Changing the IT Leader's Mindset

Time for revolution rather than evolution

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FOREWORD

This book is a real breath of fresh air!

As leadership has gradually overtaken technical expertise as the barometer of an outstanding head of IT, I have read every book out there on the subject. None has provided such a useful and pertinent guide to perfecting leadership and interpersonal skills.

Changing the IT Leader's Mindset is engaging, clear and packed with practical advice. Reading this book will get you thinking about how you influence people and unite them in common purpose to deliver a strategic vision.

For those of you who wish to take a seat at the Boardroom as a peer to the other business leaders, this book is a must-read, providing insight on personal branding, innovation and how to gain Board-level recognition.

Cathy Holly

Partner

Boyden Global Executive Search & Interim Management

PREFACE

This book is about transforming the IT leader's mindset – from one of victim to one of victor. It is dedicated to the many IT leaders we have known and worked with who feel undervalued, unappreciated and often simply ignored.

You may not like or agree with all that we say in this book, because it is in the nature of the IT professional to share a sensitivity to criticism. However, if we are serious about changing our behaviour for the better, we have to accept some painful truths.

We have written this book for the busy executive; it is punchy, pithy, poignant and powerful. We have kept it short, illustrated it with many models and tables and tried to point to simple practical steps that you can take to change the way that you operate and are perceived by others.

The principal research referred to in the text has been undertaken by us during our work with major organisations in the UK and abroad. We are in the business of management development and this book is the fruit of our experience in helping real IT leaders develop their Transformational Leadership capability.

Unlike the majority of books on IT leadership we do not try to reduce the solution to a process or procedure; our focus is on an understanding of human nature and evolutionary psychology; the development of Emotional Intelligence and the ability to embrace ambiguity and complexity.

This book will show you how to take the great ideas of the last 10 years and make sense of them in a way that will help you make the transition from Transactional to Transformational Leadership.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Dr Robina Chatham has 14 years' experience in IT, culminating with the position of CIO for a leading merchant bank. She is qualified as both a mechanical engineer and a neuroscientist. In the year 2000 she co-authored *Corporate Politics for IT Managers: How to get Streetwise*, published by Butterworth Heinemann. In the words of the Chief Executive of the British Computer Society: 'If a fraction of those who read the book do something positive with the ideas presented, the state of UK plc will be forever enriched'. She has also written a number of book chapters, numerous academic papers and articles for trade journals and magazines. She is a visiting fellow at Cranfield School of Management and also runs her own training consultancy specialising in helping senior IT managers to develop political acumen, to master the art of influencing others and hence increase their personal impact at Board level. In 2008 she was voted a medallist for the BCS IT Industry IT Consultant of the Year award. She is a regular keynote presenter at IT practitioner conferences.

Dr Brian Sutton has over 30 years' experience of running engineering and IS projects, having managed major initiatives and projects varying in size from hundreds of thousands of pounds to tens of millions of pounds. He has developed comprehensive IS strategies, conducted large-scale reengineering initiatives and led major organisational change. He regularly contributes articles to professional journals and speaks at major professional gatherings. He holds a doctorate in corporate education and a master's degree in information systems design from the London School of Economics and has worked extensively in both the private and public sectors in the UK, Europe and the United States. He was formerly a professor of systems management in the Information Resources Management College of the National Defense University in Washington, DC and is currently a visiting professor with the Institute for Work Based Learning at Middlesex University.

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PART I

WHERE WE ARE NOW AND WHY WE SEE THE WORLD THE WAY WE DO

CHAPTER 1: SURVIVING IN A WORLD OF CHANGE

In 1859, Charles Dickens began his *Tale of Two Cities* with the words: 'It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness'.

He could have been writing about the plight of IT leaders – they, too, face an uncertain future and have little in the way of tradition or track record to fall back on. In their short history, IT leaders have enjoyed many titles; recently there has been a trend towards the epithet 'chief information officer' (CIO) – as recently as the 1980s this term was unheard of and, in most instances, the incumbent never really embraced the I of information, but rather concentrated on the T of technology, and therefore assumed the default position of CTO – chief technology officer. Indeed, many IT leaders, whatever their role name, have a tendency to become bogged down in the technical aspects of the role. This has consequences, not least of which is that they tend to spend a lot of time dealing with challenging questions such as:

- Why is IT so expensive?
- How can we reduce our IT costs?
- Why did our major supply chain rationalisation project overrun on budget and deliver late?
- Why is it that we have doubled our investment in IT over the last five years, but have seen no improvement in productivity?

- Why do I read about other companies transforming their performance through the use of latest Web 2.0 technologies, but we appear to be stuck in the last century?

It is difficult to be influential when you are constantly on the back foot justifying your very existence. IT leaders rightly believe that they can, and should, influence the strategic use of information technology to drive new levels of business performance. However, all too often they have little or no voice when it comes to strategy decisions; indeed, less than half of all IT leaders are members of operational boards and only about 30% report directly to the CEO.[1]

So what is the future for the IT leader – is it to be the worst of times, a retrenchment to the mechanic's role of chief technology officer, consigned like *Star Trek*'s 'Scotty' to the bowels of the engine room and destined never to go on an away mission? Or will they model themselves on Captain Kirk and boldly go where no IT leader has gone before, on their continuing mission to discover brave new business models and enable technology-led business opportunities previously unimagined? If they take this new route, the IT leader could evolve into the CTO – chief transformation officer – and really contribute to the development and success of their business enterprises.

Our contention is that, whilst this change may appear to be evolutionary in terms of technical skills and contribution, if it is to happen, it will require a revolutionary change in attitude, perception and relationship structures. The good

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[1] Harvey Nash, *2009 IT Leadership Report*; a survey of 1,345 CIOs across Europe.

news is that this is all possible and it is firmly in their own hands. In this book we will provide access to the understanding necessary to develop the reflective capacity to shape the journey, along with a range of tools and techniques that can be used to navigate along the way.

Possible futures and consequences

Influential management thinkers, such as C.K. Prahalad,[2] argue that the very shape of business is changing, and that to be successful we need to rethink business models and relationships with customers, suppliers and partners. Specifically, he suggests that:

- The way companies create value is shifting from products to solutions to experiences.
- At any given time, the people best equipped to solve our most pressing problems probably work for somebody else. Therefore, to be successful we need mechanisms that allow us to access the talent, materials, products and services from the best source, wherever that is in the globe. This realisation is at the heart of the current shift towards Open Innovation in many organisations.
- Both internal management systems and current IT infrastructures are the largest obstacles to success in the new world.

These first two ideas and the recognition of the power of the third inhibitor have the potential to reshape our industries. Perhaps surprisingly, the early indicators are not

[2] C.K. Prahalad and M.S. Krishnan, *The New Age of Innovation; Driving Co-created Value through Global Networks*, McGraw Hill (2008).

just that it is information-intensive sectors that are embracing these changes, but also that traditional heavy-manufacturing giants are leveraging the power of individualised services and global partnering and sourcing.

At the core of this transition, is a move away from segmenting consumers in classes based upon average demographics towards engaging on an individual basis with a consumer around their individual needs and behaviours, and then co-creating a value proposition directly with that consumer. The implications of operating in this way are significant and, as a minimum, demand:

- flexibility – the ability to reconfigure resources (from both internal and external sources) to dynamically meet demand
- collaboration – networks of partner-providers and solution-finders – a model that moves away from ownership to a world of privileged access and influence
- improved decision making – in order to allocate resources dynamically to meet changing patterns of demand and one-to-one relationships with customers, we need real-time, reliable analytics, so that managers can move from intuition-based decisions to fact-based decisions
- open access – the right resource from the right source at the right time – shifting the thinking from who is available in the department to who is available in the world. The focus is, therefore, on access and influence, rather than on ownership and control.

An underpinning assumption in the trends outlined above, is that in terms of value creation, the power of IT lies not in its capacity to enable more joined-up transactions processing across diverse supply chains, but rather in its ability to support decision making around the deployment of resources to dynamically meet changing business patterns. In this respect, we need a renewed focus on the I in IT – a world where we use information to transform and enable new modes of value creation, rather than using information (data) to transact existing business and value chains. When we look at those organisations that stand out as leaders in the application of technology to enable new business models, we see nimble and highly flexible entities who are comfortable with risk and uncertainty and who frequently experienced many setbacks and failures before becoming overnight successes. Anyone in the research and development business will testify that every market-leading product is built on the back of a series of failures, probably a ratio in excess of 10 to one. However, many IT leaders behave as if this statistic doesn't apply to IT systems development. They appear to believe that they can find the right solution first time every time and that, if we can only improve our analysis and planning, we can bring every solution into operation. This is patently nonsense. In order to get new and innovative solutions, we need to constantly experiment, we need to provide an incubation environment for breakthrough ideas and solutions and we need to tolerate failure, as long as we learn from it.

We would, therefore, argue that in the modern world the IT leader needs to be a master of *imperfectly seizing the unknown, rather than working to perfect the known*.

So where are we?

For well over 20 years, there have been clarion calls for IT directors and CIOs to produce an IT strategy that is linked to the business strategy and supportive of desired business outcomes. When such a clear and explicit linkage is not evident, the excuse is often that the business strategy is ill-defined or shifting, or that it is out of phase with the needs of the IT planning cycle. Yet such claims misunderstand the nature of strategy formulation. In the 1960s and 70s, it was not unusual for large organisations to have a staff function whose remit was strategic planning, a constant scanning of the environment and the articulation of long-term plans and goals. Now, however, these staff functions are largely defunct. Strategy is seen to be a 'wicked problem'[3] – these, by definition, are problems that have no clear cause-and-effect relationships and tend not to submit themselves to analytical solutions. In such circumstances, strategy is seen as dynamically emerging through a process of ongoing and open dialogue between all stakeholders, as opposed to the product of an élite and gifted few.

So we have a situation where business strategy now tends to emerge through a process of ongoing dialogue in response to ill-defined, dynamic and often unpredictable market conditions. Many IT leaders have no voice in this ongoing dialogue because they have not established a sufficiently wide sphere of influence based on trust and personal credibility. They are not keyed into the organisational network, and their introspective focus on technology often leads to them being labelled as having no business acumen.

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[3] John. C. Camillus, 'Strategy as a Wicked Problem', *Harvard Business Review* (May 2008). Wicked problems are problems with many stakeholders with differing values and priorities. Their roots are complex and tangled, and the nature of the problem changes with every attempt to address it. These types of challenge are unprecedented, and therefore there is nothing to indicate the right answer to the problem.

It is a given that the IT leader must be technically capable and keyed in to emerging trends and technologies; they must also be keyed in to the latest business thinking in a wide range of industries, keyed in to how business models are developing and the role of technology in enabling those business models. These qualities are hygiene factors – they are must-haves, they represent a *licence to practise*. However, relationship-building, strategic influencing, consensus-building, leading through conversations, communication, negotiation, networking, stakeholder management – these are the skills that make a difference, open doors and provide a *licence to transform*.

It is becoming clear that effective IT leadership needs a blend of hard techniques and excellent people skills. Traditionally, IT professionals have been stereotyped as having poor interpersonal and communication skills – this may or may not be true, but what is certainly true is that success in the future requires a lot more than technical excellence. The IT leader of the future will be focused on business issues and, in order to be effective, must be part of a broader coalition of leaders who, together, find innovative ways to drive business value and create sustainable advantage. A recent survey of 1,345 CIOs across Europe revealed what they deemed to be key skills in a downturn (see *Figure 1*).

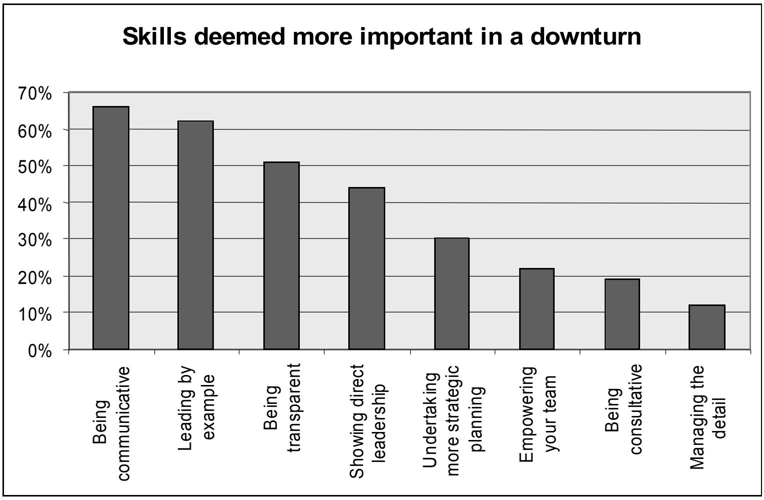

Figure 1: Critical skills for IT leaders

Interestingly, in their view of key skills there is no mention of technical excellence, adoption of best practice, or ability to carry out benchmarking and raise process standards. The focus is very much on working through people and relationships to provide leadership. The only tangible skill mentioned was managing the detail, and this from only around 10% of respondents. These findings just confirm that technical excellence only gets you so far; the really hard stuff is the soft stuff. So why do we find it so difficult to create open, transparent relationships with our peers that promote collaborative action and collective discovery?

Why we think and act the way we do

It is tempting to assume that there is just one shared reality and that, when we witness something, everyone else sees the same thing, takes away the same facts and is left with the same impressions. Actually, around 80% of the data we use to make decisions is already in our heads before we engage with a situation. Our power to perceive is governed and limited by cognitive filters, sometimes termed our 'mental model'. Mental models are formed as a result of past experience, knowledge and attitudes. They are deeply ingrained, often subconscious, structures that limit what we perceive and also colour our interpretation of supposed facts. Each person has a different mental model and, therefore, potentially a different interpretation of the Facts. The danger comes when we start to assume that our interpretation of the Facts is the only interpretation and we believe that what we see and think is the Truth, and that there is only one Truth.

Recent research in neuroscience suggests that we deal with information overload using what might be termed 'pattern recognition'. When presented with a new situation, our brain will seek to find a pattern based upon prior experience. Further, our brain is highly tuned to this task and will find a pattern even when the information is very sparse. Once we have found a match, we tend to become wedded to that view, even though subsequent information may contradict our initial assessment. It would appear, then, that the brain relies for decision making on two hard-wired processes:[4]

- our brains assess what is going on using pattern recognition; and
- we react to what is going on because of 'emotional tags' that are stored in our memories.

[4] Andrew Campbell, Jo Whitehead and Sydney Finkelstein, 'Why Good Leaders Make Bad Decisions', *Harvard Business Review* (February 2009).

These ideas complement work done by the Swedish neurobiologist David Ingvar, where he proposes a concept which he terms 'memories of the future'.[5] Ingvar suggests that the human brain is constantly involved in future-focused action-planning. We mentally rehearse possible futures based upon the information that is available to us; these possible future plans can have either positive or negative outcomes. Our brains store these patterns as a sort of memory of things that have not yet happened. Thus, when our brain looks for patterns as a result of a new situation, it could match with a real memory or with one of these possible future memories. The main purpose of 'memories of the future' is, therefore, as an aid to pattern recognition in so far as incoming information is only deemed to be meaningful if it matches one of our stored alternative paths into the future.

These two pieces of work from the field of neuroscience suggest that far from acting upon what we see, we only see what we deem to be relevant and supportive of things we already know: our stored view of how things work. Our mental models ensure that what we perceive is governed more by what is already in our head than what is in front of our eyes.

Whether you call these neural pathways 'mental models' or 'memories of the future', what is clear is that they are deeply-held views of the way that the world works or should work. At a subconscious level, these models may be largely hidden from ourselves; we react apparently instinctively as a result of deeply hidden views that we are

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[5] David Ingvar, *The Memory of the Future*, referenced in Arie P. de Geus, 'Why Some Companies Live to Tell about Change', *Journal of Quality and Participation* (July–August 1998).

not aware of and could probably not articulate if asked. Because of this, mental models are difficult to shake or change. We are all prisoners of our past experience; we view the present through the lens of the past.

Why is this important? Well, there is an old expression that goes along the lines of:

If you always do what you always did, you will always get what you always got.

The truth in this statement is that much of what our eyes see is discarded by the brain as irrelevant because it does not fit with currently-stored patterns. Our brain will find a pattern, but there is no guarantee that it will be the right pattern. Our ability to perceive is governed by our mental model, and the range of possible actions is prescribed by what we perceive and our standard models of assessment. This means that most of us spend most of our time locked into what might be termed a 'Do–Get loop' (see *Figure 2*).

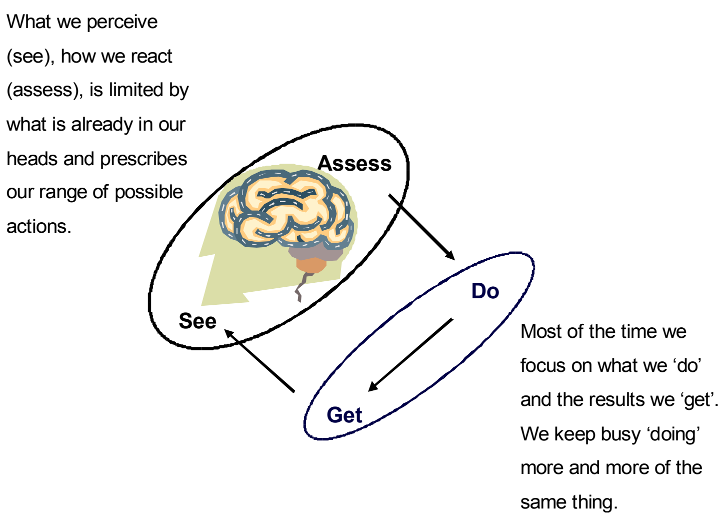

Figure 2: How mindset limits our options for action

Our past (mental model) governs what we perceive (**See**) and how we make sense of it (**Assess**). This, in turn, prescribes our range of possible actions (**Do**), which leads to results (**Get**). We are therefore trapped into repeating well-understood, but possibly ineffective, patterns of behaviour and can **Get** sub-optimal results. The cycle is both self-fulfilling and self-reinforcing – we tend to apply the same assessment techniques to review what we get, thus further reinforcing our mental model and further limiting our ability to perceive the unusual or the remarkable.

Our mental model governs what we see, how we think about things and how we act, but is this just an individual phenomenon, or can whole communities and professions share a common mental model, a shared view of reality? This is a tricky area, and much like other collective phenomena, such as organisational learning, there is no clear consensus of opinion. What is beyond doubt is that all professions have their own vocabularies, lexicons, tools and techniques. These models, techniques and ways of analysing things are not value-free; they represent a way of seeing the world. When we select and use them we are subconsciously buying into that way of thinking and, inevitably, we are also reinforcing our own mental model of cause and effect. We tend to expend significant effort in understanding the inner workings of a new tool or practice, but we give scant attention to the thought paradigm that underpins it. Like it or not, knowingly or not, we all as IT professionals subscribe, to some extent, to a common mental model of how the world works. This model is encapsulated in our techniques for analysing and documenting our organisations and systems. It finds its way into our modes of working and thinking and is enshrined in volumes of 'best practice'. It even shapes the way we think about managing, leading and inspiring our people.

Like any professional group, IT leaders have a way of viewing the world: we know how things work, why they work that way and what to do when they stop working. We have tried-and-trusted techniques for understanding our world and for resolving issues. We have well-engineered processes and best practices that have been shown to produce results. We strive to be as good as, or better than, other people and organisations that see the world in exactly the same way that we do. This is both comforting and potentially very valuable. It is also the greatest single threat to our ability to envisage different ways of doing things and ways of seeing anew.

Albert Einstein is credited with many thought-provoking quotes; here are two that are particularly apt as a means of rounding out this discussion:

- 'We cannot solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.'
- 'The only thing that interferes with my learning is my education.'

If we are to play a full part in leading the transformation of our industries, we need to examine and be conscious of the way we think and why we think in that way. We need to have the courage and capacity to think differently and lead differently.

If we are to lead our organisations, we will need to examine our assumptions about the art and practice of leadership and how we might best structure our actions and communications to achieve our organisations' aims. The art of leadership is a complex and much-debated subject;

typing the phrase 'leadership styles' into Google will produce over 26,000,000 hits! There are many theories and models of leadership and it is not our aim to get lost in this debate. Our contention is that to be successful, the prospective IT leader will, at times, need to abandon their tried and tested management techniques and find new ways to direct, inspire and motivate their teams. To aid in understanding the nature of this journey, we would point to recent discussion about Transactional versus Transformational Leadership.

Transactional vs Transformational Leadership

At its heart, Transactional Leadership[6] is based upon the premise of incentives and/or punishments for compliance with and acceptance of authority, thus, a reciprocal exchange of work for reward. The theory builds upon the ideas of Max Weber and is firmly rooted in the behaviourist paradigm. Key assumptions are that:

- employees are primarily motivated by reward and punishment
- social systems, and hence organisations, work best when there is a clear chain of command and limits to authority
- the primary purpose of a subordinate is to do what their manager tells them.

Most leadership theorists and, indeed, most people reading this book, would probably consider this concept to be outmoded and to have no place in our modern organisations. If asked about their own leadership style,

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[6] James McGregor Burns, *Leadership*, Harper and Rowe (1978).

they would, in all likelihood, claim to exercise a somewhat more enlightened approach. Nonetheless, virtually all the mechanisms, checks and balances at our disposal as managers are firmly rooted in this paradigm. Planning, budgeting, key performance indicators, management by objectives, targets, performance measurement, reporting, appraisal, and so on, are all predicated on a transactionally-based agreement between manager and worker. As managers, much of our education and training has prepared us for transactional-type relationships with our subordinates and our clients. The analytical techniques that we learned as business and systems analysts, and the tools we use to model and describe business processes and business rules, are all rooted in the thinking that underpins the transactional style of leadership.

