

SUMMARY OF FOUR ORGANISATIONAL CULTURES

From 'Understanding Organisations' by Charles B. Handy

THE POWER, CLUB OR SPIDER CULTURE

Best seen as a spider's web with the boss of the organisation in the centre surrounded by ever widening circles of others involved in the organisation.

The closer to the centre, the more influence you have.

The organisational idea is that the club exists to extend the persona of the boss. If he or she could do everything they would.

At best such cultures are based on trust, and communication is by a sense of telepathy.

The Boss maintains freedom of manoeuvre (and power) by writing little down, preferring to talk to people, sense their reactions and infect them with his or her enthusiasms and passions.

Rich in personality, such organisations abound with almost mythical stories and folklore of things that happened in the past.

They can be exciting and satisfying places to work if you are part of the club, and share the views and beliefs of the Boss.

Their great strength lies in the ability to respond rapidly and intuitively to crises or opportunities because the lines of communication are short and decision making is centralised.

When an organisation is small (less than twenty) such cultures can thrive, given that personality and speed of response are crucial to success.

The danger lies in the dominance of the character of the boss. If the spider is weak, corrupt, inept or chooses the wrong people to join the club, then the organisation is weak, corrupt, inept and badly staffed.

It is not surprising that such cultures have a sense of nepotism, since the success of the club is dependent on recruiting people who share the same values as the Leader.

ROLE CULTURE

The picture of this organisation is of a pyramid of boxes, with a job title in each box. Boxes continue, and the structure stands, even if the individual in the box departs.

The organisational idea is that the organisation is a set of roles (job boxes) joined in a logical orderly way to allow the work of the organisation to be done effectively, and with the minimum need for policy decisions to be made.

Individuals are role occupants with job descriptions specifying requirements, responsibilities and boundaries.

Communication is formalised by memoranda, which go from job title to job title and copied to other roles, not from one individual to another.

Handbooks contain procedures for standards, quality control and evaluation.

Most organisations have aspects of the role culture, since part of the work of an organisation may require predictability and certainty.

Such cultures thrive on tasks which are routine, stable, unchanging. Difficulties occur when dealing with change or with individual exceptions to the norm. Role cultures do not want too much independence or initiative. Fairness and efficiency demands that in such cultures people know what their job is, what is expected of them and how they will be evaluated.

Role cultures are managed rather than led.

TASK CULTURE

The organisational idea is of a team of talents or resources able to respond to a specific project, or task, in a less individualistic way than a club culture and quicker than a task culture.

The process is one of plans rather than procedures, in a questioning culture, which dislikes the daily routine chore of administration and sees the reward of solving one problem as being given another.

It is often the preferred culture of people working in groups to constantly solve new problems, which are beyond the scope of an individual.

Warm and friendly, the culture is built around co-operative groups of colleagues without much overt hierarchy.

It is expensive because it often requires professional, competent people to spend a lot of time talking to each other.

Task cultures have team leaders or co-ordinators rather than managers.

PERSON CULTURE

The organisational idea is that the individual talent is all- important, but there is a need for some minimal organisational structure to service it.

Individual professionals, who possess the special talent have tenure and high status.

Such organisations prefer not to use ‘organisational’ language, but use language which reflects status and the nature of the expertise (in a law firm if you ask to see the manager you will be shown into the Chief Clerk, not the Senior Partner)

Administration staff, who service the professional, have lower status and few, if any, formal means of control over the professionals, who need to be treated with a light rein.

Professionals in such cultures can be persuaded, not commanded; influenced or bargained with, but not managed.

ASSIGNMENT

- 1. Analyse the degree to which your work environment fits any one, or a mixture, of the cultures described by Handy.**
- 2. Consult colleagues in your workplace to discover recent significant changes which have taken place; who introduced them; the methods by which they were communicated and implemented and the degree to which implementation was successful.**
- 3. Communicate with members of your group to identify common themes or strategies in implementing change.**

On Day 4 (15th January, 2003) your group will have one hour and fifteen minutes to plan and rehearse a fifteen-minute presentation of your results to the other groups. (You should bear in mind that your audience will be one which has mixed experience.)

