

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS



*Organising Differently
for a Sustainable Future*

Caplor Horizons

CAPLOR HORIZONS

The Change Maker's Guide to New Horizons

Organising Differently for a Sustainable Future

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First edition

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“Water is altruistic because
it supports life

Water is modest and humble
because it always takes
the lowest ground

Water is adaptable and flexible
because it can stay in a container
of any shape

Water is transparent and clear”

Laozi

Chapter 1: Introduction



Water connects us all. Shape-shifting through liquid, vapour and ice, water unites every environment and every living thing on our planet. Without water there is no life. Without water there can be no sustainable future.

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INTRODUCTION

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed it is the only thing that ever has.”

– Margaret Mead

In this chapter, we outline how and why we have written this book; who it is aimed at; and why we felt that the world needs a book on “organising differently for sustainable futures”. We also provide summaries of Chapters 4 to 11. This is a book that can be read in any order, or as stand-alone chapters, so feel free to dip into the chapters that most resonate for you first!

About this book

This book is a collaborative, voluntary venture, showcasing the knowledge, experiences, interests and imagination of a talented team of individuals from Caplor Horizons, a UK-based charity. Sixteen “Advisors”, all experts in their respective fields of international development, academia, business, consultancy and politics, have contributed towards this book resulting in leading-edge ideas and concepts.

We have tried to harmonise our many writing styles into a single voice for the benefit of our readers, but at times certain authors’ voices may stand out as being different. We recognise the enormous value of difference and diversity, and of the many perspectives that any organisation or community can draw upon. Our gender, generational, national, and cultural differences enable our creativity, innovation, and excitement.

Caplor Horizons is a not-for-profit organisation that is already contributing to organisational effectiveness at a practical level by trialling and role-modelling new ways of working. To achieve greater influence, we create opportunities to promote relevant ideas that might lead people to think, learn and act differently. Now we’d like to step up the way we showcase our experience and ideas in the form of a book.

We hope this book will help to build our “Caplor Community”. This community is concerned about the sustainability of the planet and about the future of humankind, as well as the immediate problems of today. It believes that we can all be leaders in our own distinctive way. It believes that everyone matters. It believes that collaboration helps achieve greater impact and that strength comes from diversity. The Caplor Community wants to help provide the confidence to others to go out into the world and make an impact on things that matter. To inspire and enable leaders, whatever their role and whoever they are, to deliver a sustainable future.

Who is this for?

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

– John Quincy Adams

This book is aimed at anyone in any sector and at any stage in their organisational careers who wishes to enhance their organisation to achieve more sustainable futures – we call you “change makers”. Whether you are a volunteer, entrepreneur, activist, founder, private/public/third sector leader, if you care about creating a more humane organisation that can meet future needs, better support your team, and in turn contribute to a better world, this book is for you.

This book focuses on the word “organise” as a verb, not just “organisation” as a noun. A real-world look at how we can organise for change, how we can organise our learning journey, and how we can organise differently to enable a sustainable future. With this in mind, there is a section within each of Chapters 4 to 11 that offers steps of how you might practically implement some of our ideas within your movement, team or organisation. This section, known as “The Kitchen” in this book, also provides a summary of the key messages within each chapter, some questions for activists, some questions for reflection and some recommended further reading should you wish to learn more.

We encourage you to read these chapters in any order or as stand-alone chapters. As a result, we have allowed for some repetition of key concepts throughout the book, albeit with different nuances to certain points. If you are not familiar with the “Caplor House”, we strongly recommend that you read Chapter 3 before reading Chapters 4 to 12 as this model is used throughout to structure the chapters.

What do we mean by “organisation”?

Throughout this book, we use the word organisation as a catch-all term to refer to groups of people collaborating for a particular purpose. For example, this could include social movements, businesses, charities, cooperatives, institutions, social enterprises, community groups, committees and much more.

Furthermore, we use different terms interchangeably to describe charitable organisations such as NGO (non-governmental organisation), not-for-profit, and third sector organisations.

We also believe that everyone is a leader. Therefore, when referring to leaders we mean anyone, no matter what their perceived role, position, stage of their career or ability.

Why do we need to organise differently?