There is nothing inherently wrong with the transactional style of leadership. Indeed, it is particularly effective in a steady-state production environment where repeatability and consistent application of process is important. It is much less effective when communities are undergoing significant change, and in professional-service-type environments where individual autonomy and devolved decision making are prevalent, or where virtual or extended teams are the norm.

Table 1 summarises the types of behaviour associated with the transactional model of leadership.

Approach to structure and organisation	
1	Has a bias for functional and hierarchical organisations (command and control)
2	Favours well-defined role definitions and individual specialisation
3	Solves problems by involving a few trusted individuals, cultivates a culture that values heroic effort
Approach to work	
4	Allocates individual tasks and rigorously monitors progress, looks for compliance with agreed process
5	Is focused on activity (doing work, completing assigned tasks) and achieving expected results. Emphasis on performance management and measurement
6	Encourages and values detailed planning because good planning eliminates surprises and controls risk and exposure
7	Knows what to do because they have seen it and done it before
Communication style	
8	Uses language to describe
9	Shares information selectively
10	Encourages agreement and consensus; seeks closure
Approach to change	
11	Treats people as part of a machine – rational beings who can be influenced by logical argument and will act in accordance with their own self-interest
12	Change is like a jigsaw puzzle, put all the pieces in place and you get the right result
13	People need a clear roadmap so they know how to make the required change

Table 1: Behaviour traits of Transactional Leaders

The antithesis of Transactional Leadership is Transformational Leadership. This was first identified by Burns, and has since been developed by writers, such as

Bernard M. Bass and Margaret Wheatley.[7] Transformational Leaders seek to inspire their followers to achieve more that they thought possible by linking action to a compelling vision of a desirable future state that benefits all and appeals to the follower's sense of the greater good. Transformational Leaders' key traits are integrity and authenticity and positive role modelling through congruence of action and words.

Senior IT leaders find themselves in a difficult situation, in that IT is seen as a cost centre, a production environment where adherence to service-level agreements is key, and incremental change is delivered through detailed planning and tightly managed projects. In this role, the IT manager needs to be an adept Transactional Leader. Yet, at the same time, IT is seen by the Board as key to achieving transformation and sustainable competitive advantage. The IT leader, therefore, needs to foster and sustain high levels of individual initiative, innovation, nimbleness and flexibility; these qualities are quickly subjugated and wither in a command-and-control environment that values measurement and centralised decision making. So, we have a dynamic tension where the IT leader needs to deliver business as usual through a strong transactional focus, but, at the same time, enable change and innovation through vision-led Transformational Leadership. Success requires a form of ambidextrous leadership that is a difficult balancing act.

We will return to look in more detail at Transformational Leadership in *Chapter 4*, but first we need to take a closer

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[7] Bernard M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance*, Free Press (1985); Margaret J Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science*, Berrett Koehler 1992.

look at how our behavioural preferences and personality type determines how we see and are seen by our colleagues. We will see that influencing and networking are key skills of the Transformational Leader, and we therefore need to understand how to form and sustain winning relationships.

Reflection

- What percentage of your current workload is devoted to perfecting the known? Are you focused on renovation or innovation?
- How tolerant are you of failure? What can you do to increase your comfort with the idea of imperfectly seizing the unknown?
- How often do you challenge the things that you hold to be true? Are your universal truths really true, or are they just the result of your own biased listening?
- What can you do now to give you an insight into how other people view the world? What activities can you engage in that would give you a freshness of approach?
- When was the last time you granted yourself time to really reflect on your own decision-making processes, and what did you learn from the act of reflection?

Food for thought

- Jim Harris, *The Learning Paradox*, John Wiley and Sons (2001).
    - Good chapters on the power of paradigms and the leader's role as an innovator of paradigms.
- Bernard M. Bass, *Transformational Leadership*, second edition, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc. (2006).

    - Prime reading for any leader who wants to develop a deeper understanding of the underpinning theory of Transformational Leadership.

- C.K. Prahalad and M.S. Krishnan, *The New Age of Innovation: Driving Co-created Value through Global Networks*, McGraw Hill (2008).
    - Provides a glimpse of the power of co-creation in transforming our organisations and of the role that IT can play in the process.

CHAPTER 2: THE IT STEREOTYPE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Ask any business person not associated with the IT profession to describe their IT colleagues and images of *The IT Crowd* usually spring to mind, along with labels such as 'nerd', 'geek', 'propeller head', etc. IT professionals push back and are frequently heard bleating 'I'm not like that' or 'it's not fair'. Why do we have these perceptions? More importantly, what is the impact on the credibility of IT functions and their ability to realise business benefits?

The first of these questions is quite easy to answer: it's no one's fault, but merely a consequence of human nature and our innate ability to stereotype. Just as we classify problems, opportunities and other business phenomena, we classify people. It is a type of shorthand for making sense of the world. From an evolutionary point of view, there is enormous survival value in an ability to make rapid judgements about people and situations. Imagine those days when we were walking the savannah and bumping into other living creatures; we had to make fairly instant decisions about whether they were friend or foe – our life depended upon it. Analysing options and next steps was not a recipe for a long and fertile life. Even today, despite years of education and development and years of sensitising to political correctness, the sorting of people into 'in-groups' and 'out-groups' remains one of our primary ways of evaluating others. This is why first impressions are so important.

Human brains work with clusters of concepts, often referred to as 'neuronal groups'. Rather than building our impressions of the world by adding up the individual pieces of data, we make 'intuitive leaps'. Our brains are capable of jumping to conclusions because limited data is quickly matched against a number of 'templates' in the brain. So our natural tendency is not to say (unconsciously), 'This person or thing will remain unclassified until I have acquired enough evidence'; it is to say (unconsciously), 'What predefined pattern most closely matches my initial impression?' This instant classification remains current until enough contrary evidence forces us to make the effort to reclassify. More often than not, the effort of reclassification is too difficult and, despite evidence to the contrary, we stick with our initial assessment, even when it is demonstrably wrong.

Therefore, once categorised as, for example, a representative of the class of 'IT people', an individual may face considerable difficulty in establishing a different reputation in the minds of his or her colleagues.

In preparing for this book we undertook some research into the 'IT stereotype' and interviewed in excess of 100 senior managers. Their roles varied from chief executive officer, through finance director, to a variety of other senior positions, from a wide a range of organisational sizes and industry types. We asked the senior managers to describe their IT people – to characterise them. As more and more descriptions were recorded, it became apparent that most of the interviewees had very similar views and the variations were merely variations on a theme. That theme is the IT stereotype, the characteristics of which are listed below. If you take offence, please don't blame us, we are merely the messenger.

The characteristics of the IT stereotype include people who are perceived as:

- Comfortable with logic, facts and data, but ...
- Uncomfortable with ambiguity and unpredictability; they like to follow clear and unambiguous rules
- Living in a world of black and white where there are no shades of grey – there is a right way to build a system and a wrong way to build a system
- Politically naive and lacking in business awareness
- Cautious, conservative and risk-averse
- Good at deconstructing problems but poor at synthesis, i.e. understanding in the context of the greater whole
- Lacking interpersonal skills and failing to possess a sense of humour
- Adopting a victim mentality – can't win, so won't fight
- Poor at accepting criticism – often rationalising it away.

The question, however, remains as to the basis of the IT stereotype. Is it a result of prejudice or misunderstanding, for example, or is there something fundamentally 'different' about people who elect to enter the IT profession? Is this just a problem we see with IT people, or are there other professions who suffer from a poor external view based upon possibly misleading stereotypes?

Psychological characteristics of IT people

There are numerous instruments available which help to identify various personality attributes and behaviours. For the purpose of our study we chose the Myers-Briggs Type

Indicator® (MBTI), for two principal reasons: first, because it is one of the most widely used, respected and researched instruments in the world; secondly, because of its capacity to measure psychological preferences relevant to the workplace.

The MBTI is derived from Jungian concepts of personality type and assesses preferences on four opposing dimensions. These four dimensions are summarised in *Table 2* below:

Focus of dimension	**MBTI preference**	
Where we get our energy from	**Extroversion (E)** Energy is gathered from the outer world of people and things	**Introversion (I)** Energy comes from the inner world of thoughts and reflection
How we acquire information	**Sensing (S)** Information is gathered through the five senses. Literal meaning and concrete facts are valued. Focus on experiences that occur in the present	**Intuition (N)** Information is acquired as patterns and hunch. Non-literal meaning, ideas and inter-relationships are valued. Focus on possibilities for the future
How we make decisions	**Thinking (T)** Make decisions on the basis of logical analysis. Value impartiality and objectivity	**Feeling (F)** Make decisions on the basis of personal values and impact on those concerned. Value empathy and harmony
Our lifestyle	**Judging (J)** Good at decision making and planning. Like things organised and like to be in control	**Perceiving (P)** Flexible and adaptable. Like spontaneity and openness to new ideas and/or information

Table 2: MBTI in summary

The MBTI questionnaire places respondents in one of sixteen different categories. Both our own research into IT people and that of other researchers have found a predisposition towards preferences for ISTJ (Introversion, Sensing, Thinking and Judging). This personality type is one that would seem to reinforce the stereotypical image of an IT person.

'**I**' denotes introversion, i.e. a preference for working on one's own. Such individuals may not put networking very high on their agenda and may appear to lack social skills.

'**S**' denotes sensing, i.e. a preference for building pictures of the world through detailed analysis of all the data and facts using a sequential step-by-step approach. Such individuals are unlikely to be comfortable with making decisions based on intuition or gut feel, or to come up with 'off-the-wall' or radical ideas.

'**T**' denotes thinking, i.e. a preference for basing decisions on logic, objectivity and impartiality. Such individuals may appear cool, dispassionate and insensitive to the needs and feelings of others.

'**J**' denotes judging, i.e. a preference for order and control over the future. Such individuals are likely to be uncomfortable with unpredictability, and may be perceived as lacking flexibility and adaptability. They have a dislike for last-minute surprises that mess up their carefully crafted plans.

In essence, the IT stereotype is suggestive of people who tend to take an insular, detailed, short-term and task-oriented focus towards their work. They also have a desire for order and certainty.

It is instructive to compare the personality traits of the IT stereotype with the behavioural traits of the Transactional Leaders as shown in *Table 1* in *Chapter 1*.

We can see that when an IT professional steps up into a management or leadership role their background, training, experience and dominant personality profile all contribute to their feeling naturally at home with the Transactional Leadership style.

What are the consequences of the IT stereotype?

Our research also took us to a number of boards of directors across a range of industry sectors; we asked three core questions of these boards. These questions, along with their corresponding answers, are detailed below:

1. How important do you believe IT is to the future of your business?
   - 94% answered **exceedingly**.
2. How highly do you rate your own IT function?
   - 46% said **not very highly**.
   - 32% said **they are OK at the technical stuff**.
3. Is your most senior IT person considered to be a member of your organisation's 'inner sanctum'?
   - 98% said **no**.

The research suggests a dichotomy, whereby boards recognise the significance and potential of IT, but don't have confidence that their own IT leadership is capable of delivering breakthrough change. This, we would suggest, is a consequence of the IT stereotype reinforced by poor past experience. The repercussions of the stereotype are serious both for IT leaders and for the business that could benefit from their input. In many of our organisations, we are faced with a situation where, even though IT is recognised as a fundamental enabler of future business success, the incumbent IT management is not, and has:

- no direct representation at Board level; hence the IT department takes the status of a service function and cost centre
- little credibility, and therefore little influence where business decision making is concerned, and as a consequence ...
- IT departments are commonly held in low regard, often tussling with the HR function for bottom position in the popularity stakes.

We are not suggesting that IT leaders are incapable of delivering the required change; it is a matter of perception. Therefore the real question that needs to be answered is not, 'why are IT leaders so undervalued at Board level?', but rather, 'how can we change the perception of the capability of IT leaders and what qualities and attributes do they need to demonstrate?'.

The question, we would suggest, is not so much one of skill, knowledge or capability, but rather one of style. As previously mentioned, the IT profession attracts people with preferences for ISTJ, whereas the typical CEO is more likely to have preferences for ENTJ. The natural communication style of an ISTJ is to provide lots of facts and data, to start at the beginning and build up, step by step, to a logical QED conclusion. A typical ENTJ CEO, on the other hand, prefers to start with the 'big-picture' conclusion, and then follow with a few key and supporting facts. If an ENTJ CEO were to be on the receiving end of an ISTJ style of communication, they would be likely to get bored very quickly and disengage before any conclusion could be reached; as a consequence, the best idea or perfectly crafted case may go unheard.

The way forward

As we have seen, overcoming stereotypes can be difficult, but it is not impossible. What is clear is that IT leaders who aspire to play a more significant role in their business will need to develop new skills and patterns of behaviour, and to align themselves with the mindset of the typical ENTJ CEO. Amongst these are:

- Networking and relationship-building – they need an outside focus, to develop allies and advocates and deploy lobbying tactics.
- Enhanced use of, and reliance on, their Emotional Intelligence – this governs their understanding of both self and others, their ability to motivate and inspire others and empathy in their dealings with individuals.
- The capacity to innovate, to see connections that others miss, to leverage technology to deliver previously unimagined products and services, and to make things happen.
- To focus on outcomes and see the 'bigger picture', to embrace ambiguity and uncertainty and gain the confidence to trust their 'gut' instinct.
- To have the courage to take risks, to challenge accepted wisdom to seek first to identify the right question before leaping to a convenient solution.
- To be seen as an enabler of change rather than an as an obstacle to change. This means that at a personal level they need to adopt a 'can-do' attitude. Rather than asking, 'do you want it right or do you want it now?', they need to understand that this business always wants it now and they only need it to be right enough to solve today's business imperative.

- Above all, they need to become team players, deploying their skills and talents in a way that complements those of their colleagues. They need to take shared ownership of collective work products.

It is these abilities and attributes which will unlock the door to the organisation's 'inner sanctum' and its potential business and personal opportunities.

In *Chapter 3* we will examine in greater detail the implications of the IT stereotype and the ISTJ style, adopted by the majority of IT departments, and explore why solutions to the problem have proved so elusive. Clues to a solution are to be found in evolutionary psychology, the subject of *Chapter 4*. Further evidence is also to be found in our research into IT leaders who have risen beyond the ranks of the top IT job and made it to the position of CEO.

Reflection

Consider your own relationships with your key stakeholders and the key decision makers within your organisation:

- What perceptions do you believe your various stakeholders have about you?
- Is their anything about your behaviour, the language you use, or the way that you dress, that reinforces their image of the IT stereotype?
- How do you view other groups, and to what extent does the way you think about their stereotype influence the way you approach and interact with them?

More food for thought

- K. Patching and R. Chatham, *Corporate Politics for IT Managers: How to Get Streetwise*, Butterworth Heinemann (2000).
  - A very good book – we would say that, wouldn't we – written slightly tongue in cheek and illustrated with cartoons. It gives bags of practical advice and explains why we do what we do the way we do.
- L. Willcoxson and R. Chatham, 'Testing the Accuracy of the IT Stereotype: Profiling IT Managers' Personality and Behavioural Characteristics, Information and Management' (2006), available online at www.sciencedirect.com
  - Somewhat academic in style, it provides the proof and evidence behind some of our assertions in relation to the IT stereotype.

CHAPTER 3: THE ILLUSION OF A SOLUTION

The first step in arriving at a solution is to recognise and accept the problem. The majority of IT functions are well aware that they have a problem; however, they are not very good at understanding the root cause of that problem. When looking at the relationship between IT and the business it serves, the problem is commonly expressed as a feeling of discomfort: the business does not perceive it is getting value for money in terms of its IT investment, but can't articulate the nature of this discomfort. Once this has been recognised, IT departments normally act in one of two ways:

- They adopt a victim mentality and blame their colleagues in the rest of the business: 'It's not fair ...'; 'if only we could educate our users everything would be OK', etc.
- They call an internal pow-wow and decide that they need to improve, to do more of the same but better. This needs to be something quantifiable and measurable, i.e. something firmly embedded within the transactional model of leadership. Service levels commonly become the number-one candidate and the IT department therefore disappears into a black hole, with the objective of improving each of its service levels by a marginal percentage. IT has missed the point! This is analogous to those situations when you've just told somebody something and they say, 'I don't understand', and then you repeat the same words but louder.

What has failed to happen is an understanding of the root cause. In order to understand this, we need to place ourselves in the shoes of our peers and colleagues in the rest of the business. How would they perceive IT?

Some may perceive IT people as odd, incapable of communicating in plain English, lacking a sense of humour, and often arrogant and prone to talking down to their 'users', who just don't 'get it' quickly enough. In essence, they perceive the IT stereotype. In addition, they fail to understand why it takes the IT department two years to build a system that one of their own teenage children could knock up in an evening. Furthermore, our more technically savvy business peers will compare their work and home experiences and wonder why they are not experiencing the ease of use of Amazon, the simplicity of Google, and the functionality of eBay.

So what is the problem? Essentially, it boils down to a lack of mutual understanding and poor communication; the consequences are ultimately mistrust.

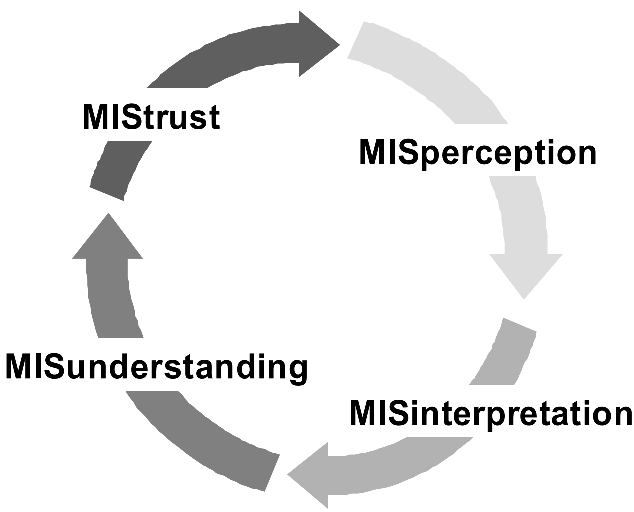

Figure 3: The vicious circle

Many IT departments try to create work around solutions to build bridges and alleviate the need for trust. We create systems and processes, committees, liaison roles, account management, service-level agreements, etc. 'What is so wrong with this?' you may ask. Well, you can't legislate for everything; human nature dictates that we look for familiar problems and solutions that we know have worked before, thus, we develop 'work-around' solutions. In addition, systems, processes, meetings, etc. all absorb company time and resources and therefore cost money; they freeze us in bureaucracy and prevent us from changing.

We have been talking about troubled relationships between IT and the rest of the business for the past 30 years. Indeed, our own studies over a 10-year period have shown that whilst there has been an increased awareness of the importance of IT as a driver of business activity, no corresponding improvement was found in the IT–business relationship.[8] The solution continues to remain elusive.

The route from IT leader to CEO – critical attributes

Let us now turn to another piece of research into IT professionals who have been successful at the top IT job. You may ask how one measures success in the role of IT leader. This is a very good question and not one that has a right answer. Our measure was IT professionals who had been promoted beyond the top IT job to the position of CEO.

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[8] Lesley Willcoxson and Robina Chatham, 'Progress in the IT/Business Relationship: A Longitudinal Assessment', *Journal of Information Technology* (2004).

Lessons from CEOs who have made it to the top from a career in IT

We interviewed 20 CEOs who had made it to the top through a career in IT.[9] Below is the advice they wished to pass on to IT leaders who aspire to have a voice at the top table:

- Become a businessperson – learn about general management, demonstrate enthusiasm for business matters, and acquire knowledge of your industry sector. Talk business language, not technical jargon. Focus on driving revenues up rather than cutting costs, and don't forget to network, network and network. The CEOs, when in the top IT job, typically spent over 50% of their time communicating with non-IT people both within and outside their organisations.
- Have a vision – find out what is going on in the outside world; read, talk to suppliers and peers in other organisations, and know where technology is taking the world. Demonstrate original thinking; be bringers of change and inspiration and make things interesting. Grab the attention of your CEO. Lift horizons and excite the Board with possibilities rather than portraying problems.
- Become a 'can-do' person – learn the 'art of the possible'; think 'out of the box', look for alternatives, never sit back, hold that failure is not an option, and learn to trust your experience and to deal with uncertainty. Remember also that in today's world, speed is an imperative, so learn to adopt the '80–20' rule.

[9] R. Chatham, *Getting to be CEO via a Career in IT*, CSC's Research & Advisory Services (2005).

- Be prepared to take risks – learn to trust your 'gut' and your heart, and go out on a limb for what you believe in; be prepared to challenge accepted wisdom or authority. In the words of the CEOs, 'it is easier to ask for forgiveness than to seek permission'.
- Understand people – do not underestimate the importance of people skills; you need to understand what makes people tick and how to get the best out of them on an individual basis. Before you can do this, you need to truly understand yourself. Don't recruit in your own likeness, but do learn to value diversity. Weed out non-team players and ensure you place round pegs in round holes and square pegs in square holes. Praise rather than criticise and give credit to others, but take the blame on the chin. Build relationships upwards, downwards and sideways, and become 'gossip-central'.
- Learn to trust and delegate – use and value your team; recruit the best people, brief and train them properly and then have the confidence to let go. You do not have the time to get involved in the day-to-day stuff. Your focus should be on the strategic stuff, so you can contribute at the business transformation level. Have the courage to hire people better than you and to nurture and reward talent. Take account of other people's feelings, and learn how to influence and communicate openly and honestly.
- Get the 'right' boss – you need the support of your boss. If you are not getting it, the advice is to 'stop beating your head against a brick wall and move on to more fertile ground; find a new job with a new boss who will support you'.
- Develop your sense of humour – humour is an essential ingredient in the workplace: it diffuses tension, bonds

people, aids creativity and understanding and oils the wheels of conversation. It increases the impact of your words and it makes you 'clubbable'; remember, we associate with, consult and confide in people we like being with!