Possible reading:

**Handy, Charles ‘Understanding Organisations’
(Chapter on ‘Cultures and structures’)**

**Deal, T.E and Kennedy A.A. (1982) ‘Corporate Cultures’ (Addison –Wesley)
(Chapter on ‘Change: reshaping cultures)**

HOW TO AVOID CHANGE

Street cred - same job for 35 years! laura – better How to avoid.

Actually quite a bit of change..

Attitude to management... in charge of mules – US experience- sardinia rounding the cape

Read the work of Charles Handy and Terry Deal and others like Tom Peters...

Intend to present Handy's four descriptions of cultural models and then adapt two of them to highlight the problem of change.

1. MODELS ARE USEFUL IN ENABLING US TO:

- Better understand the organisations we belong to or may join
- Learn to communicate more effectively within our organisation
- Make recommendations about ways to improve an organisations effectiveness

2. FIRST A DEFINITION OF CULTURE:

'Total inherited ideas, beliefs, values, attitudes, norms of behaviour, which constitute the shared bases of social action' and 'the total range and ideas and activities of a group of people with shared traditions which are transmitted and reinforced by members of a group' (Chambers Dictionary)

POWER, CLUB, - SPIDER CULTURE

ROLE CULTURE

TASK CULTURE

PERSON CULTURE

3. WHAT IS CHANGE?

NOT modification or even innovation. Change in the sense we are talking about is

DISRUPTION, RISK, DANGER, CRISIS!

LIKE COVENTRY, DRESDEN, HIROSHIMA SO LET'S TAKE A WAR MODEL

MY EXPERIENCE LIMITED TO NATIONAL SERVICE , POINT OF AYRE, ROCKAPES - KNOW THE ENEMY – PASSWORDS, PLANS OF ATTACK

4. KNOW THE ENEMY - ROLE PLAY /SIMULATE A RESISTANCE GROUP TO CHANGE

ROLE CULTURE FOR DESTRUCTION
AIMS: KEEP CONTROL - DO IT ALL
ONLY DELEGATE BLAME – NOT DECISION MAKING
DO NOT TRUST
GENERATE ANXIETY

PASSWORD ‘FOILED’

FAILSAFE- EMPHASIS AND ENCOURAGE CONCERN TO AVOID ERROR
ERROR EQUALS FAILURE AND MUST BE PUNISHED (NON VERBALLY)
INCREASE CHECKS AND PROCEDURES
EMPHASISE PRE-EVENT CONTROL NOT TRUST
THEORY X AND Y
DELEGATE UPWARDS (MENZIES)

OBFUSCATE – BEWILDER, OBSCURE, PERPLEX
BE VAGUE ABOUT STRUCTURES (WHO MAKES DECISIONS)
STANDARDS (USE AIMS LANGUAGE –Academic excell..
TARGETS (CUSTOMERS , CLIENTS,) USE ‘THEY’

IGNORE – DENY

- a) **ANY NEED FOR CHANGE (change for change sake; we are already doing it ..)**
- b) **APPROPRIATENESS (Ivory Tower, 1968, the profession does not want / need ..)**

LIE - USE THE MEDIA.

DENIGRATE NEW IDEAS- ‘Bandwagons, jargon, obvious..
DENIGRATE PEOPLE – ‘Promotion – hell be off- the knighthood..
REMEMBER PROPHETS ARE NOT ONLY NOT RECOGNISED IN
THEIR OWN COUNTRY THEY CAN BE CRUCIFIED.