“When the world is predictable you need smart people. When the world is unpredictable you need adaptable people.”

– Henry Mintzberg

Today’s world has been turned on its head by the coronavirus pandemic. It has challenged all our assumptions about what is normal, and what to expect in the future. It is an illustration, if we needed one, that we are operating in a turbulent “VUCA” world and must think afresh about what this means for our leadership. VUCA stands for Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity.

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By *Volatility*, we mean that the changes all around us are happening rapidly and on a large scale. For example, the coronavirus pandemic is currently having serious implications for many people and organisations across the globe. It is disrupting whole sectors and markets, changing the way we work and live, especially how we operate at a distance from each other and use technology. And this health crisis is on top of other short- and longer-term volatile situations – such as ongoing conflicts, the environmental crisis, escalating levels of poverty, human rights abuses and major issues of injustice, such as those epitomised by the “Black Lives Matter” movement.

Such volatility leads us all to experience a dramatic sense of Uncertainty, which means that predicting the future based on the past is no longer reliable or possible, and forecasting what the world might be like in the future is little better than guesswork.

Covid-19 has taken the world by storm, leaving every individual, organisation and leader feeling considerable uncertainty about how the future will unfold. To this we add the *Complexity* of today's global environment. So many factors now shape our world. We have seen how a virus can rapidly reshape our world and making obsolete the previous “cause and effect” approach to decision-making that aided us and gave us certainty in the past. We can no longer predict with any accuracy or certainty the outcomes of our actions in today's world. Yet our interconnectivity is visible for all to see. So how can we as leaders support and enable our communities and organisations to find a path through this turbulence?

Knowledge is of course more available to us today than ever before. This is illustrated by the volume of science at our disposal about the coronavirus and its behaviours, but this knowledge is also quickly obsolete, and we cannot be certain of its reliability. We see *Ambiguity* about what today's global events mean for our lives and futures, and what effects they may have on our world. During this pandemic, we are experiencing information overload, but at the same time this information is contradictory, ambiguous, and partial, making it increasingly difficult for leaders to make sound decisions with any sense of certainty or confidence.

So why do leaders need to pay attention to how they organise for today's VUCA world and sustainable futures?

Leaders around the world, who struggle to keep their organisations afloat and refreshed against a backdrop of increasing turbulence and frequent unexpected challenges, will see their organisations lose their edge and potentially their battle for survival.

Think back to the first organisations you engaged with. This might have been your school, a local church, a hospital, a shopping centre or airport. Or your first employer? What did the organisation look like? It's possible that you were looking at a hierarchy, an organisation with many layers and levels, probably functionally organised, with clear roles and clear job descriptions. Offices may have been labelled. Job titles reflected status. Organisational structures were set up to reflect the way people were organised and the roles they filled.

Such hierarchies reflected stability, continuity, repeatability, and they worked because people generally joined up for the long term, made career progress by climbing the hierarchy, and respected roles even more than the person in that role. This kind of organisation worked in many sectors for many years.

What about our organisations today? You may still know or even work for organisations that look and feel like the organisations described above: clear roles and defined responsibilities to deliver measurable results in a stable context. Maybe some of these still work today. But there is no doubt that many such organisations have already changed, abandoning outdated structures, unable to deliver results in today's VUCA world from such a rigid framework.

Organisations are changing and must change further.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Even as early as the 1980s, Gareth Morgan (1986) contrasted organisations as machines – traditional bureaucracies, with organisations as organisms – adaptive living entities that adapt to meet the demands of their environment. He was amongst the first to see the writing on the wall for the old rigid hierarchies that assumed people were willing to act according to strict controls and treated most of their workforce as “hired hands”. It is noteworthy that Morgan also wrote a chapter in the same book entitled, “Organizations as Psychic Prisons”, a popular chapter amongst MBA students at the time who often found themselves trapped in employment roles that demanded heart, soul and mind, but resisted challenge and rejected new ideas.

Old style machine organisations have now largely been replaced by “matrix organisations”, or project-based, networked, fluid forms of organisation. More recently, Charles Handy has been arguing for more federal organisational models, collaborations of smaller organisations with a small unifying core. And Frédéric Laloux’s (2014) “Teal” organisations have also influenced and enriched our understanding of why organisations must become organic living entities, more values-based, society-focused, and devolved, with a distributed leadership philosophy and practice.

