

ORGANISATIONS GET STUCK TOO

by

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The literatures of psychotherapy and family therapy make it clear that individuals and families get stuck because an impasse develops between a conscious desire for change and an unconscious desire to avoid change. Fisch, Watzlawick, and Weakland (1974), explain how, in these circumstances, some attempts to change can actually make things more rigidly fixed; trying harder is one classic way of remaining stuck, as every insomniac knows. "Stuckness" is defined by Watzlawick as:

A person, a family, or a wider social system enmeshed in a problem in a persistent and repetitive way, despite desire and effort to alter the situation

Small groups get stuck too. It is 40 years since Bion (1961) told us that small groups work at two levels: the conscious level of the work group and the unconscious level of the basic assumptions groups. The mysterious forces of the latter, emanating from the unconscious psyche of the group and with one commanding purpose (the survival of the group) are very strong and so long as they remain out of awareness, exercise a powerful influence on the functioning of the group.

If individual and groups work at two levels, perhaps organisations also work at two levels - conscious and unconscious. This is hardly a new thought - crowd theory has long been used to explain the extraordinary behaviour of lynch mobs, fanatical religious assemblies and football hooligans. Lyall Watson (1986) regards the crowd as a living organism in its own right - with a deep unconsciousness of frightening power.

In our work with organisations attempting change, we often come hard up against powerful forces blocking change, which seem to operate out of the awareness of the organisation, yet are created by the organisation. An assumption that organisations work at two levels, conscious and unconscious, would seem to fit the facts. By adapting ideas from Gestalt therapy we have identified five different ways organisations get stuck:

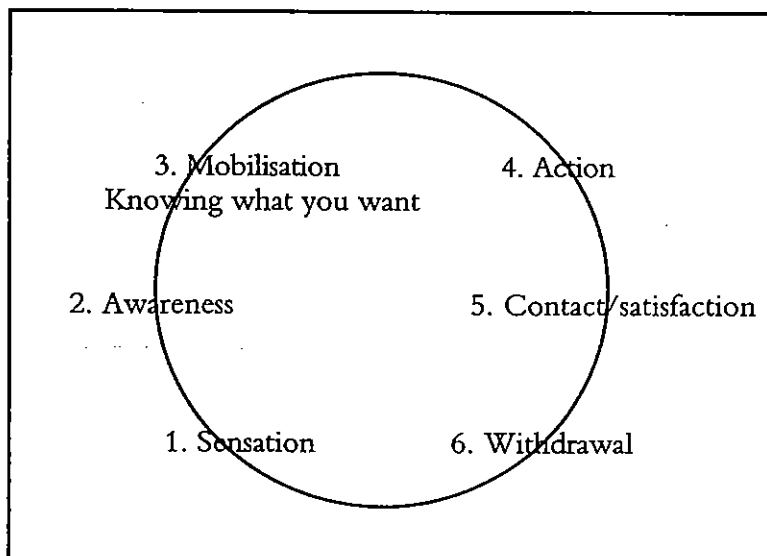
- The suppressed organisation
- The hysterical organisation
- The knowing-and-angry organisation
- The frightened organisation
- The task organisation

Over three years we have enlisted the help of several psychotherapeutic models. Our working assumption has been that organisations are living organisms with conscious and unconscious processes. Psychotherapists know that the conscious and the unconscious act as countervailing forces in a person's psyche and in psychotherapy one important task of the therapist is to move some of the unconscious into the conscious arena, so that change becomes possible at least. In organisation change it may also be necessary to uncover unconscious processes and indeed it may be futile to attempt organisation development at the conscious level of organisation processes alone. So a client who asks for help in improving conscious organisation processes like delegation, communication, decision making, planning and the like, should in fairness be warned that work at that level may not result in lasting change, unless it is accompanied by diagnostic work at a deeper level - just in case the organisation's unconscious may turn out to be working in the opposite direction.

