work through the semi-chaos caused by trying to make the command and control system work in an application to which it is unsuited. Into this chaos have marched generations of management consultants, many saying they have magic pills to restore the body corporate or, even better, to lend it a new vibrancy and potency. None of these quacks have had either the nerve, honesty or will to identify the real problem that the method of organisation itself, the command and control structure, needs to be radically supported and considered as allied to another structure which has, for too long, been hidden from view and denied its critical contribution.

The transport company had, in its determination to apply what it thought was good management, created a rigid command and control structure. The information bubbles were contained and were mini information empires. There was no way for the truth to rise up from lower tiers to prevent that simple and catastrophic error. Drivers and supervisors looked on helplessly as events unfolded. They knew what was going to happen where highly paid managers in their Jaguar cars were utterly oblivious. Information has no status when it comes to management grade or authority. In this case,

key information that could have saved what turned out to be gigantically costly was known to supervisors and drivers, some paid 20 - 30 times less than the key person who really needed to know this stuff.

A direct consequence of the desperate and focused determination to make the command and control system work was to generate critical ignorance leading to ignorant decision-making, impotency and waste. The more they tried to make command and control work, the more such efforts seemed to imply that they believed, in effect, that 'ignorance is strength'. This is the heart of the problem in much of Western business; it is rubbish at controlling information flow and making the best use of the information within organisations. The use of knowledge and expertise available in many companies is appallingly inefficient, representing both as much a massive potential as it is a shameful, needless and appalling waste.

Discipline and information flow

"Information is vital to maintain discipline but discipline is vital to ensure good information; discipline and information flow are two sides to the same coin." And the question will arise, how can this problem be overcome? It is worth looking at one method used to encourage information flow from a country that had a bellyful of some of the very worst excesses of military practice which brings me back to the secret let slip on the squash court.

The trick is as clever as it is simple. Teams of limited numbers of people working on allied projects are held responsible collectively with one ultimate priority being that they must keep their bosses informed of everything they need to do their work well. It is an ornate, human nature neutral system in that those with a tendency to selfishness may be tempted to work to kick out others with similar leanings so to better enjoy the efforts of those not so negative. What really happens is that the selfish tend not to bother because it becomes very clear that such attrition will end up with all being weeded out, either by their own efforts or the final survivor being pushed out by the hard working members of the team, fed up with the poor performance of the last survivor. The selfish are obliged by the system to act as if they had a more useful natural nature.

In addition, this arrangement manages to square the collective with the individual. In the event of a team not working well with poor communication, it is the duty of the team and whoever is excluded to report to the boss that the team is not working. The individual is as much responsible as anyone else in a team to keep the boss informed. *The good can drive out the bad* or neutralise selfishness and teams can be held collectively responsible without disrespect for individuals.

This process has the effect of sucking information towards more senior managers. This is radically different from the struggling world of information strangleholds, information bubbles and secrecy that dogs so many primitive organisation structures used by organisations in the Western World. The Solar System appears, partly, from the merging of the information landscape and the authority chart. How this works is the subject of the next few pages.

Information Landscape.

Method of data collection

The information landscape extends throughout an organisation and consists not of information itself but of the routes it takes and those transmitting and receiving information. Although some routes are very infrequently used, their significance can be very high, despite tiny volumes of information.

Information can be imparted in high compression and in low compression. Its significance can vary from the critical to marginal. Information can be verbal, written, electronic, digital, and in other forms. All these are part of the information landscape. The nervous system of a corporate body can be immensely complex but a simplicity persists between individuals based on respect and trust. This provides for fundamental principles making the information landscape coherent and also offers a method of demonstrating its existence, bringing it out of the shadows and into public knowledge.

It is so revealing that some will argue that such transparency could critically damage existing organisations that have gone some way towards perfecting, in as far as it is possible, working with the existing primitive view of organisations shadow boxing and constantly attending to the reality of organisation politics without openly admitting of their existence. Even as I write this, the wasteful futility of doing this absurd exercise, all for the want of honesty about organisation politics, constantly interrupts my thoughts. The best way to start is with a demonstration of how to reveal the information landscape of an organisation, how the secrecy can be stripped away, and how structure can be found from what many see as a quagmire of soft intangible and unteachable social relationships. It is utterly astonishing that no one appears to have done this before. Now for the demonstration.

A consultant or some neutral outsider arrives and asks three or four people from different departments in a business to do an exercise. They are instructed in the basics of what is required and are reminded that accuracy in as far as they can provide it is absolutely essential. They will know that their colleagues or others who may know something about the area they will be revealing will be providing some information in the same field.

It will be said that the management values those who have a good view and idea of relationships in the organisation so the more accurate and extensive the information provided by an individual the more senior management will be likely to be impressed with that person. The aim of this approach will be to limit a tendency to 'game' the exercise to cover up or deliberately to sabotage results. If one of the chosen people presents radically different results to the others they might, perhaps, be asked to have a good think and try again.

Each person is asked to estimate strengths of trust and relationships between individuals in the organisation and attach a numerical value to these. They are presented with the plan of organisation but without any lines, leaving individuals floating, alone, on a piece of paper. The value of the line on, say, a scale of 1-5 is determined by how much two individuals rate each other.

It would be quite possible for an MD to rate a doorman or chauffeur very highly yet not speak to him for months on end. The value of this and any rating should be set on the lowest of the two ratings

between two people. If one rates another more highly, use the lower rate. The doorman may make an oblique remark to the PA of the MD that he saw the Financial Director arrive worse for wear out of hours to leave two hours later with a bundle of what appeared to be photocopied paperwork. This sort of information can be of massive significance.

Network revealed and Quantified

After the exercise is complete, the data is collected, gaming is sorted out, and the results are merged. The resulting system of lines of different values is the first moment the political information landscape is revealed. The next step is to add up the value of rating lines that terminate into each individual. This establishes a political pecking order that can be viewed as a hierarchy of influence both potential and actual. How much this list differs or matches management grade or authority status offers a good indication of the relative impotence, potency or wasted potential of people in the organisation.

Those with a high management grade, whose rating does not match, are vulnerable because they do not have the support and information channels to ensure they can safely and effectively use the authority at their disposal. Those whose rating matches their grade are in a position to get the things done they are expected to get done. Those whose political ratings are above their authority level might be usefully promoted; left as they are, they can become a liability.

In the worlds created by primitive organisations, the sad observation that incompetent people too often get promoted over the competent can, now, be explained. It is a waste of time and unfair to promote the most technically competent and operationally skilled if they do not possess the necessary political skill and rating to be certain of success in a more senior position. If promoted, the danger is that not only will they be open to being set up, framed, unable to work the system to get results, but that they will catastrophically fail. They will lack the eyes and ears of political allies and friends developed in respect of the usefulness and security that a boss offers who has the political skill and standing to do their job well. (See The Rainbow Portrait at the start of this book)

Without the right level of skill to engage with and help create the hidden information landscape, those promoted out of their depth are doomed to drown. Better someone lacking much of the ideal levels of knowledge, skill and operational ability who, at least, can survive than to promote a top class operator who lacks the necessary political skill. Ideally, of course, a combination of both is what we all seek; these people are as rare as they are valuable.

From a wider perspective, it is possible to get a good idea of the health of an organisation as a whole. The extent that its managers can exercise the authority at their disposal effectively is a measure of their potency. Consider all the managers in this respect and you can get an idea of the relative potency or impotence of an entire organisation. It is spectacular that such a simple exercise can reveal such a fundamental and critical fact.

Pattern analysis and Information Status

Aside from information ratings, patterns can be detected. Some may be well known, where others may have existed undetected or even deliberately camouflaged. I shall cover a few typical patterns here, but there are many others. It is odd, however, how often patterns repeat, time and time again.

It is common practice to promote someone to a position where they are sufficiently incompetent or unsuited that they are open to removal from that post at any time. They can keep their job in return for providing information to their sponsor. The deal is simple: you keep your job in return for spying on your peers and whoever else and feeding that information back. The 'worth' of the person in that job, or value they contribute, is considered as a package with spying services right at the top. Sometimes, such people are given unpleasant names such as 'brown nosers', crawlers, and so on. Their real title should be 'spies'.

Use of these creatures is very common. They are often necessary to overcome the information bubbles and strangleholds that notoriously damage organisations and persist, thanks to the connivance of so many Academics. They wish to please vested interests and have a genuine, quite well-founded fear of the consequences of a head-on assault on 'business as usual'. Those made wealthy by manipulating and working the present incompetent, primitive and dangerously destructive attitudes may not take kindly towards people trying to make organisations work well.

This negativity and fear can be overcome by presenting a new way of understanding how organisations work offering radical competitive edge that will offer those clinging to primitive ways the choice of either economic extinction or admission that there is a vastly better way that organisations can be made to work in a productive and happy way. In many ways, vested interest is making money out of unnecessary waste and the unhappiness of millions of people. This project is that radical.

It is fair to say that many who have spent years, even decades, learning how to make the existing system work will feel genuine fear of the new outlook. Years ago, I knew someone who drove engines for a living on the Southern Railways in England. He was one of the last steam locomotive drivers in the 1960s as the final demise of these primitive monsters of transport arrived. They were shunted off to the scrap yards with a few lingering, sadly, on preserved lines chugging forlornly up and down short strips of track where, once, they hurtled down main lines terrifying small children on platforms of provincial railway stations.

I asked him if he missed the old engines. He answered "yes, and no." He missed the skill and the pride in being able to coax something so primitive and elemental into doing its job well. A good driver and fireman could charm a locomotive to do things that average people would be quite unable to do. They had a feel for the engines and were in tune with their moods, awkward behaviour and with the equilibrium necessary for adequate effective control of what was moving furnace, a vast bulk of super-heated water and steam and a complex of massive moving metal components hauling hundreds of tons of rolling stock.

But, he said, the diesels, 'though dull, were a far easier life. He mourned the loss of skill to his job and the satisfaction of making a huge machine work, but after only a few days on a diesel, realised how much things had improved. There will be opposition to a major shift in how organisations are seen to work, for similar reasons... even from the most positive and productive people.

Others, less positive, perhaps more compromised or, even, corrupt will bitterly struggle to preserve the primitive outlook that has permitted them to ply their trade. These people work an organisation and deliberately, systematically exploit its weaknesses for personal gain. They are more parasitic than symbiotic.

There are cases where managers joining organisations from the outside have been canny enough to spy how things are done and, in their early days of work, match the existing management style. Rather than reject the use of management spies they either adopt those who were employed by the previous boss or recruit their own. This ensures harmony with the existing culture, style and ways of doing things starting off. To go in all guns blazing, refusing to act harmoniously, (albeit in harmony with a discordant situation) is often a recipe for failure. The trick, then, is gradually to manage to remove the necessity for reliance on such devices as the organisation is rescued from the problems that caused the necessity for recruitment from the outside. This could be seen as a symbiotic relationship where the newcomer is benefiting and gradually the organisation also benefits as the excesses of the past cease.

In some cases, the patterns revealed can explain quite a bit. For instance, an MD could have a strong relationship with a middle manager who has a single strong relationship with someone on the shop floor. This pattern breaks the usual rule where management spies, normally, only have one strong rating link because everyone distrusts a spy. In this case, there is an information highway, right from the bottom right to the top. It bypasses several information strangleholds and offers a potentially high-speed information source for someone 'right up there'.

A question may arise about the quality of a fleet of new trucks about to be approved. A couple are on test. The formal pitch to buy has been put to the board by the company engineer, (who could well be 'friendly' with the supplier). But the MD could have qualms and may need ammunition to halt what appears to be a rush to a fait accompli. Using the information highway it could be possible, within minutes, to be armed with some very useful information to question the pitch made by the engineer.

Such tricks are rather like drawing the bunny out of the hat. If senior management, engineers included, know that the MD is capable of such magical behaviour then discipline is the order of the day and the tendency to attempt deception or manipulation radically reduces. The value of using spies and information highways to make organisations work where they could, otherwise, be torn to shreds by the greed and selfish ambitions of managers is enormous. Any move to reveal how the magic works could be a major threat to the success and position of senior management and board members who have scabbled their way to the top by making organisations work through the use of highly developed political skill. Even the very best intentioned may balk at the prospect of what will be a massive de-skilling... where the worst and most selfish individuals could easily become incandescent.

Some patterns will emerge which could not be detected by one individual. This will happen where the information landscape provided by one person features ratings which are outside of the ken of another contributor. In this way, a view of the information landscape can be created that could only be provided by a team or by several contributors. Cliques or rings can seem to pop out from nowhere.

For instance: A strong relationship between a warehouse manager, someone in accounts and a sales manager could well be innocent but the likelihood that it is the product of a common purpose to steal is high. Revealed rings provide prompts to investigate. In many cases, strong inter-departmental relationships are well worth further investigation.

Some managers can be highly sophisticated in their approach to their new positions. Rather than work the existing system or try to be in harmony, if they have enough authority, they often act quickly to remove certain key staff. A common device is to remove someone highly regarded as a display of power and as a warning to those who thought they were less secure. These wreckers then import their own network of spies by recruiting them in. The process of recruitment is one good clue to the rating of a relationship.

I learnt this when I was given my marching orders in the mid 1980s in a UK managed company in Saudi Arabia. I asked why and the Managing Director volunteered that as my sponsor had recently died of a heart attack, I was the one selected to go and not someone else who was monumentally incompetent in my place. The fact that I had lost my sponsor was sufficient to see me onto a plane and on my way back home.

Who recruited whom should be on the guidance to those managers used to reveal the information landscape. So, the new boss recruits his chums and other new people and, in the process, imports a political system, a sort of artificial nervous system, to bypass and to overcome the old political landscape of the company. The process usually involves pressure on buyers and significant quite swift change in suppliers drawing in external politics into the frame. This creates a costly and, often, an internal conflict that can persist for many long and destructive years. Rather than take up the job and make the existing political system work, the incomer declares war on the old political system and instigates a head-on fight between an imported new political system and the old one.