In this book, we ask what next for organisational forms in today’s VUCA world?

There is no doubt that we urgently need new forms of organisation for more sustainable futures. More than ever before we are now technologically networked and this digital connectivity is more reliable than ever across the world. We are also more focused on enabling individuals with family commitments to work effectively and efficiently at a time and in a place that meets their needs. We must meet these and other human challenges if we are to enable the full potential of our diverse workforces to be reached. Digitisation and distance will bring new challenges of their own for today’s leaders. If leaders are no longer co-located with their teams how will they effectively lead from a distance? What will be the role of trust and organisational values within this new context? How will cultures be transmitted?

Of course, this means that organisations will not only need to be structured differently in the future, they will also feel very different, and will require different work-related values from the past. Homogeneity and role cultures will continue to give way to greater flexibility and diversity. The value and contribution of staff in an organisation can now be more individually focused and developed. Low-skilled labour will increasingly be replaced by robotics, meaning that those previously hired for their hands will be encouraged to learn skills that will enrich the organisation beyond robotic work. Fewer staff perhaps, but each one contributing uniquely to the organisation that engages them.

Book Outline

This book starts by introducing Caplor Horizons (Chapter 2) and one of our distinctive leadership models: the Caplor House (Chapter 3). It then explores the many facets of organising for sustainable futures chapter by chapter (Chapter 4 to Chapter 11), summaries of which can be seen below. The final two chapters, Sustainable Futures (Chapter 12) and New Horizons (Chapter 13), offer a more holistic viewpoint, taking into consideration learning from the rest of the book.

Our readers will have noted that the themes chosen for the chapters of this book are not the usual topics you might find in books written about organisations. The themes emerged through many exciting discussions about what enables successful organising in today's world.

The following summarises some of the key messages in the book ahead:

Chapter 4: The Learning Organisation

Like the changing world, the notion of the learning organisation has long been something of a cliché. Many have attempted to describe the learning organisation, but few have made it work. Real learning organisations are learning cultures. It is in their DNA that not only do individuals participate in continuous learning but also that the organisation itself is continuously learning, innovating and adapting. This chapter introduces a range of key models such as Senge's systems thinking, Scharmer's Theory U and Kolb's experiential learning cycle to highlight the importance of unlearning and experiential learning in order to achieve a sustainable future. It also offers the Caplor House as a tool to understand different ways and preferences of learning.

Chapter 5: The Proactive Organisation

In a VUCA world, organisations will not only be adaptive they will be proactive. The most proactive will survive and thrive. Being proactive means breaking out of the mould. It means "blue ocean" thinking. It means taking a visionary approach to strategy to meet multiple changing needs and opportunities. Proactive organisations see and implement novel configurations with partners and customers, take risks and lead their sectors. They are bold, courageous, restless, and far-sighted. However, proactive organisations must pay attention to culture if they want to succeed in the long term. This chapter offers the Caplor Horizons Voyage Board and the Caplor Islands tool to help proactive organisations successfully navigate through strategic change.

Chapter 6: The Connected Organisation

As we discussed earlier, the outside world is now unavoidable. Events across the globe enter our workplace and homes unsolicited via our phones, tablets and laptops. But being connected passively and unavoidably is not what we mean by connected organisations. Connected organisations are consciously and proactively connected. Next generation leaders are already upwardly coaching their older peers in the constantly changing networking opportunities to be found in digital social connections and networks. The pace of these digitally driven shifts will only get faster. This chapter offers Hudson's Collaboration Triangle to prompt organisations to consider the level of collaboration they aspire to.

Chapter 7: The Human Organisation

Machine organisations were and still are the opposite of human organisations. People brought their professional self to work but left their whole selves at the door. To deliver a sustainable future, organisations need the *whole* person. Advances in neuroscience support this. Deeper understanding of the whole person enable us to maximise the contributions of all staff. It also means a better fit for each person to their work and greater self-actualisation, self-esteem and self-confidence inside and outside the workplace. This chapter introduces Caplor Horizons' Human Horizons tool, which gets below the surface of traditional understandings of behaviour, revealing the internal dynamics of our brains, bodies and life stories based on neuroscience.