EXCLUDE – GENERATE ELITISM - concern for standards and status
THEY WON’T BE QUALIFIED – ignore Churchill and Aylward
KEEP PEOPLE IN COMPARTMENTS(offices / dining rooms..)
AVOID CONTACT WHICH MAY LEAD TO COMMUNICATION
AND UNDERSTANDING

DELAY – GENERATE PROBLEMS DON’T SOLVE THEM (We’re not ready, 2
years too soon, need to give it more thought)
HAVE WORKING PARTIES / COMMITTEES – PUT
INCOMPETENTS IN CHARGE WITH ILL DEFINED BRIEFS
EXTEND DEADLINES.
SEEK PAPERS , POSITION PAPERS , PERMISSION

5. PLAN OF ATTACK – A TASK CULTURE STRATEGY

PASSWORD ACTION

**ACCEPT – AFTER EVENT CONTROL – LEADING TO INITIATIVES
LESS FORMAL PROCEDURES / NETWORKS
AUTONOMOUS GROUPS GIVING MUTUAL SUPPORT
ERROR – TO TRY IS ENOUGH – SUCCESS IS A BONUS
PRAGMATISM NOT IDEALISM
REDUNDANCY NOT DEPENDANCY
DYNAMIC NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS, SYSTEMS**

**COMMUNICATE – FOSTER FEEDBACK FROM ALL
REDUCE BARRIERS – INCREASE AVAILABILITY
VISIT, TALK, LISTEN, USE LANGUAGE SENSITIVELY
SPREAD, DON'T HOARD IDEAS, INNOVATIONS**

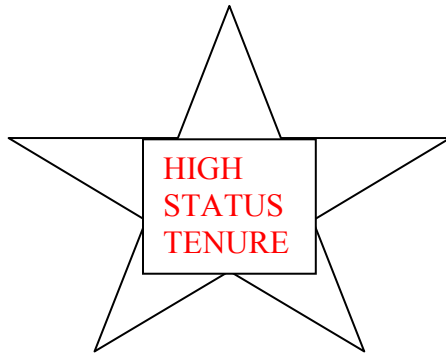
**TRUST - AT THE EXPENSE OF CHECKS, CONTROL, TIME CLOCKS
PEOPLE – ALL PEOPLE
ALLOW STAFF TO BEHAVE AS RESPONSIBLE
PROFESSIONAL ADULTS
ALLOW STAFF TO SET OWN HIGH BUT REASONABLE
AND ATTAINABLE STANDARDS
DELEGATE POWER AND INFORMATION**

**ILLUMINATE - CLARIFY STRUCTURES (simple, few layers, few grades)
THE CLIENT
THE CORE TASK
THE PHILOSOPHY**

**ORIGINATE - CREATE, INVENT, DON'T PRESERVE
SOLUTION(S) NOT PROBLEMS
SEEK IDEAS**

**NURSE - NURTURE, ENCOURAGE, PRAISE, COAX, REWARD
REINFORCE, CHANGE KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDE,
BEHAVIOUR**