The supplier angle is interesting as a degree of corruption is common and is often the object of clique activity. By disrupting 'who supplies what', the process weakens the glue that holds the old political landscape together whilst it strengthens the new imported political network at the same time. The level of sophistication of some of the plans and schemes of managers can be extensive, deliberate and very carefully thought out.

This incoming manager does not consider that old political landscape one that can be morphed or repaired to work better. Instead, he thinks that the old system was what caused the problem without realising that the real problem could have been with the style of the departing boss that created and nurtured the old system. A good incomer forced to work with this primitive view of how things work, will reform and recreate, where necessary, parts of the existing political landscape without resorting to open warfare. Needless internal political conflict has destroyed countless companies.

The massive problem with the primitive approach is that it creates an overwhelming need for superb political skills in senior management to make the organisation work, be productive and profitable in spite of, despite, elemental organisational weaknesses. The aim of all this written here is, partly, to deskill senior management and to open the way for promotion of those highly competent people, all too often excluded from any chance of promotion to senior levels for want of political skill necessary to successfully engage the political information landscape of the organisation.

The aim is to make history the promotion of the incompetent over the competent; to turn organisations so the good drives out the bad; to create a working environment where productivity and happiness replace uncertainty, waste, corruption and, all too often, gross injustice.

Metamorphosis to Power Structure

The command and control structure merged with the information landscape

Organisations running the command and control structure combined with a hidden uncontrolled information landscape manage to get along in most cases but they depend, far too much, on the ability and will of the staff to shape the information landscape to best suit the command and control system and the activities they undertake. There is a constant danger for owners and investors that the information landscape might be turned against the business and towards the sole personal gain of some of the staff involved. When this happens, the effect is can be much the same, in extreme, as the case of a senior director importing their own political network causing a head-on internal war tantamount to a takeover of the political information landscape by elimination and replacement.

In most cases, however, it is not in the interest of existing managers to opt for a total replacement and most prefer to adapt the existing landscape to suit their ends without doing so much as to draw their activities to the attention of owners and other outsiders. There is a strong objective to ensure that owners feel they are in control when they, really, only control with the permission of those who have hijacked the political information landscaped for their own purposes. Meanwhile, the authority or command and control structure can appear little changed throughout all this. Sometimes, a few small changes in those filling certain management posts in can flag seismic changes in the information landscape.

It is worth taking the command and control structure and setting it alongside the revealed political information landscape.

You should then do the exercise of working out the information hierarchy. List managers in order of grade from top to bottom. Then list all the rating sums in another column to the right. By way of illustration add arrows up, down or straight across from the management grade for a particular manager to the revealed value of their information rating. You can do this using red and black lines with, say, blue for where the grade is on a level with information rating.

The result will give a snap shot of the opportunity each manager is able to use their authority in a knowing way to get things done. It reveals whether they can use the authority which goes with their grade or management position. If a manager has a high authority standing but a red line plunging down to a lower information rating, there is clearly a problem. If a blue horizontal, things are as they should be. If a black line going upwards there is danger and potential.

A relatively junior manager with a high information rating has a highly influential position in the political information landscape. Such a person can, if they choose, disempower others by not communicating on their discretion. This puts them in an invidious position. Strictly, they are not supposed to be required to do anything except what is entailed in their job... yet they have the capacity to influence far beyond what should be theirs at their level of authority. Unless an organisation makes it a duty to communicate accordingly, and this is virtually unknown in most Western organisations, the choice remains solely and freely with the individual unfettered by rules and regulations. As such, this can turn a junior manager into a wild card making an organisation that much harder to manage. Frequently promotion solves the problem as much as to make use of their undoubted skill in working the information landscape.

The number and extent of deviations from the blue will indicate how unhealthy the organisation is. It will show the waste of potential as well as the waste of authority either through indecision or decision making based on ignorance, surmise or simple guesswork. The very process of revealing the information landscape and doing this exercise will offer prompts and guidance of what might usefully improve the situation.

Experiments can be done by removing or shuffling people around to see what happens to the overall power rating as determined by the red, black and blue. Knowing something about new recruits and existing staff, it would be possible to hypothesis how they will fit into the information landscape and what impact their presence will make on the overall power rating as well as what their personal power rating might be.

This explains the seat of the pants question that is nearly always asked but that is often not expressed: 'Will they fit in?' So we have consigned another so called soft, unquantifiable and unteachable aspect of recruitment to history. You can get a very good idea about how someone might 'fit in' before their first day at work.

There is at least one other factor worth mentioning being humour. That is, humour in the wider sense of the word well beyond slapstick joking, perhaps more in the sense of La Comedie. How people rate each other does often involve a mutual appreciation of each other's humour. It often provides shading to language and nuance which can speak volumes without saying much in a literal way. Humour can be very significant when speaking in high compression as well as indicating understanding and a will to help, especially when a fear of blame threatens.

It is a long established simple management practice in transport companies that when a driver reports back after a lorry crash, the standard approach is to sit them down, give them a tea or coffee and then say something like, 'tell me all about the bump'. If the driver has just written off his lorry, this deliberate under-statement provided by humour is saying... 'do not worry we are not out to get you' without saying a single word to that effect. If people can laugh at similar things and use similar

techniques to communicate without saying things then the chance of them rubbing along well is high. Similar aspects are also attached to the contentious area of 'taste', but that had better be left untouched for now.

As corporate entities begin to understand how the command and control structure is related to the information landscape, so the relationship between the two structures can be managed with the aim to maximise power for the organisation. After a time, a new de facto structure is revealed from a metamorphosis. The metamorphosis is more to do with how people understand, create, relate and control organisations and is not, really, to do with the two existing structures. They constantly disintegrate to metamorphose into something entirely different.

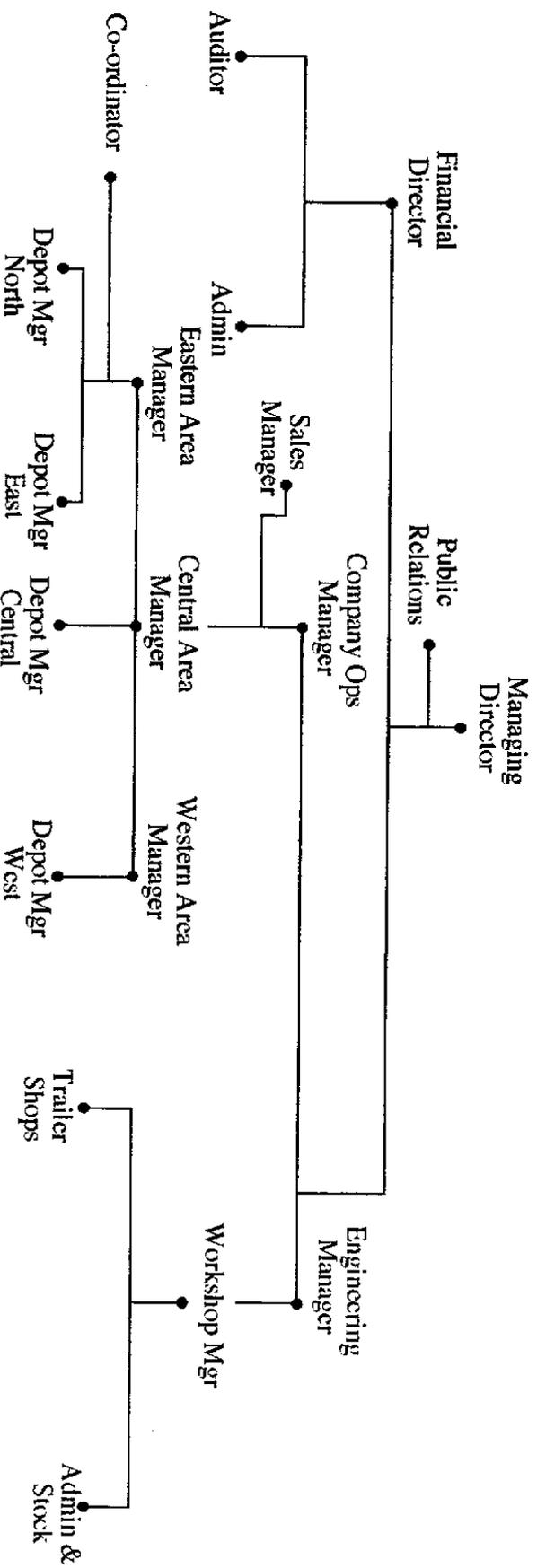
All plans of organisations and information landscapes are unreal. They are products of human relationships and the arrangements we decide should apply to how we relate to one another. They are as real as ghosts are compared to the dead weight of huge rocks, the fury of the wind or the heat of the midday sun. Although these arrangements are unreal, they are very important because they enable us to cooperate efficiently and, hopefully, productively, safely and happily.

The combination of the command and control structure and the information landscape creates a power structure for an organisation. There is an ideal form to a power structure and the extent this structure deviates from the ideal reflects the wild partly controlled wandering and flailing of limbs of the ill formed partly human creature instead of the ideal of a calm, controlled, creative, kind and positive person. A badly deformed power structure indicates a corporate entity close to death in a dangerous and wasteful condition; a well formed power structure shows that the skeleton and flesh benefit from a highly developed and appropriate nervous system and brain working in harmony.

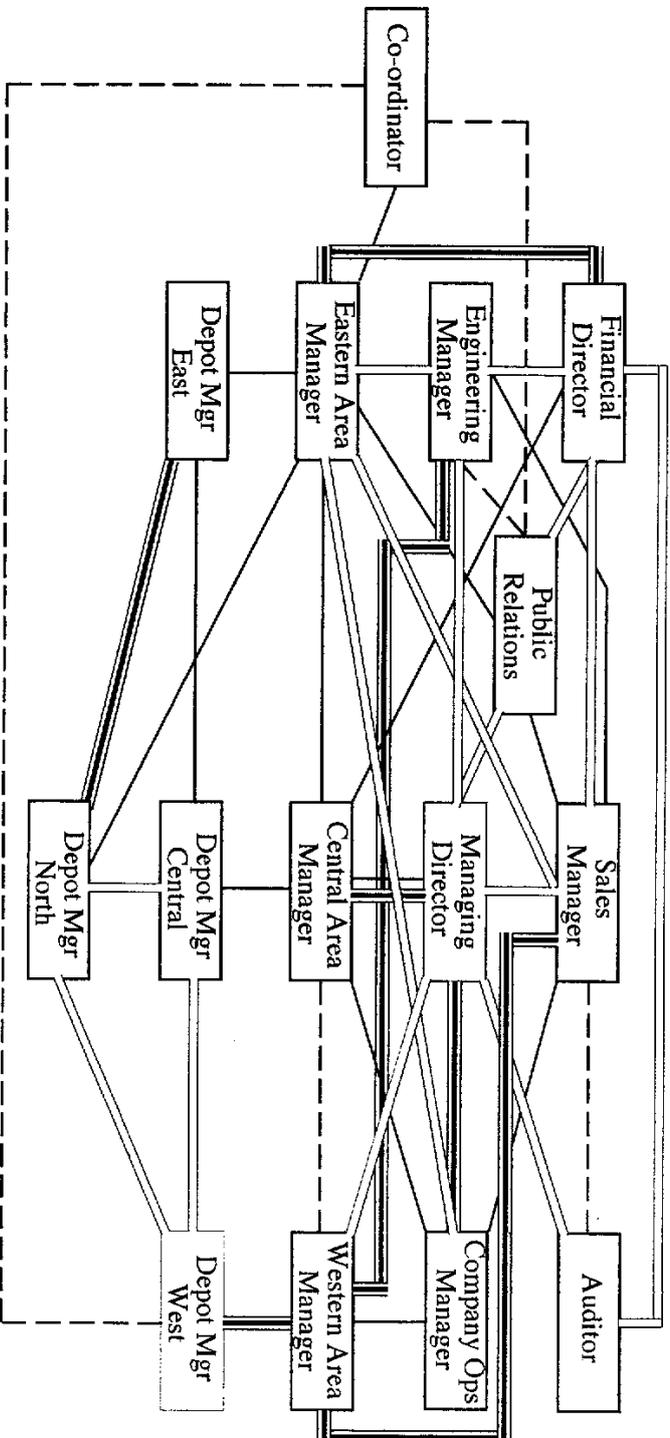
However well organised and controlled things are, an organisation will never be conscious or possess a mind of its own. That speciality rests with the people within. It provides the creativity and imagination and consciousness necessary to decide, develop and progress.

Organisations arise from humans appreciating the advantage of cooperation. It is worth taking another look at how we force the command and control structure into working in an unsuited environment where processing has been replaced with producing.

Authority Structure



The Information Landscape



Line	Relationship	Value
Dotted	Contact	5
Single	Acquaintance	1
Double	Friend	2
Triple	Good Friend	3
Four	Crawler/ secret lover	4

eg. For Depot Manager East:
 Information Status = 1+1+1+3=5

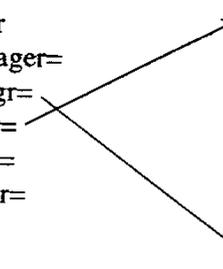
This table shows how the authority levels and information status stack up in this example.