Four areas to work on

All this research and advice points to one simple fact; IT leaders need to develop and hone their right-brain skills. In MBTI terms this equates to developing their Intuition and their Feeling functions. These skills fall into four principal categories:

- An understanding of the human condition, i.e. Emotional Intelligence. The ability to communicate effectively, to build rapport, to influence and to collaborate to achieve win–win solutions; the passion to inspire and motivate others and the empathy to exercise consideration and compassion towards others and hence earn trust, loyalty and respect.
- The capacity to take an interest in the wider world and to see problems within the wider organisational context within which they sit.
- Learning how to deal with ambiguity and unpredictability; this is a skill which will be completely at odds with all prior professional training.
- The courage to take risks and make bold decisions based on one's values and 'gut' instinct; to challenge authority and accepted wisdom.

It is one thing to say that you need to develop these four capabilities; it is quite another matter to set about doing it.

Indeed, as we look around our organisations at the incumbent senior leadership teams, we see very few who naturally exhibit these qualities.

We have seen that both our deeply-embedded mental models and our natural personality preferences can be major impediments to personal change and growth. So where can we look for role models and what simple and immediate steps can we take to improve our own performance and start to increase our credibility with the top team?

Over the last 20 years or so, there has been an increasing focus on what is termed the 'Transformational Leader'. This style of leadership appears more closely aligned to the qualities and attributes required of the future successful IT leader. In *Chapter 5* we will take a closer look at the nature of Transformational Leadership. We will go on in *Chapters 6* to *9* to explore some specific things that you can start doing that will help you develop your skills as a Transformational Leader.

Reflection

- How interested are you in the business and industry you are in? How well do you understand it?
- What is your vision for your area of responsibility? How prepared are you to take a risk for what you believe in?
- How well do you really know and understand yourself?
- How well do you understand other people? What makes them tick and what motivates them?
- How would others rate your people skills?

- How comfortable are you with ambiguity and unpredictability?
- How visible are you and are you noted for 'original thinking'?
- Would your business colleagues describe you as a 'can-do' person?
- Would your key stakeholders or business peers actively seek your company or your advice?

More food for thought

- R. Chatham *Getting to be CEO via a Career in IT*, CSC's Research & Advisory Services (2005).
    - A very brief report written with the busy executive in mind.
- L. Willcoxson and R. Chatham, 'Progress in the IT/Business Relationship: A Longitudinal Assessment', *Journal of Information Technology* (2004).
    - Again, somewhat academic in style, the paper provides the proof and evidence that the relationship issue is still alive and well and desperately in need of a solution.

CHAPTER 4: INSIGHTS FROM EVOLUTIONARY PSYCHOLOGY

Evolutionary psychologists contend that although the world has changed, human beings have not. Indeed you might say that 'you can take "man" out of the Stone Age but that you can't take the Stone Age out of "man"'. In other words, we are hardwired to behave instinctively; we still posses those traits that made survival possible when we inhabited the savannah some 200,000 years ago.

For most of our history as *Homo sapiens* we have survived and reproduced as clan-living hunter-gatherers. It was only 10,000 years ago with the introduction of agriculture that our world radically changed. Suddenly communities accumulated surplus resources, which facilitated the accumulation of wealth, cultural elites and exploitative leaders in the form of chiefs, kings and warlords. Then, some 250 years ago, came the Industrial Revolution, and from then on a number of small and rapid steps have brought us to modern civilisation with its enormous social changes bought about by transport, technology and communications. Just 10,000 years is, however, a mere drop in the ocean in the scheme of things and insufficient time for significant genetic modifications to become established in the population.

Life on the savannah was short and fragile; as weak furless bipeds, human beings' strength lay in their minds. Certain characteristics or 'circuits' increased our chance of survival. These fell into three prime categories:

1 *A sense of belonging and knowing who to trust.* Human beings are social creatures, and being a member of a

group increased our chance of survival – hence the formation of clans and tribes. We are instinctively drawn towards those closer, more familiar or similar to us, i.e. members of our own clan or tribe. We use our ability to stereotype, as discussed in *Chapter 2*, to classify these people as *insiders*. Those who do not fit this mental model will be classified as *outsiders*; with outsiders we have a tendency to focus on and exaggerate perceived differences, and therefore may judge them harshly. This classification provided us with the knowledge of who to trust and who to be wary of, dismiss or fear. People are complex and many-sided, but we are not programmed to see them that way. During our days on the savannah, analysing options and next steps was not a recipe for a long and fertile life.

2 *Knowing who to barter and trade with.* Friendly exchanges of information, favours and goods for mutual benefit provided the opportunity for *Homo sapiens* to move from mere survival to a situation of prospering. Social skills were of paramount importance: good instincts, emotional radar, being in touch with the ever-changing social scene and tuned in to the grapevine.

3 *Skill in negotiation and trading.* A competitive instinct, avoidance of loss and self-confidence were all skills that helped to ensure we got the best deal for ourselves and didn't get cheated in the process. Those who proved to be the best at negotiating and trading acquired respect and status. This led to the formation of hierarchy, of leaders and followers.

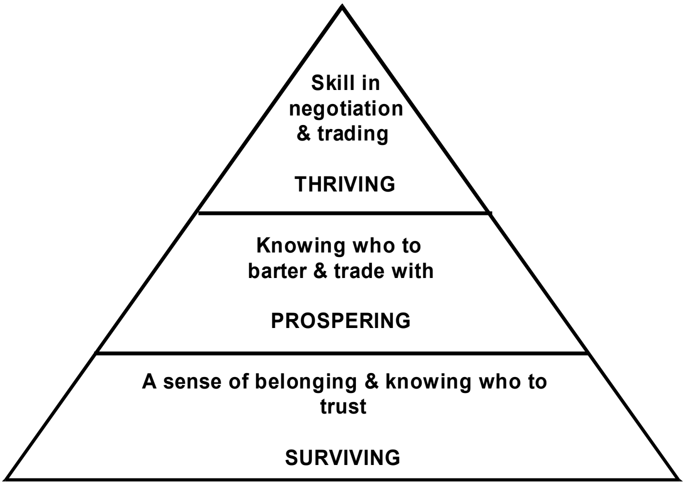

Figure 4: Three primitive instincts

So what are the implications for modern society in general and IT leaders in particular; how does it explain our behaviour today and what can we do to use our 'hardwiring' to our advantage?

Behavioural hardwiring – the implications for IT

In IT, much of our training and the way we are encouraged to work operates against our hardwiring. We are taught to dispense with our emotions and think logically and rationally, to make choices based on rigorous and logical analysis of the facts. We constantly search for the 'right answer'. We forget that being right is not enough; that decisions are made on the basis of opinion, perception and interpretation, and are coloured by our own beliefs, values and assumptions.

Hence we try to replace our natural instincts of 'hardwiring' at the bottom two levels of the pyramid with systems and processes. Our hardwiring, however, comes to the fore at the top level of the pyramid; it manifests itself in a drive to compete and get the best deal for our IT departments, to avoid taking risks, in overconfidence in our knowledge of the rest of the business and our certainty that we are 'right'. The consequences are manifold.

Our failure to adopt a service culture

With too much focus on the top of the pyramid and too little on the bottom, we end up giving the business what we think it needs, with the certainty that we are right, rather than building the relationships necessary to find out what it really needs. We make well-intended, but misplaced, assumptions. We think we know best and better than the business as to what is needed; we then try to pin down the requirements statement to the nth degree, allowing little room or flexibility to manoeuvre, and ultimately, we aim to control what is delivered through standards, procedures and detailed service-level agreements. This is not a recipe for winning the hearts and minds of one's customers.

IT departments need to adopt a service culture, to find ways of giving the business what it needs and wants rather than telling it what it can and cannot have. We need to accept that businesses are living organisms and constantly changing, therefore the systems that we produce must be inherently flexible and adaptable to afford the business the agility it needs.

We, as IT leaders, need to recognise that we are selling both ourselves and the services our departments offer. Every good salesperson knows that 'dislike of the salesperson' is the most significant reason for not buying a product or service offered. So, being liked could well be rather important. The question is, what does it take to become liked, to be 'likeable'? It is important to stress that when we say 'likeable', we are really talking about being seen as an 'insider', rather than as an 'outsider'. In our opinion it is important to concentrate on all of the following:

- building relationships
- speaking well of others
- taking an interest in other people, and their activities and interests
- being able to converse on a wide range of subjects
- sharing common interests
- actively listening to others and accepting that they have a valid point of view, even if you don't agree with it
- praising rather than criticising
- demonstrating empathy and being sensitive to the moods and feelings of others
- having respect for other people and treating them the way they would wish to be treated
- putting oneself out to help others, without expecting anything in return
- demonstrating modesty and humility and being prepared to admit your mistakes, or that you are wrong
- above all, possessing a sense of humour.

Our aversion to risk

When it comes to risk aversion and our avoidance of loss, our hardwiring and our IT training are working in sync. This could make us doubly cautious and explain why we find it so difficult to learn the lessons from project failures and often neglect to undertake proper post-implementation reviews. It also explains why it is so difficult to invite people to make mistakes in the name of creativity. Our quality and control systems encourage us to get things right first time; this is at total odds with the concept of a learning organisation. In a learning organisation, one asks questions that generate ideas, which are then tested in experiments. The aim of the learning organisation is not to get things right first time, but rather to learn from mistakes and failures, to reflect upon why things work the way they do, and to use that knowledge to deal with root causes, rather than applying short-term remedies to symptoms.

IT leaders need to frame problems and challenges in a way that is neither threatening nor tranquillising. They need to create a feeling of urgency that drives action and mobilises their people into seeking more innovative solutions and taking a more proactive view of risk.

Our preference for relying upon our own knowledge and judgement

Our innate self-confidence, coupled with a preference for 'thinking', encourages us to reach conclusions based on few facts and to have overconfidence in our own judgement. Overconfidence can cause a blindness to facts that conflict with our opinions or assumptions; it can lead us to pretend that there isn't a problem, or that it isn't that bad – we just need more time. This may provide an explanation for all those runaway systems-projects. IT leaders need to recognise when they are fighting a losing battle and muster the courage and the strength to say: ‘enough is enough’. In addition, they need to develop the humility to seek guidance and help.

Our reluctance to make networking and relationship-building our number one priority

IT leaders need to place networking far higher on their agendas than the majority do today; they need to build personal relationships with their business colleagues to ensure that they see beyond the stereotype of the IT ‘geek’. They need to work hard to ensure that their words and actions are seen to be congruent with the aims and direction of the business, and supportive of wider business goals.

They need to become gossip-central. Being gossip-central increases your chance of being in the right place at the right time. You will also have the opportunity to pick up on minor problems, and nip them in the bud before they become major issues. Gossip and the ‘grapevine’ are some of the most effective communication media within any organisation.

Relationship-building requires sensitivity and empathy towards others; this will encourage others to open up to you. Learn to listen ‘actively’ to what other people are saying to you, rather than focusing on what you want to say next; you are far more likely to hear secrets and other information if you appear trustworthy, sympathetic and interested. Try to put yourself in the shoes of others and judge their behaviour through their value sets rather than your own; those with the knack of guessing what others are thinking are likely to ask better and more probing questions. Dedicate time for networking and other forms of human interaction. Lunchtimes are a prime opportunity to interact with others in an informal atmosphere; it is far more beneficial than catching up with your e-mail whilst eating a sandwich!

Our passion for matrix forms of management

People are instinctively drawn towards commitment to one community at a time, usually the one that is physically closer and more familiar; thus, the dual loyalties that matrix management requires are difficult to sustain, and matrix structures remain one of the most difficult and least successful organisational forms. This has huge implications for the popular BRM (business relationship manager) role, which was invented to solve the relationship-gap issue between IT and the rest of the business; it explains why people in these roles often find themselves 'piggy in the middle'. If, for example, a BRM person originated from IT, as many do, they are perceived by their ex-IT colleagues to have gone native. At the same time, however, they fail to integrate fully with the business, still being viewed as an IT person with a fancy title. They become 'Billy No-Mates'. This also explains why the concept of having employees report to both people managers and project managers is doomed to failure.

Be aware of the implications of matrix roles, don't undertake them lightly, and give people particular support and ensure transparency when you do need to create such roles.

Patterns of informal leadership and deferential behaviour are witnessed in any grouping of individuals. If we try to get rid of hierarchical levels, fresh variations will just spring up in their place.

Accept that some people want to lead, other people want to be led, and still others would just prefer to be free to do their own thing in their own way. The most important attribute for leadership is the desire to lead. Managerial skills and competencies can be trained into a person, but the passion to run an organisation cannot. There are as many types of leader as there are leadership situations – the important thing is to have the appropriate style that meets the demands of the situation.

In conclusion

Evolutionary psychology suggests that it is time to recognise who we are and use this information to exploit, and live in harmony with, our hardwiring.

As an illustration, just consider what has happened with the advent of IT. At the outset, it looked as if IT threatened to eradicate small-scale societies; however, it is looking more and more like it will be the very means by which small-scale (virtual) societies are rediscovered. The means will have changed, for sure, but the ends will be the same as they always have been: to belong, to identify with, and to have meaning for others, i.e. to be in tune with our hardwiring.

To be successful, the Transformational Leader will need to embrace this hardwiring at all levels of the pyramid. We will explore this further in the next few chapters.

Reflection

- How much effort do you put into being 'liked'?
- When did you last take a stand for what you believed in?
- Have you ever canned a systems project? In hindsight, should you have? What gave you the courage? What held you back?
- How much time do you spend networking and building relationships?
- How much internal competition exists between IT and the rest of the business?
- Do you operate a matrix structure? If so, how successful is it and what could be done to improve it?

More food for thought

- Nigel Nicholson, 'How Hardwired is Human Behaviour?', *Harvard Business Review* (1998).
    - An excellent summary of evolutionary psychology; a convergence of research and controversy, encompassing six different sources of scientific research.

CHAPTER 5: NEW MODELS OF LEADERSHIP – THE ROUTE TO BECOMING A TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER

The Transformational Leader must work in the space between the present and the future. They should not ask, '*what can we do?*' but rather '*what is it possible to achieve in this situation?*'. When we ask, '*what can we do?*', we are artificially limiting ourselves by viewing the situation through our own lens, a lens that is shaped by our own experience and can only imagine outcomes that are consistent with that experience. When we ask, '*what is it possible to achieve in this situation?*', we accept the fact that others with a fundamentally different experience or structure might imagine, and achieve, outcomes that would never occur to us. The leader must envision a whole range of possible futures that are unfettered by current capability or past performance. Having envisioned and chosen a desirable possible future state, the leader must then communicate this in a manner that inspires people to commit to working together to create that state. It is important to understand that this is not about forecasting the future but, rather, that we all have a role in creating our futures. This may at first appear to be a daunting task, and only relevant to great national or corporate leaders, but in reality we can all behave in this manner to create positive outcomes for ourselves and our organisations.

Where should we focus our transformational efforts?

Understanding that process and practice are not the same thing

Most of our experience and training has equipped us for problem-solving in well-bounded rational domains. We seek the comfort of the 'right' answer, and believe that there is a 'right' way of acting, if only we can find it. This view is constantly reinforced by a barrage of 'best practice' and a raft of benchmarking data that show how we compare with supposed best-in-class in similar industries. We understand that Performance lies at the nexus of People, Process and Technology, but all too often concentrate on Process and Technology to the exclusion of People. We need to put people at the centre of the equation and recognise that good, well-motivated people will find a way to perform, even when their systems are inadequate and their processes are flawed. By contrast, poorly-skilled and/or demotivated people will fail to perform, even when given the finest, best-tuned processes and systems.

Performance is produced by people engaging with good processes whilst deploying good practice. Processes can be 'engineered', which is an analytical process. Practice, on the other hand, emerges within communities – to improve practice one has to develop a deep understanding of how people actually use their tools and knowledge to achieve work.

Practice, then, is a social artefact; a creation of a specific group of people with specific skills, knowledge and experience, who work together in a certain way to achieve results. All too often, when we try to capture best practice, we actually document best process and leave the most important elements of practice untouched. Practice exists in people and the spaces between people – the relationships between system and process, between the articulated rules and the unspoken norms of behaviour. As such, practice cannot be managed; it has to be nurtured. The way to transform practice is to work on creating a receptive and sustaining environment within which practice can emerge and develop.

In essence, then, the way to transform performance is to work on and through people, to target the way they form relationships with each other and with the systems and processes they use to achieve results. In situations such as this, the leader needs to focus on shaping and sustaining the working environment, rather than on specifying and controlling activity. However, as we have seen, the way we see the world, and the management techniques that we are so comfortable with, are poorly suited to this style of leadership. If we are to transform ourselves into Transformational Leaders, we will need to find new ways of looking at the world and new ways of working around the edges of the tools and processes that populate our organisations.

The modern leader, then, needs to embrace a new way of being – a way that engages the hearts of our team as well as the minds; a way that steps beyond process, best or otherwise, and focuses on meaning and purposeful action directed towards achieving desired outcomes; a focus on what and why, rather than a relentless drive towards a predetermined how. We need a different form of thinking: synthesis rather than analysis, questioning and dialogue rather than instruction. We also need to develop a deep understanding of the nature of risk and opportunity, and acquire tools and techniques to support decision making under conditions of uncertainty.

All of this may sound interesting, but perhaps a little flaky. Very much a case of: 'nice idea, but what do we do on Monday morning?'.

Ambiguity is not a natural bedfellow with detailed long-term planning. How do we respond to these new challenges? How do we best scope, design and deliver critical IT systems against a backdrop of constantly changing business imperatives? How do we balance the business's need for flexibility and nimbleness with the technicians' need for certainty, for defined and agreed deliverables and closure? Perhaps most importantly, how do we break out of the familiar patterns of Transactional Leadership to create an environment where new ideas can flourish and new value be created.

At the end of *Chapter 1*, we looked at the behaviour patterns associated with Transactional Leadership. *Table 3* shows the corresponding and contrasting behaviours that are associated with a Transformational Leadership approach.

In simple terms, Transactional Leadership has, at its core, an ethos of command and control, whereas Transformational Leadership places emphasis on collaboration and co-creation. In essence, the two lists could be replaced by just two words: *comply* and *commit*. The traditional leadership approach has been focused on producing compliant behaviour – this idea is at the heart of all laws, rules, restrictions and best-practice guidelines. The idea is that there is a 'best' way to do something, and that if we all do it this way we will all benefit. The emergent view suggests that if we can paint a suitably engaging and evocative picture of a desired end state, and help people to overcome the emotional and structural impediments of making the journey, then they will commit. Committed behaviour leads to more sustainable change and better performance.

Approach to structure and organisation	
1	Favours networked organisations, empowerment and devolved decision making
2	Favours self-organising teams and people spontaneously committing their personal resources to initiatives that are seen to make a difference
3	Solves problems through involving all stakeholders in meaningful dialogue
Approach to work	
4	Specifies what needs to be achieved, rather than how it must be done
5	Provides context – keeps the focus on desired outcomes rather than on interim outputs. Motivates by showing how individual contribution impacts the outcome
6	Encourages planning in action; plans need to have the flexibility to respond to changing circumstances
7	Is skilful at reframing situations and seeing anew
Communication style	
8	Uses language to create
9	Ensures open access to information
10	Encourages people to share diverse assessments
Approach to change	
11	Treats people as part of a living system – they are best influenced through involvement
12	The end result is always greater than the sum of the parts – new and unexpected things emerge. Change is about capitalising on unanticipated benefits
13	People need a compelling vision of a desirable end state so that they can align their actions and help to create the future

Table 3: Behaviour traits of Transformational Leaders

	Transactional	Transformational
Approach to structure and organisation		
1	Favours command and control	Favours networked organisations
2	Favours well-defined role definitions	Favours self-organising teams
3	Solves problems by involving a few trusted individuals	Solves problems through involving all stakeholders
Approach to work		
4	Allocates individual tasks and checks for compliance	Specifies what needs to be achieved rather than how it must be done
5	Is focused on activity and achieving expected results	Is focused on outcomes and how individual contribution impacts outcomes
6	Encourages and values detailed planning	Encourages planning in action
7	Does what has worked before	Reframes situations and gains new insight
Communication style		
8	Uses language to describe	Uses language to create
9	Shares information selectively	Ensures open access to information
10	Encourages agreement and consensus, seeks closure	Encourages people to share diverse assessments
Approach to change		
11	Treats people as part of a machine	Treats people as part of a living system
12	Change is predictable	Change is about capitalising on unanticipated benefits
13	People need a plan – a clear roadmap	People need a compelling vision

Table 4: Comparison of leaders' behavioural traits

Summary – Transactional vs Transformational Leadership traits

Both styles of leadership are equally valid – the skilful leader must be ambidextrous, flexing their approach to suit the needs of the situation. The really important insight from studying the two lists is that these are not just different styles of leaders' behaviour; they carry with them embedded controls, checks and balances. To be effective, a leader's actions must be congruent with the prevailing procedures, rules and norms of behaviour. If, as a leader, you change your style, but leave the performance and measurement regime unchanged, it will prove impossible for your followers to adopt the new practices that you need.