Chapter 8: The Soulful Organisation

Today's world increasingly demands organisations that respect and liberate the whole person: that encourage breadth of experience, that recognise family and social interests, that support staff who wish to contribute to society both at home or overseas, that encourage external achievement through sport, music, religion, politics or other modes of self-expression. Today's organisations require their leaders to build and sustain heart and soul. This chapter offers the Caplor Horizons' Leaderful Way tool to illustrate that leading with soul is possible in whatever environment you work in, bringing countless benefits for you and everyone involved.

Chapter 9: The Worldly Organisation

A worldly organisation differs from a global organisation in its cultural depth and understanding. Worldly organisations are sensitive, embracing and respectful of difference. They are curious to understand the many cultures in which they operate, and the many different worlds within worlds that make up our globe. Worldly organisations are learning organisations that understand their broader contexts and horizon scan into the future. But they also understand their worlds from close up. Worldliness enables cross-cultural partnerships and collaborations. This chapter offers some tools and models for enhancing these partnerships including the Six Senses of Partnership and the Culture Tree.

Chapter 10: The Influencing Organisation

Next generation organisations care about bigger causes and the future. They are skilled at influencing thought leaders, corporate leaders, and political leaders. Their influencing is based on deeply held values and principles. Influencing organisations are confident, courageous, resilient and focused. Their staff share their values and advocate on behalf of the organisation and with a more sustainable fairer society in mind. Effective communication is key to becoming a successful influencing organisation. This chapter offers a "connected communication" model to ensure that communication is clear and does not get "snagged" along the way.

Chapter 11: The Reflective Organisation

Reflection is probably one of the most critical, but least understood, and most underdeveloped management capabilities in today's world, and in particular today's modern world, where speed and fast action are revered above most else. Leaders often complain that they are too busy to stop, think, and question. A common misconception is that reflection is associated with inaction or slowness, but in reality, reflection is a highly proactive and conscious process that must be practised to become proficient. Practices such as mindfulness, going for a walk, listening to music, and sharing insights should be encouraged within reflective organisations. This chapter offers a selection of individual, paired and collective reflective techniques to enhance your team.

Chapter 12: Sustainable Futures

What values will matter in the future? Whereas in the old-world reliability, loyalty, predictability, and time service were all core values, in today's VUCA world we predict that creative thinking, adaptability, innovation, entrepreneurship, and teamworking will be foregrounded and critical. Furthermore, organisations are at last becoming more aware of the planet's finite resources. The public as a consumer is pressuring its suppliers to cut out palm oil, save energy, reduce plastic, and take care of the community and the environment in its production. People and planet are starting to outweigh "prosperity" in some instances, and company objectives are now more broadly measured by quadruple (purpose, people, planet, prosperity) bottom lines.

The astute reader will have noted that these many facets of organising for sustainable futures are all interconnected and overlapping ideas. They are the core themes that we have identified and developed but inevitably in a VUCA world there will be other themes that we have failed to predict. Perhaps these will form the basis of a second volume in the future! However, as we write this book we see these facets as the core elements for change and continuity, for sustainable futures and for a just and fairer world.



Caplor Horizons

What values and beliefs connect us as humanity and can be disseminated across oceans, across boundaries, from community to community, to inspire and enable leaders to deliver a sustainable future?

Chapter 2: The Caplor Horizons Project

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THE CAPLOR HORIZONS PROJECT

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.”

– Mother Teresa

The Caplor Horizons concept

“To bring about change, you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we fail to try.”

– Rosa Parks

Caplor Horizons’ vision is “a world in which social, environmental and economic progress is balanced”. This goal, at face value, might seem unachievable – even impossible. However, it’s worth remembering that over a relatively short period of time, human and social values have already changed dramatically. Only 175 years ago, slavery was still customary in the southern United States. One hundred years ago, many women in the UK didn’t have the right to vote. Only 50 years ago, the world wasn’t aware of climate change and global warming. And it’s only just over 25 years ago that South Africa held its first democratic elections, at last giving people of all races their say. At each point in the past, most people thought that change would be unachievable. And yet, here we are in the 21st century, in a changed world, incredulous that such things are such recent history.