Levels of Authority

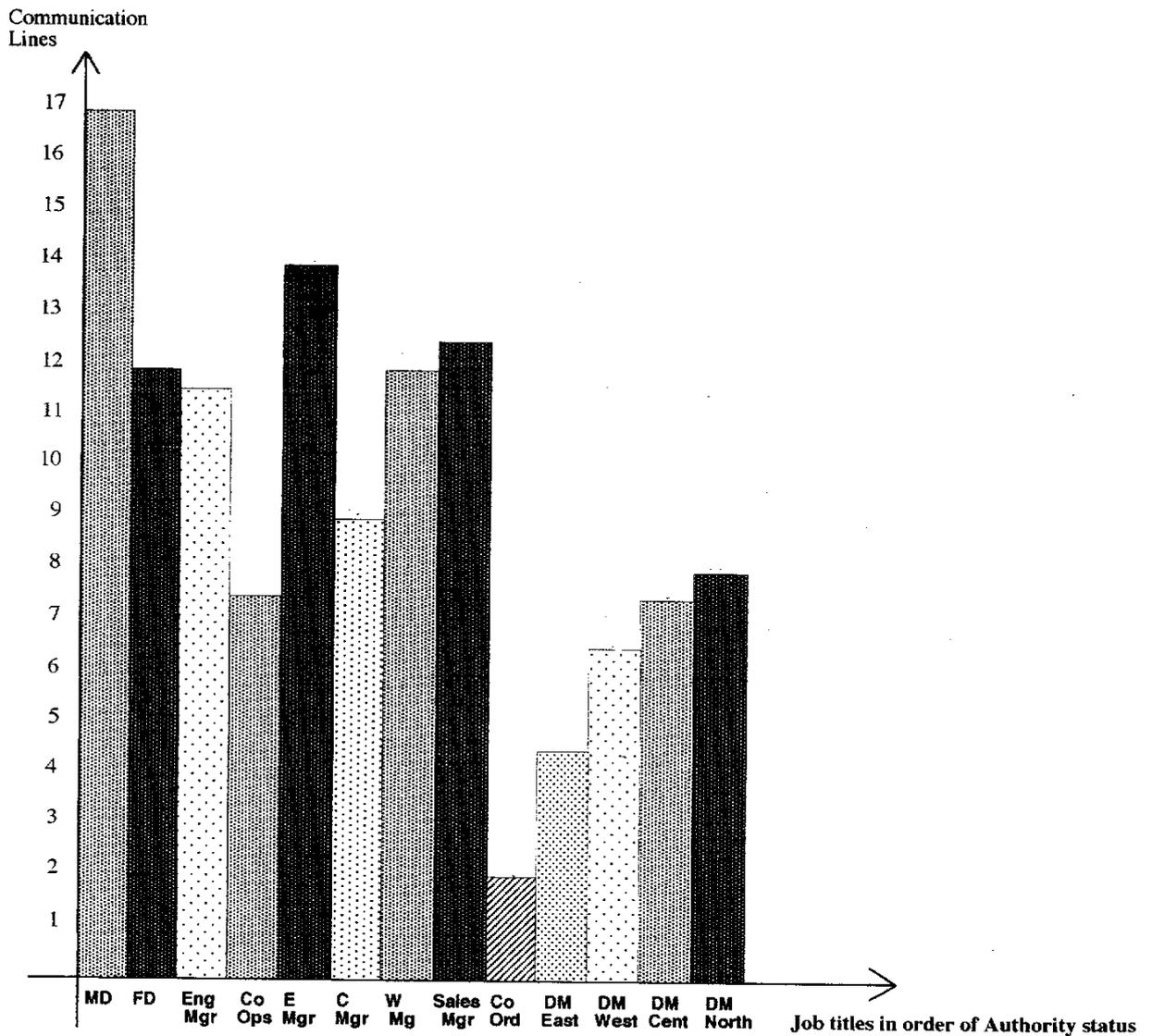
1. Managing Director
2. Financial Director
3. Engineering Manager=
3. Company Ops Mgr=
5. Eastern Area Mgr=
5. Central Area Mgr=
5. Western Area Mgr=
5. Sales Mgr=
9. Co-ordinator=
9. Depot Manager East=
9. Depot Manger Central=
9. Depot Manager West=
9. Depot Manger North=

Information Status

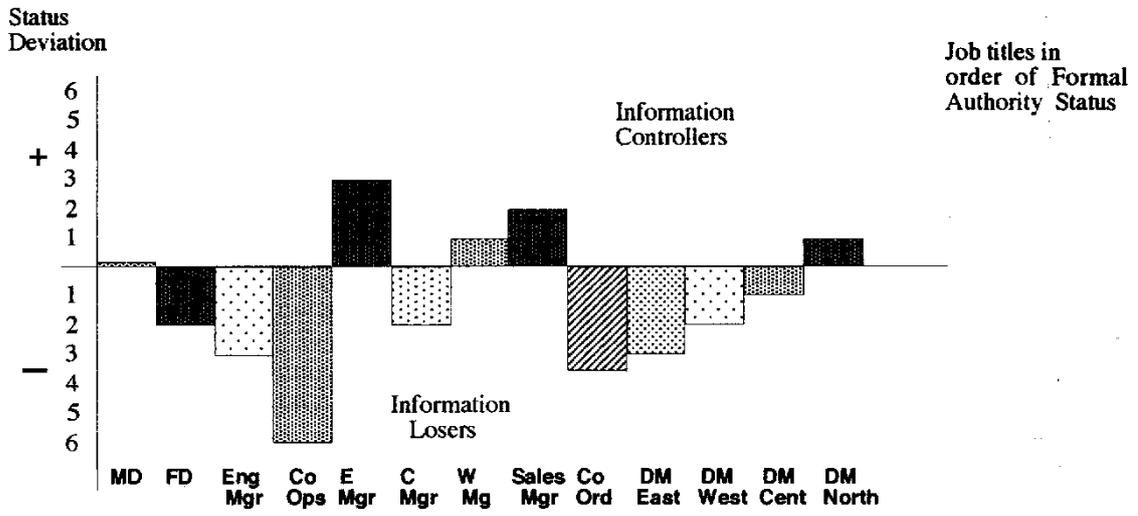
1. Managing Director
2. Eastern Area Manager
3. Sales Manager
4. Financial Director
4. Western Area Manager
6. Engineering Manager
7. Central Area Manager
8. Depot Manager North
9. Company Ops Manager
9. Depot Manager West
11. Depot Mgr Central
12. Depot Manager East
13. Co-ordinator



This can be shown more clearly on a bar chart



A deviation chart makes the matter even clearer.



THE POWER STRUCTURE AT WORK

THE LANDSCAPE FROM ANOTHER PLACE

I nearly killed myself tinkering with an old radio set in the 1970s. It was on a bench alive with its valves (tubes) glowing, the back had been taken off and a 14 year old was poking round its innards trying to locate a faulty contact. Every so often, the speaker would burst into life and, then, as quickly return to an unhelpful silence. Meanwhile, the high voltage required by those primitive devices continued to surge around the set. Had I been aware of the danger then, I should have preferred to be outside kicking a football about.

But those machines held a fascination. They appeared to be partly magical in that nothing appeared to animate them but they managed to pluck sound and music out of thin air. It was a dying world of triodes, tectrodes, pentodes, screen powered tectrodes, anti-degeneration resistors, large transformers, low tension, high tension and all the strange things of a technology largely consigned to history.

I used to gaze at large triodes almost thinking in the dim light of their orange glowing heater elements, that I could see the electrons as they streamed across the vacuum from cathode to anode whilst the grid would slow down the flow with the help of only a tiny change in its electrical charge. It was a switch but it worked without you being able to see it working. Looking into the back of the radio you could see a cluster of these wonderful, slightly strange devices glowing as if alive taking invisible waves from the air and turning them into noise.

I poked my screwdriver around and the magic started up as if I had waved a wand. Had I been more focused and understood more about how the electrons flowed around this device, such wildly dangerous tinkering would have been replaced by the systematic checking of components and joints aided by a meter, test devices and a large dollop of care. An experienced hand will often be able to detect bad joints in this way; experience would also have told that many problems with these radio sets are created by condensers, and some other components, simply 'going off' with age. Replacing these items often causes the thing to spring back to life.

Construction was, sometimes, so poor that one Television manufacturer to the west of London in the 1950s had to construct a parallel factory to mend and service the sets it had sold. Yes, I also tinkered around with old TVs. Things were more free in those days and danger was largely considered to be found out rather than created by any omission of others.

It was only a matter of time. I remember the feeling as if a large hand had hurled me across the room and the slight smell of burning flesh. Waking up on the floor I saw the ceiling and everything seemed quite silent. The smell seemed quite strong. It took a moment or two to get upright, collapse into a chair and see where that strange burning came from. On the ball of my left hand was a deep v shaped burn mark.

The radio had become quite angry with my ignorant intrusion and when my screwdriver slipped, a burst of high voltage found its way on to me. The left hand was on the bench, keeping my balance,

and underneath were the ends of two small screwdrivers in a v shape. The bench sat on a concrete floor and I was wearing rubber-soled shoes. The electricity romped, fortunately, around my body and found the best way to Earth through my hand.

It is strangely appropriate that this is called an electric shock. Even, now, after over 45 years the mark remains on my hand as a reminder. I did not understand or respect what was going on and how that radio worked. My ignorant tinkering could have been lethal. Inside that device, electrons flow in strange and interesting ways. They cannot be seen but they are there; we have created something to make these invisible things do what appears to the eye nothing less than pure magic.

Harry Beck was employed by The London Transport Executive in the 1920s and 1930s. He knew how electrical circuits worked. He would have been quite at home with the electrical schematic of that radio that took such a dislike to my ignorant tinkering. These diagrams are not literal, they are not wiring diagrams. They do not directly relate to the actual physical dimensions or locations of the components but they do show how they are connected up and they identify each component. The diagram does not reveal the flow of electrons but someone who understands how the parts work will, by looking at the diagram, know how they will flow.

Beck then took what, today, appears to be a very simple leap of the imagination. It seems so simple that it is hard to understand the enormity of the advance when it was finally accepted and implemented. Beck considered the current map of the London Transport Underground that was not schematic displaying station locations geographically.

The Underground Map of the day was easy enough to read and use if you had an intimate knowledge of the conurbation, even so, it was not the best of tools. Stations in the centre of London were close together whilst those on the outside were widely spaced so creating a tangled confusion in the middle and substantial open spaces to the outside.

Beck knew that the tangle resembled what you see when looking at the underside of a radio set chassis, the aluminium stand that the glowing valves, transformers and big items sit upon. He knew that a wiring diagram is very different from an electrical schematic. The same treatment was applied to the map of the London Underground creating the first topological map of a transport system in the World.

The authorities were very timid and felt that it was likely that this idea was not going to succeed. However, after some delay, a very limited trial was arranged which proved the point. It was hugely popular. We now think that such a way of displaying things is common sense; it is hard to imagine the time when it was considered questionable and, almost, too difficult for the public to grasp or understand.

People were not, it turned out, that much bothered when planning a trip around London, about the relative distances between stations or how they were situated on a real map. London was the destination and the Underground was considered, more, as if corridors or links from one place to another. Planning a trip was mainly concerned with making sure you knew which lines to use and where to get on, change if need be, and where to get off. Geography could be ditched as long as the essential information was retained.

The conservatism that found the topological map a challenge was partly created by operational focus rather than a focus on what users wanted from a map of The Underground. Geography is a huge issue for people actually running the system; it is as significant as it is insignificant for those it serves. People consider it as a means of getting from a to b. As the time of travel is relatively short, most do not factor it into planning their trips.

A similar lack of imagination arises when the existence of organisation information landscapes is demonstrated. The challenge is greater because there is little or no admission or recognition what animates organisations and causes them to be productive. Reasons for this have already been suggested.

Information flows around an organisation quite regardless of levels of authority. Its significance in detail or in quantity, again, has no direct relationship to management grade or authority. And this political information landscape that moves information around much as electrons were hurtling around that dangerous radio, is alive and active in all organisations. The radio shocked my nervous system in a way that can be paralleled to individuals who tinker or upset huge organisations today.

No one should be treated in the way that whistle blowers and others are victimised, smeared, hounded and disgracefully treated when they break the golden rule 'you shall not go behind your bosses back'. There are some shocking examples of this in the UK, particularly in the National Health Service. But how have things come to the point where those revealing healthcare scandals are treated as if pariahs. How have we managed to permit the hounding and destruction of good peoples lives who were providing information which should empower those responsible to mend and improve things?

THE RISE OF THE BARRIER CLASS

So many of the difficulties and failings of the modern age are caused, not by the force of nature, plague, famine or war but by a failure to manage effectively. Giant institutions behave, in part, as if they were squalid cheats, thieve being callous and without a drop of care for either customer or those who rely on their assistance.

Much of the anger of the age is in the form of a deep and searing disappointment in the behaviour and attitudes of institutions once highly regarded and held in great respect. How they have fallen from grace. Scandal follows scandal and yet, as if by some magic trick, no one appears to be held responsible. Instead, we are treated to virtually meaningless repeated mantras, because use had debased the currency, excuse language. We are told, repeatedly by people rolled out to explain the latest debacle, that 'lessons are to be learnt', and so on. What they really mean is that absolutely nothing will change. The noises are only to smokescreen an almost total paralysis and consequent lack of care and careless ignorance.

Those enmeshed will feel that if they care for such disasters, what good will it do them to bother about something that cannot and will not change? What good will it do to become upset over or try to change what appears to be a fait accompli that the same mistakes, debacles and failures are bound to repeat time and time again? Trapped in such a cage, it is only natural for people to grow callous and cold towards the fate of those minced by the organisations who employ and damage their employees in such a manner.

There are, of course, many people with a disposition to unkindness and who possess callous attitudes. The desperately sad thing is that those who go with the wind, who form the vast majority of humanity, when so trapped can act as if they, too, were naturally as unpleasant and unkind as the worst part of humanity. The saving grace in all this is that, regardless, there is the third part of humanity that will be kind despite, in spite, of everything thrown at them.

