

Inspirational Organisations

Trusting human networking power, enriching both organisations and community's in the future global economy.

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12/10/2011

A recent documentary was screened in New Zealand about the Christchurch earthquake 'When a City Falls' (Smyth 2011). This documentary when viewed showed the devastation, but more surprisingly showed people coming together to rebuild. Each individual's values, their ways of coping with adversity, their drive, enthusiasm and the fact of sharing, caring and having fun all assisted to getting this City back to being home. People contributed in such diverse ways, exemplified by the following;

- Young boys joy riding the liquefaction living the moment and love of life
- The baker baking bread wherever he could, the container or garage
- And the silent, quiet man shovelling one spade of liquefaction after another, with the rest of the football field yet to go.

It has been reported that this year crime and suicides plummeted in Christchurch. Nobody was there in the immediate days following the earthquake directing who should do what, everyone just got together and did what had to be done, engaged with a sense of purpose for themselves and others.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction.....	2
2. The power of human networks to transform.....	3
3. Organisational Flexibility: Another term for change within ourselves.....	5
4. Creating the right innovative environment.....	6
5. Putting it all together –Team work and celebration.....	7
6. Conclusion and recommendations.....	8
7. The Hack.....	9
8. References.....	13

Introduction

Organisations are groups of individuals brought together to complete tasks for an end organisational outcome, in business this is either products or services. The ability that human beings have when working as groups, is extraordinary, as seen by the Christchurch earthquake, and when at times a visionary manager harnesses the very best of this capacity, we have a shift of organisational mediocrity to success.

The purpose of this report is to present a vision of management that has practical applications to industries in emerging markets or that are resourced with personnel without formal education. The vision is about recognising that diversity can bring about strength in organisations and trusting in the inherent intelligence of people brought together for a common purpose, in which both individually and as a group all can develop and prosper.

There are several elements discussed in further detail including the power of human networks in relation to the work culture and information sharing. This leads onto setting the scene of organisational flexibility; bringing both personal and organisational change, growth and development. Growth is not possible without creating an innovative environment and this section of the report shows different innovation strategies to create an action plan for competitive advantage to link possibilities to insights of future customer needs. Finally it is all put together showing why the strategies create effective team work, successful organisations, and the importance of recognition and celebration.

The power of human networks to transform

Structure and culture are the frames we view an organisation with providing conceptual pathways for managers to use to enable initiatives. But often new initiatives are undermined; managers know intuitively that the concept or direction was blocked. Although the structure has been set up documented and used for formal communication, the actual culture and pivotal individuals contribute to an invisible network that is forever dynamic and quick in response. Communication is the buzz word, and mistakenly managers think more meetings and greater use of technology in order to have more ways to view the emails so we can be in communication 24 hours per day. But no Manager actually wants more meetings, more e-mails and further information overload(Cross and Parker 2004).

What organisations need to do is to have positive communication networks that work for them. Networks are not static but differ for collective, peer organisation and field policy leadership(Hoppe and Reinelt 2010). The networks are used for advice, ideas and critical information that can be trusted due to the rich communication context with the other person or persons.

Networks are powerful and most effective in in organisations that have been set up with the knowledge of organisational behaviours. The organisation needs to be transparent, value organisational learning, have high performance work practices and incorporate stakeholder perspectives. Employees, based on the expectancy theory, have confidence that their work effort is the performance needed and will lead to successful outcomes. The Company structure is set up to enhance this by measuring performance, understanding the nature and cultural values of the employees, and fitting the right person to the right task within the right project group. The inspirational organisation will ensure the reward system is thought out to being what the individual wants, understanding that it just not pecuniary reward but resourcing the environment to engage in fun, trust and meaningful work (Pfeffer 1998).

December 10, 2011

Networks can be complex and dense, typically they are clustered and this can be due to physical constraints, different buildings or offices, peerage, shared interests. The basic concept is that the clusters have connectivity's;

- Bonding within, which indicates trusted efficient communications,
- Bridging that allows access to other clusters and hence resources and possibilities for new innovations
- Core and periphery aspects of the cluster

There are individuals that become 'hubs' they have a lot of communication directed to and from themselves within a range of networks, they may act as bonders or bridgers or a combination of those.