But, as Martin Luther King (1994) stated in his open letter from Birmingham jail (over 50 years ago), “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” and there is still a great imbalance in fairness and justice on a societal level across the globe.

So, at Caplor Horizons’ conception stage, we started with the “why” question. Why does an organisation like Caplor Horizons need to exist? Why would it make a difference? Why would people support it? And why would it be valuable – in all the senses of that word?

From the outset, we wanted to contribute to a movement for change. We sought to form an organisation that would influence other organisations to learn differently, think differently and act differently.

We wanted to make a distinctive impact, leading to greater social equity across the planet. We wanted to inspire and enable leaders to deliver a sustainable future.

This was our thinking: we appreciated that there were many individuals within society who were committed to making as big a difference as possible. We also appreciated that a great many of these, whilst having tremendous knowledge, experience, energy and commitment, lacked an effective and efficient opportunity (or means) to help other individuals and organisations make the changes necessary for a fairer world.

And so, we felt that if we could attract these people – practitioners, business leaders, entrepreneurs, academics and government officials – to our cause, we could form an organisation that would be able to provide an impressive knowledge bank of expertise, a wide variety of skill sets, real-world experience and practical help.

CHAPTER 2: THE CAPLOR HORIZONS PROJECT

We thought that if these people contributed their time on a voluntary basis, *pro bono*, then this new organisation would be able to provide professional skills and experienced knowledge to other charities and organisations that couldn't usually afford that level of expertise.

So, we sat down to define exactly what the "value proposition" of the organisation should be. Where it should be focused. And how it might go about helping to inspire and enable leaders, and future leaders, to deliver a sustainable future.

At an early stage, we agreed that the organisation's "value" would be built around the three elements of leadership, strategy and influence. And that, as a specialist in organisational effectiveness, it would focus on helping individuals, teams and organisations to contribute to meaningful, positive and effective long-term change in a challenging world.

And so Caplor Horizons was conceived.

We believed that effective leadership leads to effective strategy and effective influence. And that leaders can be anyone and everyone. We also believed that leaders help themselves and others do the right things. They help to set direction, create change, inspire and enable.

And we believed that leaders also need coaching and mentoring, and a good understanding of how to look after themselves, as well as their teams.

How is Caplor Horizons different?

"Imagine what a harmonious world it could be if every single person, both young and old, shared a little of what they are good at doing."

– Quincy Jones

Right from the start, we knew that our vision of "a world in which social, environmental and economic progress is balanced" might seem unachievable to many people. We recognised that it's easy to feel overwhelmed by the economic, political and societal forces that surround us. Faced by the world's many challenges, how can we, as individuals, make a difference? After all, it's simpler sometimes just to become indifferent.

In forming Caplor Horizons, we wanted to contribute to a cause that overcame that indifference. We wanted to introduce new ways of learning, new ways of thinking and new ways of acting that would open up shared searches for solutions to the many problems that our world faces.

We wanted to make people curious, as curiosity leads to finding out about things and thereby a better understanding of the many issues. This engagement leads to commitment and mutual value can be added through collaboration. Sustainable change can then be brought about through collective creativity and the whole cycle cascades to expand involvement and broaden results.

So, when setting out on our voyage, we imagined bringing individuals, teams and organisations together to contribute to a movement for positive change across all sectors.

We wanted to make connections between the academic thinking and writing of our experts, our preferred experiential learning approach and the practical, real-world experience of our clients and advisors.

We hoped that our distinctive approach to learning and development would be disseminated across boundaries, from community to community, to broaden our impact and help create a world in which social, environmental and economic progress is more balanced.

Caplor Horizons' impact

“Grace happens when we act with others on behalf of our world.”

– Joanna Macy

It would be easy to gloss over the early stages of getting the Caplor Horizons project “off the ground”! However, as with any new organisation in a “start-up” position, we spent a lot of time researching what other similar thinking organisations were doing, then talking through exactly what it was that we were trying to achieve that would be different, drafting several business plans (that slowly improved with each iteration!), prototyping ideas, getting people engaged, building momentum and gaining traction.