All organisations of any size have a fair share of each of these types of people in their workforce and they all have to be catered for out of respect for their natures. Sadly, this does not happen, so causing organisations to distort and twist as those who form them attempt to make things suit the way they are.

The ideal is to arrange things so that people are in harmony with their work or whatever they expect, or are expected to do, in relation to others. The unkind can work alongside the kind, the callous next to the caring, the selfish next to the altruistic; all this is possible. Looking around we see some quite upsetting examples of how things have turned for the worse for want of good management and good organisation.

Recent years have seen the rise of what appears to be a new class of people standing outside the traditional view of the way things work. Their exploits arise as a by-product of the current persistent refusal to modernise a view of how organisations work and were extensively covered in previous pages. These people are normally apparently free from responsibility and unsackable as well as benefiting from massively higher rates of pay than that enjoyed by their predecessors 20 or more years ago. They are on the boards of many FTSE top 100 companies, at the head of Banks, in senior ranks of public services such as the NHS, heading Quangos and throughout senior appointments in local authorities.

They have worked the system to the point where they have radically increased their pay and, at the same time as if by magic, have radically reduced all for which they can be held responsible. They luxuriate with obscenely high salaries, considerable authority yet, it appears, that they are held responsible for very little. What a convenient and lovely arrangement for those who are out only for 'number one'.

The mechanism they use is to control information flow to selectively empower and disempower those who have authority over them. This can extend to shareholders, politicians and even to those 'dangerous journalists' who could tell people what is going on so unchaining the power and anger of a chunk of the general population. The journalist is the messenger who provides and empowers those who read the press. They, too, can choose to selectively empower and disempower others.

It is a mistake to claim the press has power. Its influence is based on its ability to inform or give relevant information to others. Once 'in the know', the paper does not have any power, rather those who can do something with the information have the power. The same rule applies here as it does in a company where drivers may know all about the mistake on the milk tankers but, unless the information gets to the right person, the debacle will happen. The press has a major task to prevent repeated debacles by informing interested parties and, generally, the population as a whole, of what they need to know to ensure they can act to protect their interests, or in extreme, to protect their fundamental rights and be necessities of any stable, safe, just and well organised society.

At the top of so many organisations are those unsackable people. They are highly adept at operating the political information landscape and have an almost spider like sensitivity to what is going on from the sophistication, extent and their control over a disciplined and extensive part of the information landscape locked up and under their absolute control.

Shareholders and politicians, often, do not stand a chance. They are held almost blackmail by these people as they dribble selected information to their masters and paint a picture that they want their masters to see. Meanwhile, some politicians have made things even worse by compounding the tendency to bad information flow by pressuring that even more secrets are kept from the public. This is the state of the NHS.

To prevent the truth from getting to those who need to know so they can manage well, this barrier class which is parasitic in some ways simply intimidates all those who report to them to maintain their silence. There is a history of gagging orders, careers brought to an abrupt halt, unfair dismissals, smearing of reputations and much more all to enforce secrecy and to disempower and prevent the good management of the NHS. The obscene irony is that lawyers have cited that gagging orders were to ensure or 'protect' the good name of an organisation being held hostage by a small number of selfish callous greedy takers. This 'protection' is really there to ensure their ability to dodge responsibility and to disempower and leave investors or politicians in the dark.

The more this happens, the less the employees will be willing to say a word against appalling people. Meanwhile, investors or politicians know virtually nothing about what is going on, reducing them to indecision and impotence which is exactly the position the Barrier Class wants. They have set things up to become, largely, unmanageable and, sometimes, almost out of control. They are careful never to go too far, otherwise that could force someone to take a leap and sort them out. They dance a sophisticated, manipulative cunning and selfish quadrille, running rings round their superiors whilst stamping with cruel force on anyone who might even think of blowing a whistle to reveal what they are getting up to. They find rewards from deliberate bad management. This is the ultimate and self-defeating result of management by greed.

The Barrier Class, in effect, extorts a dividend or 'cut' from public investment just as senior bank staff happily deprive shareholders of dividends in favour of stuffing out bonuses or inflating their salaries. The old private v public sector debate is history. What we have is a new political class that gains its wealth from manipulation of a poor view of how organisations should be controlled and how they work, whilst refusing all responsibility. They use politics to increase their wealth and to dodge responsibility for any of their actions, so ensuring tenure, whilst, strangely, not wishing to rule or manage at all.

The aim of these people is personal gain. Promoting or continuing inefficiency and a steady state of controlled waste, chaos and unhappiness is the ideal arrangement for this pursuit. The constant mantra of that the public sector is inherently inefficient and makes blunder after blunder is a smoke screen for the reality that many of these apparent blunders are nothing of the sort; they are either directly deliberate or they are useful, both as smokescreens. For some reason, we seem to tolerate blunders as if they were not as offensive as, say, theft. The reality is that a 'blunder' made by a highly intelligent, competent person is nearly always nothing of the sort; it is more likely to be a criminal act of engineered waste for the purposes of personal profit.

The occasional blunder is possible, and they do happen, but for senior management benefiting from great privilege the rule in the case of 'blunders' should be, 'guilty until proved innocent'. If you take up a position, there are responsibilities that go with status, pay and other benefits. The way we see managers and how they are to be held responsible are all part of the problem.

The country is being held hostage to this new class sluice-gating information at its discretion to manipulate and control those who should be in charge. They turn their masters into puppets and so major corporations, public services and, even, parts of the Civil Service. Perhaps, even the Police, often call the shots. They reduce politicians and owners to helpless onlookers.

This process first started in earnest in the public sector and, then, it infected the private sector. The situation has become so serious that the ability of the UK government to work as an efficient executive has been seriously eroded. This is not a crisis of authority but it is a control crisis created by the degeneration of large scale information landscapes in the civil service and the public sector as a whole.

Things are not helped when politicians have had virtually no experience of working for any lengthy period in large organisations. They are often unaware or simply inexperienced of the systematic, clever, highly manipulative, often callous and focused selfishness of the senior managers and civil servants on whom they rely. Meanwhile, the political information landscapes of the Banks and other institutions have spread their tentacles in and around Westminster.

Combined, large companies, the public sector and the civil service all pull strings, turning the majority of MPs and the government into as many puppets dancing and pretending to do their duty when, in fact, they are performing a show choreographed and scripted by the internal politics of large organisations touching them on the shoulder as they make their speeches.

To a certain extent, this was always the case and a certain degree of involvement is necessary and positive. But the present situation, where internal politics has run riot, is dangerous.

EMPOWERMENT- LANDSCAPE, DISCIPLINE AND AUTHORITY

This has been touched on earlier but is worth more explanation. Empowerment is to enable power either in yourself or in others. It enables the efficient and appropriate use of vested authority. Information is, of course, the key and ensuring information is available depends, in turn, on discipline which has a feedback reliance on information to operate effectively.

Power is a construct of several aspects producing the ability to get things done. Empowerment is to acquire or provide some or all of these aspects to be able to exercise or realise power. As power is a construct it is more complex than Authority, which is complex enough, and certainly more complex than information.

It is worth considering, first, what authority is and where it comes from. Authority is largely a taboo word in the modern business world. It seems that it is unfashionable, even tasteless, to admit that some are vested with more authority than others. 'Authority over people' has a strange ring to it and if you are a little uncertain of the meaning of the word. Rather than consider some of the worse implications of the potential abuse of authority, the habit is, simply, to ignore the word. Stick it into quarantine for as long as it takes for someone to come up with a half decent outlook to rehabilitate discussions using this essential aspect to understand the way people arrange, organise things in an organisation.

So what is meant by Authority? It is the ability to request and expect that people will do particular things. A boss has, for the sake of example, the right to direct their staff to do tasks which that are defined in their work descriptions. In his turn, he is expected to respect the authority of his boss in a similar way. Authority has to be accepted; its acceptance is usually on the basis of utility although other reasons sometimes apply. It is not tangible and the acceptance of authority is often linked to the wider society and the necessities of its membership. In this manner, one key aspect that holds together most businesses is, essentially, an aspect of the wider society.

On the other hand, the information is very much part of the corporate employer as is the aspect of the information landscape. Information has several aspects and the object of this small book is not strictly operational or technical information but a less immediately obvious form of information. The revealed political information landscape is, in its own way, information. The strength of relationships, the patterns they form, how the whole thing relates to individuals, their levels of authority and how the potency of the entire organisation can be revealed, again, is information.

Information gives us the ability to see what the right decisions might be, just as good vision coupled with a calm mind will ensure that any shots go in the right direction. Empowerment can come about when those with a level of authority stumble across, seek out, or are provided with the information they need to know to be able to use their authority in a positive and effective manner. Ensuring this requires discipline, to mention another taboo word. Discipline and Authority appear to terrify modern management theorists; the words are frightening if you cannot or *will not* take time to find out their real nature.

Once revealed, the negative connotations fall away. Just as with the word 'Politics' 'Discipline' and 'Authority' are neutral words. The aim should be, of course, to ensure the positive use of all three

and to totally reject the modern standard practice of simply not talking about difficult things, really because you do not understand them but on the pretext that they are of their nature negative and best, therefore, to be ignored.

In amongst all this are positive and negative power. Positive Power is where information and authority combine to enable and to realise power. Negative power is the dark side of influence where those who know can selectively hold back information to disempower others on their sole say-so. This behaviour is quite common in many Western economies where often it is thought inoffensive.

THROUGH THE LABYRINTH

(Guidance for managers)

Not ought to is

The purpose of all this is not to try to force a view of 'what ought to be' onto what is. The world will be as it wishes and what is considered is what already is and how things might be better if certain improvements were to be made. It is fine to have an ideal or at least something better to strive towards but it is hopeless to ask anyone for wildly optimistic impractical acts towards the aim of the better.

The power structure already exists today. Organisations can function and some do very well in the circumstances; any functioning organisation has a power structure. Without a power structure it would be impotent and would either be paralysed or would be dead, that is to say it could either still have some hope or be hopeless. The power structures are invisible for three reasons: They are the result of a complex of inputs including authority and information, they are intangible representing potential and, even if all this were not enough, business and the academic world are in outright denial of, even, the existence of the political information landscape.

The academic and business world cannot recognise something because it will not see it. It is close to a straightforward denial of reality and common sense except that, strictly, the power structure cannot be seen or sensed. Although non-sense, never let anybody say that it is nonsense.

The expression for power, Information + Authority permits Power has always been true from the beginning of time. It shall always be true. The extent that conditions differ varies the way it influences the organisations humans wish to use for their benefit. Although some may be tempted to use this outlook to produce a prescriptive approach on grand scale as to how things should be organised, the main aim is to offer an explanation so individuals can better navigate and contribute to the organisations they work for.

Although the theme and content appears highly radical and, even, dangerous to some, it is based on what is going on now and tries to build on foundations to a better World rather than dig them up or

dynamite them and then to start again from scratch. There is a strong element of careful conservatism coupled with a recognition that we need to identify more about what is going on and then to work in harmony with the forces and influences that are around us to get the best from organisations.

This part considers the challenge from the perspective of individual managers so it might be worth getting a bit of perspective before launching into more detailed guidance and observations.

Where we are now

The chart, below, contrasts the different objectives of organisations using the command and control structure. The same basic organisational arrangement is used for radically different objectives.

In civilian life, military aims to triumph and process ‘the enemy’ are anathema. In some cases, the influence of the command and control system is so strong that it has the strange effect of causing company staff to consider customers as if they were enemies where they should respect and build customer confidence, please them and major on service and communication.

The contrast is stark. The simple table below illustrates.

Business	Military
To profit	To win
To contract with customers	To engage or intimidate the enemy
To please customers	To kill or make impotent the enemy
To communicate with the market	NO communication with the enemy
To respond to the market	To find weaknesses and act
To respect customers and build confidence	To terrify the enemy and destroy confidence

To produce items or services of value	To destroy communications, people and items or services of value.
To serve customers and owners worldwide	To serve a nation by subjection or destruction of others.

We all know that the left hand column is stuffed full of ‘no brainers’. All of us have seen times when these ideals are not met and damage to service or business has resulted. Equally, the right hand column must appear as obvious to any military people intent on their duty.

The command and control system is well adapted to military use and we have seen the, sometimes, Byzantine yet highly sophisticated methods used to make the command and control system work in an environment to which it is quite unsuited.

The aim is not to ditch the use of the command and control structure but to make plain the best way of adapting it so that its worse side effects that do so much damage to civilian organisations are neutralised and a new and gigantic potential for better cooperation and greater real productivity is unleashed. Managers have to work in a quagmire of uncertainty and have to feel their way across a political information landscape which is unstated, unrevealed and is often denied outright as existing at all.

The side effect of causing staff to treat customers as the enemy is one of several that cripple efficiency and create so many unnecessary and avoidable difficulties for well intentioned managers, simply trying to do a good job for their employers. They are hostage to a system of organisation that has come from a military past and has the strange capacity to imprint aspects of where it came from onto organisations that could do without such a hidden and inappropriate influence.

The practical task of managers is to work within the existing system to minimise any inappropriate influence or hidden hand of the military past from distorting or spoiling the productivity and potential of their civilian organisation. This is not to negatively criticise the command and control system, it worked well for hundreds of years in military application and is still with us today, but the inappropriate transplantation of that system into civilian organisations has created some huge challenges for millions of managers.

The key is to minimise ignorance and there are some basic rules about information, not so dissimilar to long established auditing practice. See the following contrast:

Consider operational management information rather like an auditor uses the **CRAMP** acronym, i.e.: Who has **C**ustody of assets; who is **R**esponsible for them; who has **A**uthority; how is **M**anagement supervised and what is the **P**lan of organisation?