Organisations that have employees that are from the emerging nations, have within them potential to utilise this labour resource or be stifled with the limitations of an uneducated workforce. Enabling the employees to participate more effectively can be done through utilising networks and team work.

There are tools available to evaluate an organisations network, from mathematical techniques to SNA software(Hoppe and Reinelt 2010). This will provide a reasonable estimate of the health of the communications, who is potentially a hub, if there is effective bridging happening within the group.

More specific surveys can be completed;

- Network health: Is trust engendered through the network as well as being inclusive and collaborative.
- Outcomes: Does the network ensure positive outcomes are achieved and resources are more effectively used

Utilising networks positively and ensuring the organisation sustains the dynamism of the networks must be done at the same time of innovative assault within a backdrop of organisational flexibility.

Organisational Flexibility: Another term for change within ourselves

An organisation needs to be flexible for the years ahead, ideas that used to take decades to evolve and develop, now evolve within a few years (Pasmore 1994). Being flexible means being able to change direction and be successful at initiating new projects to solve the new problems, to do this efficiently to be ahead of the competition. The challenge is that the people employed will be required to have the skills that allow organisational flexibility.

During periods of change Leadership may be tempted to try to lead by hierarchal structures but change managed from this stance is the most feared type of change and can demotivate individuals, affecting productivity. Change done too often with poor outcomes weakens employees' confidence and bureaucracy has to be increased to develop controls as compliance and quality drop off.

The better management tool is to develop individual flexibility. Embed in the organisation the business, technical and social skill training that effective participation requires. This will allow flexibility needed within the organisation to manage changes successfully and for long term sustainability.

Where individuals are trusted that given the right skills will offer more, than just the sum of the skills, then this can coalesce into an environment of strong bonded teams that have the commitment and excitement and motivation to make organisational flexibility happen. This will ultimately provide the organisational success.

Creating the right innovative environment

Inspirational organisations are simultaneously dynamic, flexible and innovative. Innovation requires differing management styles for the different environments to be most efficient. Tools are available, and example is the utilising a transilience map (Figure 1) to determine what style will work to the greatest advantage (Abernathy and Clark 1985). It works with teams and an outside in orientation and links possibilities to insights of future customers' needs

