

A Resource Guide to Learning and Leadership

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Introduction

The rapidity of change, stemming from technology, an ageing workforce and globalization, is growing, exerting pressure on organizations to adapt. Traditional workplace practices are being questioned by Generations X and Y. Issues such as employee engagement, leadership and management practices, virtual teams, distributed work and alliances with stakeholders are being viewed through a new lens.

As an aid to help you in your work and learning journey, this resource guide contains a diverse selection of information sources on leadership, management, personal mastery, team learning and more. I've read most of the books that are mentioned and am familiar with the website-blogs.

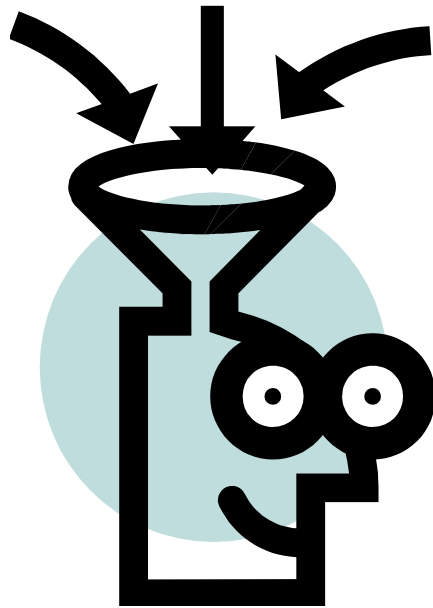
The guide begins with a series of short articles I've written over the past few years. These are intended to assist you reflect on your personal learning and development, in addition to enhancing your understanding of important organizational learning issues.

Of particular note is the inclusion of blogs and books by prominent social media experts, who offer unique perspectives on the new emerging world of work. The explosion of social media in society and the workplace, where Generations X and Y are embracing this form of communication, requires reflection and conversation. Social media is weaving its way into how people learn, lead and manage within organizations and communities.

The resources in this guide are eclectic in nature, aimed at appealing to different needs and learning styles. The leadership and learning books will help develop a base. The leadership blogs and websites add a different dimension, including diverse and, in some cases, non-conventional perspectives. The inclusion of links to short videos and podcasts helps broaden the learning to beyond reading books and websites.

Note: To access the highlighted links, control-click on the URL (hyper-text link).

Articles to Inform & Stimulate



The journey in between what you once were and who you are now becoming is where the dance of life really takes place.

Barbara DeAngelis

The Five Learning Disciplines

From Individual to Team Learning

by Jim Taggart

*To practice a discipline is to be a lifelong learner. You 'never arrive.'
The more you learn, the more acutely aware you become of your ignorance.*
Peter Senge

In his seminal book on the learning organization concept, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization* (1990), Peter Senge lays the foundation from which organizations have the opportunity to grow and prosper. He states upfront that he assumes no credit for inventing the five disciplines; they're the product of the work done by hundreds of people over many years. He has devoted, however, many years to studying these disciplines.

Senge is the Director of the Center for Organizational Learning at MIT's Sloan School for Management and the founder of the Society for Organizational Learning. He has introduced his work to thousands of managers in dozens of organizations throughout North America and Europe. He continues to be seen as one of the world's leading thinkers on organizational learning.¹

This article examines Senge's work, drawing principally from his book *The Fifth Discipline*, as well as from *The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook* (1994). Before delving into the five disciplines and what they mean for learning and leadership in organizations, we'll begin with a look at the seven learning disabilities. Understanding what these disabilities represent, and the impact they have on how organizations function, is critical to developing a more complete picture of the organizational learning process.

The 7 Learning Disabilities

Most organizations, not surprisingly, have difficulty learning. To address this problem requires first identifying the seven learning disabilities:

1. I am my position. Because we are expected to be loyal to our jobs, we tend to confuse them with our own identities. As Senge explains: "When people in organizations focus only on their position, they have little sense of responsibility for the results produced when all positions interact."

¹ As a continuous learner, Senge continues to explore new areas. His new book delves into sustainability and has received very positive reviews. *The Necessary Revolution: How Individuals and Organizations Are Working Together to Create a Sustainable World*. New York: Doubleday, 2008

2. The Enemy is Out There. We have a tendency to blame others when something goes wrong, whether it is another unit in the organization or a competitor.

3. The Illusion of Taking Charge. We hear all too often that we must be ‘pro-active,’ taking action to make something happen. However, pro-activeness can really be reactivity in disguise. Senge sees “true pro-activeness” as coming from our ability to see how we contribute to our own problems. In essence, it is the outcome of how we think, not how we react emotionally.

4. The Fixation on Events. The ongoing discussions and conversations in organizations focus typically on events, those ‘urgent’ day-to-day issues that grab our attention. But the real threats to our survival are not events but rather the *slow, gradual processes* that creep up on us. We need to move away from short-term thinking to long-term thinking.

5. The Boiled Frog. This parable states that if you place a frog in boiling water it will hop out immediately. If you place it in cool water and gradually turn up the heat, the frog will remain in the pot, growing groggier until it cooks to death. What we learn from this parable is that if we wish to see the slow, gradual processes, we must *slow down* and pay attention to the subtle as well as the dramatic.

6. The Delusion of Learning from Experience. We learn best from direct experience. In organizations, however, we usually don’t experience directly the consequences of our decisions. A major underlying reason for this is the functional silos that exist. These silos impede the flow of communication among people. The organization’s ability to analyze complex problems is subsequently greatly weakened.

7. The Myth of the Management Team. This reflects the desire for management to appear as a cohesive group that is pulling in the same direction. However, the reality is that in most management teams the need to uphold their image means that dissent is frowned upon and that joint decisions are watered-down compromises. As Harvard’s Chris Argyris has discovered through his research (and referred to frequently by Senge), most organizations reward those who promote senior management’s views. Those who pose probing questions or who ‘rock the boat’ are penalized.

This brief look at the seven learning disabilities helps set the context for an exploration of the five disciplines. One key point needing emphasis is that these disciplines are all interrelated. They do not stand independently. This is the beauty of understanding the five disciplines: because they are interrelated, they help us make sense of the complexities and turbulence inside and outside our organizations.

Our starting point is what Senge calls the cornerstone of the five disciplines: *systems thinking*. It underlies the other four disciplines: *personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning*.

Systems Thinking

Systems thinking deals with seeing “wholes” or what some would say, the “big picture.” It’s a discipline that enables us to see interrelationships and patterns of change, as opposed to snapshots of situations. It helps us to determine cause and effect, an important point because it is never influenced in just one direction.

An important element of systems thinking is that of feedback and the role it plays in cause and effect. There are two types of feedback processes: *reinforcing* and *balancing*. An example of reinforcing feedback is a manager who does not fully appreciate the impact her expectations have on an employee's performance. If she believes that the employee has potential, she will give him extra attention. In contrast, if she believes that an employee will be a poor performer, he will receive less attention.

This type of behavior by a manager produces a self-fulfilling prophecy. In the first example, the employee will grow and develop, while in the second he will languish. In the latter example, a downward spiral can actually begin, one in which the interaction between the manager and the employee deteriorates, the consequence of mutual diminishing expectations.

The second type of feedback is *balancing*. These processes abound in organizations and are difficult to address. For example, we are all familiar with the heroes who work long hours. They often complain about having to work on weekends. And it is often these people who advance in the organization because working long hours is considered a virtue and an informal requirement to advancement.

Some organizations have attempted to eliminate this practice using formal communication. However, what they have found is that despite the official line from the CEO and other senior managers, the informal rule is that working long hours is still valued. Staff see management doing it, so it must be right.

When managers attempt to implement a change, they often find themselves caught in a balancing process. They are surprised to discover resistance by staff. Managers must therefore model what it is they're advocating. In the case of discouraging staff from working long hours, managers must practice what they are preaching. As Senge states: "Whenever there is resistance to change, you can count on there being one or more hidden balancing processes."

These norms, in fact, are imbedded in the power relationships in the organization. The challenge facing managers is to be able to identify the source of the resistance and to focus on these norms and power relationships. Pushing harder against the resistance is futile because it only strengthens it further.

In a true learning organization, managers come to understand the need to see the whole and the interrelationships that make an organization what it is. They are then functioning as systems thinkers. Senge sees systems thinking as an art, in which the individual is able to see through complex issues to the underlying forces. Mastering systems thinking means "...seeing patterns where others only see events and forces to react to. Seeing the forest as well as the trees is a fundamental problem that plagues all firms."

Senge speaks of what he calls *The Primacy of the Whole*. This refers to the concept that relationships are more fundamental than things, and that "wholes" are of a higher order than "parts." Managers are conditioned to see their organizations as '... things rather than as patterns of interaction.' They look for solutions that will 'fix' problems, instead of searching out the underlying causes. The consequence is the '... endless spiral of superficial quick fixes, worsening difficulties in the long run and an ever-deepening sense of powerlessness.'

While organizations learn through their people, this does not guarantee that organizational learning will result. This takes us to Senge's second discipline.