Interventions appropriate to each particular organisation blockage are described in a later part of the article. Again we have learned from psychotherapy - the rationale for intervening in a particular way, and especially the warnings about which interventions to avoid, rely heavily on the work of psychotherapist Paul Ware (1983).

Figure 1

The Gestalt Cycle



How Organisations get Stuck

Gestalt thinking throws a lot of light on how organisations get stuck; first, a brief explanation of the Gestalt cycle, for those not familiar with that model. The notion of a cycle, starting from rest and moving through a phased cycle of energisation back to rest, is central to Gestalt. The cycle describes the essential nature of the interaction between an organism and its environment. It is a natural cycle and individuals move through its phases with or without help; or they may get stuck. The cycle (see Figure 1) describes a flow and ebb of energy in the continuous process of need fulfilment essential to an individual's survival and growth. We move from rest through a series of phases to full contact with our food, with our friends, partners or colleagues or issues which we need to tackle, followed by satisfaction and withdrawal.

The first phase, as a new experience begins to emerge, is internal sensation; as we begin to focus the sensation on to something or some person in our external environment, we attach meaning to the sensation; this is described as "awareness". As we become aware of what the sensation is telling us - as we give it meaning - we begin to mobilise our energy towards the external object through clarifying the nature of the interaction we want. We then take concrete action to bring about contact; at some point when the fullness of the experience is realised, we achieve satisfaction, and then finally we withdraw from the experience and another cycle may begin.

That is no more than the briefest outline of a rich and insightful model. It is not possible to do justice here to Gestalt theory with all its very practical principles and useful axioms. Many readers will be familiar with Gestalt and for those who want to dig deeper, the literature is very accessible (Goodman, Hefferline and Perls, 1972).

Of course, we do not sail through life enjoying the rhythmic fulfilment of all our needs in this way - and that is where Gestalt therapy comes in. Gestalt therapy offers a way of getting there more frequently and more completely each time. The notion of "more completely" is important because few of us experience the full amplitude of our own possibilities - our lives are good but they could be better. Here the notion of interruptions is useful. We trip ourselves up by interrupting the cycles in various ways, blocking the free flow of energy. When this happens habitually at the same point, we become stuck (see Figure 2).

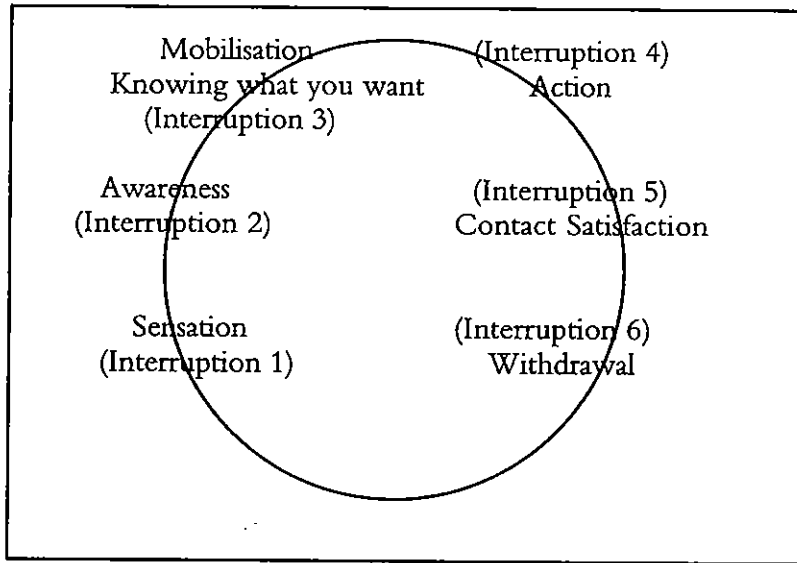
As children we have powerful needs and wants. In an ideal world, our perfect parents would have responded to these in a perfectly timed and appropriate way, which would have enabled us to grow into resourceful, open, thinking, spontaneous, effective adults.