As we move through the remaining chapters of this book, we will explore in greater depth why we think and behave the way we do; how our personal preferences for processing information shape the way we communicate and build relationships. We will see how the network of relationships and trust that we build, will inevitably impact our ability to engage with our colleagues to co-create new levels of product and service, which can transform the performance of our organisations.

We will examine a range of techniques and strategies that we can employ to help us create our desirable future, and we will point to the importance of role modelling in creating winning behaviours – this, too, will point to the importance of congruence between words, actions and the underpinning environmental culture.

We believe that the IT leader needs to develop and display Transformational Leadership skills, and that the route to achieving this needs a fundamental and revolutionary shift in attitude.

Reflection

- Think about the triggers and environmental conditions that might help you as a leader to recognise which style to adopt to be most successful in a particular situation.
- Reflect also on the steps you may need to take in order to ensure that the environment you create is congruent with the outcomes that you desire.

More food for thought

- Bernard. M. Bass, *Transformational Leadership*, second edition, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc. (2006).
    - Prime reading for any leader who wants to develop a deeper understanding of the underpinning theory of Transformational Leadership.

PART II

BUILDING TRANSFORMATIONAL COMPETENCIES

CHAPTER 6: RELEASING THE POWER OF THE MANY

The modern leader is often faced with too many things to achieve and too few resources to achieve them. In such circumstances, the key challenge is: how do we increase the bang for the buck? What can the leader do to ensure that where it matters most we get the maximum impact from the resources we deploy?

The Transactional Leader may approach this problem through a combination of focus and control, limiting the scope of the activities through unambiguous specifications, backed up by tight work packages and structured individual objectives. Progress against predetermined targets would be rigorously monitored and achievement of individual targets rewarded. The Transactional Leader knows what to do and how best to do it, and will muster and deploy resources accordingly. This invariably leads to a reduction in individual autonomy, coupled with more centralised and short-term-focused decision making. Such strategies can work well when activities are well understood and not subject to significant variation; these are tactics for the production environment. Where success depends upon flexibility, nimbleness and innovation, such control-focused tactics can rapidly lead to a workforce that is unwilling, or unable, to think or act outside the immediate needs of the task at hand. The result is that we just keep doing more of the same, getting the same results and failing to see, or respond to, new opportunities, or even to our customers' needs.

By contrast, the Transformational Leader will respond to the need for efficiency in production-type tasks, whilst at the same time creating an environment that liberates their team members, giving them the freedom to solve problems innovatively and make decisions that are congruent with the overall aims of the business.

Learning to see anew

We saw earlier how our mental models of cause and effect are so ingrained that we just assume that some things are inviolable, we unquestioningly accept the wisdom of what we see as eternal truths. The Transformational Leader must first and foremost learn to question those things that we just know to be fact.

For example, let's look at what we *know* about reward systems. We know that if you incentivise people with extrinsic rewards (pay them for performance), they will perform more efficiently and effectively. Yet repeated experiments have shown that such extrinsic rewards only produce improved performance where the task is well understood and can be completed using existing skills and knowledge. When faced with new and novel problems, ones that require thinking 'out of the box', extrinsic rewards tend to have a detrimental impact on performance, producing confused and sub-optimal performance. The reward encourages people to do what they have always done and they become channelled in their thinking and despondent when their efforts fail to produce new solutions.

It would appear, then, that tight management, reward and command and control may be counter-productive when performance is dependent upon innovative thinking, new ideas and new ways of working. We are limited by what we *know*; being so sure about what we *know* closes our minds to the possibility of knowing something new.

What we need is a motivational framework that stimulates new thinking, rather than channelling it repeatedly into well-trodden courses of action. The future health of our organisations rests on our ability to inspire our people to deploy all their talents to produce new products and services that delight our customers.

Our challenge, then, is: how do we create an environment where our team members have the desire to think and be different, the latitude to take responsible action, and the understanding to ensure that their actions are congruent with our overall aims and therefore collectively contribute?

Table 5 gives a high-level view of the change in leadership mindset that is required. In broad terms, the change is from the leader as a controller of action, to the leader as the shaper of the environment within which action can develop.

Approach to structure and organisation		
	From	**To**
1	Favouring command and control	Favouring networked organisations
2	Favouring well-defined role definitions	Favouring self-organising teams
3	Solving problems by involving a few trusted individuals	Solving problems through involving all stakeholders

Table 5: Transformational Leadership – change of emphasis

A framework for shaping the environment

As managers we are used to focusing directly upon people and their immediate actions as the means to improving performance. What we are suggesting is that you will get far greater leverage by focusing on the sustaining environment within which the people operate. To help you better understand where to direct your actions, we suggest that you focus on **ACCESS**:

A = Alignment

C = Congruence

C = Co-creation

E = Engaged stakeholders

S = Shared responsibility

S = Self-selection.

This simple mnemonic acts as a good guide to the range and nature of the Transformational Leader's action. We will look at each of these in turn and suggest things you can do to stimulate change in each of these areas.

Alignment

Leaders worry that giving people too much autonomy will produce un-coordinated and potentially conflicting actions. To counter this, they carefully prescribe levels of devolved authority, and seek to limit the range of decisions that can be made without appeal to higher authority for approval. The problem is that such rules can only hope to cover situations which are already well understood. Yet devolved decision making is arguably most effective when the situation is new and no precedent for action exists. Under these circumstances, it is essential not only that people have access to the relevant information needed to support the decision to be made, but also, more importantly, that they understand the context in which action is to be taken.

We saw earlier how our mental model acts as a filter for information and how we tend to focus only on those signals that support our view of how the world works. Each of us has a subtly different model and a different view of priorities and consequences. For effective decision making in a devolved environment, the leader must take action to align the mental models of the team. This deep-seated alignment requires more than a comprehensive set of operating instructions and it is certainly very much more than simply parroting a catchy vision statement or mantra.

Mental models are formed over time through a deep enculturation process, so it follows that any attempt to align mental models must focus heavily on collective sense making. Alignment only happens through a process of socialisation; people working together, solving problems together, making sense of the world together.

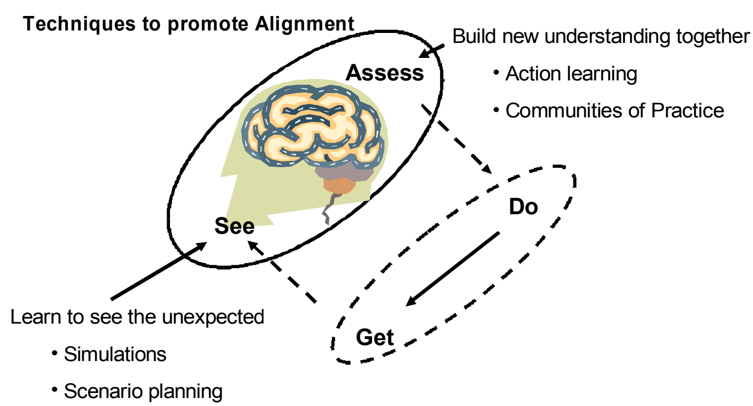

Figure 5: Aligning mindsets

When the leader works on Alignment, the emphasis has to be on actions that address how people **See** and **Assess**. Of the two, seeing is at the deepest cognitive level and it is often easier and, in the short term, more effective, to work first on trying to align the **Assess** function. The process of Assessing is essentially about deploying problem-solving techniques and frames of reference that we found have worked in similar circumstances in the past.

Steps to help with the alignment of the assess function

To help people align the way they assess situations and actions, the leader should therefore seek to put people together to focus on operational problems that are important to resolve, but do not submit to standard remedies. Ideally, the problems should be familiar in nature but perplexing in resolution. This sort of enquiry has become known as *action learning*, and is gaining significant popularity in organisations.

With regard to action learning, the leader's role is to define the problem, provide information and access, listen uncritically to the new knowledge that is created from the process, provide resources to deploy, and leverage worthwhile solutions that emerge from the process. A typical action-learning group will go through the following steps:

1. Work as a small group (four to eight people) on a real work-related problem that needs a resolution
2. Question what is happening and why it is happening
3. Challenge conventional wisdom about cause and effect
4. Explore new relationships and ways of understanding the situation

5 Suggest potential solutions
6 Reflect upon what they have learned as a group and on the process of learning
7 Share insights and experience widely with fellow practitioners
8 Create new levels of practice.

Action learning helps people both to understand challenging problems and, perhaps more importantly, to understand how others see problems and why they take the actions that they do. As such, action learning is a highly effective tool for aligning the way groups of people assess situations. It is therefore a core building block of new levels of professional practice. The process tends to work best when supported by an experienced coach who can guide the participants through the steps outlined above. The role of the coach is very different to that of the leader. The coach is primarily concerned with the process of learning and encouraging the participants to break down the barriers that stop them learning. By contrast, the leader is focused on aligned action and the commercial exploitation of the new knowledge created.

In action learning, the leader's role is one of questioning rather than telling, of listening rather than commanding, of providing enabling resources rather than structuring action. As new understanding and practice emerges, communities of practice can also play a vital role in sharing and disseminating practice into the organisation and the wider industry.

Steps to align the seeing function

Deeper alignment relies on helping people to **See** or perceive differently. The emphasis is on helping people to pay attention to stimuli that would otherwise go unnoticed. Essentially, there are two ways of shaking up the way we see.

1 We can use 'what-if'-style management simulations to allow people to experience situations that otherwise would be too costly, time-consuming or dangerous to contemplate.

2 We can pose challenging questions that fly in the face of conventional wisdom. This is the technique that underpins scenario planning, making managers think the unthinkable and devise ways of dealing with it.

To help achieve alignment of thought process, the leader should work on providing key personnel with opportunities to engage in both action learning and scenario planning around challenging organisational issues. Aligning thinking is a precursor to aligning action; interventions at this deeper cognitive level will produce longer-lasting and more effective results than concentrating on observable behaviours.

Congruence

Only a small part of communication rests in the actual words we speak; a very large part of meaning is construed through the way we say the words, our body language, and the context in which we receive the message. In addition, our strong mental models tend to make us blind to certain possibilities, and therefore we unknowingly engage in biased listening. Whenever we interpret information, we subconsciously access three filters based upon how we feel about the content, the information source and situation (or context) in which we receive the information.

In terms of content, we tend to place weight based upon factors such as:

- emotional appeal
- visual and aural appeal
- uniqueness
- brevity.

When assessing a source, we are most likely to look towards what we know of, or how we feel about, the sender. In doing so we are making judgements about factors such as their:

- perceived expertise
- power and/or influence
- personal appeal or charisma
- objectivity
- impartiality.

Finally, the situation we find ourselves in also impacts how we perceive the message; here we are concerned with such matters as:

- the perceived consequences, both personal and for our community
- expectation
- individual or group setting (we like to receive some messages personally and privately)
- our personal comfort level (how what is being suggested chimes with our personal value set).

All of the above are assessed instantly and subconsciously, and this, when combined with biased listening and our predisposition to ignore certain signs, makes communication a hazardous activity. We need to add to all this that, even when a message does get through intact, everything can be undone if the communicator's actions are seen to be at odds with their own message. We therefore place great emphasis on the need for **Congruence**.

To be congruent is defined as: 'to be in agreement or harmony'. It is essential that our actions and our words are seen to be in harmony, to be congruent. This is always important, but particularly so when our message is about change and has a strong emotional impact. The Transformational Leader needs to be conscious of the impact of their own behaviour and actions in communicating; the leader must strive to ensure that their words and actions are congruent in nature, also that the course of action they are proposing is congruent with the espoused strategy and journey that has been set out in previous communications. Where multiple change initiatives are under way at the same time, we should seek to show how they are complementary and mutually supportive of the achievement of a desired outcome.

Co-creation

The idea of co-creation has been around for some time in the world of product development and R&D. Indeed, there are classic examples of co-creation, such as:

- open-source software, particularly Linux
- Lego's® Mindstorms – robotic kits where the user community has hacked the firmware and software to

achieve capabilities far beyond the original scope of operation.

Such developments are often termed external or open innovation. The fundamental premise is that, at any given time, the person who is best qualified to solve your problem probably doesn't work for you, and maybe isn't even in your industry. One of the challenges of open innovation is therefore to find ways of gaining access to shared resources from anywhere at any time. In new product development, co-creation efforts often focus on enlisting customers to work together with internal design teams to improve the product and the brand for the benefit of all customers. This is not about engaging the altruistic few but rather about tapping a broad wellspring of talent. Customers are willing to engage in co-creation efforts because:

- they want to work with brands they know and trust
- they like to be listened to
- they enjoy the challenge of solving problems.

The solution that eludes you may be a really simple step for someone else who thinks and sees things differently, someone who makes different connections

Yet co-creation is not just about product design – we should think about the principles and process of co-creation in relation to the way we construct internal processes and policies, the way we engage with our stakeholders to build new services and deliver benefit, and the way we engage with our peers to create new knowledge and understanding.

When a leader heads down the road of co-creation he/she needs to let go of some old certainties. First and foremost, co-creation depends for its existence on the ability to self-organise. The leader must trust the process, work to remove obstacles and balance the benefits of providing wide access to data and information that might otherwise have been commercially sensitive. Here are three things that we recommend the leader to focus attention on:

1 Inspire participation. Seek to provide an 'igniting purpose' – set a challenge or pose a question or task that would, if solved, produce a breakthrough level of service.
2 Connect creative minds. Remove barriers of access, especially to information. Seek relationships in similar industries and in universities. Look for examples in unexpected places. Don't be tempted to try to exploit apparently good ideas too soon; allow the wisdom of crowds to show you where the gold nuggets lie. Follow where great minds go rather than trying to anticipate and point to where you think they should go.
3 Share results widely. When you get a winning idea, feed it back into the community so that people can reap the benefits of being early adopters and can help you both to build brand and to drive future enhancements.

Co-creation is an essential tool for the future-focused leader with an eye to increasing innovation. It helps us deal with the primary challenge of how we access the right resource when we need it for as long as we need it, and how we increase the leverage of our internal resources.

Engaged stakeholders

Stakeholder engagement, when done, is often viewed as a one-shot activity, usually at the start of a project or initiative. We strongly suggest that stakeholder engagement should be a deep and ongoing process. We have already seen that building relationships takes time and sustained effort; this is as true for business stakeholders as it is for personal contacts. The key components of a good stakeholder engagement strategy are:

1 clarity about desired outcomes

2 rigorous stakeholder identification and analysis

3 open information disclosure

4 continuous consultation

5 partner management and negotiation

6 feedback on progress and issue resolution.

Good stakeholder identification is essential. It is always a good plan to make a list of stakeholders and then plot them on a relationship map. We suggest that you put the issue or project at the centre of the map and show your own relation to the issue, and then map all the other known stakeholders. For simplicity, in our illustration below (*Figure 6*) we have shown them as Groups A to D. We also recommend that you indicate the strength and nature of the relationship by the density of the line joining the groups. A dotted line indicates a very tenuous relationship whereas a thick pipe indicates a long-term trust-based personal relationship.

Finally, it is important to recognise that stakeholder groups talk to each other; how they feel about an initiative may be impacted more by what they hear from other stakeholder groups than by what they hear or see from you. Try to estimate the nature of the connections between various stakeholder groupings and also plot these on your relationship map.

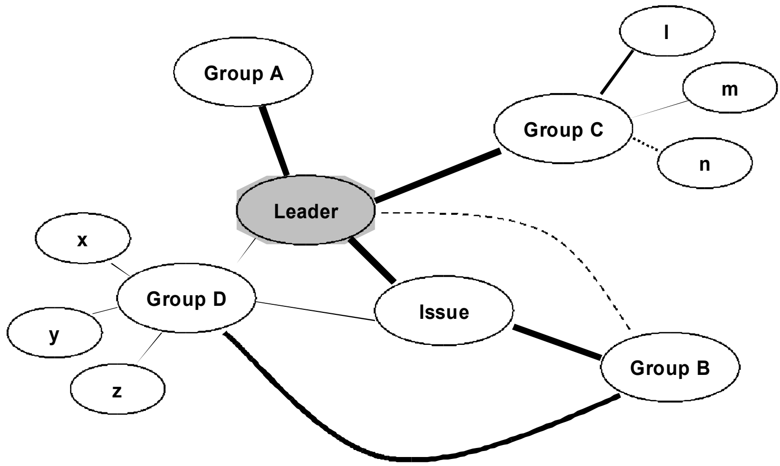

Figure 6: Building a relationship map of key stakeholders

In the example in *Figure 6*, we have an interesting situation where Group B has a strong relation to the issue at hand and also to Group D; unfortunately our own relationship with Group B is tenuous and we have only a weak relationship with Group D. Building simple relationship plots of this nature can indicate to us where we need to build relationships and how we can use allies to help with that process.

We cannot achieve anything on our own; relationships are the foundation of everything we do. The success or failure of our transformational efforts will rest entirely upon the networks of relationships we create and the strength of the trust-based bonds that we build. A good network of mutually supportive and committed stakeholders will overcome setbacks and accelerate the achievement of outcomes, but you should not just play the hand that you are dealt. When looking at the stakeholders in your initiative you should ask yourself the following questions:

- Who do we need to involve?
- What unique contribution can they make?
- What are their core values and driving passions? How does this initiative play to those values and passions?
- How do we engage them?
- How do we keep them engaged?
- What mutual commitments must we make to each other in the spirit of partnership? What guiding principles should govern our decision making?

Once we have a view of the dynamics of a stakeholder engagement plan we need to use our understanding of relationship-building and personality types to start to influence opinion. This process is as important in dealing with our direct reports and teams as it is with the broader stakeholder base.

Shared responsibility

Many leaders talk about creating wider involvement in direction-setting, or about increasing worker empowerment and devolving decision making, but few recognise that such wishes cannot be achieved whilst retaining all the old checks and balances. It is a truism that if you want others to change their behaviours you must first change your own.

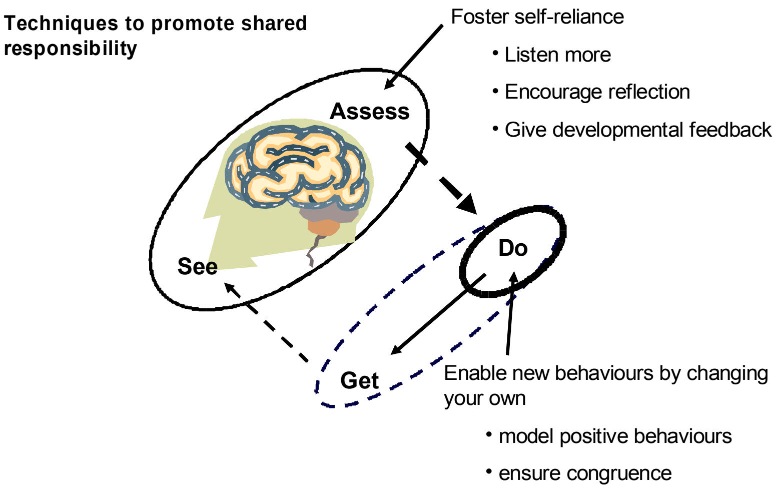

Figure 7: Promoting shared responsibility

It is important to realise that when trying to foster shared responsibility, the initial focus for intervention is at the behavioural level; what people **Do** and the visible behaviours that are exhibited. This is an important starting point, but to anchor these behaviours over time, we need to find ways of working backwards; first to the deeper cognitive level of how we **Assess** and then into how we **See**.

Doing things differently

Start by making a list of the modified behaviours that you want to see in your team members. For instance, if you want them to be more innovative, your list might include some of the following (this is a starter rather than a definitive list):

- contribute ideas

- think through ideas in terms of cost, benefit, viability and fit with strategic direction
- have confidence to present ideas to outsiders.

Or, if you want your team to take a more proactive approach to managing risk with regard to your operations, your list might look more like this:

- think about the things that could get in the way of successfully delivering on our promises
- quantify the potential impact if things do go wrong
- start to recognise the trigger events that indicate that a known risk is happening
- put in place actions now that would limit the impact should a risk trigger.

Once you have your list, it is important to recognise that some of the behaviours you desire may be simple and can be adopted quite quickly, whilst others require experience, self-confidence and practice. Restructure your list into three columns based on increasing time. For example, things that might reasonably be achieved in less than a month, things that could be achieved in two to three months and things that will take longer. Using our Innovative example from above, our restructured list might now start to look like this:

Less than one month	Two to three months	Beyond
Contribute ideas	Have confidence to present ideas to outsiders	Think through own ideas in terms of cost, benefit, viability and fit with strategy

Table 6: Action planning for behavioural change

We have started the list for you, but you may want to continue to develop this more fully.

Finally, you need to realise that if people are to start to exhibit these behaviours, you as their leader will need to change your own behaviour and be a positive role model. It is a fundamental truism that change must start at home – you cannot expect others to change their behaviour if your own is unchanging. You need to role model the required behaviours and demonstrate that you can change yourself. I once heard a senior leader explode with the phrase: 'when are these turkeys going to get it that they have to change?'. The simple answer was: not until he could look in a mirror and see that he, too, looked and behaved a lot like a turkey.

To help understand what needs to be done, we suggest that you go back to the table above and add a further row below the existing content. This row should focus on your own behaviour. For every entry in the top row you should identify at least one thing that you must do to enable the behaviour to happen and to sustain it once it has started to happen. For instance, if you want people to contribute ideas you will need to be available, ask for opinions, listen, and avoid judgement and destructive criticism. As you start to complete the table it may start to look more like *Table 7*.