THE TRANSILIENCE MAP

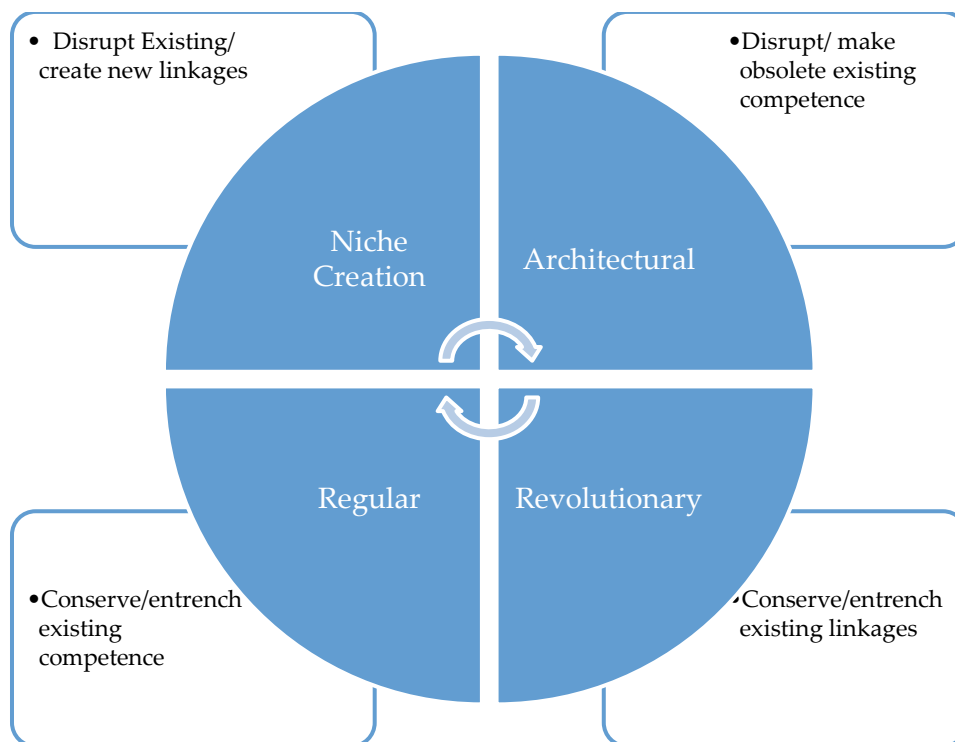


Figure 1

Within the architectural phase of innovation creative environments are provided for teams for new technologies to be explored.

In the niche creation phase, management needs to have the flexible teams in place that have fast responses to enable competitive advantage until other organisations catch up.

December 10, 2011

Regular innovation is fostered always and is another term for constant process improvement. This is about TQM (Total Quality Management)

The revolutionary mode of innovation relies on creative and an often undisciplined technical talent. Management has the most challenge in allowing established modes of operation to be broken and new modes resourced.

Putting it all together –Team work and celebration

Team work removes the managers and allows strength through diversity of ideas with synergies gained far surpassing one individual's capabilities for inspiration. Teams develop through forming, storming, norming, performing and final adjourning(McShane and Travaglione 2003). Effective teams need to be aligned to organisational goals and be trusted as individuals within the group as they work to resolve the problem before them. A balanced team with differing strengths improves a team's efficiency to allow constructive conflict and brainstorming. The differences may be in professional disciplines or personality traits.

Once prospective ideas are prioritised, prototypes are established and acceptance by all the stakeholders is gained it is then a matter of gathering of resources and implementation. Successful execution requires the TQM aspects of monitoring and assessment for task completion. This is then celebrated and communicated into both formal and informal networks. The individuals within the Team will have been enriched through this process, especially if stretched. The relationships along the way and the shared experience will provide further bonding. Where the group is diverse and inclusive, further barriers will have broken when belonging and working together for something meaningful.

What people love and are motivated by are all these elements; meaningful work, enjoyment and trust.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Inspirational organisations empower individuals by creating environments that allow for the most effective information transmission through communication networks, supported by organisational structure and culture. The concept is of simultaneously doing the innovating through team work and growing a flexible and dynamic organisation. The global trade vision is one where organisations will need to adapt to new employee and culture constraints, incorporating emerging nation's peoples with few skills to those with cutting edge skills and experience. Organisations will be enriched if they allow participation of all, beyond current concepts of thinking the unskilled cannot offer synergies to organisations without being directed. These will be the organisations that evolve to be the most successful, along with the individuals that grow within the organisations.

Recommendations for practical applications of the theories include;

- Utilising network analysis to understand and creat more efficiency within the organisation.
- Tailoring management approaches to support innovation.
- Participatory team work to enhance engagement and learning.

The ability that human beings have when working as groups, is extraordinary. A visionary manager, who harnesses the very best of this capability, will create a new paradigm driving organisational mediocrity to success globally.

The Hack

SUMMARY

The global stage is set for emergent countries participation in business. Technology in travel and communication has broken down cultural barriers. Comparative advantages along with free trade have given rise to new business ventures. Organisations will have to adjust to the new environment in which individuals move freely around the world to be employed. Skill shortages and increased access to education in some countries will provide opportunities for those from more primitive agricultural societies. Initially employees are unlikely to have the skills needed for a competitive manufacturer or service provider. However where the organisations embark on a programme of participatory involvement and up skilling they will be leaders of the new business world.