PERSON CULTURE

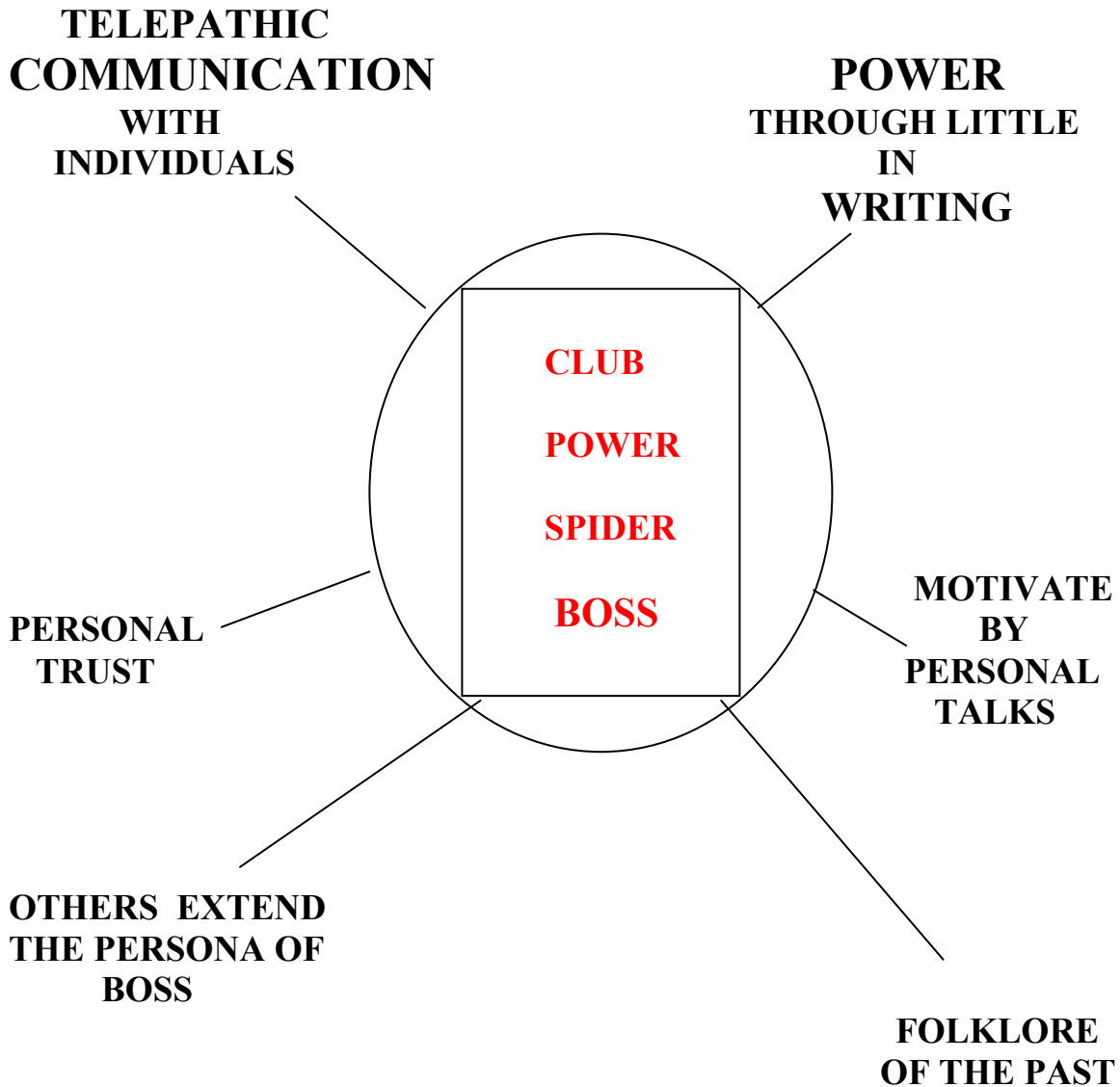


ORGANISATION SERVICES AND PROVIDES THE RESOURCES NEEDED TO ENABLE PROFESSIONAL SKILLS TO BE DELIVERED.

MINIMAL ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE.

LOW STATUS ADMINISTRATORS USE LIGHT REIN – PERSUASION NOT COMMAND.