Personal Mastery

Personal mastery is the term used by Senge and his followers to describe the discipline of personal growth and learning. People who possess high degrees of personal mastery are continually increasing their abilities to create the results they seek. Their never-ending quests for self-improvement and self-discovery underlie the spirit of the learning organization.

When we speak of personal mastery, it's important to be clear that we are not just referring to skills and competencies. Personal mastery includes spiritual growth and approaching life as a creative work. It means that we continually clarify what is important to us and continually learn how to see the real world more clearly.

People who possess a high degree of personal mastery share some basic traits. First, they have a strong sense of purpose that supports their personal visions and goals. Second, they are individuals who work with change, not against it. Third, they feel connected to others and to life itself. Perhaps most importantly, they live in a continual learning mode.

Systems thinking brings out the more subtle aspects of personal mastery, for example, combining reason and intuition, seeing the interconnectedness of events in the world, compassion, and commitment to the whole. To embark on a journey of personal growth means that one has made a *conscious choice*. It's impossible to force an individual to engage in personal growth. As Senge says, "It is guaranteed to backfire."

There's a key lesson here for managers: you can't push against a string. People must *want* to do change. Managers help create the environment, which includes *modelling* the desired behaviors.

Senge explains that managers must work daily at creating a climate that promotes personal mastery. They must, above all, establish an environment in which people feel *safe* to create their personal visions, where they can challenge the status quo, and where inquiry and commitment to the truth are the norm.

If managers live this on a daily basis, personal mastery will be strengthened in two major ways. First, it will reinforce the notion that personal growth is indeed truly valued in the organization. And second, it will provide a sort of 'on-the-job-training,' an essential part of personal mastery. The manager who is serious about her own quest for personal growth will send a powerful message to her followers.

Personal mastery is seen as one of the two individual disciplines. The other one is mental models. However, it's important to remember that the five disciplines are interrelated. In the case of mental models, they're also intertwined with systems thinking because they deal with how we view the world.

Mental Models

Each of us carries our own sets of assumptions, views and prejudices that affect how we interact with others. While we often attempt to deny certain views or prejudices we hold, it's difficult to maintain this stance when our actions are not consistent with our words. Chris Argyris explains:

“Although people do not always behave congruently with their espoused Theories (what they say), they do behave congruently with their theories-in-use (their mental models).”

Our mental models strongly affect what we *do* because they affect what we *see*. As Albert Einstein put it: “Our theories determine what we measure.”

From a management perspective, mental models are extremely important because of the associated consequences, whether good or bad. In fact, it is difficult, if not impossible, to develop systems thinking if one's mental models are ingrained in past experiences and beliefs. For example, how can a manager deal effectively with an interpersonal problem in his unit if he has certain opinions about an individual? How can a manager bring her followers on board with a major change in the organization if she is unwilling to understand the underlying causes for the change and the many interdependencies involved?

To be an effective systems thinker requires the discipline of mental models. These two disciplines fit together naturally. Systems thinking concentrates on how to modify assumptions in order to show the true causes of problems. Mental models, in contrast, look at revealing our hidden assumptions.

For managers, it becomes essential that they take the time to reflect on their existing mental models until their assumptions and beliefs are brought out into the open. Until then, their mental models will not change and it is pointless to attempt to engage in systems thinking.

Shared Vision

When we talk about shared vision, we don't mean an idea. Instead, we're referring to a force that is in peoples' hearts. Senge states: “When people truly share a vision they are connected, bound together by a common aspiration. Personal visions derive their power from an individual's deep caring for the vision.” Shared vision is an essential component of a learning organization because it provides the focus and energy for learning. The underlying force is the desire by people to create and accomplish something. And the bedrock, as Senge calls it, for developing shared visions is personal mastery.

Shared vision emerges from personal visions, and this is how energy is formed and commitment created. Managers must therefore walk a fine line when they express their own visions. To master the discipline of building shared vision requires that managers understand that visions are not announced from the top or that they come from strategic planning processes.

The traditional approach to creating a vision for the organization has largely failed in most organizations because employees have been unable to connect with the vision developed by management. In other

words, the vision that is communicated to employees has not built on peoples' personal visions. They are not *enrolled* in the vision. The consequence has typically been apathy and a lack of energy on the part of people.

Of course visions can, and should, be conceived by senior managers. But senior management must realize that their vision cannot be considered shared until others in the organization feel part of it. Their personal visions must connect with the larger vision.

Building shared vision requires daily effort by managers. It must be a central part of their work. And they must remember that the visions they develop are still their *personal visions*. As Senge asserts: "Just because they occupy a position of leadership does not mean that their personal visions are *automatically* the organization's vision."

Creating shared vision goes hand-in-hand with systems thinking. The latter enables people to understand what and how the organization has created. Vision portrays what people want to create. Because most managers don't experience that they are contributing to their current reality, they have great difficulty in seeing how they can contribute to changing it. They see their problems as being caused by the system or by external factors.

This attitude, as Senge explains, "...can be elusive to pin down because in many organizations the belief 'We cannot create our own future' is so threatening that it can never be acknowledged." To be a good manager (or leader) means that you are in charge of your own future. A manager (or non-manager for that matter) who openly questions the organization's ability to accomplish what it is attempting is quickly labeled as being not on board or as rocking the boat. The underlying cause for this occurrence is that organizations tend to be dominated by linear thinkers instead of systems thinkers.

This leads us to the final discipline: *team learning*. As we'll see, team learning is all about 'alignment' and getting people working in synch with one another. And this is where creating shared vision can be a powerful force.

Team Learning

Team learning builds on the discipline of personal mastery. It is a process that encompasses aligning and developing the capacity of a team to achieve the goals that its members *truly* want. While individual learning at one level is important, it is irrelevant at another level. Individuals may learn but the organization as a whole does not. There is no *organizational learning*. Teams become, therefore, the essential ingredient for learning, a microcosm for learning as Senge calls it.

There are three key components of team learning.

1. *Teams must probe and explore complex issues, drawing on the talents, knowledge, and experiences of one another.*

2. *They must work in concert, coordinating their efforts and communicating openly and closely. Trust is essential since members must be able to rely on one another.*
3. *Teams must interact with each other so that they can share what they learn. Senge invented the expression Nested Teams as a way to express this interaction. Just as there must be interdependency within a team, so too must there be interdependency among teams in an organization.*

Team learning must therefore be seen as being a collective discipline. To say that “I” as an individual am mastering team learning is irrelevant. Team learning involves mastering the two primary ways that teams communicate: dialogue and discussion. By dialogue, Senge means deep listening and the free exploration of ideas. (Stephen Covey uses the expression *emphathic listening*). Discussion, on the other hand, refers to searching for the best view to support decisions once all views have all been presented.

For a team to grow and develop, and to be effective, it’s necessary that conflict be present. This notion may no doubt surprise some people, but unless a team’s members disagree at times, the team will not learn. To think creatively, there must be the free flow of conflicting ideas.

Of course, the team must know how to use disagreements productively. Conflict becomes then a part of the continuing dialogue among the team’s members. As Senge explains: “...the difference between great teams and mediocre teams lies in how they face conflict and deal with the defensiveness that invariably surrounds conflict.”

The issue of when and how to use conflict productively is one that escapes most organizations. The consequence is the regular use of defensive routines. To admit that one doesn’t know the answer to a question or problem is to reveal one’s supposed incompetence. This has particular applications to managers because they’re expected to know everything that is going on in the organization. This becomes part of managers’ mental models. Senge states: “Those that reach senior positions are masters at appearing to know what is going on, and those intent on reaching such positions learn early on to develop an air of confident knowledge.”

When managers internalize this mental model, they create two problems. First, to maintain the belief that they have the answers they must shut themselves off from inquiry from their subordinates. They refuse to consider alternative views, especially if they appear provocative.

The second problem they create for themselves is that they sustain their ignorance. To keep up the facade they become very skilled at being defensive. After all, they wish to be seen as being effective decision makers.

Through his work, Chris Argyris has found that such defensive behavior becomes an ingrained part of an organization’s culture. As he states: “...We are the carriers of defensive routines, and organizations are the hosts. Once organizations have been infected, they too become carriers.”

Organizational learning is obviously severely impeded in such a culture. This is underscored especially when teams engage in defensive routines, which block their energy and prevent them from working towards their shared visions.

The more that defensive routines take root in a team, and more broadly the organization, the more they hide the underlying problems. And in turn, the less effectively these problems are addressed, the worse the problems become. As Argyris puts it: "...defensive routines are 'self-sealing' – they obscure their own existence."

All is not lost, however. A team that is committed to the truth will find ways to expose and address its defensiveness. The same applies to a manager who has the courage to self-disclose and examine his mental models to determine where defensiveness may be hidden. This in turn creates energy and the willingness to explore new ideas. Openness and dialogue then become the norm in the organization.

*If dialogue articulates a unique vision of team learning,
reflection and inquiry skills may prove essential to realizing that vision.*
Peter Senge

A Final Note

Senge notes that the five disciplines may also be called the *leadership* disciplines. As he asserts: "Those who excel in these areas will be the natural leaders of learning organizations....It is impossible to reduce natural leadership to a set of skills or competencies. Ultimately, people follow people who believe in something and have the abilities to achieve results in the service of those beliefs....Who are the natural leaders of learning organizations? They are the learners."