Less than one month	Two to three months	Beyond
Contribute ideas	Have confidence to present ideas to outsiders	Think through own ideas in terms of cost, benefit, viability and fit with strategy
Leader's behaviours		
Be available Ask for opinions Listen Avoid destructive criticism	Create opportunities for them to run internal workshops Allow time and space for discussion Open doors to relevant people	Provide access to information rather than answers Ask probing and reflective questions Coach the use of analytical tools

Table 7: Mapping own behaviour to changes required of others

Reflect on the table above and work to expand it and your understanding of the factors involved. Recognise that different members of your team will be at different stages of development, so one size does not fit all as you work with individual team members. Understand also that this is just the first step to bringing about behavioural change; for the change to take root it needs to be congruent with the way in which people internally Assess and See.

Assessing things differently

As well as working on the things people do, the leader must also help them to See and Assess differently. The Assess function is to do with the way we deploy our mental tools to review situations and decide action. In order to help people anchor and sustain behavioural changes, the leader needs to put in place structures that enable people to reflect on why they do the things they do, and to work together to collectively make sense of their environment. To enable this process the leader may employ some of the following tactics:

- Encourage people to think about how their new behaviour patterns fit with their personality preferences and style (this will be explored in greater depth in *Chapter 8*)
- Get them to think through how their behaviours are likely to be viewed by people with different preferences and styles (this will also be explored in greater depth in *Chapter 8*)
- Coach through reflective questioning, encourage them to evaluate their own performance by asking questions such as:
  - What part of this task felt good, natural or enjoyable to you?
  - What will you try to do more/less of next time?
  - What could we have done that would help us to anticipate the occurrence of *x* when we take this course of action?
- Provide opportunities for action learning (see the section on Alignment above).

As the leader becomes adept at leading through questions and modelling behaviours that are congruent with what they expect of others, their teams will see more meaning in their work and start to take collective responsibility for the outcomes of their efforts.

Self-selection

Have you ever wondered why some people appear to be brain dead between the hours of 9 and 5 when they are at work, but as soon as they go home they can become highly efficient and organised members of their community? Why can we not engage them at work, when they patently have great talents and a desire to make a difference? Part of the answer lies in the satisfaction that we gain from activities that we perceive to be meaningful, and the sense of purpose and self-worth that comes from developing ourselves and others. Management theory increasingly places stress on the value of intrinsic reward systems; that is, reward that comes directly from the engagement itself. It has been suggested that there are four sources of intrinsic reward:

- meaningfulness
- choice
- competence
- progress.

For the purposes of this short discussion we want to concentrate on choice and meaningfulness.

At first glance, the ability to exercise choice would appear to rely upon delegated authority, access to relevant information to make informed decisions, a clear understanding of intended outcomes and which actions are likely to impact most on the production of those desired outcomes, and the security to know that you are trusted to act in the best interests of the whole. These factors are fundamental to the ability to exercise choice, and we take these as our base-level expectation.

For us, choice has to go beyond mere choice in decision making, and should extend to teams selecting their membership, setting their own targets and, as far as is practicable, being self-managing. We also see choice extending into an element of volunteerism in deciding where to direct one's efforts.

When you look at the common factors that highly innovative companies exhibit, they all find some way of encouraging their workers to experiment and follow interesting avenues and ideas that they feel passionate about, and they do this in company time using company resources. In extreme cases, organisations build this facility into their structure by allowing everyone up to 20% of their work time to devote to non-programmed work that they feel has winning potential.[10] This is directly at odds with two core principles of hierarchical organisations as we know them:

1 the idea that the leader allocates resources and decides who should do what
2 that the people at the top are best placed to decide which initiatives are winners and, *ergo*, where we should direct our efforts.

Impressive results can happen when an individual is so passionate about an initiative that they organise themselves to investigate and develop a promising solution. How much more impressive if that same individual could convince others to invest their resources on his or her initiative, rather then their own; to do so would demonstrate both the exercise of choice and also self-selection – a case of the wisdom of crowds deciding what products are best to invest in rather than a hackneyed business-case generator.

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[10] See Gary Hamel, *The Future of Management*, Harvard Business School Press (2007). This book gives many examples of how differing companies organise themselves to promote self-selection, innovation and discovery. Of particular interest is Chapter 5, a case study on the W.L Gore company.

We are not suggesting that it is either desirable or appropriate to try to emulate such open approaches to resource allocation. What we do stress is that if innovation is a priority for your company, you need to find ways to allow talented individuals to promote their ideas and to attract others into contributing their personal time, knowledge and credibility to develop these ideas from concept to deployable product or service. Enabling structures of this kind provide the most powerful of intrinsic rewards; they give meaning to individual activity, show trust in individual judgement, and value initiatives that are compelling enough to cause busy workers to volunteer their services to ideas that they perceive to have purpose and organisation value. In short, we are suggesting that mechanisms that foster self-selection are, in the long run, always more effective than mechanisms that favour centralised and impersonal appointment of resources.

Building the conditions that promote innovation

If the leader is successful in managing all six components of our ACCESS framework, he or she will have created a working environment that values individual contribution, encourages active involvement and collaborative working, and encourages commitment to common goals. This platform provides a basis upon which new levels of innovation and performance may be stimulated.

All organisations struggle with how to become more nimble and innovative. Conventional wisdom focuses on promoting and supporting a small number of smart, sometimes unconventional, workers who are looked upon as ideas people. However, increasingly, it is becoming apparent that the engine of innovation lies not in the heads of a few clever people, but rather in the spaces between clever and experienced people. Great ideas seem to stem from the interactions between people, and curve-jumping innovations are most likely to come when professionals from different disciplines or industries engage to synthesise existing wisdom into new knowledge. Engaging with people who see the world differently, solve problems differently, and have a different approach to what is possible, can bring a real freshness to the generation of ideas. Leaders should look for opportunities to expose their teams first to the operational environment of their customers, and then to the problem-solving and organisational structures of professions that have totally different values and working practices.

Recently, Lynda Gratton of the London Business School did some research on why some companies appear to be more innovative than others and why hotspots of innovation just appear spontaneously, flourish and then disappear only to be replaced by another hotspot in another area. Her work suggested that there are common environmental factors that, when present, tend to increase the likelihood of innovation hotspots emerging. Her work suggests that innovation is more likely when the following four conditions are in place:

1 A co-operative mindset exists
2 There is a widely understood igniting purpose. This could take the form of a task, a question or a vision
3 Opportunities for boundary-spanning exist. Professionals can interact with peers from other departments, disciplines, industries and cultures
4 There is the productive capacity to do what needs to be done.

In our ACCESS framework, **Alignment** and **Congruence** are fundamental to the ability to communicate an effective igniting purpose. **Co-creation**, **Self-selection** and **Shared responsibility** are essential components of creating a co-operative mindset. **Stakeholder engagement** is the first step in boundary-spanning, but, to be really effective, we need to also look for opportunities to experience fundamentally different working environments. We should also encourage our people to read widely from works in apparently unrelated disciplines as a means of gaining fresh insight and knowledge.

Key ideas from this chapter

In this chapter we have suggested relaxing the emphasis on command and control and on the leader as the director of activity, in favour of a leader whose focus is the creation of an environment where workers elect to invest their personal resources to achieve collective goals which they can feel part of and take pride in. Essentially, it is about creating an element of personal choice in where and how to invest effort, in valuing the power of networks rather than hierarchy. The Transformational Leader has to become adept at communicating in a manner that helps align individual mental models around a single world view. It is essential to provide an element of real choice in work assignment and self-management in teams; by doing so we foster commitment, increase meaningfulness and promote empowered action that leads to greater innovativeness and breakthrough thinking.

1	Work on the 6 elements of our ACCESS framework Alignment Congruence Co-creation Engaged stakeholders Shared responsibility Self-selection
2	Nothing can be achieved alone. All change is facilitated through networks of relationships. You cannot devote enough time to building and sustaining those key relationships
3	If you want others to change you must first change yourself. Once you have identified new behaviours that you want from others you must ask yourself what personal changes you will have to make in order to enable others to change their behaviours
4	A key tool for creating alignment is for the leader to provide an 'igniting' purpose. This can take the form of a question, a vision or a task (challenge)
5	One of the key enablers of innovation is 'boundary-spanning' – finding opportunities to see and experience how others think and act

Table 8: Five key actions to release the power of the many

Reflection

- How well aligned is your team? When was the last time you provided an opportunity for them to learn together in the context of real work problems?
- What steps can you take to ensure that your words, written communications, plans and actions are congruent?
- What structures do you have in place to promote boundary-spanning in your team?
- How many ideas come from outside your immediate IT management team?

- When you have identified new needs, do you have a reliable way of finding the most able resource to work on that need? How can you ensure that you get the best resource wherever that resource resides?
- What percentage of your solutions come from outside your own organisation? How can you encourage people who don't work for you to contribute towards problem-solving or fulfilling your stated needs?
- How do you really engage with all your stakeholders? Do you communicate at them or do you engage them in real dialogue?
- Do your stakeholders spontaneously champion your ideas? Do they speak with the same sense of vision? Are their words and actions congruent with the direction you are striving for?
- How can you create a mechanism where team members have an element of choice of projects in which to invest their personal resources?
- Is it feasible for you to create an internal open market for ideas, where your workforce can virtually invest in those ideas that they feel are most likely to bring benefit?
- Can you develop the structures you identified in the previous questions into an investment portfolio where your workforce can volunteer their services to develop new and winning ideas?

More food for thought

- Kenneth W. Thomas, *Intrinsic Motivation at Work: What Really Drives Employee Engagement*, second edition, Berrett-Koehler (2009).

  - Prime reading for any leader who wants to develop a deeper understanding of the power of intrinsic motivational factors.

- Lynda Gratton, *Hot Spots: Why Some Companies Buzz with Energy and Innovation and Others Don't*, Prentice Hall (2007).
  - A chapter is devoted to each of the four conditions that increase the likelihood that spontaneous innovation will flourish in organisations.

- Gary Hamel, *The Future of Management*, Harvard Business School Press (2007).
  - A thought-provoking read that challenges the way we think about how and why organisations work and the changing role of the leader. Some great examples from a variety of industries of companies that dare to be different and the rewards they reap from their adventure.

CHAPTER 7: CHANGING THE WAY WE THINK AND TALK ABOUT WORK

As leaders, we are expected to get things done. In a working world that is often centred on targets and compliance, the temptation is to fall back on micro-management techniques, putting our faith in detailed planning and task-focused control. Leaders are also expected to bring about change, do something different and exceed customer expectations. These two views are uncomfortable bedfellows – the skills and techniques that can bring about the former often stifle the later. We believe that the successful leader of change must have an unrelenting focus on outcomes that we should constantly strive to deliver real customer benefit at the earliest opportunity, rather than a gold-plated solution that is too late and incongruent with the way people actually perform their work. We also hold it to be true that the single most powerful tool which the leader has to achieve this is dialogue: conversations that inspire, liberate and challenge. This chapter is focused on tools that will help you develop meaningful dialogue.

The Transformational Leader must understand the power of conversation and learn to shape conversations rather than be shaped by them. We will show you how adding a deeper understanding of the power of conversations can help you shift the emphasis of your team and open their minds to new realms of possibilities. Our starting point has to be a solid foundation of transactional skills, but then we must add a flexible, future-focused approach to the way we structure and manage important conversations.

Approach to work and the conversations that shape work		
	From	**To**
1	Allocating individual tasks and checking for compliance	Specifying what needs to be achieved rather than how it must be done
2	Focusing on activity and the achievement of expected results	Focusing on outcomes and how individual contribution impacts outcomes
3	Putting all your faith in detailed planning	Encouraging planning in action
4	Just doing what has worked before	Seeking to reframe situations and gain new insights

Table 9: Transformational Leadership – change of emphasis from past to future

We can see that the right-hand side of *Table 9* is very much future-focused. It values action in the context of long-term results. It recognises that the actions and decisions we take must take account of the context and particular circumstances that prevail at that moment; in this sense we recognise the need for situated action rather than planned and pre-programmed action.[11] Finally, there is a recognition that our future is a direct result of the situated actions we take, and that when multiple actors are involved, the only way to achieve aligned action is through the articulation of a powerful future-focused vision.

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[11] Situated action was described by Lucy A. Suchman in her book *Plans and Situated Actions: The Problem of Human–Machine Communication*, Cambridge University Press (1987). She was researching the area of human-computer interaction, trying to explain why people in real situations seldom behave in the way we had expected and planned for in the development of computer interfaces.

Start at the end and work backwards

When we first learn to plan, we generally start with a list of things that we must do, a task list. More advanced planners may organise this as a functional breakdown, or what is known as a work breakdown structure. From this we can produce a Gannt chart and launch into a software-based planning tool, assigning resources and completion dates. We feel comfortable and in control; we are confident that we are taking a professional approach to the organisation of work and the utilisation of our resources. We can use our plan to track activity and report progress.

The only problem is that nobody cares about what you are doing. They only care about what they are getting and what they can do with it once they have got it. The unrelenting focus on work that stems from a detailed planning mentality is counter-productive when talking to our customers. It is also a very weak negotiation platform when a customer wants their product or service earlier than planned, because your only option is to remove work, to eliminate tasks.

In recent years, the focus has moved to product-based planning. Instead of starting with tasks to be done, we start with the products that we will produce, then break down to the tasks that are needed to produce each product. This is a better focus, but again misses the point that most of the products that we define in this way are just parts of a larger assembly, and, as far as the customer is concerned, such products often have no utility in and of themselves. We must also not lose sight of the fact that the customer does not want the product for its aesthetic qualities, they want it because they have a 'Job to Be Done' and they believe that the product you are to give them will enable them to do that job in new and winning ways.

We suggest that when you start planning, you should start at the outcome, the Job to Be Done, and the characteristics of that job that we intend to improve upon. These are the outcomes we are aiming to support. How will we know what success looks like? What are the final outcome-related performance measures that we need to improve and by how much? If we start with outcomes and clear outcome-based measures of success we can then work backwards to the components of a solution that will directly impact those measures. We may be able to partition our outcome breakdown structure in a way that shows how we can deliver against some portion of the outcome measures without implementing the whole of the solution. This is a strong negotiating perspective and one that allows us to have meaningful discussions about what can be left out in order to deliver functionality earlier.

A relentless focus on Jobs to Be Done and outcomes is key. It is too easy to fall into endless discussions about form and function, benefits and features, and totally lose sight of the Job to Be Done. Theodore Levitt, a renowned Harvard professor of marketing, frequently stressed to his students: 'People don't want to buy a quarter-inch drill. What they want is a quarter-inch hole!'[12]. This simple analogy provides a critical insight, and one that we would do well to remember. Too often we devote our efforts towards making a better and better drill, extolling the virtues of our drill bit over that of our competitors, giving it more appealing packaging and free additional features. We forget that our customer just wants a hole, and that we are competing not with other providers of similar drill bits but rather with

[12] Quote taken from Clayton Christenson, 'Marketing Malpractice – The Cause and the Cure', *Harvard Business Review* (December 2005).

alternative means of making holes, or indeed something that eliminates the need for a hole at all.

We urge you to focus on outcomes and work hard to understand the Job to Be Done. Provide an igniting vision that shows how the job can be done better, quicker, cheaper and with more consistent quality. Make sure that everyone knows how what they are doing contributes to achieving the Job to Be Done. Start your planning process at this outcome and work backwards, only including things in the plan that really do have a significant impact upon the creation of the desired outcome. Then, when you measure, don't measure completion of tasks, measure progress towards the achievement of the desired outcomes instead and try to bring forward those elements of the deliverables that can produce early positive impacts on the Job to Be Done.

The power of igniting purpose

We saw at the end of the last chapter that an igniting purpose is one of the key enablers of an innovative culture; it is also the heartbeat of self-management. A sense of purpose is what makes us volunteer to take on new challenges; purpose is what makes us commit to a cause. Purpose drives our choices and spurs us on to perform to new levels. In short, it is the difference between commitment and compliance. People do not commit to a plan, no matter how comprehensive, logical and detailed that plan may be. People commit to the achievement of outcomes that they perceive to be worthwhile. The leader's job, then, is to help people find that sense of purpose as they engage in their work. This is why it is so important for the leader to engage in outcome-based planning.

A focus on detailed planning emphasises task completion and pushes outcomes into the background. A focus on outcomes pushes tasks into the background and brings purpose to the fore, thus allowing people to truly commit and take personal responsibility for progress towards the achievement of the desired outcome.

For the leader, the problem with this level of outcome-focus is that it is necessary to allow the worker to decide how best to deploy their own resources to achieve the stated purpose. For as soon as we allocate tasks and monitor the way they are completed, we lose sight of purpose, and people merely comply with the requested task, completing it to the expected standard. They may work hard, they may even bust a gut doing it, but they will be doing it without a sense of purpose and will soon get tired. When the leader can ignite a sense of purpose, new levels of performance and inventiveness can be achieved. So the challenge for the leader is, how do you kick-start this process?

There are essentially three ways that the leader can engender purpose:

1 By articulating an igniting *vision* – this essentially paints a picture of a desirable future that is so powerful that it pulls us towards that future
2 By posing an igniting *question* – this is also future-focused, but here we create the future by finding answers to the question. A question pushes us to the future
3 By shaping an igniting *task* – to be effective the task must both be challenging and provide opportunities for personal growth and recognition.

We recommend that the leader direct his/her attention to the future-focused approach of *vision* or *question*. In both cases the only tool the leader has to achieve this aim is language. As both of these challenges are future-focused, the language must also be future-focused. This is a difficult skill to master, especially as the language must also be aligned to outcomes and congruent with behaviours, plans and control systems.

Building purpose through future-focused conversations

We live in a continuum – everything we experience has a past, a present and multiple possible futures. The past is important because it gives us context and shape; we can look to our past for examples of success and failure, we can also see how the organisation reacted in the past to certain sets of events. As we view the past, we do so with today's eyes and perspective, we rationalise what we think we saw; our memory may be selective and events can be blurred by opinion, judgements and potential bias. However, if we have consistent metrics in place, the past can also give us a benchmark of how we have historically performed at critical processes. The present is a world of facts, measures of real-time activity, descriptions of what is happening now, the challenges we face and the initiatives we have in place to meet those challenges. The future is all about possibilities; with a consistent and shared vision, supported by committed and purposeful action, we can increase the chance of a favourable desirable future coming into existence.

Generally, leaders are unaware of where they are pitching their conversations; the past, present and future blur into one and we have messy conversations that achieve no purpose. Some researchers suggest that on average 80% of leaders' conversations focus on the past, 15% on the present and only 5% on the future.[13] If the leader wants to bring about transformational change we need to significantly change this balance away from a preoccupation with the past towards a future orientation. This is not as easy as it sounds as much of our experience and training drives us into analysis of the past and much of the language we use is both critical and debilitating, closing off ideas in favour of justifying past actions.

The language of past focus

Too many conversations revolve around promoting our own viewpoint and trying to convince others to abandon theirs and adopt ours. Under these circumstances, the emphasis is on right and wrong: if you think like me you are right, *ergo* every other view must be wrong. We try to identify what is wrong so that we can put it right; if something is wrong then someone must have made it wrong, so we also try to apportion blame. Past-focused conversation can be adversarial; we spend time selling our ideas and convincing others of the merit of our way. We spend too little time listening and too much time explaining.

Dialogue starts with questioning. Past-focused conversations tend to put too much emphasis on closed and leading questions. You can recognise past-focused conversations by the language and structure of the questioning as well as by the implied time line. If you are in a past-focused conversation you may be using structures such as:

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[13] Quoted from research published by Kim H Krisco and Paula Lee in *Leadership and the Art of Conversations*, Prima Publishing US (1997).

- Why did this fail?
- Who was responsible for doing ...?
- When we first recognised that this was happening, what did you think the problem was?
- What do we normally do when this happens?
- Why is department X always the last to submit their monthly report?
- Did anyone ask HR if we need to tell the staff association about this plan?
- Yes, but ...

The language of future focus

By contrast, future-focused conversations act as a catalyst for collective learning, idea generation and exploration of possibilities. We need to practise listening without judging, inclusive participation, enquiry that surfaces and challenges assumptions. Future-focused conversations are at the heart of building relationships and inspiring people to commit to personal action. These conversations are always built around open questions, specifically a mix of reflective questions to trigger sense-making and personal learning linked to probing questions to elicit more detail and make connections. When you are using open reflective questions to stimulate future-focus, you may find yourself using questions such as:

- What can we do to take our existing product lines into new and emerging markets?
- What could we achieve if we had unlimited access to ...?

- What steps can we take today to cut the time to market for our products by an order of magnitude?
- What would we need to change in order to ...?
- What would it take for us to be voted best place to work in our industry?
- Yes, and ...

Notice that these are all open questions; they are reflective in that they promote thought. Thought and reflection take time so we need to be comfortable with silence and be prepared to listen carefully. We must listen uncritically and use probing questions to increase insight and help people build on each others' suggestions. Probing questions feel like:

- How does this relate to ...?
- What are the critical dimensions of ...?
- What additional process steps would we need if we adopted this approach?
- How can we achieve this without impacting current system availability?
- What security workaround could we implement to enable this function?

We suggest that next time you are running a meeting, keep a personal tally of the nature of the conversation. If you find that the majority of the interactions are centred around the past or use language that creates a past-focus, try throwing in a couple of future-focused open questions and then watch the energy level and body language of the people in the room. Keep the impetus going with a combination of reflective and probing future-focused questions.

Structuring your conversations

Once you have mastered tailoring your communication style to match the way that different people react to and process information and you have started to shift your significant interactions from a past-focus to a future-focus you can think about moving on to structuring your conversations to deliver on your promises.