Custody of information	: Who stores it and how is it stored
Responsibility	: How is information supervised
Authority	: Plan of authority defined
Information	: Plan of information flow defined
Management	: Who determines the two plans?*

***The information landscape and the authority structure**

Managers need to know how people find out what's going on and think about how to make certain the right information will always end up with the right people. It's all about the information necessary so that whoever is involved they can do their jobs to the maximum effect. Anyone who tries to stop this is either genuinely mistaken or has some selfish motivation to stop things from going well.

A lax view of operational information can lead to absurd situations. The obscenity of careers damaged or ended because the person stood up and said something for the good of their company is apparently accepted; whistle blowers are still treated as pariahs. Most staff are fully aware of this reality and a cloak of secrecy descends on many dubious and sometimes disgraceful management practices. To an outsider, it appears that the lunatics have taken over the asylum and the sheer normality of the surface appearance can be quite disturbing.

Of course, the priority should be to treat operational information as company property, to be used and controlled with the same care as any other key asset. Deliberately holding back information to disempower anybody you work with or anyone in your organization is an offensive act of negative internal politics. It abuses the political information landscape and creates avoidable impotence so weakening, not only the manager deprived of information, but the company that employs everybody. What a rotten thing to do.

To sort this out, the first thing should be to try to see how information flows in the information landscape. You need to construct one as covered earlier. Once you have some idea of the landscape it will offer hints of what can be done to change affairs for the better. Most middle and junior managers do not have the authority to change a plan of organization but at least this exercise will make it easier to navigate through and in the very process of doing so, knowingly alter the political information landscape for the better.

A more knowing involvement in the informal and unstated politics of the organization will be quickly noticed by those fortunate to have an intuitive political ability to sense and work the information landscape. By displaying a methodical positive engagement, rather than a passive acceptance, the process will cause you to become associated with what animates the organization. If done carefully, it is a career move second to none.

The point is simple. Information without authority is useless; authority without information is blind. The two are essential for the potency of any organisation.

All managers should consider the other part of the expression for power in a measured and calculated fashion.

Endless reorganisations, tinkering with the authority chart, 'redundancies', and so on will not provide any solutions without reference to the laws of information flow.

They fail to provide the answers, because they fail to address the question. However, you will know how to avoid this dead end and could quickly become associated with a positive contribution towards a more efficient and enhanced power structure benefiting all.

This is the stuff of promotion.

Making things work

The aim is to increase your personal power as well as to increase the power of all those around you and of the enterprise you work for. To do this you need a clear understanding and appreciation of the expression for power and appreciate that not everyone will be bound to think kindly towards your efforts.

There is bound to be opposition to such a simple, constructive and radical project. It is an idea not to go public over the new approach until your position in the information landscape has developed and your information rating has risen to a safe level in excess of your authority status. It is surprising how quickly others react and change their estimations when they spy that individuals are highly competent in the way they handle information and that, as if by magic, key managers or others suddenly become aware or take the right and useful decisions after an apparently entirely coincidental chat with you a short time before.

This is called influence and influence draws status. Status is, among other things, an estimation made by others of how much you are worth talking and listening to. People with status have a high information rating on the political information landscape; they appear to be very useful at helping to get things done but how this happens is, of course, unknown.

The landscape could reveal more. It will demand those empowered by information from the political information landscape not to treat sources in the same way as newspapers treat their 'sources'. The newspapers will go to almost any lengths to protect their sources out of fear that if they are betrayed others will think twice before passing on any useful or newsworthy information for fear of the same fate. Newspapers do not want to kill the golden goose.

Managers receiving useful information do not want to appear puppets of, heaven forbid, more junior people and will do what they can to hide up sources. They do not want to be beholden or to be seen to be hopeless and in the palm of others. This mentality is, partly, a side-effect of the inappropriate use of the command and control system inherited from the military past.

There is a strong need to counter this natural but destructive defensiveness. Changing the attitude towards information flow and discipline could do so much but introducing such a radical step, even on a small scale, would be a leap in the dark even for quite senior managers.

Making things work for average managers is no easy business. However, being aware of the problems and using this new outlook will make things much more predictable and will help prevent innocent mistakes that turn out to be highly damaging to the political information landscape despite appearing inconsequential when seen only in the light of the formal and admitted aspects of how

the business works. Some gigantically embarrassing things have been done by individuals blissfully unaware of the minefield into which they have innocently strayed.

Had they been aware of the information landscape, such minefields would be obvious. Well in advance, better informed and more deliberate steps would ensure they tip toe around the edge, avoid the mines and get on to what could well appear to be a triumph of good management, especially to those who are unaware of the management techniques used to spot and avoid risks and dangers on the way to getting that monumental result.

Yes, it can be really exciting and there is a huge sense of achievement to appear to pull a bunny out of the hat and display an uncanny knack of taking the right decisions. Little do they know, you did not guess, but you applied a methodical and careful analysis and then acted accordingly.

Such methods and skills are key to good leadership. Leadership is not necessarily related to management grade or the authority vested in people. It is a quality that can be possessed of anyone whether they are formally a leader or choose not to chase such an ambition. Being known as someone who gets things done and gets them done well coupled with this special ability is the ideal combination; in this state, people (managers or otherwise) are considered powerful.

On the way, it is useful to consider some detailed rules and guidance to engage with and help form / reform part of the information landscape.

Some rules and guidance

Faced with, at best, a partially known information landscape it is useful to be aware of some basic tips.

When you find out something interesting or new, it is important to suppress a natural tendency to share it with those around you. The motivation can be simply to please others, to be generous or, even, on principle that if there is no apparent reason for secrecy, the more everyone knows the better. Sharing information can be a good way of cementing relationships. Stop before you say anything.

It can appear utilitarian and insensitive, even manipulative to be so calculating but there is a good reason for this.

Before passing on information, try to work out if the other person owes you a favour or sees you as a useful person to request a favour at a later date. This can prevent leakage to those you do not want to know about what is going on. There is a guarantee in this. If the recipient breaks confidence you can choose to reveal something about them, the reason why they originally owed you a favour. In effect, before passing on sensitive information try to ensure that any recipient will not abuse your kind act to your detriment.

This may sound highly calculating but, be assured, it is quite common for people with generous hearts and believers in openness to be betrayed by those with less principled attitudes.

Which leads us on to a second rule: at all times, be prepared for someone to act badly. This is not a distrusting or ignoble view, but it is a sensible precaution. Even the very best of people can sometimes not act in the best of ways or they can handle things in an unintentionally bad manner. Being prepared is not the same as how you actually behave towards them. When dealing with someone thought to be nasty, equally, be prepared for surprises. This approach provides for the

ever present danger of judging those around you and getting it wrong either by thinking the best, to be disappointed, or by thinking the worst and doing an injustice.

When people have done things for you, in whatever manner, including passing on your information in the expected and productive manner, repay them but always in a different way from what they expected. This is important to water down what could develop into a crude trading utility which can corrode or even destroy mutual trust.

Although unpleasant, there will always be those who will 'try it on'. Sometimes, it may be necessary to meet fire with fire and deal with them on their own terms; this has the advantage of taking them by surprise. They normally act only after thinking they have worked out how you operate and think that you will be hamstrung by a refusal to move away from more subtle and, perhaps, more kind ways of trying to get things done. It will wrong foot them when you give as good as you get. Usually, their assumption that you may not have the guts or bottle to meet them head-on often causes them to be sloppy and leaves them quite vulnerable.

Of course, this is a matter of timing. If they are insufficiently careful, they will leave you enough time to work out their technique and method. In this case, you have a good chance to see them off on their own terms. If others become aware of this, and it is almost bound to be the case in the information landscape, they will often be quite impressed. However, it is important to try to be prepared by working out, in advance, the styles and methods of engagement in the information landscape of those likely to cross your path. This will reduce the danger of coming across someone who has deliberately left you very little time to react or work out what is going on.

Yes, you do need to be aware of this sort of thing.

Whatever preparation you may have done, be prepared for 'off the wall acts' and straight forward lack of reason. In these cases, it is often worth waiting for the dust to settle and checking with others to find out the impact on the information landscape.

Careful use of the information landscape empowers people and supports the formal plan of organization. Use of such simple rules, far from destructive gossip and negativity, is essential to animate and get results. This may all seem so calculating to the point of being an oppressive regime; it is worth taking a look at some common symptoms of bad management which need to be overcome to get things done the right way; indeed, they may need to be overcome to get anything done at all.

Challenges

From a corporate perspective you may come across one or more of these general tendencies:

The presence of cliques and corporate tribalism

Corruption

Blame and guilt engineering

Defence of weak and destructive management systems

Apparent incompetence and the promotion of the incompetent over the competent

Ignorance and the bad driving out the good

Corporate deafness

and, the ugly spectres of blackmail and intimidation.

All these are known to exist and you can find several in the worst organization that simply will not die despite a constant and brutal assault on its information landscape. Management attitudes are often revealing. The more extreme, unkind and overtly idiotic, the more weak and vulnerable is the organization.

Revealing attitudes

'I never make mistakes'. Loss of face can be considered fatal; it often leads to astonishing behaviour. If you admit fallibility as a command and control manager you are admitting that you cannot do your job. Honesty is rewarded with attempts to discredit you and weaken your position. Making a mistake is considered to be proof that you do not deserve your post. Officers / managers are never wrong. Even if they are, they must be obeyed making them always right, by definition. Obedience determines what is right in this strange, slightly perverted world.

'I shall always blame someone else'. In this strange world where obedience determines what is right blame usefully restores reality, i.e., that a mistake has been made, so pinning it on someone else is a good plan. Behind this is, of course, an attempted insinuation of guilt which has its own strange and potentially dangerous properties previously discussed. This device is essential to maintain the outward reputation of never making a mistake.

'I never listen to anyone who reports to me'. As you never make mistakes and knowing everything is what makes you the boss this is quite sensible, even logical. It is impossible for any of your team or staff to know better than you and they must never 'get any ideas above their station'. Ideas are not for little people. Ideas imply change which is a very different matter compared to simple information. The boss is the one who makes changes and not the team.

'I shall ignore advice unless the person has the right rank.' You cannot go wrong if you accept the opinions and directions of someone in authority. Might is right and 'what is true and correct' is officially determined by management rank or who says it. The worth of whatever is said is directly proportional to the rank of the person saying it.

'I shall never be seen to benefit from the help of someone more junior to me'. By definition, you already know more than any junior. Revealing that you have relied on them in any way is an admission of incompetence and weakness.

'I shall never admit of the existence of internal politics or the political information landscape'. It is common sense to make sure other people do not know how you operate. They need to be kept in the dark because their ignorance is your 'strength' (really, only negative power), it gives you an edge. Ridicule or use any means at your disposal to shut down discussion or any attempt to reveal or learn about these matters.

'I shall rigorously enforce the golden rule: 'Never go behind the bosses back'.' Make sure that only you can control information going to your superiors or owners; if need be, openly forbid any junior to have contact with your superiors. (Although it would be nice to have this written into terms of employment, that might be a little too obvious). The more they know, the less you will be able to get away with incompetence or any plans you have for personal enrichment at the expense of your employer. Even for the smallest infraction, ensure that all witness the consequences of your wrath. Take all steps necessary regardless of kindness, justice or formal rules to keep the information in your team and all those reporting to you in a bubble and inaccessible to senior management as much as possible. Play along with performance reports and other methods designed to reveal results and prepare, well in advance, to pin blame where these threaten to hold you responsible in any way.

This principle should be applied systematically. If need be, abuse your disciplinary authority to intimidate staff into silence. The command and control system gives you this ability so use it as much as necessary remembering never to over-play your cards. If you go too far, the strange tolerance that most people have for such abuse can evaporate very quickly leading to your departure when seen by your superiors as being as an incompetent command and control manager. This is one of the most common causes of management dismissal in the organisations this book is trying to improve.

'I shall put down juniors who start getting ideas'. Only you can have ideas. Any ideas they may have are not as good as yours, by definition.

'The team shall get the blame when things go wrong and I shall get the reward when things go right.' The team does not support me rather, the team is nothing without me. I shall secretly act against teamwork because its principles could damage my position.

'Don't try to improve information flow by changing the formal structure.' Doing this is to open a Pandora's box of uncertainty and could cause uncertainty as well as endanger your position. It is a much better plan, especially if you are a new appointee, to recruit your friends, promote crawlers and systematically employ management by fear. Again, it is important not to overplay your hand and only use fear where it is necessary to ensure you and only you can regulate information going to higher management or the owners.

You are safe to do much of this as long as preventing information from getting to those who need it to do their work is not seen as offensive or against company interests. As we have already seen at that milk plant, this astonishing lack of respect for the value of information is far from unknown.

These attitudes are strange products of using a military style organization arrangement, the command and control system in an unsuitable application. Knowing them can take most of the upset and, sometimes, gob smacking surprise away when they are first encountered. Understanding why they arise makes it much easier to come to terms with them and to find ways or working that make the best out of what can, quite easily, be a very difficult and, at times, quite unfair and stressful working environment.

Understanding the information landscape and doing what you can to engage with it in a positive way will be immensely helpful and could be a first class career move. There some very basic observations about the political information landscape worth noting. It is another list but, this time, it is designed to help engage and improve personal power as well as the power structure of the business without, with any luck, upsetting or drawing the anger or attention of those who may wish

for no change in the present arrangements. All this should help you feel your way through the labyrinth.

Engaging with the information landscape

Engagement is to become part of what animates the organisation. It permits more use of what you know as well as providing access to information from others. The extent of effective engagement is a key factor in promotion prospects.

The style of engagement varies in relation to management grade as well as to the corporate culture (to be considered in the next part)

Every internal political act at some point by-passes someone on the plan of organisation

There is no relationship between management grade / authority and the value of information. The nature of information is unaffected.