When Senge wrote *The Fifth Discipline* his intention was to portray what a learning organization could look like and how it could be created. He did not set out to convince people they should build a learning organization. By presenting this concept to people, he is offering them a choice. He states, however, "The choice, as is always the case, is yours."

Conversation & Tacit Knowledge

by Jim Taggart

Why Conversation Important

The word “conversation” has become a word of choice within organizations. We’re beginning to realize the important role that talking to people plays in sharing information, forming partnerships and collaborating on projects. What’s important to stress is *meaningful* conversational interactions among people in organizations: sharing ideas and insights, suggesting improvements to work processes, reflecting together to identify new opportunities, and taking enjoyment in pausing from hectic routines to engage co-workers and to get to know them better.

Conversation enables the continuous sharing of information and ideas, in turn contributing to the generation of new knowledge and its subsequent dispersing throughout our organizations. But what tends to get overlooked is the huge role that conversation can—in fact must—play in addressing the issue of *tacit knowledge* (the qualitative, contextual knowledge each of us carries in our heads).

We tend to be influenced by the literature and by those firms selling their knowledge management solutions. These solutions talk about how tacit knowledge can be captured using various methodologies and IT tools. Different perspectives exist on this issue. People like Peter Senge (as discussed in his book [The Dance of Change](#)) question whether tacit knowledge can indeed be captured. Other notable people in the knowledge management field, such as Nonaka and Takeuchi ([The Knowledge Creating Company](#)), believe that tacit knowledge can be captured and transferred.

A Quick Side Tour

An adapted form of Nonaka’s and Takeuchi’s knowledge management model is presented below. To help set context, the two main components of knowledge transfer within an organization are:

- 1) the capturing, sharing, and dispersing of information and the creation of new knowledge by those people who work in intact and virtual teams,
- 2) the capturing and transferring of critical corporate knowledge back to the organization from those who are on the cusp of leaving it (e.g., retirement).

A Complete View of Learning & Knowledge

Explicit Knowledge	<p>Q 4</p> <p>Reflecting</p> <p>Understanding</p> <p>Internalizing</p>	<p>Q 3</p> <p>Organizing</p> <p>Classifying</p> <p>Accessing</p>
	<p>Q 1</p> <p>Conversation/sharing</p> <p>Coaching/Mentoring</p> <p>Job shadowing</p>	<p>Q 2</p> <p>Capturing</p> <p>Documenting</p> <p>Codifying</p>
	Tacit Knowledge	Explicit Knowledge

In *Quadrant 1* (Q 1), tacit knowledge is shared through daily, ongoing conversation; coaching and mentoring; and, where appropriate, job shadowing. This quadrant is highly qualitative and contextual in nature, and is a fundamentally important part of knowledge management. Learning occurs here, but is more at the personal and team levels. Moreover, it's still fragmented in nature.

Quadrant 2 is especially important for the organization when people have signaled their intent to leave it within a certain time period. This is where the effort is made to transform tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge using complex techniques and tools.

Until an organization has established as part of its business practices a rigorous process to systematically capture, document, and codify key information and knowledge, it will react to the imminent departures of those people possessing critical corporate knowledge. As such, a reactive approach using various knowledge transfer methodologies will be used.

In *Quadrant 3*, the huge amounts of information collected must be organized and classified in order to enable easy access. This is akin to a portal approach, in that people in the organization are able to quickly search for and retrieve the information they need on a particular topic.

Quadrant 4 is where further personal and team learning occurs, based on the access to critical corporate information and newly generated knowledge. Organizational learning now emerges as everyone in the organization has access to the necessary information, and where openness and collaboration have become ingrained parts of the corporate culture.

And Onwards

Nonaka's and Takeuchi's model gives us a framework to interconnect people, processes, technology and the organization. But it starts with people, and it is people who will determine the success of any knowledge management initiative.

Instead of approaching tacit knowledge from the angle of IT solutions, we should first focus our efforts on how we can open up our organizations by knocking down the functional and psychological walls that inhibit information sharing and collaborative learning. In effect, this means questioning the information sharing practices that are an outcome of our corporate cultures.

Conversation during our daily work—what we are learning and struggling with, how problems are solved, and how new innovative products and services are created—gets at the tacit knowledge that resides in each of our heads. Whether it is through communities of practice, action learning sets, unit meetings, or virtual discussion groups, conversation is the most potent form of catalyst to see the emergence of organizational learning and knowledge creation.

Conversation is a vital part of knowledge transfer, in particular with people leaving their organizations after many years of service (e.g., retirement). This is where coaching, mentoring, and job shadowing, for example, play key roles in succession planning. Where IT and structured methodologies fit in are as support tools and processes to help maximize the capturing, codifying, sharing and dispersing of new knowledge, and also the transfer of knowledge back to their organizations when people leave.

During most of the 20th Century, organizations were seen primarily as machines. They could be tweaked and controlled to deliver the desired outputs. As the world became increasingly complex, so too did organizations. That organizations can no longer be seen as mechanistic entities but rather as complex adaptive systems, means that we need to adjust our personal lens of how we see people interacting. This is one leadership challenge for the 21st Century.

It's critical that we understand that IT solutions are not the tail wagging the dog. The role of IT needs to be clearly understood. And as part of that process, we need to come to understand that knowledge management is not a process that is detached from the human dynamics of learning. Rather, it's one that supports it. Complex adaptive systems require a much more holistic and integrated approach to learning and knowledge creation. This is especially important when one considers the impending

changes facing government, in particular the impending exodus of tens of thousands of Baby Boomers over the next decade.

The subject of tacit knowledge is complex, requiring further study. This must be part of the change process underway to create learning cultures. However, it's also important to note that the challenge is less that of reaching a common understanding of how to approach tacit knowledge, and more of how do we *truly* engage people throughout our organizations to open up, share, collaborate and learn together.

Communities of Practice

A Cornerstone to a Learning Culture

by Jim Taggart

*Genuine inquiry starts when people ask questions
to which they do not have an answer.*

Peter Senge

Organizations have adopted numerous concepts to improve performance over the past two decades. These have included total quality service, business process reengineering, quality circles, team learning (including outdoor adventure learning), and knowledge management. In the process, what has tended to be overlooked is the overarching umbrella of organizational learning, the process to create learning cultures.

In their book *The Dance of Change*, Peter Senge and the five other authors talk about an “Organizational Learning Infrastructure.” Of particular note is that this concept transcends the team learning infrastructure, which was espoused during the 1990s and which Senge and his colleagues argue was a failure in most organizations. People remained stuck in functional silos, for the most part, making it difficult to engage in collaborative learning.

The concept of an organizational learning infrastructure is founded upon *Communities of Practice*. In that environment, people work across silos, collaborating and learning together as they work towards a shared vision. The key driver is that they share a common purpose. But there also needs to be mutual trust and respect.

This state is far more advanced than traditional knowledge management approaches, which rest largely on the exploitation of information technologies. This can be characterized as mechanistic and quantitative attempts at capturing and codifying the corporate knowledge possessed by people.

However, much of the knowledge that people possess is tacit: the qualitative, contextual knowledge that enables people to do their work, often in spite of onerous organizational policies, rules and procedures. What’s important to remember is that this generation of knowledge is often done unconsciously. People learn through observation, listening and doing.

This is where communities of practice enter. The members of a community of practice learn by working together. What they learn from one another is achieved through natural human effort and relationships. It’s for this reason that tacit knowledge cannot be converted or distilled to explicit knowledge. Senge refers to one researcher who made the statement: “I understand at XYZ corporation, the management says they are collecting the organization’s tacit knowledge. I hope they have a large bag.”

While some people may argue with the above view on capturing knowledge, what's critical to remember is that we're dealing with human beings who cannot be codified or quantified. This is the power behind the creation of a learning culture: where the nuances, diversity, perspectives and experiences of people collaborating contribute to enhanced creativity and innovation. In turn, this fosters the deepening of an organization's capacity for new knowledge. Communities of practice serve as a cornerstone to realizing this state of *being*. Of most significance, this is where we'll see the emergence of a learning culture.

Is Your Team REALLY a Team?

Part One of Six

by Jim Taggart

Teamwork is talked about widely in organizations, but often with little understanding of what it means. Organizations want instant results, teams that are formed and ready to go overnight – something like an instant pudding.

This article looks at the six basic elements of teams. But first, here's one definition of a team (from Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith):

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

There are two key prerequisites to becoming a team. One is that the group of people involved has a **common purpose** and the other is **interdependence** among the members. Without both of these present the group will never become a team.

It's essential that the members of a team be committed fully to their common purpose and performance goals. A common purpose takes time – substantial time – to develop, but it gives the team an identity. Remember this: **team purpose = team performance**. They're inseparable.

To determine if your group is a team, or has the potential, answer the following questions.

1) How large is your group?

- Is communication frequent?
- Do you meet often, and are discussions constructive?
- Do people understand their roles?

2) Are their sufficient, or potential, skills to achieve your goals?

- Are the three types of skills present: interpersonal, technical, and problem-solving?
- What skills are missing?
- Are people willing to learn new skills and to help one another?