The reality of course is that the process of development and parenting is so complex, that parents, with the best will in the world, rarely get it right. Consequently children must adapt to the inadequacies of their nurturing environment. Adaptions take the form of interruptions to otherwise natural functions. For example, it is natural for children to have temper tantrums, but

it the parents admonish them persistently and sternly, they will either learn to repress their feelings altogether, or to find another indirect form of expression. Certain typical patterns of interruption emerge, to form identifiable personality types. These types indicate the broad lines of a personality's development and suggest likely behaviour patterns.

Figure 2

The Gestalt cycle with Interruptions



So it is with organisations. Organisations have personalities too - that is what "organisation culture" means. We have already proposed that it is legitimate and useful to think about any organisation as a living organism with a life of its own, working at two levels - the conscious and unconscious. We now find it extremely useful to take this one step further and hypothesise that organisations, being living organisms, also go through the Gestalt cycle in their interactions with their environments. This is a useful hypothesis (however vulnerable it may be to rigorous academic assault) because it opens up the immediate possibility that organisations may suffer the same interruptions to their Gestalt life cycle as individual do - perhaps organisations get stuck too! Our combined practical experience, over a number of years in many organisations attempting major change, convinces us that this is so. What we had never been able to do until now, was make sense of all the frustrations and paradoxes generated by attempting to offer consultancy help to an organisation which is stuck. Psychotherapists, and especially Gestalt therapists, are used to that - and they have a very convincing explanation - we who work with organisations as our clients can learn from them.

We will not take the bold step of listing some of the characteristic exhibited by organisations when they become stuck (or interrupted) at different stages of the Gestalt cycle. As an introduction to each description we will include an abbreviated description of the individual personality type suffering from the same interruption.

(1) *The Suppressed Organisation -
Interrupted before sensation*

People stuck here have difficulty with the very first step in the cycle - they interrupt their own sensations, which has the sad effect that they seldom show much feeling and appear withdrawn individuals seeking solitary interests. They are difficult to relate to emotionally because they appear unmoved by situations in which an emotional response would be appropriate.

Organizations stuck here rely heavily on rules and procedures and mechanistic control systems. They are usually quite rigid and well defended against feedback. Much of the work is likely to be repetitive and fairly simple, as in traditional insurance companies, government departments, old fashioned banks and building societies. The organisations are predominantly concerned with detail, the scale of thinking is micro, not macro, tasks and duties are defined in detail, demarcation and compartmentalisation abound. Strategic thinking is rare, as is interest in change or anything new. Even now as we move towards the next century, organisations of this type can be found in many sectors of the economy.

At their worst such organisations appear to be in a state of permanent withdrawal, and those who work there do so mainly to earn a living, deriving little satisfaction from the work itself. Michael A Diamond, in his article "Resistance to Change" (1986) states: "Bureaucratic behaviour is in large part the result of externalised defensive actions of organisations participants to avoid anxiety". He goes on rather gloomily to say "a truncated psyche is the inevitable human product of the personal experience with bureaucratic hierarchy" - this may be because the organisation itself has a truncated psyche, blocked as it is against feelings.

(2) *The Hysterical Organisation -
Interrupted before Awareness*

People stuck here habitually respond with emotional excitability. Their emotions are close to the surface and freely accessible. One unfortunate consequence of this is that they may get carried away by their sensations and attach inappropriate meanings to them, which is where their difficulty lies; their feelings are available but their awareness is limited.

Organisations stuck here are in stark contrast to the suppressed organisation - instead of denying feelings, these organisations go overboard with their feelings and much of their time is taken up with experiencing and expressing sensation. Where they fail is in extracting any sort of sense from this welter of sensation - they have plenty of excitement but they do not know what it means for the organisation's health.

These are the exhilarating and chaotic advertising agencies, lurching from one crisis to the next; drama companies desperately unable to graduate from theatrical passion to economic viability as a production company; some so-called caring organisations unable to think themselves beyond the deeply felt compassion and into the practical world of providing genuine help. Many such organisations stay stuck because by and large they enjoy the experience of sensation.