We have already seen how we tend to be messy about mixing past-, present- and future-focus conversations, with the result that we create confusion, blur purpose and fail to get the commitment we need for our initiatives. The same problem occurs with regard to signposting the sort of committed action we need. We have found that it is useful to think about the purpose of conversations and classify them as aiming to achieve one of five possible outcomes. Conversations are aimed at:

1 initiating commitment
2 checking on levels of commitment
3 valuing achievement
4 steering to magnify or accelerate impact
5 closure and learning.

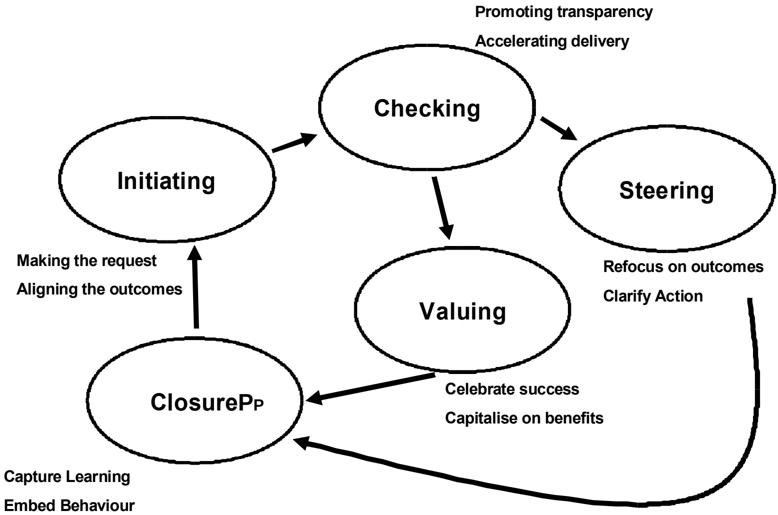

Figure 8: Five types of conversation to achieve a specific purpose

Initiating commitment conversations

These conversations are about exploring future possibilities. It is important that we focus on generating new ideas and resist the temptation to jump to early judgements or the imposition of limits or artificial justifications.

We have all attended brainstorming sessions which generate lots of ideas but somehow nothing much happens. Brainstorming, however it is facilitated, is essentially a four-stage process:

1 Generate ideas – this is a divergent process

2 Refine to a small subset of ideas – this is a convergent process. Convergence should be a group process based upon criteria agreed by the group

3 Agree what is to be done (not how it is to be done); also agree how we will recognise when we are successful, and what relationships we will need in place to make things happen
4 Make personal commitments to take action to achieve the desired results.

Often we generate good ideas but prioritise for action based upon arbitrary or non-consensual criteria. We fail to recognise the importance of relationships to achieving change and we set grand objectives without gaining commitments to take personal responsibility for the achievement of those objectives. This last step is critical and feels very different to allocating tasks to be done. When we make a personal commitment, we are both placing our reputation on the line and pledging to leverage our personal network of contacts to help facilitate the action.

The leader's role in initiating conversations is to phrase the challenge, maintain focus on the challenge, gain consensus on the most fruitful courses of action and elicit those personal commitments. It may sound obvious, but a personal commitment is personal – there is one person (owner) clearly identified with the commitment. There needs to be total clarity about what the commitment is and by when it will be completed. We further recommend that, particularly where organisational change is concerned, everyone should make some form of personal commitment, no matter how small. Otherwise we fire people up with energy and then that energy ebbs away as they wait for someone else to do something. We all need to have an action we can call our own and understand how it fits into the bigger picture.

Checking commitment conversations

As leaders we are used to conversations that check progress against allocated tasks. These conversations often take the form of:

- Have you completed task *x* yet?
- What percentage complete are you on ...?
- Why didn't you give me ... by last night?
- When am I going to get ...?

Such conversations are usually mapped against work plans or allocated work packages. These conversations are valuable when managing business-as-usual activities, but they tend to be debilitating when leading transformation change or innovation. If we use this sort of language and approach there is a danger that things which started life as personal commitments degenerate into 'things that need to be done'. Once this happens, we lose the excitement that comes with the exploration of new possibilities and potentially devalue the efforts that have been made. Then frustration and resentment soon follow and the focus becomes one of 'getting the monkey off your back' rather than achieving something of value.

So when conducting a conversation aimed at checking commitment, it is wise to summarise the nature of the challenge we face and the direction we agree. The leader can then try some of the following questions:

- What has been accomplished since we last talked?
- What have we learned in the process?
- What can we do now that we couldn't do before this accomplishment?

- What new possibilities are now open to us that were previously closed off?
- Where else could we leverage with this new learning or these new capabilities?
- Who else could benefit from what we know?
- What else could we do to make this new capability even more effective?
- What do you need from me to take this to the next level?

Valuing achievement conversations

When we commit to a course of action, we do so because we have a sense of purpose and a belief that our individual contribution to the collective effort can help realise the ultimate goal, the desired outcome. With purpose comes pride in achievement – we take personal pride in our accomplishments and in those of the people around us that we respect and value. The leader must always be alert to indicators that people have accomplished something of value towards their commitments. Recognising these accomplishments builds self-esteem and confidence and when we share that recognition with the wider group we strengthen relationships and accelerate accomplishments.

Valuing accomplishments is, in effect, capacity-building. The leader's role is to provide platforms through which achievements can be shared and valued for the new possibilities they enable. These conversations are the engine of personal growth and pointers to future personal development.

Steering-for-impact conversations

One thing we know for sure before we start an initiative is that we will encounter problems along the way. Sometimes these are roadblocks or dead ends that just halt progress completely; other times they are more like speed bumps that slow progress or throw us slightly off course. Whatever their nature, setbacks will happen.

For the Transactional Leader with a detailed planning mentality, setbacks are seen as problems to be fixed in order to get back on the planned course. This problem-solution mentality sets us up for making excuses, apportioning blame, avoiding responsibility and justifying actions. In extreme cases, we find people turning a blind eye to the setbacks, pretending they have not happened and hoping that things will come right or that we can catch up without having to admit to our apparent failures; all of the above are counter-productive and energy-sapping. They are also sadly inevitable because setbacks will always happen.

We recommend that the leader views setbacks as a stimulus to be more innovative and to achieve new breakthroughs. This can only be achieved if the leader adopts a coaching approach based around reflective questioning. The coach views steering not as a mechanism to get back onto a predetermined course, but rather as an opportunity to explore new possibilities and find a new route to the desired outcome. The key elements of the steering-for-impact conversation are:

- Acknowledgement of the setback and agreement of the factors that are getting in the way of the commitment

- Reaffirming how resolving these factors will allow the existing commitment to be fulfilled and possibly enable new commitments and new breakthroughs
- Reflecting together on our interests – what do we really want and are these wants still relevant in the pursuit of the desired outcomes. Once we have agreed our interests we can look for options to fulfil these interests.

During the exploration of interests, the coach will focus largely on probing and clarifying questions. As we move into the exploration of options, we fall back on more reflective questioning. The aim is always to enable new insight rather than to provide answers.

Steering is about building collective understanding about a new direction rather than giving instructions about how to return to the old direction.

A steering conversation must always end with the making of new personal commitments, and with confirmation that these commitments are aligned with overall direction and supportive of the commitments others have made. When new commitments are made it will often be necessary to re-examine the network of relationships that will be needed to deliver on these commitments.

Closure conversations

Closure conversations are, in essence, not about closure at all. Rather than closing things off, these conversations are about opening things up. Specifically, what we want to open is the learning process. So closure conversations are first and foremost about what we have learned, how we can share what we have learned, and how we can use what we have learned to identify opportunities to learn new things;

to get better at what we are doing. In this sense the closure conversation is the driver of continual improvement, it is a time to reflect on what has happened and how we can recognise these stimuli in future and react accordingly. Only by having really effective closure conversations can we ever hope to calibrate our own mental models and learn to **See** differently and **Be** different.

Closure is also an opening of the door to exploitation of our accomplishments. In our initiating conversations we set out to explore future possibilities and in doing so we defined challenge statements that would lead to breakthroughs. When we achieve those breakthroughs the hard work is just starting, because we must now hand over our breakthrough into business as usual for exploitation and benefits delivery. Closure conversations are about identifying how we use the knowledge and relationships that we have created to ensure that our breakthroughs are fully leveraged.

Closure conversations are therefore about planning and learning about the realisation of benefits. They are also a vehicle to identify new challenges that can, in turn, spin off new initiating conversations.

Key ideas from this chapter

This chapter has been about changing the way we think and talk about work. We stressed the importance of organising around outcomes, Jobs to Be Done. We pointed to the power of conversation and true dialogue as a means of establishing and maintaining a sense of purpose. We have shown how future-focused conversations can ignite a sense of purpose, and how both the language we use and the way we structure our conversations needs to be managed much more effectively.

1	Focus on the Job to Be Done
2	Engender a sense of purpose
3	Work to change the balance of your conversations from past-focus to future-focus. Use future-focused language
4	Improve your understanding of the use and structure of questions and use questions to encourage reflection
5	Structure your conversations to achieve specific aims. Be sure about the purpose of your conversation. Are you: Initiating commitment? Checking commitment? Valuing achievement? Steering for impact? Closing?

Table 10: Five key actions to change the emphasis from past to future

Reflection

- Are you clear about the desired outcomes of your major projects? Do you understand the Job to Be Done? What could you do to increase your understanding of the Job to Be Done?
- What are the key factors that give you a sense of purpose about the work you do?
- What actions have you taken to create a sense of purpose in the people that work for you?
- When you are engaged in meetings or workshops, or when you are in one-on-one conversations with your

peers, what percentage of the conversation has a future-focus? What can you do to increase the proportion of future-focus in your interactions?

- Are you always clear about the purpose of your conversations, and about what steps can you take immediately to focus the structure of your conversations more effectively?

More food for thought

- Clayton Christenson, 'Marketing Malpractice – The Cause and The Cure', *Harvard Business Review* (2005).
  - A stimulating read that introduces the idea of Jobs to Be Done.
- Michael. J. Marquardt, *Leading with Questions: How Leaders Find the Right Solutions by Knowing What to Ask*, John Wiley and Sons (2005).

CHAPTER 8: FUTURE-FOCUSED COMMUNICATION

In the last chapter we looked at how we can refocus our efforts on outcomes by ensuring that the language we use is future-focused and outcome-oriented. We saw how the skilful use of questioning is a key leadership tool, and how we can structure conversations to achieve our ends better. In this chapter we will look at ways to help you ensure more effective communication in all its forms.

Communication is the lifeblood of any organisation. Without effective communication, nerves don't communicate with musculature, our heart doesn't know to pump faster during physical exertion, and so on and so forth. It is the same with organisational life: without effective communication people become demotivated because they don't see the results of their efforts; they don't know what is expected of them or understand their purpose within the greater context of the organisation as a whole. Silos develop, departments work at best in isolation and at worst in competition; the whole thing becomes disjointed and productivity suffers.

As Transactional Leaders, much of our focus is on work product, closing down options and making decisions, ensuring that processes and procedures are followed, monitoring lines of code generated, etc. As a consequence, our style of communication has been to tell people what to do based on our experience of what has worked in the past and what is considered to be 'best practice'. We give out information on a 'need-to-know' basis and we encourage expediency in decision making. The aim is to increase efficiency, to make things happen at a pace; we don't, however, often step back to consider whether we are doing the 'right' things. Are we trading effectiveness for efficiency, quality for quantity? The result is simply more of the same.

For the transformational leader, communication is the means by which we bring focus on innovation rather than on stability, foster divergent rather than convergent thinking and inspire people to action rather than simply tell them what to do. Communication is not just about the words we choose, it is about the images and emotions we create in people's minds, the possibilities we open up when we share our hopes and dreams, the confidence and trust that we inspire when we provide access to privileged information and the role modelling we provide through our actions.

Communication style		
	From	**To**
1	Using language to describe	Using language to create
2	Sharing information selectively	Ensuring open access to information
3	Encouraging agreement and consensus, seeking rapid closure	Encouraging people to share diverse assessments

Table 11: Transformational Leadership – change of emphasis

In our research into IT leaders who had progressed beyond the ranks of IT and made it to the position of CEO, we found that they all displayed common traits that marked them out as good to great communicators. Broadly speaking, there were seven tactics or techniques which they all appeared to have in common: networking, sharing themselves and their time, actively listening, open-mindedness, always speaking well of others, a well-developed sense of humour and, perhaps most importantly, being adept at adapting their communication style to match the style of the receiver.

Let's look at each of these factors in further depth:

1 Networking – place networking and building relationships at the very top of your agenda. On average, the IT leaders in our study spent 50% of their time networking and building relationships! Very simply, they talked with everybody and anybody they came across.

2 Sharing yourself and your time – be generous, help others when you can, share knowledge and information, be prepared to disclose a little about yourself; all without expecting anything in return. Such behaviour will encourage others to open up and share with you; you may be rewarded with that nugget of wisdom, that germ of an idea or simply someone to call upon when you need help at some future time. As they say, 'be nice to people on your way up because you might meet them on your way down'.

3 Active listening – next time you are having a conversation with someone just stop for a moment and consider what you are doing when the other person is talking. Are you really listening and absorbing what they are saying or is part of your brain formulating your response or the next question? Develop your empathy and sensitivity toward others, give them feedback that you are listening and interested, and encourage them to share more. Remember, we are all equipped with two

ears and one mouth. Perhaps communication should be undertaken in similar proportions?

4 Open-mindedness – facilitate diversity and encourage debate and the sharing of different assessments; don't be too quick to judge or criticise, accept and take an interest in the views and ideals of others.
5 Always speaking well of others – if you air negative views about one person to another, how does that person on the receiving end of your views know that you are not doing the same about them behind their back?
6 A well-developed sense of humour – humour is an essential ingredient in the workplace: it diffuses tension, bonds people, aids creativity and understanding and oils the wheels of conversation. It increases the impact of your words, makes you more interesting to listen to and makes others feel good. People are more likely to want to associate with you, to consult or ask your opinion, to buy your ideas or proposals and to confide in you.
7 Adapting your communication style to the language of the receiver – some people like lots of detail and data, other people prefer a very concise, big-picture view. Some people prefer you to be businesslike, direct and to the point, whereas others prefer you to be personal and to acknowledge their feelings and values. Using these two opposing dimensions gives us four different styles of communication.

It is this last point that is perhaps new and most difficult to master. We will explore this in greater detail below. We will use the understanding of personality types, introduced in *Chapter 2*, to illustrate how people process information and how, by adapting your style, you can be more effective at getting your message home.

Adapting your communication style to the language of the receiver

The following analysis is based on Carl Jung's theory of psychological type. His theory describes a number of opposing dimensions, two of which are of fundamental importance in relation to communication style. The two dimensions are:

1. Level of detail – some people like lots of detail whilst others just want the big picture or 'headline'. In MBTI terms this is described as sensing (S) vs intuition (N).
2. Basis for decision making – some people base their decision making on objective logic whilst others base their decision making on subjective values and the impact of their decisions on the person or people concerned. In MBTI terms this is described as thinking (T) vs feeling (F).

These two dimensions are used to generate the matrix in *Figure 9*, which describes the four resulting 'types' of people, each with their own style and needs.

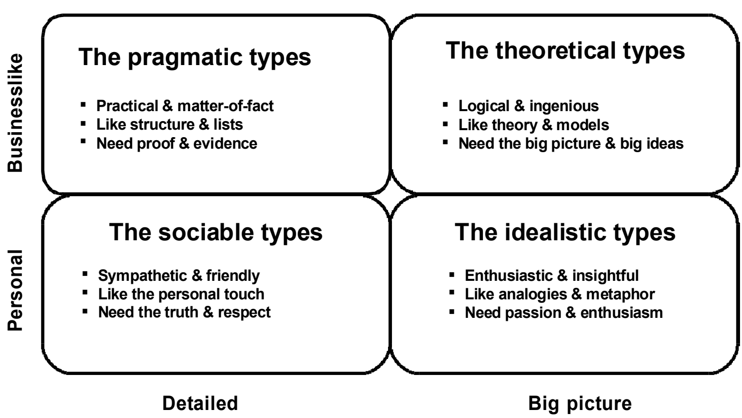

Figure 9: The four personality types

The pragmatic types (Sensing, Thinkers) like facts and are cautious not to go beyond the facts. They rely upon their five senses to guide them, and favour literal interpretations of that data. They make decisions through logical analysis of the data and other empirical evidence, evaluating the pros and cons of all possible options. Their objective is to reach fair, reasoned and rational conclusions.

The theoretical types (Intuitive, Thinkers) like ideas, theories and concepts. They read between the lines and value the interpretation of such insights. They need to have an answer to the big 'why' question. They rely upon gut instinct and sixth sense in their decision making, intuitively knowing the answer or way forward. They pursue their chosen course of action with confidence and certainty. Their objective is to make sense of the world by making connections and building mental models; they seek to find ways of helping others to see in different ways, to bring clarity from disorder.

The idealistic types (Intuitive, Feelers) like the figurative and the symbolic. They are ingenious and creative and are interested in the complexities of communication, the patterns underlying immediate facts and theoretical relationships. These insights are focused on human relationships. Their interests are focused on future possibilities, things that have never happened but might be made to happen, or truths that are not yet known but might be known if we ask the appropriate questions. Their objective is to make the world a better place; whatever 'better' constitutes in their view of the world.

The sociable types (Sensing, Feelers) are also interested in facts, but facts about people rather than facts about things. They are grounded in the present reality and focus their efforts on practical benefits for individuals. They value collegiality and harmony, are approving and uncritical, and exercise sympathy and sentiment in their decision making. For them, values and emotion determine what they consider to be right. In their decision making they will take into account the impact of their decisions on the people concerned. Their objective is to make the world a nicer place.

Communicating with the types

In the words of George Bernard Shaw: 'The biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has been accomplished'. Communication is not a one-size-fits-all problem; what works for you is not necessarily what works for the person next door. If you can learn to tailor your communication and speak the language of the recipient you are far more likely to engage your audience and ensure that your message is received as you intended. The first step towards becoming more effective is to develop a deeper understanding of the needs of each type.

- **The pragmatic types (STs)** need structure, data, the specifics – what, when, why, who, how and where, and clear guidelines. You should tell them what you are going to tell them, tell them it, and then tell them what you have told them. This is the approach that is advocated in the self-help books; self-help books tend to be written by pragmatic types, so they offer sound advice for people of this type but not, unfortunately, for the other types. The pragmatic types like bullet-point lists, graphs, pie charts, bar charts, tables and the like. If you use graphs, the axes must be labelled properly, numbers must add up; if there is any error in the arithmetic your whole message will lose credibility. You must have all the relevant information, but only relevant information, not data just lobbed in there for good measure; it must be pertinent and significant. Start at the beginning and work logically and systematically through your analysis to a proven QED conclusion. Be practical and realistic and offer evidence that what you are suggesting has worked before for others in similar situations.

- **The theoretical types (NTs)** need the overall rationale; they need you to answer the big 'why' question, to reach new understanding. The theoretical types like models, theories, concepts, but don't bore them with too much detail. If you need to give them a list, ensure that it contains no more than three items. You should appeal to their intellect and imagination and give them a chance to input to the vision and add their own ideas. Start with the future and then work backwards, showing how it fits into the bigger picture. Ensure that your theoretical base is sound and demonstrate your own credibility. In the eyes of theoretical types, credibility does not come from experience in your field; it comes from things like gravitas, charisma and presence. The theoretical types tend to be the most arrogant of the types because they know they are right, but often this certainty is based on very little factual information. Therefore, by definition, they will always have a better idea than you, so don't present them with a *fait accompli* conclusion; always give them room to manoeuvre and input their own thoughts and ideas – they desire to co-create. Be prepared to be tested; the theoretical types may dive into some detailed questioning, not particularly because they are interested, but rather to check out your thought processes and that you have done your homework thoroughly.

- **The idealistic types (NFs)** need to be inspired. In order to achieve this you will need to do the following:
  - Get to know your idealistic type to give you a chance of engaging with their personal values
  - Paint pictures and draw analogies that have meaning
  - Be passionate and enthusiastic in your presentation
  - Genuinely believe in what you are proposing because if you don't your idealistic type certainly will not
  - Share your visions and your dreams
  - Engage their imagination and involve them in the process; remember, ideas are their forte
  - Show how it will enhance relationships and play to people's strengths, and ultimately ...
  - ... how it will contribute to the 'greater good' of humankind.

  The idealistic types are primarily interested in global causes rather than the needs of individual people; hence individuals can be expendable for the greater good. Don't conflict with their personal values, shower them with facts and data or give them detailed lists. As for the theoretical types, lists should be kept to a maximum of three items.

- **The sociable types (SFs)** need facts and detail, but facts and detail about people. Before launching into the business at hand, build a relationship with your sociable type first, get to know them on a personal basis and find out what is important to them. Talk specifics, real people, and real examples; be clear and explicit, don't just imply. Demonstrate immediate and practical results for people, and how each and every individual will benefit. Engage in a proper two-way conversation, and be prepared to actively listen and learn from them and modify your own conclusions accordingly. Don't talk at them, don't patronise them, but do show them respect. Don't ask them for off-the-wall ideas, but do ask about practical realities.

Being sensitive to the needs of others

So what does this mean in practice, and how can we adopt our style to be more sensitive to the needs of our audience? Here is some practical advice:

If you are a pragmatic type (ST)

When dealing with the theoretical type (NT) you will need to:

- reverse your normal style – start at the end with your idea, proposal or conclusion
- remove most of the detail and back up with a few key high-level facts
- keep lists short – no more than three items.