3) Is there a clear and meaningful purpose to which people will strive to reach?

- Is it a team or organizational purpose?
- Does everyone understand it the same way?

- Do people think it's important and inspiring?
- 4) Are there specific performance goals that everyone agrees on?

- Are they organizational, team, or the leader's goals?
- Can they be measured easily?
- Do they allow for small wins along the way?

5) Is there a commonly accepted approach to work?

- Does it maximize the contributions of people?
- Does it allow open interaction among people to solve problems?
- Are new ideas encouraged?

6) Is there mutual accountability among people?

- Is there individual and mutual accountability for the group's performance and results?
- Are people clear on what they're accountable for, individually and mutually?
- Is there the view that only the team can fail?

The Five Levels of Teams

Part Two of Six

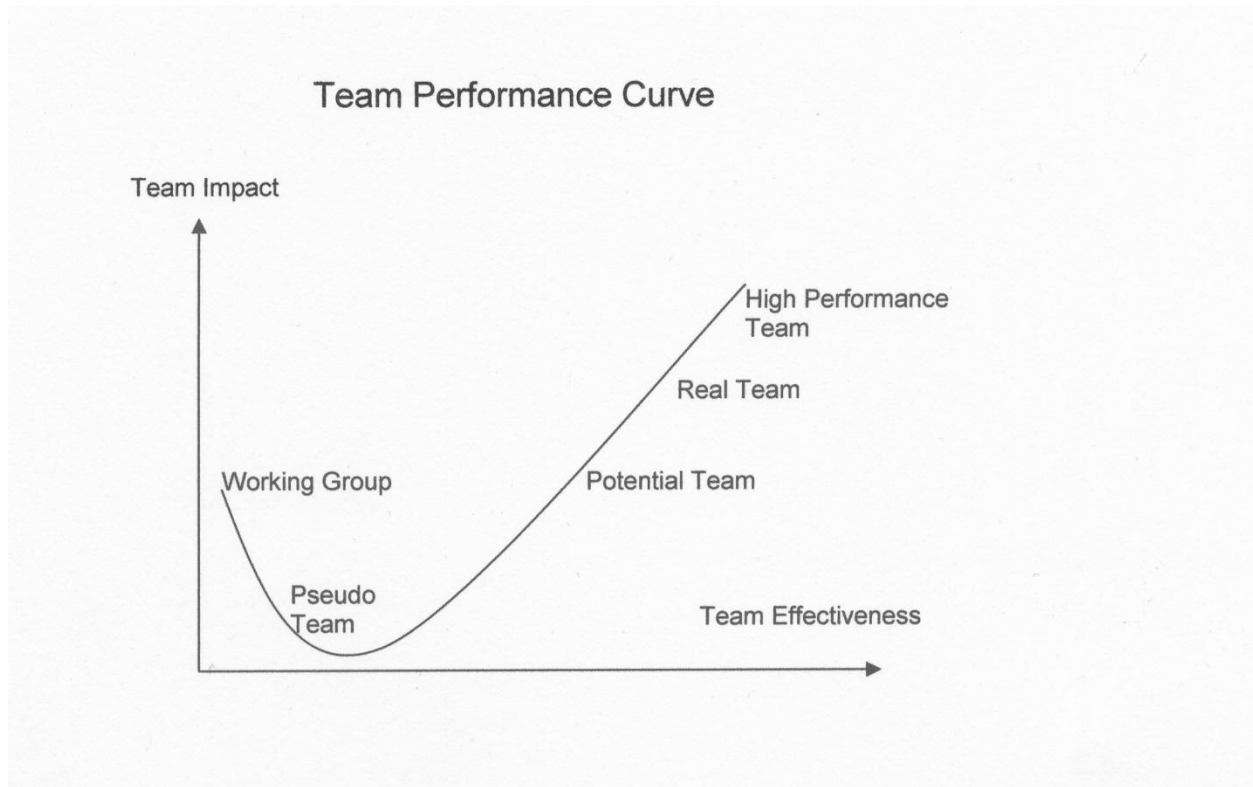
by Jim Taggart

In the first of our series on teams, we looked at the six basic elements of what constitutes a team. Now we'll move into understanding the five levels of teams.

Using the questions in the first article will help a group determine if it is a team or has the potential to become one. The next step is to understand the degree of teamwork to which a group of people can aspire.

The five levels of teamwork can be plotted on an X-Y axis to form what Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith call the team performance curve.

It's essentially a U-shaped curve, starting on the Y (vertical) axis, then sloping down to touch the X (horizontal) axis, and then bending back upwards to the right. The five levels of teams are located along the curve.



1) The Working Group

The members interact mainly to share information and best practices and to make decisions. *There is no common purpose*, nor performance goals that require mutual accountability. The purpose of this group is only to specify the roles of its members and to delegate tasks.

Its members only take responsibility for their own results. Therefore, the focus is on *individual* performance. The key here is there is no significant, incremental performance need or opportunity that requires the group to become a team.

2) Pseudo Team

There's a potential for significant, incremental gain here. The team has not, however, focused on collective performance. The members don't want to take the risks necessary to become a potential team. They are not interested in creating a *common purpose* or setting performance goals.

This is the weakest of the five levels. It resides at the bottom of the performance curve. What is especially dangerous about the pseudo team is that the members believe they are a real team. Moreover, pseudo teams are common in organizations.

3) The Potential Team

There's a significant, incremental gain in performance with this type of team. The members are working hard to achieve a higher level of performance. However, the members must work on developing a clear purpose, goals, and common approach. The members must also agree on mutual accountability. This form of teamwork is very common in organizations. This is also where the greatest gain in performance comes, from being a potential team to a real team.

4) The Real Team

This consists of a small group of people who *share a common purpose*, goals, and approach to work. The members have complementary skills. They hold themselves mutually accountable for their results. The performance impact and results of the real team are much greater than the potential team and working group.

5) The High Performance Team

This has all the characteristics of a real team, but the members are *deeply committed* to one another's personal growth and development. They far out-perform all other teams. The members form powerful relationships. Moving from a real team to a high performance team requires a very strong personal commitment. In effect, what is needed is a leap of faith.

How Do You Build Team Performance?

Part Three of Six

by Jim Taggart

There is no ideal approach to building a team. A team must learn as it's developing what is its preferred approach. What's important to remember is that *performance* is at the core of building a strong team. Performance serves, in effect, as the compass to moving a team up the performance curve (see *The Five Levels of Teams*).

Here's an eight point framework for moving a team up the performance curve (adapted from Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith, *The Wisdom of Teams*).

1. Create a sense of urgency

Everyone on the team must believe that the team has urgent and worthwhile purposes. The greater the urgency and purpose, the more likely that a *real team* will emerge.

2. Select members by skills, not by personalities

Effective teams need complementary skills. The three broad types of skills are: *technical, problem-solving, and interpersonal*.

What's critical for the potential team is to achieve the *right balance* in skills. But it's not necessary for members to have all the technical skills immediately. Instead, the key is to have the needed skills at the team's start-up and the ability for members to acquire additional skills later on. Key skills that should be learned at the start-up include interpersonal, problem-solving, and team skills.

3. Give sufficient time to initial meetings

This is a vital time in a team's development. The first few meetings involve members getting to know one another. Assumptions are either confirmed or destroyed. Members watch the leader to determine if his or her actions are consistent with what is said. Is the leader control-oriented or flexible? Is the leader sensitive to how members react to his or her style? Can the leader change behaviour?

4. Establish rules of behaviour

A real team has a set of rules to guide it – a code of conduct. Without rules, it's impossible for a group or potential team to transcend to a real team. At the early stage, rules include: attendance, confidentiality, open discussion, constructive disagreement, and fair workload. These rules encourage participation, openness, commitment, and trust.

5. Set some short-term goals

Doing this helps create some momentum to propel the team forward. It ensures that the goals are reasonable and can be reached fairly and quickly. And it acts as a great motivator.

6. Shake them up with new information

This is especially important for intact teams because they tend to block out new information. An example is a management team that's given new information on employee attitudes and perceptions from a survey. The team reacts in surprise. Giving a team new information serves as a catalyst to the members to help them refocus on the team's performance. It's also dangerous for members to assume that they hold all the necessary information collectively.

7. Interact at work and outside

A team must not just spend a lot of time together at work but also time together outside of work. This is especially important during its early stage of development. Members need to have fun, both at work and outside. This promotes a bonding element. Potential teams are weakest here and must make conscious efforts to include socializing.

8. Recognize team performance

Achieving a high level of performance is a team's ultimate reward. But before that's reached, it's vital to recognize the team for its progress and achievements. Doing this keeps the team's members focused and motivated.

What Kind of Team Player Are You?

Part Four of Six

by Jim Taggart

An effective team needs diversity in its membership, a combination of work and personality styles. The following four team player styles are not intended to be absolutes but rather preferences that people have towards how they work with others. Each style has a brief description of its strengths and weaknesses (adapted from Glenn Parker, *Team Players and Teamwork*).