The block is essentially a thinking block. This type of organisation does not think through its problems effectively, instead it is inclined to react over-excitedly to events which then escalate into crises. Some other observable symptoms are likely to be: above average intrigue and gossip, some of it malicious, dependence on "them", decision-making processes which are at best woolly and vague and an absence of good system and procedure. The general sense to an observer is that these organisations are in a fairly constant state of excitability and pain.

(3) *The Knowing-and-angry organisation - Interrupted before Mobilisation*

People stuck here are very aware - they think a great deal. What they fail to do is mobilise their energies to decide what they want. Procrastinators are a good example - they are typically stuck here. People with this interruption lay blame for their difficulties fairly squarely on others' shoulders.

Organisations stuck here are strong on thinking - everyone will know what the problems are. The organisation's difficulty lies in moving beyond an intellectual grasp of what is wrong to knowing what it wants out of the situation. These organisations are fond of diagnosis, and their diagnosis will be quite sophisticated so it ill-behoves a consultant to go in with his/her diagnosis, because their's is bound to be superior - they have been at it longer.

There will usually be a high degree of blaming for the perceived problems; blaming of senior management, blaming of the system and the environment plus a reluctance on the part of individuals to take personal responsibility for either the problems themselves or for finding solutions.

These organisations are angry yet unable to decide what it is they really want. There is resentment simmering beneath the surface - resentment of old injuries, anger at being left out and at the same time, and paradoxically,

anger that someone else has not solved their problems. Small groups talk about problems in corners but never in open forum. Meetings will be large because everyone will feel left out if they do not attend, yet nothing is decided because nobody really knows what it is they want – all they know is what the problems are. Typically these intellectually able organisations continually revisit their policy statements – every six months a new version of the organisation’s mission appears – each new version starting from a new intellectual standpoint, but never actually being agreed.

It is hard to diagnose this condition because the key organisation pathology of anger remains muted and repressed and the presenting impression is of intellectual competence and well articulated understanding of the problems facing the organisation.

(4) *The Frightened Organisation – Interrupted before Action*

People stuck here can bring into focus what it is they want, yet can still be interrupted before choosing what to do. To choose action A is to reject action B and that choice may of course turn out to be wrong. There is a risk involved in moving into action and where there is risk there is fear. People interrupted at this point exaggerate potential consequences and hold themselves back.

Organisations stuck here have, in common with the first three so far described, an underlying feature of the organisation’s psyche known clinically as “passivity” – that is an unwillingness to solve problems. They frequently get stuck after knowing what they want (being mobilised) but before taking the action they want to take. We believe that what holds them back is fear; so the underlying pathology of these organisations is unresolved fear, just as unresolved anger was the underlying pathology of knowing-and-angry organisations stuck at the last interruption.

At first glance the frightened organisation is very active indeed and to say that it is stuck seems absurd. However, we have learned to look critically at busyness, at long-working hours at the top and work overload at middle management levels. We look for real action arising directly from all this activity – and often the search is in vain. If the organisation is stuck at this point there is no clear link between thought, intention and action. One powerful clue is the constant drafting and redrafting of reports; even minutes appear first as a draft for approval before circulation. A simple check of the number of copy letters sent out regularly can be an eye-opener (sending lots of copies spreads the risk).

Meeting proliferate, not as places for quick decision making but as another mechanism for avoiding risk. Frightened organisations spend a lot of energy avoiding risk. If the possibility of real action looms in sight an immediate call goes out to “a paper” to be prepared. The paper will be in draft and

when the final draft eventually reaches the inevitable meeting, the minutes are gestated for weeks or months and even then the minutes will be in draft. The merry-go-round of activity designed to reduce risk goes round and round: the organisation is stuck.

(5) *The Task Organisation - Interrupted before Contact*

People stuck here are obsessed with thinking and doing; they tend to be perfectionists, paying too much attention to the individual parts at the expense of the whole. They are inclined to be over dutiful and conscientious - their output is high but they pay a price. That price is the ability to surrender without reservation to each full experience.