Nonetheless, within a short time of its formation, Caplor Horizons had begun collaborations with many other charities. It had worked extensively with other organisations in sub-Saharan Africa, helping to put knowledge and learning at the heart of development. It had embarked upon a number of strategic partnerships in India, working to reduce poverty. It had worked with students and lecturers at the United World College, to develop programmes for future leaders. It had produced over 200 downloadable resources and thought leadership papers, aimed at a global audience and with the purpose of inspiring and enabling change. It had established a core of 50 Advisors who contributed nearly 1,000 days of their time per year. And its regular “Updates”, providing information, facts and learning, reached people in 30 different countries around the globe every week.

This was a small start. However, as with ripples on a pond, the impact of Caplor Horizons' work continues to spread outwards. Our influence emanates from an initial impetus that then creates ripples of effect. Firstly, at an *individual level* involving the personal learning of the people who work with us; then at an *organisational level*, as we help to improve organisational practice; and finally, at a *societal level* in the wider world, as more effective organisational practice leads to a more sustainable future.



Caplor Horizons' Theory of Change

What do we do?

We believe that the ability to learn – quickly and thoroughly – underpins all successful leadership and all successful change. The most effective leaders are constantly learning, challenging themselves and others to grow, develop and improve. They use experience, both positive and negative, as a spur to move forward and drive change in knowledge, behaviours and attitudes.

We see this learning journey, both for ourselves and everyone that we work with, as a voyage.

Very early on this was reflected within our brand imagery – our sailing ship (to take people with us on the voyage); our crow’s nest (to see further over the horizon); our “vision” compass (to ensure that we never lost sight of our purpose); our lighthouse (to see through the fog of everyday problems); our “voyage map” (to remind ourselves where we were heading and what was important); and the “islands” that we would land on as we explored the best navigational path.

We want to actively support leaders and organisations in their learning. We believe that learning is about being creative, igniting new ideas within each other to enrich knowledge and understanding of ourselves, others and society. And that learning is about growing skills and an awareness of the world which we live in and want to sustain.

We therefore offer stimulating and exciting learning opportunities to a broad range of people. Learning that is relevant to them and that shines a light on future possibilities.

As a result, Caplor Horizons has developed many tools and models that help other organisations to learn differently, think differently and act differently. Many of these are based on established research themes, academic concepts and the work of prominent thinkers.

Some of our most distinctive tools, approaches and models include:

- **The Caplor House**, a model that provides insights into behavioural preferences, developed by Ann Alder and Geoff Cox from the work of Ned Herrmann – read Chapter 3 for more information.
- **A strengths-based approach**, an approach inspired by Charles Handy’s saying: “Do the best at what you are best at for the benefit of others.” It involves working with individuals, teams and organisations to identify what they are best at, how they can build on these going forward and how they can work towards their goals through harnessing and developing their strengths.
- **The Caplor Voyage Board**, a tool for plotting exactly where you are on your voyage so far, and what compass heading you need to follow to achieve your objectives going forwards – read Chapter 5 for more information.
- **The Caplor Islands**, a model for leading strategic change based on John Kotter’s 8 Steps – read Chapter 5 for more information.
- **The Caplor Culture Tree**, a model for helping to define, manage and strengthen an organisation’s culture, based on thinking from Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes, as well as ideas from Kim Cameron and Robert Quinn – read Chapter 9 for more information.
- **Human Horizons**, an online tool based on the latest insights from Clive Hyland about the complex world of neuroscience when analysing our thoughts, feelings and instincts – read Chapter 7 for more information.
- **The Six Senses of Teamwork and Partnership**, a means of analysing team and partnership effectiveness developed from the research findings of John Adair – read Chapter 9 for more information.