When dealing with the sociable type (ST) you will need to:

- get personal and engage them in a genuine two-way conversation
- talk about Fred, Joe and Harry – avoid impersonal words such as 'human resources' or 'workers'
- demonstrate caring and empathy towards people.

When dealing with the idealistic type (NF) you will need to:

- inject passion into your dialogue and demonstrate that you truly believe in what you are saying
- focus on the idea or concept, not the detail of how you arrived at it
- use imagery and metaphor to impart your message.

If you are a theoretical type (NT)

When dealing with the pragmatic type (ST) you will need to:

- reverse your normal style – start at the beginning and work sequentially, step-by-step, through your analysis to a proven QED conclusion
- offer proof and evidence that it has worked for others
- make sure all the numbers add up; be accurate and precise and give all relevant information in support of your case.

When dealing with the idealistic type (NF) you will need to:

- inject passion into your dialogue and demonstrate that you truly believe in what you are saying
- use metaphor and imagery rather than theory to impart your message
- ask your idealistic type for their input – remember, they have ideas too, and also feelings.

When dealing with the sociable type (SF) you will need to:

- get personal and engage them in a genuine two-way conversation – don't patronise them or talk at them

- ask open questions and probe gently, actively listen and encourage them to do most of the talking, be patient and gentle
- avoid global and/or impersonal jargon such as ‘downsizing’ and ‘rightsizing’.

If you are an idealistic type (NF)

When dealing with the theoretical type (NT) you will need to:

- focus on models and theories rather than pictures and images
- make sure you answer the big question why ...?
- toughen up a little.

When dealing with the sociable type (SF) you will need to:

- start with the facts and the here and now;
- don’t over-generalise, talk about specifics and demonstrate that you care about individuals
- avoid big intuitive leaps.

When dealing with the pragmatic type (ST) you will need to:

- reverse your normal style – start at the beginning and work sequentially, step-by-step, through your analysis to a proven QED conclusion – provide all the relevant facts and figures
- focus on the tried and tested rather than the novel approach
- don’t become over-evangelical about your cause.

If you are a sociable type (SF)

When dealing with the pragmatic type (ST) you will need to:

- keep it businesslike – don't get too personal
- focus on the hard facts rather than the effect on the people and their feelings about it
- conclude with the impact on the 'bottom line'.

When dealing with the idealistic type (NF) you will need to:

- focus on the idea, not the detail behind it
- talk global people – humanity at large – rather than individuals; remember, in the mind of the idealistic types individuals are expendable for the good of the masses
- use imagery and metaphor to impart your message.

When dealing with the theoretical type (NT) you will need to:

- reverse your normal style – start at the end with your idea, proposal or conclusion
- focus on the model or theory and the results and objectives; avoid too much detail and keep it businesslike
- be direct and to the point – don't hesitate or waffle – toughen up a lot.

Adding an extra dimension

Some people get their energy from internal thought and reflection, whereas others get their energy from the outside world of people and things. The former are, in MBTI terms, referred to as Introverts (I) and the latter as Extroverts (E). When asked a question an extrovert will give you an immediate response; they will articulate their thought processes first before the final idea. An introvert, on the other hand, will pause for thought and think through what they want to say and how they are going to phrase it; they often avert eye contact whilst going through this thinking process.

Communication problems can arise: extroverts don’t easily deal with pauses and silences, and, therefore, when an introvert pauses for thought, the extrovert will leap in and fill the silence and finish the sentence. This behaviour will encourage introverts to resort to e-mail communication because it gives them the time to think things through.

Bearing that thought in mind, let’s now turn our attention to e-mail communication. As a general rule, introverts tend to write longer e-mails than extroverts. Introverts tend to put the whole story in one e-mail, which is well structured, well thought through and complete. Extroverts, on the other hand, construct one-liners which are more conversational in style and encourage a response. Many extroverts suffer from a common weakness – shortness of attention span – the consequence of which is that long e-mails get left ‘for later’, but later often doesn’t happen and therefore they don’t get read at all. So when introverts resort to e-mail communication in response to interruptions from extroverts they send nice long e-mails which the extroverts don’t read because they are too long. The result is a communication breakdown or failure!

When communicating with extroverts, ideally talk to them face to face; if this is not possible then phone them – e-mail should be used as a last resort. Be open and friendly and give them immediate feedback. Don't give them the heads-up on an issue; extroverts need to take action on an issue immediately, all you will do is give them time to fret and fidget. Don't ask them to spend too much time working in isolation.

When communicating with introverts, ideally put things in writing. Respect their time and space give them the heads-up on an issue; introverts need time to think and reflect so don't expect an immediate response.

E-mail communication

A few simple rules will significantly enhance the effectiveness of your e-mail communication.

- Ask yourself: 'is this the most effective method of communication for this particular message' – consider the sensitivity of your message, the receiver's communication preferences and their physical proximity.
- Get the length right – extroverted theoretical types have the shortest attention span of all; statistically your CEO is likely to be one of these. They will read an e-mail until the point they think they know what you are writing about; they will stop there and take whatever action they think appropriate. Therefore restrict your e-mails to one question only when dealing with these types as any subsequent questions will go unread.
- Use an effective tone – this is even more important than with face-to-face communication as you haven't got body language to soften a blow or harsh word. Tone is the personal touch that compels a reader to react positively or negatively. An effective tone will encourage co-operation and consideration. An

ineffective tone will do exactly the opposite. Consider the following examples:

- ‘I am mailing you to remind you about our follow-up meeting scheduled for tomorrow at 11 am; last time we met you kept me waiting for 20 minutes, I do not expect to be kept waiting this time.’
- ‘I just wanted to check that we are still OK for tomorrow at 11 am. I appreciate that you are very busy and wish to thank you for your time. I understand that you have many back-to-back meetings so please let me know if you need to adjust the time of our follow up.’

How would you respond if you received either of the above messages in an e-mail?

Writing reports

The most important part of any report is the executive summary. The majority of IT people have no problem at all with the body of a report providing more than enough detail and data. However, most executives will only ever read the executive summary and, if inspired, skim through a little of the body of the report. If the executive summary doesn’t hit the spot, all the effort dedicated towards the body of the report has been wasted. The executive summary must be a genuine summary of the whole of the report; it must be sufficient for a busy executive to grasp the issue and make a decision. The executive summary is not an alternative term for an introduction. Executive summaries should:

- establish the purpose of the report and why it is important or of interest

- summarise the current status in relation to the topic of discussion
- explain precisely your key message and/or findings
- state what you want to happen and what actions you want taken, by whom and by when.

Assume you're writing for someone who is very busy, and very impatient. Assume he or she will be asking: 'What's the point? What do I do with this information?'. Apply the 'so what?' test to everything you write.

If excited by the executive summary, your reader may dip into the body of the report. Make it easy for them, make it inviting; use space, structure, bullet pointing, bold type, numbering, short sentences, paragraphs, etc. Text that is too dense is the quickest and easiest way to switch a reader off. Take the opportunity to put key messages in section headings.

Key ideas from this chapter

This chapter has been about communication and recognises that in organisational life everything gets done through human interaction. The Transformational Leader has to focus on communication capable of creating the future rather than providing life-support for the present.

1	Place networking as your number one agenda item; dedicate a certain amount of time to this activity each and every day
2	Consider your own style of communication and your interactions with others. Are you a pragmatic, theoretical, idealistic or social type?
3	Pick a key stakeholder with whom you don't easily connect. Determine their preferred communication style; make a list of the steps you can take now to improve communication with this individual. Put your plan into action
4	Consider what you have learned from this activity and extend this approach to your other key stakeholders
5	Work on adopting an effective tone in all your acts of communication, whatever the vehicle

Table 12: Five key actions for future-focused communication

Reflection

Think of personal examples where you have faced fundamental difficulties getting your message across:

- Did you merely repeat the same message in the same way but louder?
- When presenting to a group, did some individuals get it whilst others did not?
- Do you end up talking at cross-purposes from time to time?
- Do you ever get frustrated with others and wish they would get to the point, or do you get frustrated with people who come up with vague, poorly constructed strategies and are not interested in the practical realities?

Now take a look at:

- A presentation you have recently put together – is it of one predominant style, and if so, which?

- Review some of your e-mails; how long are they?
- Take a look at a report you have written recently; is your executive summary a genuine summary of the whole report, does it provide pointers to the issue and key findings?

More food for thought

- Anthony Stevens, *On Jung*, Penguin (1990).
    - A very good book if you want to learn more about Jung.
- Gordon Lawrence, *People Types and Tiger Stripes*, Centre for Application of Psychological Type (1996).
    - This book gives an explanation of how type shows up in everyday life, especially in learning and teaching.

CHAPTER 9: DELIVERING LASTING CHANGE

Advances in technology are arguably the greatest single driver for change in our organisations. The nature of this change is very different from previous periods of technology-led change. In the past, the primary driver has been replacing people and labour with technology; now the driver is using technology to connect people in new and dynamic ways. One side effect of this change of emphasis is that the key challenge of change is no longer structural, but rather social and cultural. You cannot be an effective manager of change by focusing solely on the technical aspects of organisational design, process design and the development of best practice. We increasingly live in a world where IT systems are essentially social systems, people working together with purpose and commitment to deliver new levels of performance. We need to ensure that the systems and processes that we design and deploy take the human factor into account – the ways in which they will interact with all stakeholders to deliver value. When we seek to transform our organisations we need to engage with our people in a way that inspires them to commit their scarce personal resources, and we have to build upon their core principles in a way that will sustain them through the highs and lows of the change journey.

Paradoxically, change is often resisted by the people who would most benefit from the change even when they can plainly see the benefit and sense the logic of the proposed change. People resist change for many reasons, and as (would-be) Transformational Leaders, we need to be sensitive to the concerns of those who are affected by the changes we propose. Far too often, technically excellent systems have floundered because of poor social implementation and because the solutions we provide turn out not to be congruent with the way people work around here.

Not-Invented-Here Syndrome – we are naturally more disposed to solutions that we have thought up ourselves than those that are thrust upon us. We must guard against closing our minds to good ideas from other areas.

Effective leadership of change requires a far more engaging approach. Key skills are facilitation, influencing, communication, relationship-building and empathy.

Approach to change		
	From	**To**
1	Treating people as part of a machine	Treating people as part of a living system
2	Thinking that change is predictable	Understanding that change is about capitalising on unanticipated benefits
3	Imposing your plan on people – plotting out their course on your roadmap	Providing a compelling vision, appealing to both the head and the heart.

Table 13: Transformational Leadership – change of emphasis

For many years we have tended to think of organisations as machines – indeed, the machine metaphor is so deeply ingrained that we use phrases like ‘well-oiled machine’, ‘in need of minor tuning’, ‘putting on the brakes’, ‘stepping on the gas’. This may seem innocuous and even irrelevant, but we tend to carry the metaphor into our problem-solving and adopt a machine-like approach to specifying new working practices. This can have unexpected consequences.

Organisations are not machines, they are communities of people. Good, well-motivated people can operate effectively with poor processes and inadequate leadership, but poor, demoralised people will underperform even when given superior processes and excellent systems.

When we try to bring about a change in an organisation we are asking people to change their skills, knowledge and working practices, and the relationships they have with each other and with the systems within which they operate. Their attitudes and beliefs – their hopes and desires – will all be impacted; this is why change is so difficult. Change is never neutral, there are always winners and losers, and some of the losers may be in positions of power.

Different groups within the organisation will view things from completely different perspectives. This means that there is unlikely to be any consensus as to the nature of the problem, let alone the efficacy of any proposed solution. Mechanistic problem-solving and logic are of little use in such situations; what is needed is an approach that enables disparate groups within the organisation to start to see and appreciate the significant elements of the problem domain. Once we have consensus that there is a problem we are a step closer to constructing a solution.

Some classic reasons for lack of success in change initiatives

The short history of IT-led change is littered with heroic failures. Here are some common factors that contribute to lack of success. They are in no particular order of importance.

- **Lack of readiness**. No matter how elegant the solution, if we do not put enough energy into 'preparing the ground', the desired result is unlikely to materialise. Creating a state of readiness requires much more than just telling a group that a new system is on the way. We need to help people understand why a change is needed, how they will be impacted, what is needed from them and what they will gain in return. This all takes time and is greatly facilitated if they can play a part in imagining the new way of working and being.
- **Symptoms vs root causes**. We work at a superficial level and address the outward manifestations of the problem, rather than digging to find what caused the problem. For example, if the oil light comes on in the car, we check the dipstick and the oil level is low. Answer: top up the oil. But why was the oil low? This sort of limited thinking leads to solutions that fail.
- **Optimising the part, sub-optimising the whole**. A chain is only as strong as its weakest link; making one link stronger will not strengthen the chain overall. This often happens in organisations: we strengthen one element of a process, but by doing so we increase the pressure on another element of the process further along the supply chain, sometimes with disastrous effects.
- **Separation of cause and effect**. We take action – but because the effects of our actions often do not become apparent for many weeks or months, we no longer associate the effect with the result of our actions. Because our brains operate by recognising patterns when we see the problem again we tend to apply the same solution, but with more vigour, thus repeating solutions that fail because we have no way of associating outcomes with the actions we are taking. We can easily

fall into the trap of applying, with great certainty, solutions that were never of any value.

- **Powerful losers**. When we introduce change there will inevitably be winners and losers. If the losers are powerful within the organisation we may need to take steps to erode their power base. This can be achieved by many means, but will often require negotiation, compromise and concessions.
- **Lack of shared vision**. In order for people to be willing to consider major change, there must be a level of dissatisfaction with the status quo. Some writers have advocated using a crisis, or in extreme cases even creating a crisis. This is sometimes termed the 'the Burning Platform'. Whilst it is certainly true that crisis can precipitate action, what we really need is action that is aligned with our goals and positioned in a way that encourages us to take collective responsibility for the resultant outcomes. It is not enough just to create dissatisfaction through the demonstration of pain; we also need to show that there is an acceptable alternative future. This is the role of vision; to paint a picture of a desirable future state, a state that should be realistic, yet challenging and engaging – just this side of the impossible.
- **Under-communication and lack of congruence**. It is estimated that in most organisational change initiatives, the amount of communication that pertains to the change typically represents less than one per cent of all the communication that is hitting the worker. One would therefore have to conclude that we under-communicate during change by several orders of magnitude. Yet communication isn't just about words and e-mails; we communicate most vividly through our actions. We need

to role model the changed behaviours that we need. All too often it is only the words that we plan, but frequently it is our actions that convey the most powerful messages. It is, therefore, imperative that we ensure congruence between our words and the actions we take. The Americans term this 'walking the talk'.

- **Change fatigue**. Change is the one constant in our organisations today, but all too often changes appear random and un-coordinated. People can only cope with so much change at once; they need to see a consistent theme, and they need to see where they are going and why they should care. If they don't see these things, they will rapidly lose enthusiasm.
- **Sense of powerlessness**. This can come in two forms: a negative emotion of being swept remorselessly along with a tide of change, and a perhaps more frustrating emotion of wanting to help but being unable to see how anything you do might make a difference. Often the changes that are required appear to be beyond the scope of individual action; a useful technique is to identify some small way in which each and every individual can contribute and then to challenge them to do so.
- **Lack of consultation and involvement**. We often fall into the trap of accusing our workers of resisting change, or of failing to buy into the required change. What is happening is that they are resisting 'being changed'. If, however, they are actively involved in constructing the change there is a greater chance that they will commit to the change rather than just comply with the demands you place upon them.
- **Poor fit with the prevailing culture**. Culture is very important in organisations; it determines the way we do

things around here. It is not constructed, but rather emerges as an unplanned and unwritten expression of the collective consciousness. Culture is not static; it is constantly and subtly changing, along with the general mores and norms of behaviour. Changes that are not congruent with the prevailing culture tend to fail.

- **Lack of a suitably powerful group of committed advocates**. Regardless of their apparent referential power, no single person can make change happen in an organisation. In order for change to proceed smoothly, we need a coalition of like-minded and respected people drawn from all levels across the organisation who wish to see the change succeed. Research suggests that this collection of influential people probably needs to encompass and represent at least 10% of all the people who are affected by the change.

In recent years there has been considerable research on the nature of organisational change and the key factors for success. Perhaps the most influential thinker in this domain is John Kotter[14], who has written a series of seminal works on the subject. As a result of research carried out with hundreds of organisations, he has identified eight steps which, when undertaken in order, can increase the chances of success. He lists these as:

1 establishing a sense of urgency
2 forming a powerful guiding coalition
3 creating a vision
4 communicating the vision
5 empowering others to act on the vision

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[14] John P. Kotter, *The Heart of Change*, Harvard Business Press (2002).

6 planning for and creating short-term wins
7 consolidating improvements and producing more change
8 institutionalising new approaches.[15]

One can immediately see how these eight steps address, to some extent, all of the 12 classic reasons for lack of success that we set out at the start of this chapter. We can also see that this eight-step model is heavily front-loaded; the first three steps need to be in place before any change can start – this phase may be termed readiness and mobilisation. We also see that the final two steps occur in the operational environment and can only be seen after traditional project closure and handover.

Indeed, all eight steps have a strong focus on inclusion, co-operation, co-creation and social engagement. This is perhaps worrying and points to a significant reason why so many IT projects fail to produce the desired outcomes, namely that IT professionals tend to give scant regard to readiness and mobilisation activities and are notoriously poor in terms of placing their solutions within a social context. Increasingly, IT systems are social systems, and if we are to become more successful in their deployment, we need to work in true partnership with the receiving environment and find ways of learning together and embedding cultural change. When we also consider that the IT stereotype points to poor levels of interpersonal skills, poor communication ability and little idea of how to

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[15] First published in John P Kotter, 'Leading Change: Why Transformation Efforts Fail', *Harvard Business Review*, *Best of HBR* (January 2007). This article was first published in the *HBR* in the spring of 1995 and was the basis of a series of detailed books later published by Kotter.

empower teams, it would appear that the odds are stacked heavily against the IT professional as a change agent.

If we are to get better at delivering change, we need to learn these eight lessons and find ways of incorporating the necessary behaviours into our portfolio of leadership skills.

Tactics to use to become a lightning conductor for change

Creating urgency and behaving with urgency

Establishing the impetus for change is a key component of readiness and mobilisation. Recent work has focused on the idea of urgency and the creation of a sense of urgency as a means of counteracting the overwhelming sense of powerlessness that pervades communities in crisis and also as a means of both creating and sustaining readiness through periods of change fatigue. Creating a sense of urgency is seen by Kotter as the single most important factor in creating the environment for successful change. What exactly does he mean? Urgency comes in two forms:

- creating urgency in the hearts and minds of the people and communities that are at the centre of change
- behaving with a true and authentic sense of urgency as a leader of change.

In terms of the targets of change, urgency comes from an understanding that the benefits of the proposed change significantly outweigh the personal sacrifices that everyone is required to make. Such a realisation can seldom be achieved by weight of logic alone; it requires an emotional engagement. The leader must provide access to the uncensored information that people need to make sense of the prevailing environment. The leader also needs to provide a means whereby they can explore collectively and constructively the context of the change and the boundaries and limits to engagement. This is a time of experimentation, in terms not just of new ways of doing things but also of new ways of thinking and behaving. It is not possible to prescribe the limits of behaviour or expect people to find a new way first time out. There will be false starts, ideas that don't quite work, behaviours that are not quite aligned with the goal. Unless people are given the opportunity to experiment, and possibly fail, they cannot commit fully to a new state. The leader must therefore provide:

- Information about the change, where we are now, why we are here and what is likely to happen if we stay where we are.
  - Over the centuries communities have traditionally used storytelling as the vehicle to provide this narrative thread. The leader of change also needs to provide this story of change and the space for the community to engage with the story.
- Provide a context that explains why the environment is changing in the way it is.
  - Context is external to the community. The leader must provide external examples and reference points for how others are coping with similar demands. This is best done through a process of boundary-spanning. Bring external people, ideas and examples in and provide opportunities for internal people to experience and work with external bodies.
- Recognise that the above two strategies will not work if you wait for a crisis to emerge. We know that change is

> both inevitable and continuous; we therefore need to manage in a way that treats change as the norm, not as an exception. Creating and sustaining a sense of urgency in our people is a primary leadership skill. Just as an athlete trains every day for their event, we as leaders must engender a constant sense of urgency in readiness for change.

We have already talked about the power of positive role modelling, so, if we want our people to understand the urgent need for change we, too, must behave with a true sense of urgency. It is important to distinguish clearly between behaving with a sense of urgency and rushing around doing things. Paradoxically, in order to have the time to behave with urgency, it is often necessary to do less – to create the space needed to be able to take action when action is needed, to make commitments and follow them through. At a time when we seem to be constantly running faster just to stay in the same place, when our diaries are crowded with back-to-back meetings from 8 am to 7 pm, clearing the space to be able to devote time to people and events may appear to be an impossible task, but it is essential and we must find a way of achieving it. In simple terms, this is an act of personal time management.

Simple tips to help you behave with a true sense of urgency are:

- Purge your diary and create space for yourself. Do this by:
  - Delegating tasks to grow the skills of your team and allow you time for coaching.
  - Build in thinking and preparation time before meetings, and time to complete action items after meetings.

- o Block out 'me-time' in your diary. Be rigorous about this – you need time to think but you also need time to network and build working relationships. Work on increasing your sphere of influence.
- o Use the Time Management Importance/Urgency matrix (*Figure 10*) to prioritise your precious time into activity associated with the top-left quadrant of the grid. Understand that activity is not the same as progress; value your activities in terms of the insight they create rather than the time you spend or the output you produce. Focus on contribution to outcomes rather than on volume of output.