Self-centred aims are not necessarily negative. Politics can help do work better and gain greater satisfaction.

People doing politics are thought, by the old school, to be giving information to others who 'should not have it' or are in receipt of information is not their business.

This is important: two way political channels can threaten formal structures. The information channel should never be the action channel. This contrasts to the way the existing plan of organisation or formal structure is thought to work.

A political act usually is intended to have a circular effect. Information gets to a decision maker and the decision made either directly effects operations or those of someone who will be grateful to you.

The source of any political information should not be revealed and any resultant action should never admit of the trigger.

Formal management structures and the political information landscape depend on one another for their maintenance and existence, in turn, they create an animated corporate entity. And this is the point of it all.

Respecting patterns in the landscape.

The most obvious patterns are created where individuals rate one another highly. Once identified, the next step is to take a close look at the jobs of those involved. Rings indicate a commonality of purpose or objective; as with any alliance or organisation there is usually a method of discipline keeping members together and protecting them from any difficulty or fallout should a member decide to blow the whistle.

Some patterns are not rings but can be identified by other factors. A classic example is there one person has only one strong or high value link, usually to someone of a significantly different management grade, otherwise only benefiting from several weak links. A director or a senior manager protecting the employment of someone who is patently incompetent or someone who holds down a non-job is a very common arrangement.

Once you see the pattern of one strong line and only weak lines the signs are that there is a senior management spy at work. However, sometimes as mentioned above, there is an ornate variant on this pattern where the senior manager has engineered the recruitment of someone of a very junior management grade and arrange them to report to their handy spy. In this case, the result is an information highway or conduit from someone at the very bottom of the pecking order bypassing several strangleholds, right up to the board. .

This arrangement is usually found in medium sized companies. It offers a radical and high speed information source for someone who might, otherwise, have no idea what is going on where things get done.

Another pattern is a triangle or ring clique. Nearly all these patterns have no regard for management grade, rank or level of authority. A typical strong relationship, already noted, between a warehouse manager, someone in accounts and someone in sales is a strong sign that they are mutually profiting to the expense of their employer.

Patterns can become quite complex with diamond shapes as well as pyramids. Each has its own characteristics and each has a discipline attached to ensure information does not leak out and to ensure focus on its objectives. Such rings form small parasitic organisations nested within larger legitimate organisations syphoning off assets or money at will. This process depends on the theft or abuse of information combined with the abuse of authority to generate the power to this end.

To do this, there is a need to disempower their employers by strangling or cutting off information flow in a process designed to create the power necessary for the parasite organisation to meet its objectives.

There is a symmetry. As the legitimate employer is disempowered so the authority of the delinquents in the clique is abused to create conditions necessary for theft, corruption, fraud or whatever is necessary for the objective of the clique.

Cliques operate as mini organisations obeying many of the fundamental rules of information authority and power. It is, of course, very useful to be aware of patterns and what they can reveal. Sometimes, you may see three people who are linked strongly but there is no apparent ring; in this case, it is often worth doing some digging to find out any missing relationships you have not noticed.

One of the characteristics of strong relationships is that there is usually, but not always, some business going on. In many instances, that business is not exactly the same business as that of the formal employer. The beauty of an information landscape constructed by merging the knowledge of two or more people from different parts of an organisation is that patterns can appear as if from

nowhere. The system produces a view of an organisation which is often impossible for any individual to create.

In this respect, the information political information landscape is usually beyond the ken of any one individual but is most definitely identifiable when using sufficient people whose findings can then be merged. The act is similar to the way artillery spotters get a trig on a target. One, alone, may offer some useful information but the gain to be had from merging two or three is massively more than the sum of the contributions. Patterns appear and better assessments of the nature and strength of relationships result from considering the judgement of more than one person.

Should someone who you know is a member of a clique offer you information which appears very useful, but that is not strictly related to your job, you now know not to immediately repeat it to anyone. Look at the clique and work out a possible motivation or plan that caused this to happen. It is important not to act as an unwitting messenger for others and even more important not to be thought as someone spreading damaging rumours and misinformation.

Once you have worked out the possible reasons that, suddenly, although you were not a member of that close-knit group, you were privy to 'interesting information', you can act accordingly. It can be an idea to give the impression that you have passed on the information as they expected when you have done nothing of the sort but this project will need very careful handling as it could upset or disturb the clique and there is nothing a clique likes less than being wrong footed. Uncertainty, or feeling that others are wild cards, can draw unpleasant fire that you can do without.

Another approach is to listen to and, once you have worked out that you are expected to be a messenger, either do nothing of the sort or pass on the message suitably modified. In general, if a clique passes you some 'interesting information' the best default position is to sit tight and see what happens; normally, they note such as a move and either press you again or try to get someone else to do the job, so leaving you in the clear.

This may sound Byzantine and calculating but cliques are highly sensitive to information flow; such rules and methods are at the very heart of how they operate. Do not let yourself become their puppet. If you are canny, you will have established a reputation for being highly effective and a competent handler of information, in this case, it is highly unlikely a clique will bother to come near you.

They, normally, go for the vulnerable, those who are politically unaware either on principle, because they are inexperienced or, simply, because they are too busy getting on with their operational duties and responsibilities to have time to have the awareness necessary to avoid being set-up or used by others less well intentioned.

Always remember to apply these steps. What is the information? Who gave it and why have I received it? Are their motivations generous, principled, malign or was the information given out from incompetence? What, if anything, should I do and what might happen if I pass it on? Who might get upset? What are the alternatives? Do not let yourself inadvertently become someone's tool or puppet.

Expertise participating in the information landscape could put you in a good position for promotion or for an application to work in a new post with another employer.

Recruitment and Promotion

The first and most important key to any recruitment is the matter of control. Two key questions arise: will we be able to control the new recruit and, will the new recruit be able to control those they will be responsible for? In other words, can they be controlled and control others in turn? Unless these two questions are satisfied, job applications receive the firm red stamp of 'rejected'.

The 'seat of the pants' feel often includes these absolutely essential requirements. Loose canons are a disaster for those who have signed off on an appointment as much as they cause dismay and upset in reporting staff and avoidable costs to the operation. Line ratings on the information landscape are automatically quite high between recruit and recruiter even if they rarely speak if at all. These ratings usually last long after both have moved on to pastures new.

Before going into detail, you should know that being asked to leave is frequently nothing to do with your worth. It is not uncommon for someone to find themselves in the exit lounge sitting on a chair still warm from the recent departure of their sponsor. This can happen to people however competent they are because the demands of the information landscape usually overrule points scored for competence, performance or the will to get things done in a professional and proper way.

When your sponsor leaves, someone with an already weak position on the information landscape in relation to their management grade, can find the deviation between what their information status should be to what it really is suddenly increases from uncomfortable to highly vulnerable. When companies 'down size', reorganise and so on, it is common to see sections of the political information landscape cut off and sent packing. These sections do not always correspond to neat compartmentalised activity; although political reality has been satisfied by such a planned departure operations can be quite severely hit as the priorities and prescriptions of the information landscape and its political nature trump operational priorities.

This tends to be most destructive in badly organised companies with a distorted information landscape and more than average disagreement between information status and authority levels. The more impotent the company the more is the damage done when a key manager departs as others follow them in their wake through the exit lounge to other companies. In some cases, the departing boss will scoop up his old chums and after edging out staff in their new business, like a saving angel, will hire his old buddies so taking a significant part of the incised political landscape and planting it into the landscape of another business. In other cases, people are not so lucky and end up having to start from scratch and integrate into new landscapes when they find new employment.

Many people are dismissed or 'asked to leave' through no fault of their own. Political reasons that are completely out of their control apply.

There are several features that recruiters cover, most over-lap into or are entirely in the domain of 'seat of the pants', 'gut instinct',

Listening

Listening encompasses not only the will, focus and absence of ego to block incoming information but it also requires expertise and knowledge to be at home with the language and skills of any particular form of employment. It is essential for control. If you are at home with the language, it is easy to communicate efficiently in high compression with someone equally experienced and able to listen. Two doctors discussing a complex medical matter can cover the ground at very high speed, where many would have trouble understanding the specialist vocabulary, let alone appreciate brief remarks that refer to large amounts of shared experience used to cover ground very fast.

This sort of specific expertise is intrinsic to listening skill and is vital to participate effectively in many aspects of the political information landscape. Knowing the specific language and being able to speak in high compression are key skills and do, of course, vary from occupation to occupation. A significant part of the ability to listen comes from experience, education, training as well as from attitude, freedom from self-importance and an open enquiring and positive attitude. Listening varies from the strategic to the short term.

Strategic listening is useful when time permits you to consider at length. Sometimes, what seems stupid can end up highly informative either because it is not so mistaken after all or because what is said tells you something about who said it. This can help you to appear to 'see around corners' and is very useful for greater control and, where necessary, to manipulate or influence things to get better results.

Short term listening is needed when events will not wait and you have to make a decision quickly. An angry, customer letting rip on the phone, is one example. In these cases, pre-established formulae learnt from experience help cut corners to take the best decisions that time and the circumstances permit. Knowing a customer's sense of humour can be very useful and careful application can defuse the situation and buy time to offer a better response to what could have turned out to be a costly and upsetting row. Sensing when to ease off and when to come on strong are important attributes.

The impact of being at home with the information landscape

This is vital to be able to manage people effectively. It is a mistake to associate consideration of relationships as something a little sneaky and negative; doing this in a positive manner is to respect those you work with. In the process, things like diplomacy and tact often improve communication

but take care. If you have overblown views of your ability, you can end up appearing ignorant and sycophantic instead of an enlightened leader. Effective engagement with the information landscape is key to all successful leadership.

But there are wrinkles. If you someone senses you are a bit too adept at engaging with the information landscape they may feel you could turn into a threat. Should they ever mismanage you, you could well have the tools to indirectly get your own back and, at the very least, defend your position all guns well aimed and blazing. Too much skill can frighten off an interviewer from making a job offer but then, a truly skilled candidate could well be able to camouflage any such weaponry. Recruitment can be a minefield. Many time-served managers suffer from this. It is a common cause of age discrimination.

The 'ideal' age is between about 29 and 38 years old. Over these years managers are grown up and should have the presence, skills, knowledge etc: to do the job but do not have too much skill in the information landscape to become a potential threat to their boss. The boss can keep them in check and, if need be, burn their ambition lacking any way to give people sufficient freedom to continue developing beyond the jobs they are employed to do. This age group is very popular because it usually passes the control test.

When employers show a tendency to prefer younger people, in many cases they are revealing a lack of management skill to get the most from more experienced, competent people. They trade expertise and excellence for control caused by poor leadership skills. Control can trump even the employment of the people with the expertise the market may require. The needs of a poorly controlled organisation soon become paramount with expertise coming a poor second.

This can snowball, leading to marketplace failure with a loss of custom as the organisation demands more and more control over staff and correspondingly less and less expertise from them. Failure is blamed on a lack of control rather than an inability to recruit and use people with the expertise that customers demand.

Humour

Humour can oil the wheels of business and is very useful when emotion appears to leapfrog reason. It can push emotion back to its place behind reason. It will still be there driving things along but will not obscure the use of reason. A well-timed joke or remark is a very effective way of doing this. Unfortunately, people with the least humour and often seeing no need for it at all are quite capable of employing a didactic sledgehammer to crush a butterfly of wit or humorous insight.

Not only is humour useful to manage subordinates, as well as superiors and customers, it is essential that superiors and interviewers feel that the candidate can appreciate it when it is applied to them. When they are becoming emotional and less rational than usual, their superiors will be able to apply humour and manage them effectively. Humour and the control of managers are closely allied.

Expertise

Only when the interviewee passes all these tests with flying colours does the question of expertise come into play. Interview requirements are often circumscribed by the health of the organisation. The less healthy will result in greater emphasis on control and less on expertise. Over the years as an organisation gets more and more control fixated so the first hurdle gets higher and the expertise hurdle gets lower and lower. Some interviewers appear to want it both ways and, rather like the Quest for The Holy Grail, seek the 'ideal manager'.

These beasts are highly competent in engaging with the information landscape but cannot and will not use that ability to protect themselves from any mismanagement by their bosses. They will happily work and fit into a control obsessed operation and yet turn out to first class results. They are about as probable as an accounts manager successfully working an air traffic control desk or a coal-miner, re-employed as a Personal Assistant to a Director of some large company.

Recruiters need to realise the extent control obliges them to compromise on expertise. This will help to ensure the compromise does not swing too far towards control and contribute towards a corporate collapse caused by a loss of power. It will also bring the problems of the organisation into sharp focus. The danger is that as control becomes a greater priority so expertise is compromised with fewer and fewer people left after the first sift to choose from. Recruitment difficulties can tell more about the organisation than the availability of appropriate, experienced and competent candidates.

An unhealthy fixation on control at all costs can create a spiral leading to corporate collapse. Over many appointments, the overall level of expertise reduces. With lower expertise, so the new managers will require more leading. Being less competent, they will be more prone to hiding incompetence. The crawler will become an essential management tool. Thus, the first hurdle will become increasingly difficult to clear as the demands of control snowball.

In the end, many organisations consider control and be controlled factors as trumping expertise every time. This is a classic pattern associated with corporate decay and the reason why companies on the slide are often nests of vipers with managers fighting tooth and nail regardless of the cost to their employers to preserve their jobs and see off all threats.

Recruitment is often a strange and dark art.

CORPORATE CULTURE AND MANAGEMENT STYLE

FREEDOM AND CONTROL

The relative freedom that managers enjoy depends on what the products or services their organisations provide. Control is more critical for some than others. Military activity needs more as do security companies. But there is much more freedom in advertising and media companies.

Management style needs to suit the nature of the business. Conflict can break out even within an organisation where individual styles and the level of discipline required in one activity or department can be very different from that in another.