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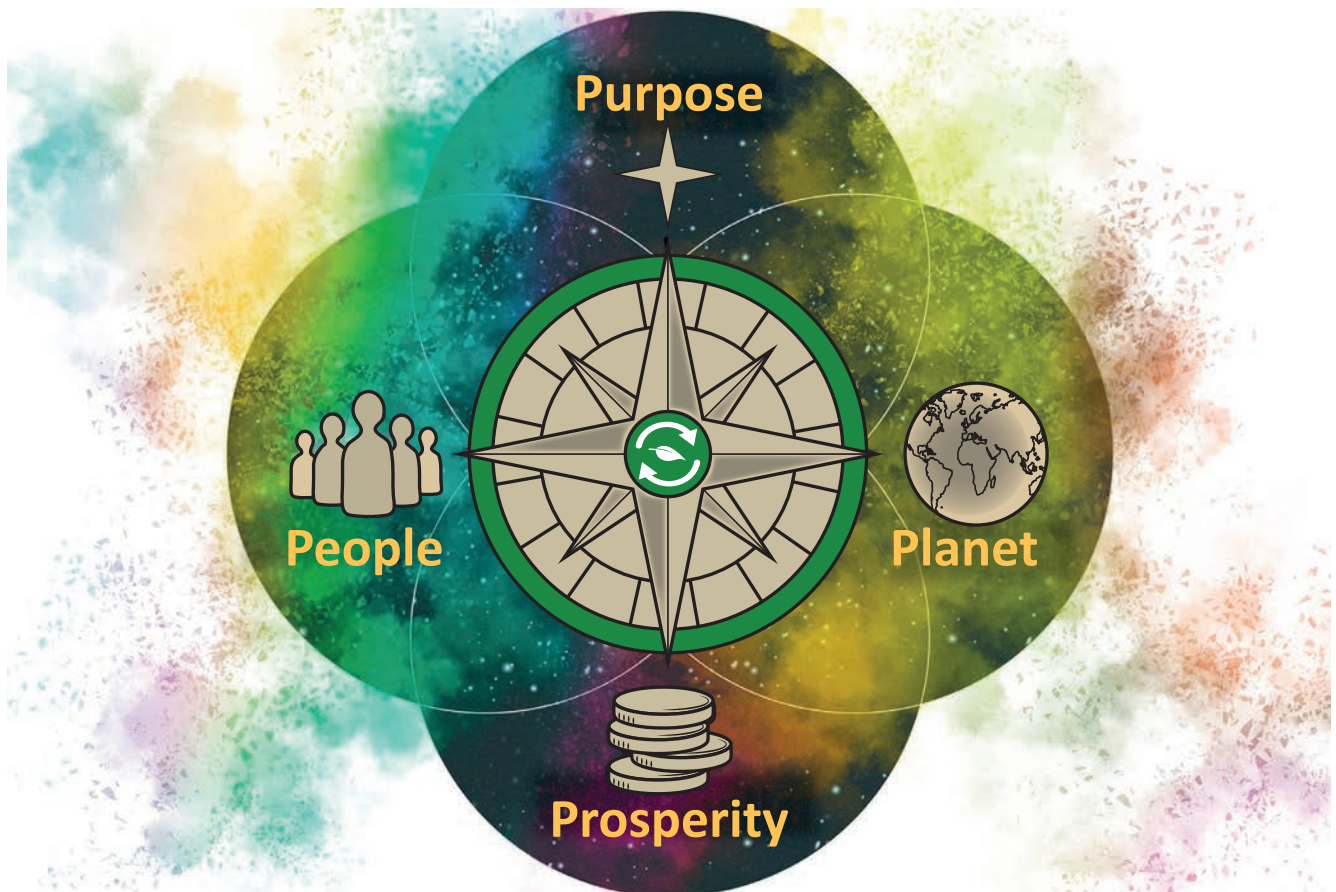
By widely sharing these tools and models via the “Voyage”, our online resource website, we hope to create common understanding, common goals – *a world where social, environmental and economic progress is more balanced* – and a common language that contributes to a greater willingness to learn from each other.

And then pass that knowledge on, with the overall aim of bringing about positive and lasting change by uniting people and ideas.