Figure 10: Managing your time

- Spend more time steering and less time rowing. Do this by:
  - o Asking questions that make people think and help them solve problems for themselves.

  - o Recognising that you can achieve more with 10 minutes of targeted coaching than with 40 minutes of detailed step-by-step instruction.
- Expand your mental model and increase your ability to perceive the unusual. Do this by:
  - o Engaging with professionals from other disciplines and understanding their challenges and mind-set
  - o Reading about emerging ideas in other business fields and thinking about what you can learn that might provide insight into your own challenges
  - o Engage in future-focused conversations
  - o Don't ask: 'what can we do in this situation?'. Ask, rather: 'what is it possible to achieve?'. Envision a future state and help people to create it with you.

Creating a network of committed change advocates and agents

Change is a team sport, not an individual event. To be effective, the leader needs to work through a network of committed change advocates; these are people who understand the need for change and are passionate about achieving the envisioned future state. These people will commit their personal resources and their reputations to the cause, and in doing so will help foster a groundswell of support for the change. It is essential that the network of change advocates and champions are drawn from across disciplines and the whole of the business and are trusted and respected for their past achievements, integrity and selflessness. Kotter calls this a 'guiding coalition'. With such a network in place it is easier to communicate and share a vision for change and greatly improve the quality and congruence of communication. The network can also play an important roll in co-opting or neutralising powerful losers or people who have the capacity to derail or slow down the change initiatives.

Simple tips to help you create and sustain a network of change agents are:

- Take time to understand what motivates and inspires the people in your sphere of influence. Learn also how they like to process information, and structure your messages to their preferred style. Specifically look for clues on:
  - Their approach to detail; are they big-picture-concept people or do they like to get into the detail and inner workings of a problem?
  - Their approach to problem-solving and decision making.
  - Their sensitivity towards people and their approach to people issues.
- Focus on creating readiness. Take time to build a small core of people who share your passion for the proposed change, and spend enough time with them to co-create a compelling vision for change.
- Build impetus for change by slowly expanding the sphere of influence of the core team. Understand that this inevitably means that the core team must also expand because commitment comes through being involved, not through being informed.
- As the core team expands, new ideas will be generated and the vision for change will evolve. New change champions need to make the vision their own; this necessitates that they can shape and form some of the pieces.

- Build a stakeholder map for your change project. Make sure you include all individuals and groups who are impacted in any way by the change. Once you have the map you need to:
  - Estimate the power, position and priority that each of the stakeholder groups accords to this initiative
  - Score power on a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 is powerless and 5 is a key decision maker with the ability to make or break the initiative
  - Score priority on a scale of 0 to 5, where 0 indicates that it is likely to get metaphorically buried in their in-tray, 5 means that it is their number one priority and they will always find time for this project
  - Score position on a scale of –5 to +5, where –5 is dead against, 0 is ambivalent and +5 is a fully committed champion
  - Plot a graph with position on the vertical axis and power × priority on the horizontal axis
  - Look at the spread of the plot – groups towards the left are largely irrelevant regardless of whether they are for or against the project as they have no power base. The further to the right groups are on the plot the more significant they are. It should be simple to inspect the plot and make an instant judgement on the strength of your guiding coalition, the likelihood of successful change and the priority groups that you need to influence. The example plot in *Figure 11* depicts a change initiative that in its current form is doomed to fail. What influencing strategies could you adopt?

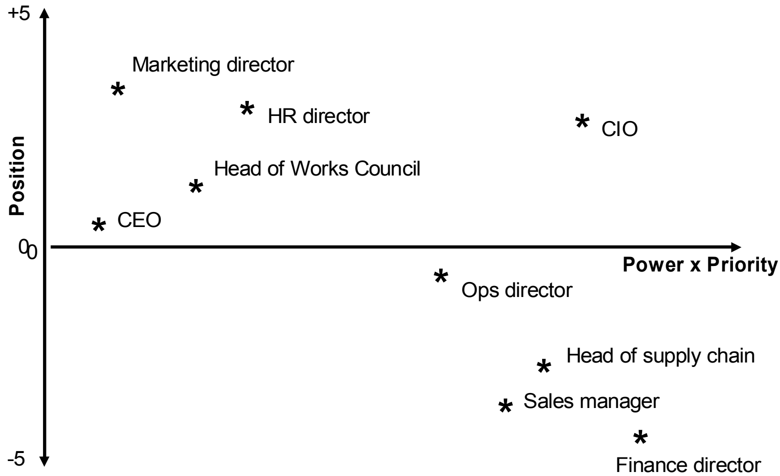

Figure 11: Estimating the level of support for a proposed change

- People commit most readily when they are made to feel part of the solution rather than part of the problem. Give them the opportunity and the resources to experiment and create a part of the solution.
- It is easy for people with a scientific training to assume that, if only we can explain the logic of a change, people will be persuaded of its merit and take action to change. Yet it is clear that in matters of human behaviour, people are more likely to engage with things emotionally.
- People will get enthusiastic about change when it connects to their core values.
- If we want to change human systems, we need to appeal to both the heart and the head.

Key ideas from this chapter

This chapter has been about change and recognising that, in the 21st-century organisation, what can be achieved is not limited by technology, but by our human capacity to adapt our social and organisational structures quickly enough to take advantage of the promise of technology. The Transformational Leader has to become adept at imagining the future and inspiring followers to help create that future.

1	Front-end your change efforts with activities aimed at increasing readiness for change
2	Put together a network of respected individuals to act as advocates and champions of the change
3	Use your network of change champions and their contacts to co-create a vision for change
4	Create a sense of urgency around the change
5	Remember the power of positive role modelling – ensure that your actions are congruent with your words

Table 14: Five key actions for leaders of change

Reflection

Think of personal examples where you have faced fundamental change at work.

- What was it about the way the change was presented that concerned or excited you?
- What was it that persuaded you to commit to the change?
- What factors maintained your enthusiasm during the change?
- What most turned you off about the change process?

- How was communication handled? Was leadership behaviour congruent with the changes that were being espoused?
- Knowing what you know now, what would you have done differently?

More food for thought

- John P. Kotter, *Leading Change*, Harvard Business Press (1996).
  - This originally introduced the notion of eight reasons why change fails.
- John P Kotter and Leonard A. Schlesinger, 'Choosing Strategies for Change', *Harvard Business Review* (July–August 2008).
  - This article was first published in the *HBR* in 1979. It looks in depth at resistance to change and the main reasons for resistance. It proposes a spectrum of intervention efforts that can be adopted to help people through change. This model is as relevant today as when it was first published.
- John P. Kotter, *The Heart of Change*, Harvard Business Press (2002).
  - In the intervening years of research after the initial statement of the eight conditions, Kotter came to realise the importance of the human aspect and the need to appeal not only to the head but also to the heart. This book is more rounded and contains more examples of the ideas at work in organisations.
- John P. Kotter, *Our Iceberg Is Melting*, Macmillan (2006).

  - This is a retelling of the *Heart of Change* as a metaphor. It is simple to read and engaging whilst losing none of the theoretical underpinning of his work.
- John P. Kotter, *A Sense of Urgency*, Harvard Business Press (2008).
  - This short and engaging book provides an explanation of tactics that have been found to be effective in creating urgency during change initiatives.

CHAPTER 10: TAKING A HOLISTIC VIEW

In this final chapter we offer a very brief summary of the key ideas we have presented in the book.

Part I set out the changing nature of our organisations and why we need to adopt the characteristics exhibited by Transformational Leaders. We looked at some findings from evolutionary psychology that provide an insight into why we think and act the way we do. We linked this developing understanding to the theory of personality types using the Myers-Briggs typology.

Part II set out steps you can take to become a more effective communicator and leader of change. We looked at this in terms of how we can:

- work to release the power of the many
- change the way we think and talk about work
- be more future-focused in our day-to-day communication
- ensure that we deliver lasting change.

We will now summarise our recommendations in terms of how to modify behaviour in all its guises, whether that be organisational, transformational, individual or interpersonal.

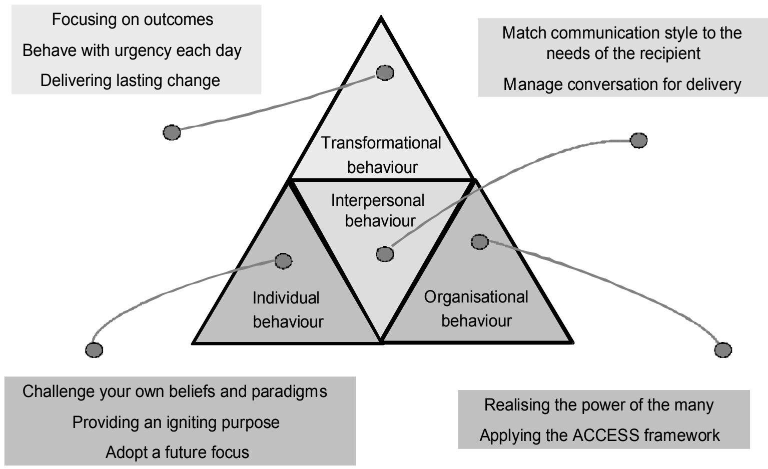

Figure 12: The route to transformational change

It is our contention that you can only make the journey to become a Transformational Leader if you can balance the four dimensions of change shown in *Figure 12*. Furthermore, we believe that the keystone that holds everything together is the interpersonal relationships that you create. These relationships will, in times of chaos and turbulence, provide the anchor that holds the four behaviour sets together and allows you to 'Be' different.

Learning to 'Be' different

We stressed the need to make a fundamental commitment to **Being** different. Our definition of 'Being' is that you must act, analyse and see differently before you can have any hope of changing your sense of 'Being'. We use the word 'Being' to illustrate that this is not a superficial change, nor is it something that you can just do for a couple of hours a week or slip into when you feel it would suit the situation. 'Being' is more than acting; it requires a fundamental shift in the core principles that inform and drive your actions. We have given you ideas on how to start to challenge your own sets of 'eternal truths', to question why you think things work the way they do, to imagine new ways of being.

Changing your sense of 'Being' is neither a quick nor an easy journey. It will have many false starts and will be characterised by experimentation and failure. It is, however, a worthwhile and rewarding journey.

To be successful, and to sustain you on the way, you must work from a solid base of integrity. You must draw on your core values to inform the way you communicate and build trust. It is through honest and open communication that you can ensure that your words and actions are always in alignment.

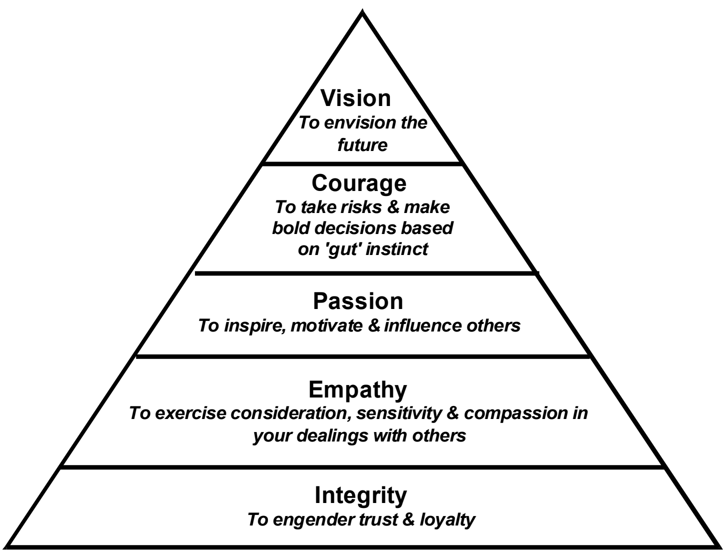

Figure 13: A revised hierarchy of needs

You need to deploy empathy in your dealings with others; to exercise consideration, compassion and sensitivity. Use your understanding of personality preferences to tailor your communication to the way in which others need to hear in order to process and understand. Always look to understand context and contextualise your communication accordingly. Above all, understand that committed action comes from engaging the 'heart' more than the 'mind'. Don't be frightened of emotion; it is the lifeblood of action. Appeal to and engage emotionally with your peers; emotions drive action and afford you trust, loyalty and respect.

If you link your words and actions to your core beliefs, you cannot help but be passionate about what you advocate. Passion engages at the emotional level, passion enlists followers and helps people to commit; but only when the passion is real, transparent and congruent with the espoused strategy.

Have courage to follow through on your words. Understand that there is no such thing as low risk coupled with high gain. If you want the big prizes you have to be bold and take difficult decisions when others would prevaricate or seek further data. Learn to trust your heart and your gut and be prepared to challenge authority and accepted wisdom.

Be clear that whilst your tactics may change to suit the prevailing situation, your eyes are unwaveringly focused on a greater vision. Use your sense of vision to inform your decision making and anchor your actions.

Key steps on the journey

The pages of this book are full of detailed advice on how to act, assess and see differently, and, in doing so, how to 'Be' different. We can summarise this journey as a developmental path with three key strands. To be successful we believe that you need to focus at least 75% of your time and energy to getting better on three key dimensions:

1 communication
2 innovation
3 networking.

Focusing on these three dimensions will help you imagine new ways of working and release the latent drive and power of your colleagues. You will build the trusting relationships that you need to gain acceptance for your ideas and drive delivery. Through open, transparent and congruent communication, you can inspire people to act upon your ideas and in so doing you can build and sustain a better tomorrow for your organisation.

All of this takes time. A first step is to create space to work by purging the irrelevant or apparently urgent, but not necessarily important, activity from your 'to-do' list. Give yourself time to think, reflect and act in accordance with your beliefs. Space and time allow you to plan and carry out your communication more clearly, and to ensure that you are consistent in your message and congruent in your actions. Creating space to network builds the trust and understanding that leads to personal recommendations; remember that when someone personally recommends you, they are putting their own reputation on the line – recommendation builds a bond of mutual trust and commitment to deliver.

Take time to build a network of people who trust you enough to recommend you and value you enough to lobby positively on behalf of your ideas and vision. Start your network small and local and then work steadily to enlarge your sphere of influence. Remember the power of boundary-spanning in providing a new viewpoint and generating startling new insight on existing intransigent problems. Place a high value on network members who think differently from you; they are the ones most likely to stimulate breakthrough thinking.

When you start to see and think differently you become an engine for innovation.

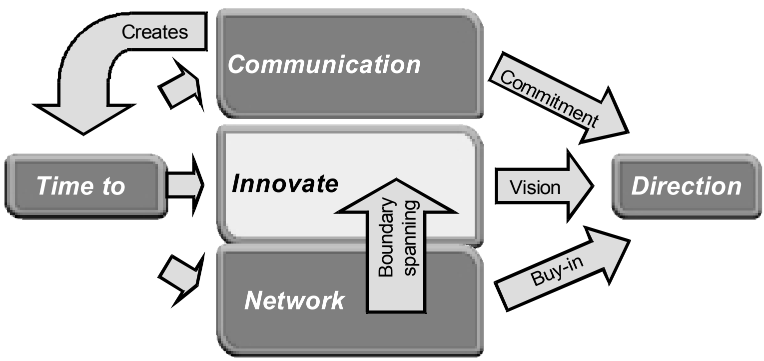

Figure 14: Three killer capabilities

A focus on communication, networking and innovation will transform the value that you can bring to your organisation. Effective communication helps achieve buy-in and also affords you more time to network, innovate and communicate. Networking also helps you achieve buy-in and additionally facilitates boundary-spanning, which in turn leads to innovation. Innovation provides vision and ultimately direction. This is the first step on the road to true influence and attaining a role in establishing the direction of your organisation.

The Transformational Leader is a very different person from the traditional Transactional Leader; it requires you to make a fundamental change in the way you act, the tools and techniques you deploy, the way you perceive your environment and ultimately your sense of 'Being'.

Four levels for you to work on

The IT leader of today needs to be adept at working at four distinct levels and capabilities, as illustrated in *Figure 15*. We have adapted Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to illustrate the breadth and depth of your transformational journey. We depict this journey as two pyramids. The right pyramid shows the likely balance of attention for the Transactional Leader – a focus on service delivery with involvement, contribution and influence rapidly waning as you progress to the upper levels of the pyramid. You could view your challenge as negotiating the journey through to the upper levels. As you can see from the inverted pyramid on the left, you also need to change your focus and sense of being as well as working upwards through the layers. The left pyramid shows a focus on anticipating and meeting business needs through collaborative partnerships that deliver business benefit and provide the basis of enhanced competitive advantage.

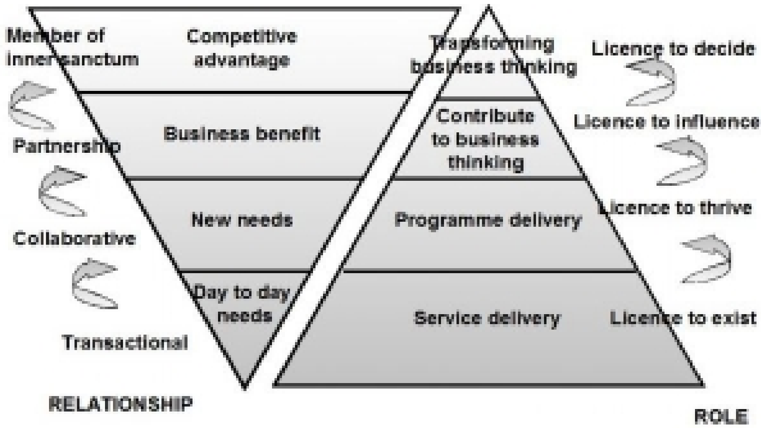

Figure 15: Four levels of contribution and hence sphere of influence

Service delivery – your licence to exist

At the base level we have service delivery; this includes getting the basics right, 'keeping the lights on', i.e. delivering a reliable, responsive, robust service that addresses and serves the day-to-day needs of the business. However, this also involves adopting a service-focus, a service mentality, and building a service-oriented culture; something that few IT departments have achieved and, as a consequence, why many organisations do not perceive they are getting value for money from their own IT functions. This is your 'licence to exist' as an IT leader; get this wrong and you are 'ripe' for outsourcing.

Programme delivery – your licence to thrive

The next level, programme delivery, is about responding to the future needs of the business by undertaking new work and delivering projects and programmes on time, to specification and within budget. This is your opportunity to show what you can do, to gain credibility and to begin to have a voice within the business context. Operating at this level is your 'licence to thrive'; it is the starting point for building trust, partnerships and supportive relationships. You need to be constantly vigilant that you are not delivering yesterday's programmes that meet yesterday's business imperatives that no longer exist. Far too many of our programmatic efforts are lost in yesterday's strategy; you need to find ways of constantly challenging the validity and the business outcomes of the programmes you deliver. Look for new ways of building and delivering organisational benefit. Reduce the length and ambition of programmes so that you can deliver capability early. Look for innovations that are supportive of new business models or new management paradigms, rather than solutions that just lock your organisation more firmly into a productive past. Future-proof your organisation by ensuring your deliverables are flexible and afford the business the agility it needs.

Contribute to business thinking – your licence to influence

Having mastered the two base levels you may have created enough trust and won enough credit to be invited to 'contribute to business thinking'. When you are operating at this level you will be working with your business colleagues to deliver real business benefit. Questions like 'are we getting value for money from our IT function?' will have faded into the distant past and service-level agreements will be gathering dust in some forgotten archive. At this level, the business trusts and believes in you – proof and evidence are not required. You will be valued for your ability to advise on how technology can be deployed to drive key business metrics; you will be seen not as a cost centre, but as another critical arm of revenue generation. This is your 'licence to influence'. You need to broaden your personal network to become attuned to ways in which technologists are transforming other industries. Understand that some of the best ideas are likely to be found in the most unlikely places; don't restrict benchmarking and investigation to your own industry; don't be content with being in the upper quartile of IT operations for your industry. What you need to focus on is the upper quartile of IT in terms of transformational capability in any industry. This is not about setting the bar slightly higher; if you were a high jumper, setting the bar higher could only ever gain you a few centimetres, but changing your game to become a pole vaulter could let you jump three times higher. Don't ask, 'what can we do?', ask, 'what could be achieved if we looked at things with a completely different lens?'. Become the engine of innovation by asking better questions rather than looking for better answers to existing questions.

Transforming business thinking – your licence to decide

At the very top of the pyramid you will have entered that elusive 'inner sanctum'. You will be part of that small team shaping the future direction of your organisation. You will be valued not for your technical knowledge, but for your deep understanding of how technology can be used to shape the future success of your organisation. You will be *au fait* with future technological trends; with the social, organisational and political implications of those trends; with the future dynamics of your industry sector; with key developments in business thinking. You will have the ability to synthesise all of this understanding to imagine and realise new business models for your organisation. You will have a passion for the transforming power of technology and the vision and drive to turn that passion into business reality. At this level you have achieved your 'licence to decide'.

Final words

In this book our focus has been primarily on the top two levels of the pyramid. Being a good Transactional Leader will afford you much, but not total, success at the bottom two levels. A new style of leadership – Transformational Leadership – is, however, necessary to put the 'icing on the cake' even at these bottom two levels, but more importantly, to afford an IT leader any chance at all of succeeding at the top two levels.

Our lasting message to you is that without the foresight to network and the ability to build effective relationships with your peer group you are unlikely ever to get the opportunity to voice your ideas or words of wisdom even if they are the greatest in the world. Remember, 'being right' is not enough; you have to be heard. The gateway to being heard and respected lies in the relationships we build; relationships are the foundations of everything we do! So go forth and network ...

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