1. The Doer is very task-oriented and action-focused. Give him a job and he's happy. The *Doer* is good at research, reliable, meets deadlines, and produces good quality work. He operates by priorities and pushes the team towards higher performance. He can be effective at teaching technical skills.

The *Doer* dislikes uncertainty and ambiguity; is impatient; wants results immediately; can be too focused on data; is impulsive; strives for perfection; and tends to avoid risk. If the *Doer* is the leader, he must be especially careful of these weaknesses. One major problem can be a lack of trust in the team's members. Moreover, he must be aware of others' feelings and work at interpersonal and communication skills.

2. The Visionary sees the big picture and likes ideas and concepts. She lets the team's vision and mission be the driver. She doesn't like getting bogged down in details, leaving these to the *Doer*. She believes strongly in teamwork and is good at helping others understand where they fit in to the larger picture.

The *Visionary* is a creative thinker and stimulates others in thinking about the future. She takes a cooperative and flexible approach to working with others. However, she must pay attention to her weaknesses. She has a tendency to ignore work in favour of conceptualizing and dreaming about the future. She can get hung up on process instead of results. And she may over-commit the team to setting too many objectives

If she is the leader, the *Visionary* has a lot to offer the team, especially in the area of long-term strategic thinking. But she must be aware of her weaknesses.

3. The Feeler is a very strong context person, making sure that everyone is on board before proceeding with a task or project. He's very aware of how others feel and is an excellent listener and facilitator. He's skilled at resolving conflicts and won't let stronger members dominate team discussions.

The *Feeler* must be careful not to push the soft stuff too hard (i.e., listening and feedback skills) if the team gets bogged down. He believes that interpersonal skills will solve all problems. And he can become a process fanatic, driving the others to distraction.

If he is the leader, the *Feeler* creates a participative atmosphere. But his people approach can be overbearing and he must not lose sight that disputes are normal and healthy for teams.

4. The Boat Rocker is open and direct with the other members of the team. She regularly challenges the team on such issues as methods used, goals, and team values. She won't hesitate to disagree with the team's leader or with management. She likes to take calculated risks. However, the *Boat Rocker* must be careful not to use her style for non-productive use. It's necessary at times to let an issue drop. Moreover, she shouldn't push the team to take unnecessary risks.

As the team's leader, she's good at promoting an atmosphere of trust and openness; innovation; and continuous learning. However, she needs to watch out for being too argumentative.

The Challenge

Each of us has a personality preference to how we approach work, establish relationships with co-workers, and engage in collaborative learning. In the context of team players, the challenge is for each of us to understand our preferred style and to use it effectively. This means being constantly aware of the shadow (weak) aspects of our preferred style. Moreover, we must strive for balance by using all four styles in the appropriate settings.

The Four Stages of Team Development

Part Five of Six

by Jim Taggart

This article looks at the four stages of team development (B.W. Tuckman, 1965) and incorporates the four team player styles that were presented in the fourth part of this series on teams.

1. Forming

This occurs when people are first brought together to form a team. They begin to get to know one another and set out to establish the appropriate rules and behaviors that will govern the team. The members look to the team leader for direction. Interactions among the members are somewhat formal and polite during this phase.

During forming, the *Doer* wants to know where he fits in and his specific role. He can be helpful by being a catalyst to action and getting the team to move ahead. The *Visionary* helps by encouraging the members to share their visions and to set goals. The *Feeler* wants to be accepted by the others and to help people to get to know one another. Moreover, she wants the team to understand its diversity. The *Boat Rocker* wants openness and the team to have a clear purpose and direction.

2. Storming

The members are getting comfortable with one another. They start disagreeing and challenging each other. If this stage is missed, the team won't be as strong because it hasn't yet learned how to deal with conflict.

The *Doer* is getting impatient because he wants results. He can help the team by urging it to move ahead. The *Visionary* worries that the team is getting distracted from its goals. She can assist by promoting the common good and being open to ideas. The *Feeler* functions best during this stage. He wants to help his teammates be productive by using effective listening skills. And the *Boat Rocker* thrives here because it involves high energy. She can help by showing the proper way to challenge people and when to put an issue to rest.

3. Norming

The members know each other and have developed rules of conduct. They want the team to be successful. Trust is being established, and the members are having fun.

The *Doer* in this stage is excited because the team is getting down to real work. He plays a key role here. He can help the leader set standards (e.g., quality) and promote accountability and the effective use of resources. The *Visionary* wants to be reassured that the team is moving towards its goal. She may be concerned with camaraderie. The *Feeler* is happy that the team has reached this stage, but wonders if all the baggage has been discarded. He encourages the team to do some reflection. And the *Boat Rocker* becomes concerned that members are getting complacent and not challenging one another.

4. Performing

In this final stage, the team has a clear, common purpose and direction. The members appreciate their diversity and are building on it. Synergy is taking hold.

The *Doer* is worried about the team not being aware of external changes. He can be a catalyst to setting new standards. The *Visionary* becomes bored and wants the team to seek out new challenges. She can help by encouraging the generation of new ideas. The *Feeler* is happy with the team's progress and wants to celebrate. But he's concerned with the potential for regression. He can help by encouraging the team to celebrate and to air problems. The *Boat Rocker* thinks that the members are not challenging each other enough. She can help the leader by raising external changes that may affect the team.

What's important to remember is that a team will typically move back and forth between certain stages as it develops. This is normal and should be expected.

Turning People On to Teamwork

Part Six of Six

by Jim Taggart

This is the last article in the series on teams. The first five articles explored what it means to be a team, the five levels of teamwork, how to build performance, the four major team player types, and the four stages of team development.

It's important that leaders set the proper context – the atmosphere – for teamwork. Remember, team work is not an end to itself. It is built around the need to accomplish something. A common purpose, mutual accountability, interdependence, and trust serve as the foundation to building a strong team.

In building a strong team, it's vital that in the early stage that people learn about themselves. They need to understand their own strengths and weaknesses and what they need to do to respond to the latter. They must develop their own personal visions of what they want to achieve in their lives and how they're going to realize this. And a key component of this is people taking responsibility for their personal growth and development. This is achieved best by adopting a lifelong learning philosophy, one in which the team member strives to continually improve himself or herself.

Following this approach will enable a team's members to transcend to *team learning*. In essence, this is not just about sharing information. More importantly, it's about the existing boundaries among team members. Interpersonal learning takes place when the members must depend on one another for their own rewards. Of course, this raises such issues as resolving conflict effectively, solving problems collaboratively, and running productive meetings.

Turning people on to teamwork means creating those conditions that allow people to meet their personal needs by performing the work itself. Instead of motivation, what drives people forward is *commitment*, in which their energy is directed towards a goal. To build commitment is less a matter of changing the person as it is creating the right conditions.

The team leader requires special skills if he or she is to be successful in fostering team learning and in setting boundaries for the team. These essential skills include: leading the team towards creating a common vision and team goals, communicating clearly and concisely, running productive meetings, and solving problems quickly, as well as anticipating them.

A great deal has been written on leadership, to the point where it is used loosely without a clear understanding. The distinction between a leader and a manager can be explained this way: One is *given* management responsibilities – power and control over people and things. Leadership, on the other hand, must be *earned*.

In a team setting, this requirement to *earn* the privilege of being the team leader cannot be overstated. The leader's purpose is to *inspire* and *mobilize* the team to higher levels of performance. The leader achieves this by *enabling* the team's members. And this can only be done if the leader gives up *control*. This is one of the most difficult challenges many managers will experience in their careers. Yet it is essential if the members of a team are to assume greater responsibility and ownership for their work.

Abraham Maslow made this poignant comment on control and authority and one that should be heeded: *When the only tool I have is a hammer, I tend to treat everyone like a nail.*

Don't forget that an effective team isn't just concerned with getting work done but also with HOW it gets done. *Process* (how decisions are made) is critical. Strong teams with solid leaders don't compromise or vote. They operate by consensus, guided by their common vision and purpose.

Rethinking Teams: Getting Over the Guilt Complex

by Jim Taggart

Teams, teams, teams!

This has become the refrain since the early nineties when the literature on teams and teamwork exploded. Everyone needed to be part of a team, however small the organization. To most people working in organizations, private and public, the reflex is to refer to one's "team" when discussing co-workers and work issues. What has happened over time is that the use of the word team has greatly diluted what teams and teamwork are really about. Along the way, the cult of teamwork has created scepticism and mistrust—and even guilt—among employees.

Before one concludes that I am anti-teamwork, I should point out that in addition to spending many years being part of a variety of teams I also designed and delivered dozens of teambuilding workshops. The purpose of this concluding section, therefore, is to rock the teamwork boat a little and challenge the conventional wisdom that has emerged during the past two decades. My ultimate aim is to widen the perspective on what constitutes teamwork, that it's okay to enjoy working independently, and that "teamwork" in reality encompasses a broad range of ways in which people come together to accomplish specific objectives.

My own experiences in being a part of teams and various assortments of work groups extends back 32 years when I first entered the labour market in the late 1970s. When teams became the method of choice for how work should be organized in the early nineties, it was nothing particularly new to me since that was how I had been working for several years in a service branch.