For example, a publishing company may keep the production team well away from the space sales team. Production is a 'right or wrong' environment. You either get the dimensions of the advertisement correct or you do not, almost no latitude is permissible. But selling advertising is not such an exact activity; of course targets have to be met, but judging when to give a discount or when to stand out and refuse a refund or a rate cut relies on less absolute factors.

If a customer is poorly served, there is usually a way of making amends: a small rate cut, an invitation to a company promotional event, free space and so on. But if the colour register is out and only noticed after the print run, virtually nothing can be done.

Sales people have a reputation as being less exact and even irresponsible, as far as production people are concerned. On the other hand, 'production' seems pedantic and inflexible to 'Sales'. How much freedom you in doing your work depends on how sharply mistakes can be defined and the sort of damage that a small error can cause.

Control is contrasted against freedom in the illustration that follows.

Corporate Culture and Management Style

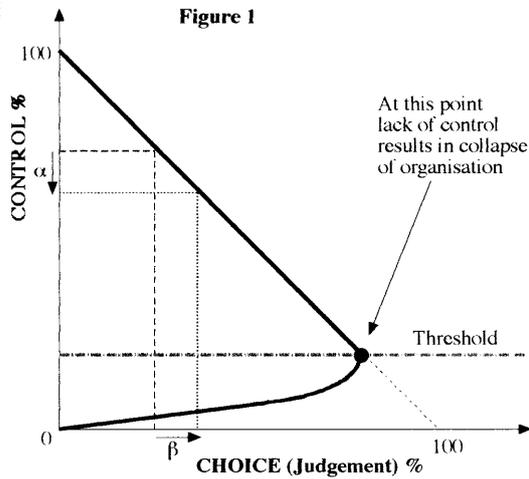
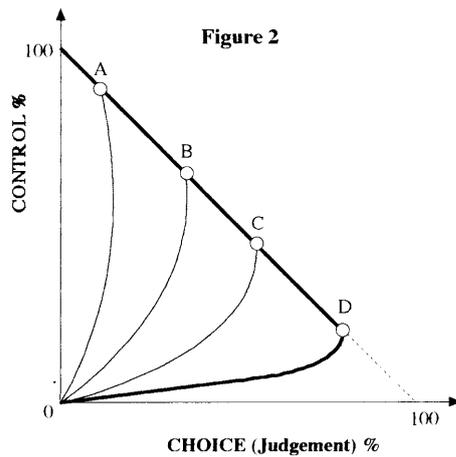


Figure 2 refers to thresholds of different corporate cultures. Threshold "A" could represent a branch of the armed forces where the environment is very strict and rules need to be followed by the book. "B": A railway operation. "C": A haulage company and "D": the advertising agency. Without certain levels of control, which depend on the nature of products and their markets, organisation soon breakdown.

Corporate Culture can be partly identified by methods used to control employees and to what extent these limit or encourage the imagination and choice necessary for sound judgement.

Figure 1 refers to a loosely controlled business organisation which encourages the wide use of judgement from staff. A business which needs to exploit imagination and creativity (eg an advertising agency), tends to have a low threshold as in the diagramme.



Management failure to understand the source of a company culture and how it has developed can leave a business slowly throttling itself, as it continues with yesterday's formula to deal with a changed environment. Many companies find a method and stick to it because it has proved so successful.

The need to keep an eye on how companies key into their markets is vital. Their culture must always serve to exploit markets to maximum effect; if it fails in this respect the culture becomes self-serving. Incompetence may protect itself in the short term but competition will soon put the business out of its misery.

ELEMENTS OF CORPORATE CULTURE

Factors which have a bearing on company culture include ownership patterns, size, nationality of ownership, customer base, processes, capital base, company age and age of staff.

Among elements beyond the humour test (it is a little tongue in cheek) and information landscape which help identify company culture are:

Management dress

Jargon and Titles

The scope of 'Human Resources'

Status

Telephones

Secrecy

Humour

Listening

The detection of Fraud

This is not exhaustive but most of the items are reasonably easy to ascertain. Let us look at a few in more detail.

Management Dress

Clothing varies significantly.

Only as recently as the late 1950s many occupations in Britain had distinct types of dress making it quite easy to work out, from clothing alone, what someone was doing for a living. It was a very different, highly controlled and regulated World. The conditions of the times and the

aftermath of two World Wars had created a preference for order even where it may not have been absolutely necessary; a tendency to excessive uniformity expressed itself in the uniforms people chose to wear. Some of these persisted and, in certain cases, are still with us today.

The typical uniform of the old style traffic manager in a haulage company was faded shirts, often nylon, brown shoes, non-matching jacket and trousers with a plain tie, sometimes with a small insignia attached. These people sit in offices arranging how things are moved around the country. Binos sticking out of the top pocket or even on the ear were optional extras, as were strong cigarettes, strong tea, strong language and even stronger opinions.

People often give away their occupations by their clothing: stereotypes exist because they are based in reality. Some companies prefer the dark charcoal suits which mutely throw a threatening message. Others prefer to avoid traditional dress and choose informal with staff in casual clothing complete with pony-tail styles or streaked hair for either sex. Companies as well as occupations tend to press certain styles on people. Some predators employ an effective camouflage of chameleon-like complexity.

Sometimes, a compromise is required, as in the case of a legal expert (charcoal) in the employ of Unilever (blue-grey lightweight). But the compromises do not always work, just as it appeared impossible to compromise between the typical traffic operator style and the polished big company style. So we can see the nature of the problem faced by that big company with their inability to understand or recruit the traffic experts it so badly needed to make the shared user product a success.

The typical traffic operator just could not be shoe-horned into a smart snappy polished business suit, nor take on the humour which went with the culture the suit was tailored to.

Jargon and Titles

The best place to find examples of jargon is in personnel departments and recruitment advertisements. Self-justifying words are often order of the day and often con the user even more than anyone else that they know what they are talking about. Simple words are not such useful coin in the trade of self-delusion.

Jargon usually forces the person to accept a lexicon of words and beliefs, sometimes unconsciously and is a great tool to use for propagandists. A cunning use of words leads one into another, so creating a predisposition to certain conclusions arising from accepting certain words into your speech and thought. It is possible to combine simple words to deal with a subject where more precise ones stood before. The meanings of two words or more are forced into a limbo of the indefinite or worse an embedded meaning can secretly act on the mind.

'Competency' is a good example and sometimes takes the place of 'ability and the will to use it correctly'. It seems a useful combination, but precision is lost. The assumption is foisted on one that if someone has the ability, it will follow they will use that ability in a competent manner. Of course, this is often far from the case, especially when individuals have a tendency towards corruption. It also neatly side-steps the problem of discipline. We think in words and the

outcome of thoughts can be determined by hidden assumptions nesting in the vocabulary we choose to use.

A useful comparison can be made to the action of 'Trojans' attacking computer systems. They often come unannounced on e-mails and can systematically corrupt every file. This can render an entire computer system inoperable and unresponsive to keyboard or mouse commands. Jargon containing hidden or embedded assumptions can have the same effect on the mind so causing a failure to listen to those pointing out problems because those problems appear to those using by such 'viral jargon' as irrelevant. The problems have been trashed out of their thoughts by the action of the embedded elements of the jargon.

This small example shows that jargon can be quite dangerous. It can be pleasing to make explanations easier to sell to people and also have the air of assisting the articulate use of language, making communication more efficient. The hidden danger rests with the way the compression has been attempted and the implications which can arise from that compression. Words have separate meanings for good reasons trying to combine them, especially when they appear in new theories, should be treated with the greatest of care. In many cases, speed kills.

It is not, of course, that all new language and meaning combinations are wrong, but theories dressed in jargon usually depend on the jargon to cloak inadequacies. The construction of jargon can have immense effects on thought processes as if the need to sell justifies changing and idea to make the fix. Some management consultancies, business experts, 'gurus' and other nonsenses have quite a bit to answer for.

It there is no way of using simple words then complex words should be suspected. Without a translation, words should be subjected to severe investigation. If a translation can be made, the question must be asked, why was the more complex word used and how were the simple meanings combined? Is there an attempt to foist unconscious assumptions on the recipient of the terminology?

Words can lead to a lack of clarity and precision. The thrill of appearing to open the door to a new world of business theory without much effort, giving the user the illusion of competence (or even competency), can be very attractive. The new words can act as pieces of a puzzle: accept a few and the picture is determined. Countless adolescent school children over the last 80 years read the Communist Manifesto and were convinced they knew all about Marxism. A few hours with a fashionable 'human resources' professional lecturing about skills and abilities in business can have the same effect, but jargon is not communication. More often, it is obfuscation, or as the common-sense American has it, blowing smoke.

Oddly, those wedded to jargon appear to have lost their sense of humour

A jargon victim is a fashion victim. Recent recruitment advertising for an American company called new recruits 'entrepreneurs'. No lie was intended, but the only interpretation is that the word was false clothing.

Entrepreneurs take risks for themselves and their ambitions; they are not the type of people who make loyal, consistent and controllable employees. To employ an entrepreneur in a large corporation would be disastrous and would terrify organisation people, who put a high premium on control and predictability; the information landscape would shake to pieces. Large corporations cannot work any other way.

Of course, the advertisement was using the connotations of the word to key into the self-image of potential candidates. The real McCoy was quite out of the question, but the advertisement

was tapping into the illusions and desire for freedom which so often accompany the long hours of mundane employment in large corporations.

The bait was dangled to recruit servants with employers' clothing. The corporation could not recruit employers, though its jargon appeared to make that possible. Deceptive advertising is nothing new.

Job titles try a similar trick. In the 1980s 'Supervisors' gradually metamorphosed into 'Managers'. Supervisors were given the illusion of being Managers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Supervisors make certain processes or operations run as they should; they are there to there to maintain the status quo. But a manager is supposed to deal with changes and instigate them where required in line with company objectives. Their job is not to maintain processes, unless to deal with supervisors when required.

The 1980s saw Managers everywhere. At times it seemed possible to have a Manager of the Paperclips, certainly there were 'Pallet Control Managers'. A 1990s development has been the proliferation of Directors. I predict a Chairman of the Warehouse or CEO of goods inwards for 2015.

A manager has certain freedoms and responsibilities, but a director is supposed to participate in the collective activity of the Boardroom and be privy to strategic decisions and the relationship with the owners. Directorship involves an intimate relationship with the corporate persona of the company as well as the planning the future of the business relationship with its owners, employees and the market. Where managers make changes and directors define who can do this and determine the plan of organization and patterns of authority. They should tend to the information landscape to ensure the potency of the organisation and therefore its future.

It is very satisfying to have Director on the business card. But a director who is not registered for the purposes of Companies House is not the real thing. The servant has been dressed up as a confidant of the master who is often more fooled by the conjuring trick than anyone else.

The Scope of 'Human Resources'

The more Human Resources appears to be in control, the more the underlying quite unpleasant implications of their too common preference for Behaviourism comes clear. This belief reduces people, almost, to robotic creatures possessed of the illusion of freedom and denies the importance of our own ideas about how we think. Any attempt to explain beyond the required response is tainted with subjectivity and should be ignored; in effect, not listened to. Some unpleasant assumptions become clear; but any approach that actively excludes listening to people appears to have something very wrong with it.

The view that humans can be analysed and controlled as machines is flawed and makes people very angry, and rightly so. We cannot afford to ignore consciousness and how we think we think, when assessing individuals.

Behaviourism has quite some difficulty dealing with humour because inconsistency and absurdity are immune to what they see as 'scientific analysis'. A scientist will observe and quantify all the inputs to an experiment and do the same for the results. They, then try to work backwards from results to inputs to see how things can be explained; how causes brought about the effects. If the inputs are not fully unidentified, then the experiment is flawed and any results are ignored. The same applies to volunteered information in the absence of any stimulation--- so the brakes are put on listening. It would not be 'scientific and objective' to do

anything else! The energy of controlled consciousness and cognitive thought is not needed to build and maintain pyramids, monoliths or rigid structures.

You can get a good idea of someone's management style from their humour. This is because the strength of human thought process is that we can handle contradiction and work on with it unresolved and this special ability is utterly essential to getting things done when events press in and demand swift decisions. It would be utterly impossible to deal with industrial relations or a difficult customer issues without this capacity; time will not always be available to think everything out from a-z before acting. Machines cannot work with contradiction or inconsistency unresolved; we are much more sophisticated.

The Behaviourist approach to incentive schemes, in part, appears to derive from laboratory experiments with rats, It was discovered that a simple reward system was sufficient to make them do what you wanted them to do. No consultation was required to get a result. Incentive schemes common today have very shaky foundations. The assumptions they use can appear quite insulting to the people they are applied to

Unlike rats, we have a developed sense of humour and the capacity to act in altruistic ways and appreciate the utility of helping others who may one day assist us. This is the foundation of all teamwork. The idea of all sinking or swimming together is one which is very difficult for Behaviourists to accept. Atrophy of the human element is a signal of the dominance of such joyless practice.

From this mistaken view develops the idea that we are all fundamentally selfish. So developed what has turned out to be little more than management by greed over the last 40 years. Stick and carrot attitudes abound. This miserable view of people creates a working world that discriminates in favour of many who do, indeed, have a leaning towards selfishness and businesses adapt and morph to suit these carrot and donkey people. In the meantime, a significant part of 'everyone' is sidelined and discriminated against and these are the people who are naturally inclined not to be motivated by carrot and stick. These very people who should be entrusted to lead are rejected in favour of the more destructive, selfish and short term thinkers that Behaviourists think represent a universal human nature. The damage done by such a blind adherence to one view of how people think has been spectacular reaching a peak (hopefully) with the banking crisis in 2008.