Organisations stuck here take themselves very seriously. All organisations exist to do a task, but some get so obsessed by task that they get stuck. The kind of comment an observer makes about organisations with this blockage, is that they do a lot of efficient things, but somehow they do not quite score - they miss the point in some indefinable way, the sum of all their actions does not amount to the best thing, the most appropriate thing for their customers.

Divorce lawyers do a first class legal job for their clients, but they often miss the real point which must be to negotiate the optimum solutions for the family system as a whole rather than maximise the settlement for one client. Management consultancies produce superb technical solutions which clients cannot use fully. Research laboratories produce ideas which their companies are unable to exploit fully because of lack of money, people or market potential.

The notion of contact is very appropriate here - in the examples above the organisations do not make full contact with their clients, they make partial contact, they get it partly right but the result of the interaction is not fully satisfying, to either party. There is efficiency but no joy. Internal relationships are very task-dependent and functionally dictated; people exchange ideas rather than make full human contact with each other. In the top management team true consensus is unlikely to emerge because the organisation cannot see the point of long-drawn-out deliberations in search of consensus - when all business decisions are, in their view, databased, right or wrong.

There is no denying that many organisations interrupted before contact have a successful record. Joyless, efficient Local Authorities provide acceptable local services; very many companies managed this way turn in excellent financial results. So why should they worry about being stuck? The argument for attempting to move through this interruption is not simply that organisation life could be so much more fulfilling with much less tension and much more joy - there is a deeper danger. These

organisations tend to be overworked and short-sighted. Problems of a short-term nature fill the horizon and are coped with well by the application of whatever state-of-the art technique or technology is available. Action and risk-taking are the order of the day. As a consequence little energy is left for the less pressing philosophical issues concerning the longer-term relationship of the organisation with its changing environment.

The perfect becomes the enemy of the good and action becomes the enemy of real contact. Task performance has primacy over human relations or managerial issues - performance first, process if there is time, is their motto. Not that it should be the other way round, but task and process are actually interdependent and an organisation stuck at action is denying this.

(6) *The Exhausted Organisation (?) - Interrupted before Withdrawal*

For completeness, we should mention a possible sixth kind of stuckness. In the individual it might be thought of as a state of "burn-out" when people stay in contact too long, losing the capacity to complete transactions properly by withdrawing and resting. There may well be organisations in a state of exhaustion corresponding to individuals experiencing burn out. We do not deal with it here simply because we have not so far come across it in any organisation; until we have some experiences we prefer not to speculate, because there are so many surprises in this work, we prefer not to guess until we have been there.

Organisation Interventions

Diagnosis, exciting though it is, will not tell you what to do. Our hypothesis that organisations behave as organisms led us to enlist the help of psychotherapy and this has proved immensely useful in diagnosis. We felt sure psychotherapy could be at least as helpful in showing us how to make effective interventions.

The effective intervention is the one which helps the organisation move out of the impasse which is holding it in unconscious patterns of repetitive behaviour. It is rarely the obvious intervention. In fact, the road to long-cycle organisation change is strewn with traps - some laid by the client, some by the consultant and some even laid jointly by client and consultant working in an unconscious collusive pact.

The danger of traps came to our attention in the work of psychotherapist Paul Ware (1983). He developed a useful strategic framework for working with individual personality adaptations, based on choosing, at any time, one of the three possible therapeutic interventions; cognitive, affective or behavioural. In other words you can get the client to think, to feel or to do something.

For each personality adaption, there is an entry point aimed at, and also a trap door to be avoided. These are different for each personality type. For example, an individual interrupted before sensation defends against feeling by investing their energy elsewhere, in this case in withdrawn behaviour. To intervene first at the feeling level, although it appears to be the obvious thing to do (because that is where they eventually need to be) is to walk into the trap. The starting point is to confront their behaviour because that is where they are investing their energy now. It means, in fact, starting where the client is.