However, I recall quite clearly the stress that some of my co-workers in other parts of my office underwent. Ostensibly they were all for teams, the message they wished to be heard saying publicly. But one-on-one, their true feelings were candidly expressed. These were people who preferred working independently, and whose jobs really did not demand the rigours of a team setting. And I confess, too, that as much as I enjoy working with others, especially initiating projects and bringing people together, I also like working on my own when the right circumstances prevail.

So what am I talking about—working independently in the face of the omnipresent need for teamwork? It's essential that one understand what teamwork entails before defaulting to the mantra of teams, teams, teams! As much as a long list of writers has enunciated the characteristics and traits of what constitutes teamwork, at its core are two necessary conditions:

- 1. Shared common purpose for the team**
- 2. Interdependency of work among the members**

Unless both these conditions are present, one cannot have a team. Yes, there are a number of important features of teamwork, including:

- Size of the team,
- Effective communication,
- Performance goals,
- Respect for one another,
- Mutual accountability,
- Socializing and having fun.

As organizations continue to evolve as a consequence of socio-economic changes, technology, demographics, markets, etc., so too must their internal structures change. Work still needs to get done, regardless of external and internal changes, and sometimes this is by using formal (intact) teams or some other forms of bringing people together.

Most of us have probably been part of working groups at some point in our careers. I've spent a significant amount of time working in this manner. They can be very effective at addressing specific problems and issues with prescribed time durations. But it's important to remember that working groups exist to share information, delegate tasks and make decisions. The members of the working group take responsibility for their own results. The focus, therefore, is on *individual* performance. Consequently, the output of the working group is the sum of the individual members' contributions. The so-called synergistic effect of teamwork doesn't take hold in this setting.

When it is necessary to form a team because the conditions call for this type of work arrangement, the challenge to create effective teamwork can be quite daunting. It's important, therefore, to understand that teams typically go through four main stages:

1. Forming

This occurs when people are first brought together to form a team. They begin to get to know one another and set out to establish the appropriate rules and behaviors that will govern the team. The members look to the team leader for direction. Interactions among the members are somewhat formal and polite during this phase.

2. Storming

The members are getting comfortable with one another. They start disagreeing and challenging each other. If this stage is missed, the team won't be as strong because it hasn't yet learned how to deal with conflict.

3. Norming

The members know each other and have developed rules of conduct. They want the team to be successful. Trust is being established, and the members are having fun.

4. Performing

In this final stage, the team has a clear, common purpose and direction. The members appreciate their diversity and are building on it. Synergy is taking hold.

The lengths to which a team remains at a certain stage vary, depending on the ability of the members to address and resolve issues and to move forward. But the members must work on developing a clear purpose, goals and common approach. They must also agree on mutual accountability.

Given the amount of time, effort and nurturing that the creation of a truly effective team requires, it's not surprising when one hears cynical comments about teams. Publicly in organizations employees will say what management wants to hear. But with co-workers in private, another conversation is being held.

One expert on teams who rocks the boat is J. Richard Hackman, who has been consulted by numerous organizations over the years on work design, leadership development, and team and group performance. His research runs counter to the popular press, finding that work teams are found clustered at both ends of the organizational effectiveness continuum. While some teams succeed well, others flounder. Underlying this is how management approaches work group design. Here are some key points to retain for consideration when thinking about forming teams.

First, management should not push teamwork when certain tasks can be done more effectively by individuals. One good example is preparing reports, which Hackman suggests is better done by one person on behalf of the group. My experience in report writing is aligned with this view. Trying to employ a team to write a report is both inefficient and frustrating, with the result being an inferior product. A second example, but in the area of executive leadership, is the creation of mission and vision statements. While a democratic approach may appear appropriate, creating a vision statement with a team of managers can be hugely time consuming. I've been there, done that, and finally learned that having the CEO, president or the principal leader of the organization write a draft of a vision is much preferred.

Second, when a group of employees needs to be brought together to address an organizational issue, it's important to define it for what it is (e.g., working group, planning committee) and manage it accordingly. If teamwork is required (remember the two features of interdependency and shared purpose), then management needs to ensure that the necessary resources are available to help the team develop.

Third, when teamwork is determined as the appropriate route the level of authority for the team must be decided. And tied tightly to this are participative management and clearly defined objectives and timeframes. During my career, I've seen teams flounder or go off the rails because management did not clearly express its expectations at the outset. In the face of uncertainty and weak managerial oversight teams run the risk of going renegade, producing unnecessary grief for everyone.

Fourth, depending on the maturity of the team and its members (i.e., past experience) the structure supporting it will need varying attention. For example, what should be the size of the team? What are the training needs? Are special physical resources required, as well as budgets? How is leadership within the team to be shared? And how should team learning and knowledge generation be managed?

Fifth, few writers on teamwork address the interdependency among teams. This is a critical aspect of using teams within organizations, but one that is often overlooked. And the issue gains even more significance when self-directed teams are used. Some of my past work in delivering teambuilding workshops included self-directed teams. Without adequate managerial oversight, the danger exists of teams forming their own exclusive walls around themselves, driven by such motives as unique identity and controlling information. When this occurs teamwork at the organizational level begins to break down. Product and service may suffer as the guiding light of organizational mission and vision becomes dimmer in the eyes of employees.

The relationship between managerial leadership and the leadership practiced by individuals and within teams, as well as with other assortments of employee groupings, is constantly in flux and being challenged. In effect, there's a necessary tension between the two. This keeps organizations in the state of constantly learning and evolving. In the absence of this creativity and innovation will suffer, with the consequence being the onset of organizational sclerosis. In a globalized economy characterized by market turbulence and rapidly changing technology, compounded by the entrance of emerging economies, organizations have increasingly narrow windows within which to make corrections.

As organizations in the public and private sectors adapt to the pressures and dynamics of globalization and technological change, one key aspect will be how they approach work design. When teams are determined to be the most effective way to accomplish certain objectives, they will increasingly be virtual in nature. The use of telework, while being applied currently with varied success in the workforce, will add new challenges for managers. And of particular significance is the growing use of contingent workers who have no specific affinity for organizations: they move in and out based on organizational needs.

Finally, a rapidly emerging issue that's beginning to shake organizations is Generation Y (also referred to as Millennials). Gen Y is especially technologically savvy and possesses a high level of self-confidence. Their approach to work is more fluid, much less hierarchical and virtual-oriented through the use of technology. A major challenge for those in senior managerial positions will be how to organize work efficiently. Teamwork will undoubtedly continue to be an integral part of how organizations function, but the conventional mental model of what constitutes teamwork will increasingly be challenged.

My suggestion to those who are feeling stressed or threatened as a result of the turbulence we're witnessing in organizations is to follow these simple words: "Be open to outcome, not attached to it." Maintaining an open mind will enable people to see the opportunities that are resident in change and to adapt much faster and more easily.

Good luck!

Some questions for team reflection

- 1) What can we do to bring *joy* back into the workplace, where laughter and smiles prevail?
- 2) What can we do to ingrain a deep sense of *commitment* to one another, not only in the sense of accomplishing our work but also in our learning and the fulfillment of our personal growth and development?
- 3) Connected to #2 is how do we begin to show a *mutual caring* for one another, especially in times of stress and crisis (a hallmark of high performing teams)?
- 4) How do we re-establish *what is important* in our work, with respect to value-added to citizens, and get off the treadmill of “doing” and move into the realm of “being?” And from there, how does this contribute to our achieving mastery in work-personal life balance?
- 5) From the above, how can we begin to translate this into team and organizational learning, and subsequently into the creation of new knowledge that is then diffused throughout our organizations?

Will that be Leadership or Management?

Integrating the Right Hand with the Left Hand

by Jim Taggart

Introduction

During the 1990s, the topic of leadership took on new meaning and interest in organizations. As with many business fads (e.g. total quality management, business process reengineering, and knowledge management), the numbers of articles and books on leadership exploded to serve the insatiable appetites of business people, HR practitioners, and the public in general. Interest in the field of management diminished, while people explored such topics as spiritual leadership; the learning organization concept and its implications for shared leadership; women as leaders; lessons from such notable individuals as Gandhi, Thatcher and Churchill; and Native teachings.

While the plethora of new books and articles on leadership has contributed in an important way to raising the level of awareness and understanding on the subject, it has also created confusion, and perhaps more importantly, relegated management as a discipline to the back burner. It is only in the past decade where some prominent thinkers and writers have begun to stress the importance of management practices in organizations and the need to integrate this discipline with that of leadership development. While the two are distinct, they are nevertheless interrelated.

In a period of what Charles Handy calls “discontinuous change” (that change is not smooth but rather comes in unpredictable bursts), the interlinking of management and leadership development is extremely important. No longer can organizations afford to address the two fields as separate silos. Instead, a systems approach is required to ensure that an organization’s managers develop good management practices and solid leadership abilities. Combined, the two fields will ensure that those in management positions are able to deal with discontinuous change, and that their staff possess the necessary competencies to learn continuously, explore opportunities, innovate, and serve clients to the highest degree possible.

The Question

Before an organization jumps into developing a management/leadership development model, it is essential that the question be asked: *who* is a leader in the organization? Is leadership specific to management positions? If so, then leadership is positional in the organizational hierarchy. Or is leadership seen by senior management as being more inclusive, in which employees throughout the organization are encouraged to develop their leadership abilities?