Company cultures permitting sprawling HR departments betray their attitude towards their staff and, perhaps, towards their suppliers and customers. They put a high value on control and usually have complex Command and Control structures. Negative behaviour can be quite common with little control over information flow and a distorted information landscape. Their power structures are unnecessarily dysfunctional when they could do so much more.

Some modern test systems used by personnel professionals bear an uncanny resemblance to the 11+ examinations of many years ago. This is no surprise as the assumptions underlying both systems are very similar. Psychometric and personality tests much used today share many similarities in content and underlying philosophical assumptions. People should not be treated like lab specimens. Too often, those who have never lived, or the living dead, decide how others coming within their deadly grip shall endure stultification.

H.R. can be very revealing about the real place employees occupy in company cultures.

Status

A company can leave a mark on someone and workplace attitudes often place vastly more emphasis on status and the importance of little things which would often be laughed at in everyday life. The grades of chairs at my old office, bossing around truck drivers, is a good example.

Status can attach to how many gadgets your company car has, if your office chair has arms, whether you have pictures in your office, the colour of the carpet and so on. If you've worked for a long time in one office, these items acquire a significance in that small world far beyond any real worth to the rest of creation.

Status with its signs is about how much you are thought to be worth listening to and being kept informed. They also stand for recognition of authority and as having the right to the power which *should* go with the position. Managers on the slide often become obsessed with status and its insignia to try to make up with a declining ability to engage with the information landscape.

Telephones

There are two distinct attitudes towards the telephone. One is a by-product of the military attitude when it appears almost impossible to get a senior manager without a 'key name' to make it safe for them to speak to you.

They are 'protected' by their secretaries or P.A.s from anyone they do not know or from anyone who cannot identify their worth before the conversation. Senior managers can easily become the playthings of a small group of people cut off from the day to day knowledge of their businesses. Incompetent middle managers prefer this style as it leaves them free to spin whatever yarn that suits them to their superior.

The reasons for this are complex. Some genuinely feel threatened by the interruption of small time callers and therefore take steps to filter out any calls which might waste their time. For well-known people this may be the only way to do things, but the device is used even by directors of quite small companies.

The system of filtering is nearly always done by junior staff who often have little idea how to spot critical exceptions to standard rules designed to filter out inappropriate callers. The risk of permitting someone of no importance actually speak to someone of consequence could be so great that the temptation not to check carefully can lead to a form of censorship which senior staff could do without. Directors can become playthings of their subordinates. Sometimes, those who appear to be far too unimportant to be permitted to speak to grand people have something very useful to say; expecting a junior to be able to sense such things and permit contact can be to ask too much.

In a military environment the telephone call from a private to a general cannot do much to alter the big picture and could not justly occupy the time of a very senior person. But in the civilian a different rule applies. Suppose a customer returns a new car with a defective brake which looks as if it were caused by a design fault.

The potential damage and cost of a mass recall could be quite serious. Quick action would be essential to rectify the fault before any more vehicles were delivered. The grand manager, too important to speak to minnows, could cost the company dear for holding that attitude.

The use of the filter analogy to justify such an approach gives the game away. If the aim is to get a big picture to handle the enemy, the generals' filters may be useful, but in business organisations, they are often highly inappropriate.

Senior managers can't work if they are flooded out with information. But they must never be deprived of what they need to know. The collective discipline information system covers this problem. It becomes the responsibility of junior managers to inform seniors when they need to know and this judgment is put on the shoulders of the junior managers.

If they 'cry wolf' too often, senior managers will not have the time to attend to serious problems and so the junior managers will fail because of their misjudgment leading to overloading their superiors. If they say: "we did tell our superiors", they will be open to the charge of cutting themselves off from help by damaging information flow.

Too often, British managers think they know what and who they need to take seriously before listening to them. How much this permeates a corporate culture can be easily judged by a few telephone calls to different management grades. Listening has become a serious problem and is closely allied to a seeming blindness to the problem of information theft.

Secrecy

"The less you tell them, the safer you are. Don't confuse them with things they don't need to know." Many companies work on the need-to-know rule. Managers assume, as might be realistic in a military environment, that they can judge from their experience and isolate what those below them 'do and do not need to know'. If your view of a workman, supervisor or junior manager is based on the military system, this may make some sense. But does it make much sense in business?

There are several ways of looking at this aspect of corporate culture. Are performance figures posted and in how much detail? Do staff know the names of the main board directors and could they recognise them? Are there any discussions or reports about general company performance? Do the staff understand the process the company uses? Are there discussions about methods of performance measurement? Are suggestions encouraged and how many get implemented? How often are senior managers seen by the workforce? Does the night shift ever see senior management? Are purchases always the result of group decisions?

Secrecy on a need-to-know basis assumes information is dangerous if its dissemination appears to have no immediate use. How much an organisation starves its managers and workforce of information is also a good pointer to corporate culture. If ideas are not required from juniors, information which might help the creation of ideas is not required and might only lead them to getting 'thoughts above their station' and acting in an insubordinate manner. Ideas are not for little people.

Organisations which go the other way and only apply a 'need not to know' criterion usually have a very different feel. In these, if a junior manager in transport wants to find out how the presses work in the body shop and the performance figures of the team responsible, the information will be available. In this environment he might find some way of using that expertise to improve the quotation given to him by a goods vehicle supplier claiming high costs of manufacture.

The other extreme, where companies hold secrets even between departments, massive and avoidable mistakes can arise. Indeed, it can happen within one department as happened in the case of the milk tanker milk microbes running riot.

Humour

Well intentioned managers sometimes resort to underhand devices in stressed and badly managed environments because absurdity is never far off. Humour is an essential tool to defuse situations and help control, especially when emotions appear to have leap-frogged reason.

Many managers in the late 1970s will remember the smoke-filled rooms with long tables when trade union power was close to its zenith. On one side would sit the convener and the stewards and, on the other, the managers. Negotiations would often involve ritual outbursts of anger. Insults would sometimes fly and language was often violent. In one such meeting, a member of the management team had had enough.

Down went his pen with a heavy noisy crack on the polished table. For a brief moment there was silence, as the managers were wondering if recess time had come or a stormy exit was in order. The trade union waited for the next move as management had so helpfully taken it on themselves to make the running.

The site manager stood up and silently walked around the end of the table ending up behind the convener. Bending over him, he kissed the bald head of the trade union chief: uncontrollable mirth ensued. The air was let out of a balloon about to burst. At the base of humour lies a form of contradiction or absurdity, both extreme and subtle in one instant, often worth a thousand words by one succinct action, just as a cartoon can summarise an entire situation in one frame and fuse opposites. Understanding an ability to use humour is key to good leadership.

Below is not intended to be practical, but it might add a bit of useful perspective. As with the Information Landscape the importance is almost as great that its existence is admitted as it is to actually ever do the exercise.

The Humour Test

- 1 Go to a newsagent with fellow managers and buy most of the popular press and magazines.
- 2 Back at the office, select up to 80 examples of humour ranging from crude sexual jokes or cartoon strips to narrative humour in obituaries. This could cover publications from The Sun, Cosmopolitan and Private Eye through to the Spectator and The Times.
- 3 Paste them down onto numbered sheets of card leaving space for five multiple response boxes.

- 4 Establish that a tick in box one means: "Very amusing," box two, "Quite amusing," box three, "Vaguely," in box four, "I don't get it," in box five, "Unpleasant or worse."
- 5 Get each part of the company to do this test under appropriate conditions.
- 6 Collate and compare the ticks on both a departmental and company wide basis.

The beauty of this is the low number of assumptions it requires. There are no doubtful psychological theories, introverted, extroverted, etc. Even the jokes have been mass market tested, otherwise they would not have been available at the newsagents. **The key assumption is that it is easier to manage people if they laugh at the same things as you.** In the same way they will find it easier to manage if they can laugh with their peer group and the staff reporting to them or elsewhere in the company.

I doubt that the humourless 'scientific techniques' loved by Behaviourists could accommodate this simple approach. Most HR people would be flummoxed. The words **humour** and (internal) **politics** are rarely to be found in the indexes of the vast majority of the specialist books on personnel theory. No mistaken application of psychological theory is required, and people actually enjoy taking the test.

A collation of the ticks will tell you the prevailing humour in the workplace. By the way, the same test is ideal for job applicants to fill out and can build up interesting insights and profiles, with positive results. This device provides a clear and simple way to address one key aspect of what is often called 'fitting in'. It provides a way of sounding out one key ability to manage well.

It is possible to employ systematic techniques to deal with humour and, at least, partly to rescue the psychologists and reject some of the excesses underpinning the application of modern behaviourist theory. People are reflective and reflexive beings, not gaining any benefits from analysis and manipulation by humourless zealots.

This is a complex and interesting area, too involved to cover in full here. The Command and Control environment can expect more of a manager's humour than many can supply.

Listening Technique

In unstable environments created by tension between the command and control structure and the information landscape, listening skills have to work overtime and often have to be top quality.

The need is to be able to see around corners. It is so easy to turn off listening the minute someone appears to say something stupid or plain wrong and this can be a serious mistake. Listening varies and is differentiated according to the time available for the listeners to make a decision based on what they have heard.

The line manager's method

A manager is frequently expected to react quickly excluding the luxury of proper, in-depth listening. Instead, as a decision needs to be made quickly, devices have to be used to cut listening time to cut to the chase. The mental formulae used for this are sometimes called prejudices. Prejudice is a neutral word, there are destructive prejudices as well as useful ones.

Prejudices enable people to be streetwise. If you see in the mirror of a van at ten o'clock on a dark night three large figures and silently quickly coming up behind you, prejudice may tell you to run like hell. There's no proof they had any bad intent, but the mental formula told you there was a good chance that trouble was on the way.

Likewise, if a supervisor has a problem with a driver, similar devices may be used to remain in control; he who hesitates is lost. The use of experience through developed prejudices is crucial in many operating environments. Without the ability to use this method, decision-making be too slow or come to a grinding halt. Time limits can deny the information and processing required to take unprejudiced and properly weighted decisions.

I remember being a tongue-tied raw graduate trainee working in a spot traffic office! I was indecisive and felt as if I were drowning.

The long-term listening method

Whenever possible, where there is no pressure to act immediately, use the long-term listening technique. Every shade of opinion is absorbed, even the outrageous. After meetings things can be mulled over. Incorrect information often tells more than correct information. Questions can be considered such as "Why did they tell me that?" "Where did that strange opinion come from?" "Who wound them up?"

The Japanese are good at this detailed way of listening and masters of the extended silence in meetings. Where the English will bust a gut to keep the flow going, the Japanese will often ponder in silence for some time, digesting what has been said. Probing questions are usually left for the next meeting, when time has allowed for careful consideration of all that has been said.

Of course, with the need to key into the information landscape, this second technique is very important. ***You can build up a map of who is speaking to who and from this an information flow chart can be constructed.*** This is very useful before meetings to establish the real agendas of individuals and thoroughly reveal the related strengths and weaknesses of groups by appreciating their dynamics.

With this ammunition, it is easier to arrange trade-offs to get what you want, in an environment made difficult by a haze of half revealed activity and disrupted information flow. Another use is to identify cliques and whether they are rings or radials, the former often being wholly or partially motivated by greed, corruption and insecurity. Another is to identify those most keyed into the organisation and those most isolated.

A final example might be useful to highlight the dramatic practical application of this outlook.

A leap towards better management

We have seen the Information Landscape does not respect organisational distinctions, even though it has a special relationship with the plan of organisation. It is not a replacement but something that works with the plan to create The Power Structure.

On large sites relationship patterns will inevitably straddle shifts, departments and even corporate entities. The information landscape technique can be used to reveal the tie-ups and patterns otherwise hidden from individuals but which can be revealed by pooling information and converting it into knowledge. Most intelligence officers will know of spies being unaware of the significance of their bits and pieces of information but of the value they contribute to the big picture they may never see but that they help construct. A similar method can be applied in commerce.

In a well know furniture retailer's warehouse there were three shifts, an Operations Manager and a General Manager. Due to an incident some weeks previously, the company had covertly checked its stocks and discovered a serious shortfall. The Shift Managers, the Operations Manager and General Manager sat down and wrote out landscapes. Where the lines disagreed, an average was taken or discussion settled on an agreed value. But more interestingly, where some did not know of relationships due to being on another shift or for some other reason, the missing relationships and their intensities were entered onto the landscape for the entire operation.

Where there was suspicion of one team working to pilfer stock, three teams totalling 18 people were revealed. The cliques had connections and, from time to time, joined up when the opportunities arose to make co-operation profitable.

Strong relationships of one clique member to outsiders indicated trading links and indeed it fast became obvious that the cliques not only did not respect formal company organisation but straddled companies. An extra-corporate trading network had been established so that sofas were being exchanged for electronic goods or clothing and so on.

When the cliques began to sense their time was up, one member tried to 'finger' six innocent people in attempt to divert fire, smokescreen their activities and neuter management action by set-up embarrassment. But, by that time the landscape technique had revealed too much and the attempt failed.

The revealed Information Landscape gave senior management access collective knowledge, identified relationship patterns and prompted investigation into areas where fraud was most likely to be happening. In this respect, the landscape device is one of the most effective tools of Knowledge Management. Theoretical detail of the method has been previously outlined.

The skills demanded of Command and Control managers are very great and such people are in short supply; Western industry, its public and private services are asking too much of managers. But an alternative system could reduce these requirements by partly "de-skilling" managers, making them more able to meet their targets and releasing the most able for more productive activity.

Far too much management time and skill is wasted on servicing a system needing a radical overhaul. Perhaps, a merging of the two messages of the pictures at the front of this book is what has been suggested. Understanding the source of Corporate Power will help make a huge and long overdue leap towards the better management which will soon become absolutely essential for the wellbeing and happiness of all.

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