Ware encourages this general rule of always starting where the client is investing energy now (in thinking, in feeling or in doing). We are finding this a good rule in organisation interventions too - always start by joining the client organisation below the threshold where the organisation has got stuck.

To make this clearer we will now consider the intervention strategy appropriate to each of the five kinds of stuck organisation described above.

Releasing the Suppressed Organisation

Organisations stuck here are heavily defended against feeling. In the 1960s members of many such organisations found themselves dragged through T-groups, encounter groups and the like in the name of what the OD people called "unfreezing". The idea was that following the "unfreezing", attitudes and ways of doing things would be changed, and then the new practices would become institutionalised. Few of these change programmes achieved their original goals.

There is a refreshing admission of failure in a little book, *Making Waves in Foggy Bottom* (1974). "Foggy Bottom" is the endearing American colloquialism for the US State Department. What failed was a head-on attempt to introduce feelings into one of the world's great bureaucracies. And those who tried and failed were Warren Bennis, Alfred Marrow, Chris Argyris, Harry Levinson and Rensis Likert, no less! Even the most skilled can fall into traps, for here is a perfect example of one of Paul Ware's traps. At first sight it seems perfectly logical - if an organisation is bureaucratic and therefore suppressing feeling, let's create opportunities in which the organisation might be encouraged to experiment safely with feelings . . . But this is precisely what the organisation is most defended against.

The entry point for suppressed organisations is elsewhere. They are introverted organisations whose unconscious is concentrating on security and maintaining the status quo. Energy is invested in withdrawn *behaviour*, so that is where to begin - the best entry point is where the organisation is currently investing its own energies.

A conventional consulting approach is an effective way to start: the consultant diagnoses the environment in which the organisation operates, so that it is compelled to face the consequences of its *behaviour* for its survival. Nothing less than a threat to its very survival will be powerful enough to change an

established bureaucracy In “Foggy Bottom” the top management (who killed the project, in the end) knew that the US State Department was not actually under threat, so there was no need to listen to that gang of behavioural scientists – however famous in their own field they might be. If a bureaucracy is not fighting for its life, organisation development is an unrealistic expectation.

The correct sequence is to try to get the stuck organisation to relate to its external world (*behaviour*), to refocus attention from the inside to the outside so as to perceive the dangers it faces if it does not change; then to *rethink* and adjust its relationship with the world. Long term, the organisation may start to connect with feelings, but it is the wrong place to start.

Releasing the Hysterical Organisation

Organisations stuck here are interrupted on the cycle at awareness – their defence system is constructed to avoid awareness. Since their energy is heavily invested in *feeling* this is the right place to begin, even though the real aim is to strengthen their thinking function. It is necessary first to empathise, to listen carefully, to show understanding, in order to gain entry. There is a delicate line to be drawn between showing empathy and becoming embroiled in interpersonal issues, which are likely to be the presenting symptoms in a sensation-seeking organisation. So there is a tightrope to be negotiated by consultant and client if they are to arrive together safely on the first piece of solid ground, on which the consultant confronts the process issue, which is a failure to *think* effectively.

The step is to show them how to *think* through a diagnosis, without doing it for them. There is a potential trap here too – they may well invite the consultant to offer a diagnosis. If the consultant falls into this trap, they may give every appearance of accepting his/her diagnosis but will in practice ignore it.

The temptation to prescribe, in effect to tell them what to *do* is very strong, because this is what they are likely to ask for. The route to take is: enter with their *feelings* (but don't get enmeshed); avoid the temptation to tell them how to behave; help them to do *their* own diagnostic *thinking* (but do not do it for them) so that they begin to think for themselves.

Releasing the Knowing-and-angry Organisation

Organisations stuck at the mobilisation stage (which is essentially about choosing a course of action) are unable to mobilise their energy to achieve a sharp focus and resolve the broad field of awareness into a clear figure. This cognitive activity is what is being defended against and in this case is the trap. The thinking that does go on tends to be circular or opaque; there is a lot of intellectualisation which can easily seduce the consultant into yet another diagnosis.