This is a key question to pose because it creates a common vocabulary and set of expectations in an organization. From this will emerge a culture that is defined on how leadership is *perceived* and *practiced*.

The issue of leadership versus management development becomes a moot point if leadership in an organization is defined as being the domain of management. As we will see below, approaching the two fields as separate entities only further deepens the rift between them, contributing to misunderstandings throughout an organization, the ineffective use of training funds, and limited progress in creating effective managerial leaders.

If an organization chooses the path of participative leadership, as it recreates its corporate culture, the challenge will be how to create a model that reflects both management and leadership development. For employees in management positions, there is a rapidly growing need to have an approach (or program) that embraces *both* management and leadership competencies. For aspiring managers, these employees need to be factored into the process. The urgency for this is rising as the existing management cadre begins to retire in large numbers over the next few years. Those seeking to move into management are the succession pool, and hence require sustained attention in terms of their developmental needs.

For employees who do not aspire to be managers, or who will not progress to this level, the added challenge is how to encourage their leadership development, in the context of their participating more in decision-making and in taking more initiative. This assumes that senior management wishes to support the creation of a 'leaderful' organization because of the benefits this would bring.

The next section looks at what a number of leading thinkers are saying on management and leadership.

Insights on Management versus Leadership

John Kotter (2000) sees leadership and management as "...two distinctive and complementary systems of action." While each field has its own unique characteristics and functions, *both* are essential for managers if they are to operate successfully in complex organizations that are subject to discontinuous change. To focus on leadership development may produce strong leaders, but the consequence will be weak management. And the converse is true. How to combine strong leadership and strong management, so that there is balance, is the real challenge. As Kotter notes: "...Smart companies...rightly ignore the literature that says people cannot manage and lead."

Similarly, Drucker (1998) sees the interrelationship between the two. He does not believe that management and leadership can be separated. He states it is "...nonsense—as much nonsense as separating management from entrepreneurship. Those are part and parcel of the same job. They are different to be sure, but only as different as the right hand from the left or the nose from the mouth. They belong to the same body."

Chris Hodgkinson (1983) presents a similar view on 'administration' (his term for management) and leadership. "Administration *is* leadership. Leadership *is* administration." He states that the word leadership is used loosely and not well understood. It is "...as if it were a sort of increment to the administrative-management process which might or might not be present." He believes that leadership extends throughout an organization. Leadership and management go together. The individual cannot avoid one without avoiding the other. He sees leadership, therefore, as "...the effecting of policy, values, philosophy through collective organizational action."

The confusion that arises with the generally accepted definition of management (planning, directing, controlling, and coordinating) is addressed by Bolman and Deal (1997): “How does one reconcile the actual work of managers with the heroic imagery?” They note: “Control is an illusion and rationality an afterthought.” People will only follow provided they believe their leader is legitimate. Their voluntary “obedience” evaporates, along with the leader’s authority, when the leader loses legitimacy. Bolman and Deal support what Drucker says about the link between management and leadership when they observe that it is difficult to think of a highly effective manager as someone who is not an effective leader. But they follow this up with a comment that leadership should not be seen as being attached to senior positions.

This leads Sally Helgesen (1996) to make an important point on equating leadership to position. She states: “...our continued habit of linking leadership with position signals our inability to grasp how organizations are changing...in the future, our ideas about the nature of leadership will undergo a radical transformation.” What this new leadership will look like and what qualities it will embody are important issues. However, she also emphasizes that organizations that address how power is distributed will have moved forward in creating leadership at all levels. (In her book *The Female Advantage*, inspired by the early work of Henry Mintzberg, Helgesen interviewed senior female leaders of organizations.)

This brings us to the perspectives of McGill University management professor Henry Mintzberg, regarded as one of the leading management thinkers, and who has also conducted deep empirical research into what managers really do. In an interview with CBC’s *Ideas* in 1999, Mintzberg explained that managers “...sit between their organizations and the outside world...they manage information in order to encourage people to take action.”

He refers to the ‘myths’ of managers planning, organizing, coordinating, and controlling, noting that when one observes managers at work, it’s difficult to determine if they are actually engaging in these activities. Managers get interrupted continually, and spend a lot more time talking to people than reading. They develop and maintain large people networks.

In discussing the role of management in organizations, Mintzberg observes that those managers who place more emphasis on building lateral relationships, compared to vertical relationships, are operating in a contemporary mode. The rise in importance of knowledge workers (the highly educated and skilled professional employee) means that managers can no longer treat their staff in ways that were once acceptable. Mintzberg’s introduction of the expression *lateral managerial relationships* introduces a new meaning to management, and especially its connection to leadership and the learning organization concept.

This redefinition of management, in terms of the people factor, leads Mintzberg to state that the ‘professionalization’ of management has undermined this discipline. By this, he means the formal training in business schools which allegedly produce ‘managers.’ He continues by noting that while management is critical for ensuring that organizations do what they are supposed to do, it is also important that we understand that our organizations exist for people, not the converse.

Where does leadership fit in his perspectives on organizations? The lists of attributes and characteristics of leaders, as described in countless books and articles, leads Mintzberg to state: “...Superman’s abilities are modest in comparison. We list everything imaginable.” For Mintzberg, good leaders are candid, open, honest, and share information with people. The issue of truth is fundamental to Mintzberg’s stand

on leadership. “People have agendas,” he notes, and consequently they hoard information and do not disclose their true feelings. The work of senior leaders becomes more difficult because they are often unable (or do not wish) to find out what is really going on in their organizations.

What this means for organizations is this: when one enters an organization that is functioning well, one is able to sense it. Some authors call this *the smell of the place*. It becomes very apparent in this type of organizational climate that there is abundant energy present, and that this energy is focused. People enjoy going to work everyday because they understand where they fit into the organization’s vision and what their roles and responsibilities are. They are committed.

This is the challenge, therefore, of weaving together the roles of management and leadership so that they form a coherent whole, with respect to how the works get done in organizations. But what can we say about the key distinctions and complementarities between management and leadership? The next section summarizes the commonly agreed upon functions of management and leadership.

Management & Leadership as Functions

Kotter, as echoed by others since his early writings, states that management is about *dealing with complexity* in organizations and the surrounding environment. In the absence of good management practices, organizations fall into chaos, which in turn threatens their survival. Thus, one can say that management brings order to organizations and consistency to their products and services. Leadership, in contrast, involves *coping with change*. In a world experiencing discontinuous change, this key feature of leadership is becoming increasingly valuable to organizations.

These two features, coping with complexity and change, shape the functions of management and leadership. Kotter explains there are three primary tasks within organizations:

- 1) determining what work needs to be done,
- 2) forming the networks of people to do the work,
- 3) ensuring that the work gets done properly.

Management and leadership, while both addressing these tasks, approach them from different perspectives.

Planning

Planning, budgeting, and resource allocation are activities initiated through the *management* function in an effort to address the issue of complexity. As a management process, planning is about producing ‘orderly’ results, not about change. *Leadership*, on the other hand, involves *creating a vision* to chart a course for the organization. As part of this process, strategies are developed to initiate and sustain the needed changes to stay focused on the vision. *How* this is done is critical to the success an organization will have in not necessarily achieving its vision but rather working progressively towards it (a vision serves as a beacon, pulling forth the organization).

This is where Peter Senge has contributed constructively to the ongoing discussion on corporate vision. Leadership, to Senge, is "...a collective, creative process." The heads of organizations do not change cultures—people do. Those leaders who are most vital at the start of a change process are the local line managers. "Real leadership occurs through a collaborative shared vision by groups of people who share aspirations." He explains that rather than pushing against resistance from within the organization as a result of a change effort, the effective managerial leader identifies the source of the resistance. The manager then focuses on addressing the behaviors and power relationships within which the values are contained.

As Kotter, Senge, and others have noted, leadership includes the ability to distill trends from patterns and what may seem as chaos. The ability to synthesize is critically important for effective leadership.

Organizing

To reach its goals, management *organizes* and *staffs*. This involves creating an organizational structure, including a set of jobs, that will enable the organization to achieve these goals. Through this process of organizing and staffing, management develops delegation authorities and monitoring systems. It also creates communication plans to ensure that employees understand what is taking place.

But the management function needs the opposing hand of leadership to assist it. The equivalent activity, as Kotter explains, is that of *aligning people*. A vitally important activity here is *communication*. One key aspect of this is ensuring that those who understand the vision, are able to build relationships and coalitions, and are committed to change receive this communication.

Senge, as well as others, contend that leadership is about more than just one-way communication of a corporate vision. True leadership is about 'enrolling' people in the creation of a shared vision, one that will withstand discontinuous change. The failure of senior leaders to enroll employees in a shared vision will produce 'compliance' to it.

Controlling

Management must also ensure that the plan is achieved, and it does this through *controlling and problem-solving*. Monitoring plays a key role here. In contrast, leadership requires that people are *motivated and inspired* to work towards a vision, despite setbacks and unforeseen problems. Senge adds further clarity to what Kotter describes. In addition to the need for senior leaders to create an inclusive vision, a key aspect of leadership is to *unleash the energy* of people in an organization and to *focus* it towards a shared vision.