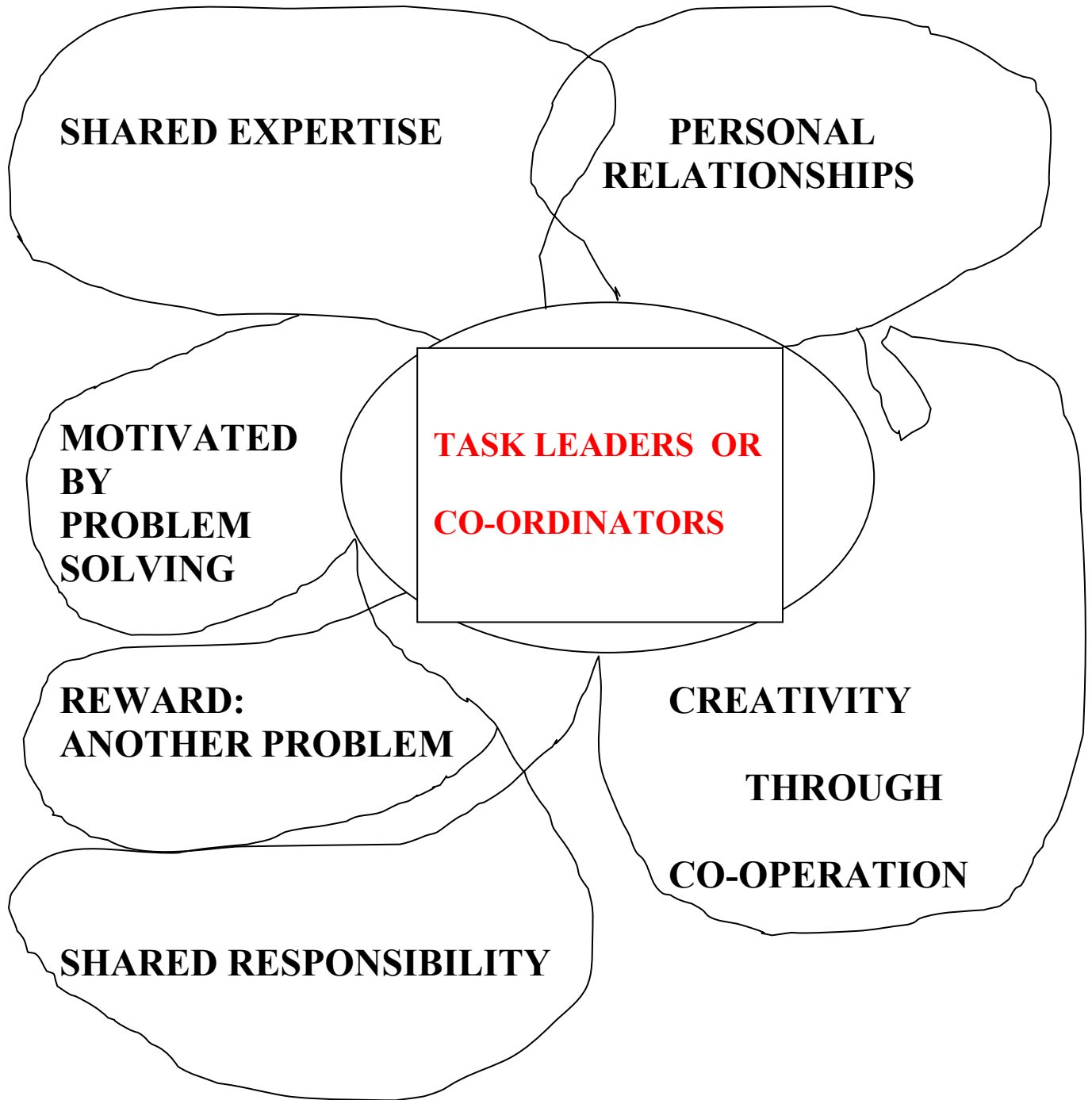
POWER, CLUB OR SPIDER CULTURE



STRENGTH : REACT QUICKLY TO CRISIS OR OPPORTUNITY

**DANGER: IDIOSYNCRATIC AND
NEPOTISTIC**

TASK CULTURE



DYNAMIC, CREATIVE, INSECURE, EXPENSIVE

ROLE CULTURE

ORGANISATION		INDIVIDUALS
SET OF ROLES/ JOB BOXES		ROLE OCCUPANTS
		JOB DESCRIPTIONS
LOGICALLY JOINED TO DISCHARGE A FUNCTION		NO DESIRE FOR INDEPENDENCE OR INITIATIVE
		ROUTINE, STABLE, UNCHANGING TASK
HANDBOOKS OF PROCEDURES (STANDARDS, QUALITY CONTROL, EVALUATION)		COMMUNICATE ROLE TO ROLE

COMFORTABLE; SECURE; DULL?