MOONSHOT

INSPIRATIONAL AND ENGAGED ORGANISATIONS; TRUSTING HUMAN NETWORK POWER

PROBLEM

Emerging countries in the near future era of free trade will demand a new style of collaborative management. In the past this has been dealt with a command and control style of leadership. This style will not give organisational flexibility or tap into the potential capabilities of the new employees. Take the example of New Zealand, who without trade barriers and as an agricultural exporting country will be one of the first countries exposed.

In the future to sustain its standard of living and continue innovation, how will New Zealand compete? Is the stage set for young New Zealanders to emigrate as they seek greater reward for their skills? Is there anything New Zealand Inc. can do to stem this likely scenario?

SOLUTION

New Zealand will need to work collaboratively with these countries, taking businesses off shore. Organisations will have to adapt to a very different set up, incorporating and

assisting the local agricultural industries which are based on subsistence farming without investment in new technologies. These organisations will need to involve local communities and to develop new ways of management that will grow the company and enrich the communities. The challenges will be in communication to overcome the barriers of culture, language and minimal business skills and education. To be efficient productive organisations will be required to remove the bureaucracy, encourage fun and make work meaningful. The solution is to utilise the power of human networks to build strong teams of people aligned to the organisation goals.

Human communication networks are incredibly powerful. Take the recent Christchurch earthquake, in which order was lost, but people coped and rebuilt in the early hours and days, using individuals differing abilities, values, intelligence, knowledge to carry out meaningful and caring work. A recent documentary recorded this and what could be seen, was the resilience, the fun and the engagement. Studies are being developed, but people were found to be happier and more connected, with less reports of suicides or crime in the months that followed the earthquake.

This same power of human networking can be used positively for business, it happens anyway. The networks are used for advice, ideas and critical information that can be trusted due to the rich communication context with the individuals and teams. Information is delivered in a relevant manner, supportive (culture considered) and dependable due to the relationship history and understanding of the individuals.

PRACTICAL IMPACT

The practical impact of using the power of human networks is the effect on participation. To be most effective management must set up structures that utilise and empower teams of people to complete projects and tasks. Allow the capacity within people, their intelligence and drive to be part of something meaningful. Manager perceptions of what is achievable are limited in these challenging environments. The teams of people will know what they are capable of and targeted and up skilled individuals will know how to engage others.

From the writer's experience working in a participatory decentralised type of environment, one of the organisation's most effective leaders is not literate, does not use e-mail, yet manages to form closely bonded night shift seasonal worker teams. On analysis of his communication networks, he has informal network communications with all departments within the organisation. He delivers, he is engaged and he loves the workplace. He is not alone, this workplace example is supportive of up skilling within the Company and many of the Senior Managers are without formal education and have expanded the company to be one of New Zealand's most innovative and successful meat export companies. Currently the Company is working with new operators from the Pacific Nations, who are recognised as being an important part of the company's future. This requires the company to work with communities, providing literacy and living skills as well as job specific education.

CHALLENGES

Networks can be complex and dense, typically they are clustered due to physical constraints, peerage or shared interests. The basic concept is that the clusters have connectivity's;

- Bonding within, which indicates trusted efficient communications,
- Bridging that allows access to other clusters and hence resources and possibilities for new innovations
- Core and periphery aspects of the cluster

The individuals that become 'hubs' have a lot of communication directed to and from themselves within a range of networks, they may act as bonders and or abridgers. The hubs are powerful and can be used very effectively, but also can become overburdened with the potential of removing themselves from the network, at great cost to the organisation in the subsequent inertia. A supportive organisation would ensure more resources are provided to personnel that are identified as hubs.

FIRST STEPS

Organisations need to consider, analyse and support this process. A simple tool is to survey who talks informally to whom and determine the central 'hub' positions. Training and up skilling will change the differing networks, so this analysis process must be on-going. In the design of the architecture and of the processes, allow places for people to talk and encourage ease of access. This may seem to slow the organisation down initially, but trust that people want to be able to contribute; time is not wasted and efficient quality driven processes will be enabled.

TAGS

Emergent Countries, networks

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