We spent six months bashing our heads against a brick wall in one organisation before we found an old internal document which had already clearly identified every single problem we were laboriously coming up with, in our diagnosis. The organisation was playing an intellectual game with us and we fell right through the trap door, which is *thinking*. We clambered out, dusted ourselves down and moved to the correct entry point which is *behaviour*, confronting their behaviour by identifying the games the organisation was playing with us and with itself.

We helped them to experiment with new ways of *doing* things. Next they needed to *feel* better about the organisation, less resigned, less resentful, more productive and more influential. Our role was to support the experimenters and confront old patterns of attitude and behaviour which were likely to sabotage the problem-solving activity (and of course, re-confirm old beliefs). It tends to be a long term intervention (in this case 18 months) and at the same time it needs to have a stated withdrawal point to discourage dependency.

So the general pattern for the knowing-and-angry interruption is to avoid the *thinking* trap, and begin where their energy is invested, which is the passive *behaviour*. Invite experimentation with new behaviour whilst offering support, and so help the organisation to *feel* better about itself. Long term, the organisation may come to *believe* in its potency (new thinking).

Releasing the Frightened Organisation

This kind of stuckness is common and consultancy help is likely to be needed over a fairly long period. Just as individuals put off getting started on something or agitate over a decision, so do organisations. The underlying cause is often some level of fear, fear that it won't be right, or good enough, fear of punishment or criticism, fear of choosing or making a commitment. All these possibilities circulate just beneath the consciousness of the frightened organisation, causing paralysis in the face of any demand of action.

The worst possible approach to a frightened organisation is to exhort them to "do something!" That is the trap (behaviour). The organisation is blocked against taking action and its unconscious voice is whispering in its ear "be careful . . . it's not safe . . . no good will come of it . . . you'll be sorry. . .".

As always, the right place to start is where the organisation has its energy invested, which is *thinking* about disasters (not always at a conscious level). Next, the degree of fear needs to be reduced and some sense of safety and the beginning of trust established.

The consultant's first job is to build trust and create safety around a chosen intervention, through *thinking* carefully alongside them. Confronting feelings directly (say in an early team-building event) would be unlikely to work because individuals would feel exposed, and would construe the event as an opportunity for others to take advantage of them in some way.

One way to start is to engage in *cognitive* work, one-to-one with individuals

and at a point when enough trust has been established between the consultant and a critical mass of individuals, they can be brought together into a joint diagnostic and problem-sharing process. This trust-building phase can take a long time but it is dangerous to short-circuit the process because without this foundation of trust no sound progress can be made later.

Privately owned organisations frequently live in the grip of fear, feeling themselves to be vulnerable to the next fanciful whim of the owner(s). In one such unlisted commercial business the Chairman owns most of the shares and the rest are spread evenly around a large number of ancient aunts and uninterested uncles. In practice the livelihoods of nearly a thousand employees are in the hands of one person or, at least that is how it feels to them. The organisation is understandably frightened, not least because its position in the marketplace is beginning to slip. This business showed all the symptoms of a frightened organisation. The managing director has sought our help and this assignment is in progress at the time of writing. Although eight months have passed since our introduction, all our energies have been invested in working with individuals, especially the managing director. Later, when we judge the climate is a trusting one, we will collect people in groups.

In summary, the sequence starts with diagnostic work with individuals *thinking*; moves on to sharing the diagnosis in working groups so that members begin to experience sharing as safe (*feeling*) and finally moves into problem-solving activities (*behaviour*).

Releasing the Task Organisation

Being invited to help a task organisation can be a bit daunting – it already does everything so well! The trap which a task organisation sets (unwittingly) for the consultant, is to challenge the consultant to perform even better than they do, or to come up with the latest state-of-the-art operational technique. And most consultants, feeling slightly ruffled by this challenge will fall straight into the trap. But the fact is, that no consultant is capable of more than improving marginally the systems these efficient organisations already use, so the outcome is often dissatisfaction on both sides.