The following quotation from Dee Hock (former head of VISA) helps synthesize the issues concerning the separate yet integrated roles of management and leadership:

The essential thing to remember, however, is not that we became a world of expert managers, but that the nature of our expertise became the creation and control of constants,

uniformity and efficiency, while the need has become the understanding and coordination of variability, complexity and effectiveness.

What does this mean for Management/Leadership Development?

The preceding comparative analysis shows that while management and leadership do indeed possess some distinct differences, there is also a complementarity that is emerging. Mintzberg's comments on knowledge work and the expectations of people is changing not just the leadership that is required but also the management component. Work still needs to be planned, organized, directed, coordinated, monitored, etc. But the context is rapidly changing, both from an externally driven, discontinuous change perspective, and from within – the values people possess and what motivates and inspires them.

How organizations approach management and leadership development is critical to their eventual success, let alone their long-term survival. And as noted at the outset, one of the first questions that must be asked is *How do we define leadership in our organization?*

Leadership & Learning Blogs–Websites

Bret L. Simmons: Positive Organizational Behavior

<http://www.bretsimmons.com/>

Bret's regular blog posts cover a wide range of topics on leadership issues. Ranked as one of the top leadership blogs in the U.S.

Business Exchange: Management Ideas

<http://bx.businessweek.com/management-ideas/reference/>

A terrific source for information on business and management-related issues.

Capture Your Flag: Interviewing Tomorrow's Leaders...Today

<http://www.captureyourflag.com/>

An eclectic array of interviews with leaders from around the world.

Center for Creative Leadership

<http://www.ccl.org/leadership/index.aspx>

Look under the Research & Faculty tab for free papers and reports.

Changing Winds

<http://changingwinds.wordpress.com/>

Author's website-blog: Broad selection of articles on leadership, teams, learning.

Great Leadership

<http://www.greatleadershipbydan.com/>

Dan McCarthy both writes on and hosts Leadership Blog Carnival

HR World: The Top 100 Management and Leadership Blogs

<http://www.hrworld.com/features/top-100-management-blogs-061008/index.php>

Organized around diverse themes relating to organizational issues.

Infed.org: Leadership Models

<http://www.infed.org/leadership/>

Includes a variety of excellent essays on shared leadership and learning.

Integral Coaching Canada

<http://www.integralcoachingcanada.com/home.php>

Contains excellent articles on coaching (look under the Resources tab).

International Leadership Association

<http://www.ila-net.org/>

If you're looking to join an excellent network with supportive people, this is it.
Managing Leadership: The Strategic Role of the Senior Executive
<http://managingleadership.com/>

Excellent blog posts on corporate leadership issues, including book reviews.

Paracomm Partners International: Coaching
<http://www.paracomm.com/index.html>
Provides excellent articles on coaching.

Society for Organizational Learning
<http://www.solonline.org/>
Founded by Peter Senge. Look under the Publications tab, then click the Library link for free articles.

The Cranky Middle Manager
<http://www.crankymiddlemanager.com/home>
Wayne Turmel shares his insights on middle management (includes podcasts)



Leadership & Management Books

Note: The highlighted books in red are especially recommended because they serve as foundational books. Mintzberg's book (highlighted in orange) is a very important contribution to understanding the relationship between management and leadership. Senge's book (in blue) has been called one of the most important leadership books of the 20th Century because of its insights on personal, team and organization learning.

Anderson, Ray C. (2009). *Confessions of a Radical Industrialist: Profits, People, Purpose-Doing Business by Respecting the Earth*. Toronto: McClelland & Stewart.

Bolman, Lee and Deal, Terrence. (1997). *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice and Leadership*. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco.

Block, Peter. (1993). *Stewardship: Choosing Service Over Self-Interest*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Bradford, David L. and Cohen, Allan R. (1998). *Power Up: Transforming Organizations Through Shared Leadership*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Burns, James MacGregor. (1978). *Leadership*. New York: Harper Row.

Covey, Stephen R. (1990). *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Drucker, Peter. (2007). *The Essential Drucker*. Butterworth-Heineman.

Gardner, John. (1990). *On Leadership*. New York: The Free Press.

Helgesen, Sally. (1990). *The Female Advantage: Women's Ways of Leadership*. New York: Doubleday.

Kouzes, James M. and Posner, Barry Z. (2007). *The Leadership Challenge, 4th Ed.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Katzenbach, Jon R. and Smith, Douglas K. (2001). *The Discipline of Teams*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Mintzberg, Henry. (2009). *Managing*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Inc.

Parker-Follett, Mary. (1995). *Prophet of Management: A Celebration of Writings from the 1920s*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.

Senge, Peter. (1990). *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*. New York: Doubleday/Currency.

Wheatley, Margaret J. (1992). *Leadership and the New Science*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.



Videos

LEADERSHIP & LEARNING:

Ray Anderson: Interview on Sustainability and Leadership

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EsyFUKd7SQ&feature=fvst>

Lee Bolman: *"Reframing Organizations"*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tQDJfYPG5Ho>

Stephen Covey: "On Choosing Success"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U8LM4C1I70U>

"Five Emotional Cancers"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4uuZYAdbes>

John Kotter: *"The Importance of Urgency"*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD8xKv2ur_s

James Kouzes and Barry Posner: *"Truth About Leadership"*

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yiAtoO61C_w

Henry Mintzberg: An interview on his book *Managing*

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVBPhCJh-dw>

Peter Block on "The Structure of Belonging"

Part 1: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwahGcEiAr0>

Part 2: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTpSLKr7xao>

Part 3: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z7rGEgZpQil>

Peter Drucker "An Interview"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DbM7gU6Y5LA>

Peter Senge and Jon Kabat on "The Business of Changing the World"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=27jEzce0g2Q>

Margaret Wheatley, Excerpt from "Eight Fearless Questions"

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PvJeqA9SnpU>

SOCIAL MEDIA:

Chris Brogan “The Serendipity Engine”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XIRD5oosqIU>

Gary Vaynerchuk “Building Personal Brand (and Passion) within Social Media”

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EhqZ0RU95d4>

Jonathan Fields “Conversations at the Crossroads of Work, Play, Entrepreneurship & Life”

<http://www.jonathanfields.com/blog/>

Mitch Joel (Canada’s leading social media thinker)

<http://www.twistimage.com/about-mitch/>

Zen and the Art of Life Management (interview with three well-known bloggers)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JD-BdoKqFfk>

Seth Godin (shares his insights on organizations)

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO-3_pYEQXU&feature=feedrec_grec_index



Social Media and Networking Books

The following books are from well respected writers and thinkers on social media and its impacts on the workplace and society.

Enchantment (Guy Kawasaki)

<http://www.kirkusreviews.com/book-reviews/non-fiction/guy-kawasaki/enchantment-kawasaki/>

Linchpin (Seth Godin)

<http://www.amazon.ca/Linchpin-Seth-Godin/dp/1591843162>

Crush It (Gary Vaynerchuk)

<http://crushitbook.com/>

Multipliers (Liz Wiseman)

<http://www.harpercollins.com/books/Multipliers/?isbn=9780061999482>

The Thank You Economy (Gary Vaynerchuk)

<http://garyvaynerchuk.com/post/226157962>

The New Community Rules (Tamar Weinberg)

<http://www.newcommunityrules.com/>

Six Pixels of Separation (Mitch Joel)

<http://www.twistimage.com/book/>

Trust Agents (Chris Brogan)

<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/where-to-buy-trust-agents/>



Social Media and Networking Blogs

This is a small sampling of the many excellent blogs that present and discuss new ideas and challenge conventional thinking.

Chris Brogan

<http://www.chrisbrogan.com/>

Entrepreneur and respected author and speaker on social media marketing

Seth Godin

<http://www.sethgodin.com/sg/>

Marketing guru, provocative thinker

Gary Vaynerchuk

<http://garyvaynerchuk.com/>

Hold on to your seat when you enter Gary's space!

P.S.

<http://shankman.com/blog/>

Peter Shankman shakes up conventional thinking with his out-of-the box-thinking

How to Change the World

<http://blog.guykawasaki.com/#axzz1G8JpljWb>

Well known blogger and entrepreneur Guy Kawasaki covers a wide range of topics

Jonathan Fields

<http://www.jonathanfields.com/blog/>

Looks at work, entrepreneurship and life issues

Zen Habits

<http://zenhabits.net/>

Leo Babauta shares his life experiences on how to lead a simpler life



About the Author



Jim Taggart is a leadership and organizational learning consultant, offering services to business executives and managers who wish to enhance their effectiveness as leaders.

Jim worked for three decades with the Government of Canada. His career spanned labor market forecasting and analysis, innovation and competitiveness policy development, and leadership development and organizational learning project management.

A recognized thought leader, Jim maintains a website and blog on leadership and management issues. He holds a Master's degree in economics from the University of New Brunswick and a Masters degree in Leadership and Organizational Learning from Royal Roads University.

Visit his leadership website: <http://changingwinds.wordpress.com/>

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