Task organisations are obsessed with a compulsive quest for more expertise, more systems, more accuracy, more efficiency. What is missing is an internally experienced sense of quality and satisfaction.

The task organisation is already thinking frenetically – so this is where to start. The consultant's job is to get the organisation to forget task for the moment, but to carry on *thinking*, refocussing its thinking on process, on *how* things get done. The invitation to the organisation is to move its thinking to a higher plane, to go meta to the daily stuff of performance targets and the quest for task perfection.

The next step is to help them improve their process work, starting with task process (how they do their task) and moving on to *feelings* process (how they manage their feelings whilst doing the task). In this way the organisation will gradually bring feelings back into its working life. The final target is a new way of *behaving* which we might call whole-person behaviour.

An organisation which has moved through the task blockage will not be distracted from its task; on the contrary, by managing itself holistically, being conscious of the essential task and also of the processes it employs to achieve the tasks, as well as the feelings it experiences and how it copes with those feelings, it will be ready to make full contact and achieve much more than excellence in the task - it will be open to experiencing the satisfaction it deserves.

Conclusion and Discussion

We would like to declare the exploratory nature of our work in this field and emphasise how coarse-grained is the parallel between personality structure and organisation culture. The usefulness quickly falls away if the analogy is pushed too far and in the end, if pushed to the extreme of stereotyping, would become seriously flawed and even counter productive. It is not our aim to provide a simplistic taxonomy of "organisation types", with a checklist of symptoms and a ready-reckoner of intervention steps.

We do, however, suggest that one discipline may offer another fresh way of seeing old problems. Just as chemistry is helping physics, and mathematics is helping family therapy (Fisch *et al.*, 1974), so we find psychotherapy helping organisation change.

The approach raises new questions at every turn. Does being stuck always imply being disadvantaged or are there cogent reasons why some organisations choose to become and remain stuck? Perhaps being stuck only becomes a problem when the way or working either becomes significantly incongruent with the needs of a new generation of employees or inappropriate to meeting the needs of the organisation's clients or customers?

It would be silly to start stereotyping large organisations as "frightened" or "suppressed", when in fact separate parts may exhibit very different cultures. And, in any case, stuckness may be transient or relatively long-lasting, crippling or merely a nuisance, just as interruptions in individuals may vary in intensity from very serious, causing illness, to being mere traits of the personality.

And many questions arise for the consulting process itself: do you tell the client what your diagnosis is and in what circumstances do you reveal and share with the client your treatment plan? And how do you, the consultant, recognise when *you* are stuck, or when you are causing your client to become stuck, or reinforcing the client's existing stuckness or even caught in an unconscious conspiracy between yourself and your client?

Some questions remain to be answered. Meanwhile our practical experience has been that the approach is very useful and we would like to suggest there is an important place for what we believe is a new dimension of OD, alongside the other kinds of OD.

Most intervention strategies arise from the organizations metaphors and assumptions held by practitioners. If you are a member of the classical organisation school with its machine-like and scientific precepts, you will probably focus on the formal structure, on redefining roles and accountabilities, on designing monitoring and control systems, as the vehicles for bringing about change. If yours is the human relations perspective you are likely to use group work as one of your major intervention methodologies. If you are a systems theorist, you will be interested mainly in boundary transactions and management.

We work from a psycho-dynamic perspective and we feel this approach deserves to be placed alongside the others because we have found that the hidden forces of resistance which often lie deep within the unconscious of the organisation are ignored at our peril. That is not to say that all the other metaphors and assumptions are invalid – far from it, they often work well. However, they *sometimes* have nothing to say to us as culture consultants because they don't go deep enough.

Much of the psycho-dynamic theory is about defence structures and we believe it has a major contribution to make to working effectively with resistance to change in organisation. Watzlawick (1974) has written a seminal work on change. We think he is right to emphasise that the place to concentrate our energies is often not on change itself but on the defence structures which are preventing change.

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