Caplor Horizons’ approach to sustainable development

From the very beginning “*helping to ensure a sustainable future for our world*” influenced everything that we did. Inspired by John Elkington’s “triple bottom line” (people, planet, profit), the 5 Ps of the Sustainable Development Goals (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships) and the Brundtland Report’s (1987) definition of sustainability, we have defined sustainability in a way that allows us to focus on where we believed that we could make an impact:

- **Purpose** – The north star of our vision compass symbolises our guiding principles. It entails viewing all our stakeholders as valued members of our Caplor community, working towards shared goals and a common purpose.
- **People** – tackling social injustice, addressing inequalities and promoting human rights wherever possible.
- **Planet** – treading softly on the Earth’s resources in as many ways as possible, looking after our fragile ecosystems and controlling our use of natural resources that future generations will depend on.
- **Prosperity** – ensuring that all human beings can enjoy equitable and fulfilling lives in harmony with nature.



Caplor Horizons’ 4 Ps of sustainability

CHAPTER 2: THE CAPLOR HORIZONS PROJECT

Wherever we live and work on this planet, we can all share a common aim, to enable the people, animals and plants of the world to thrive and live together, preserving our resources for future generations. We understand that there is no simple formula for achieving this, but we are of the firm belief that education and leadership are key. And that contributing to a growing understanding of the many systemic and interconnected issues that can either enable or destroy our sustainable future is a worthwhile goal.

Through working collaboratively with other organisations, we address issues around diversity, equality and human rights. We examine the unconscious biases that we all have and how these can sometimes negatively impact fundamental equalities. And we also explore ways in which we can help to develop communities, social groups and organisations so that they can sustain themselves into the future, without depending on external support.

We involve ourselves with the challenges surrounding the use and preservation of the Earth's natural resources, the ability of the planet to renew itself, the damaging impact of human activity on the natural world and the need for the replacement of outdated technology with new, sustainable solutions. And we encourage people to think in ways that consider the long-term effects of their short-term actions.

We aim to support the development of ideas that contribute to a sustainable future, even if there is a short-term cost. One of our key objectives, therefore, is to help other organisations achieve sustainable change through renewing their strategy, strengthening their leadership and improving their influence.

A commentary on Caplor Horizons

By Charles Handy

Charles Handy has a global reputation for being one of the leading thinkers of our time and has been proactively supporting Caplor Horizons since it was established.

Charles Handy was born and raised near Naas in Ireland and now lives in London. He is a social philosopher, writer, broadcaster and lecturer. He regularly features among the top names in "Thinkers50", the list of international management thinkers, and in 2011 was awarded his first Lifetime Achievement Award. Charles was the first significant international authority on organisations and leadership, with over two million books sold around the world, mostly dealing with the future shape of work and life in our changing society.

Below summarises a conversation with Charles in early 2020 about his involvement with, and thoughts relating to, Caplor Horizons. The conversation also covers his most recent insights on other topics mentioned later on in the book such as the soul of an organisation, the best ways for organisations to stay relevant in today's ever-changing world, his advice to the younger generation, and how to reduce the effects of climate change and biodiversity loss.

The conversation took place at Charles's home, sat by his fire.

What did you think about Caplor Horizons in its early stages?

Well, Caplor Horizons, I thought it was a wonderful idea really and I do congratulate you for discovering what you wanted to do.

Many people, either themselves or their organisations, are on the brink of what I call a second curve, rethinking their mission and how they're going to go about it. And I do think that expanding your horizons is an incredible and very important part of that.

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Asking lots of people who may not know you very well to give you ideas may spark all sorts of things. I don't know who particularly sparked Caplor Horizons but the idea of people giving their time is not new. But giving their time in such an organised way to help voluntary organisations seems to be rather inspired really. It was sort of a businesslike approach to non-business organisations which I liked.

From what I have seen myself about Caplor Horizons' work on the ground, it's basically about lighting a spark in an organisation. Like this fire. You know, you press a button and it suddenly fires up and I think that that's what your Caplor teams do. They suddenly get people excited so that they can be more exciting as an organisation and deliver more exciting things. And that's very exciting to be part of.

How would you describe your story of involvement with Caplor Horizons?

When we met Caplor Horizons, Elizabeth and I, we understood it was a volunteer consultancy organisation that went out to the developing world mostly to help voluntary organisations with their strategies and so on. To be honest, it did seem worthy and good, but I can't say we were very excited with the thought. Particularly my wife Elizabeth who's a photographer and fascinated by people, but not that fascinated with managerial ideas. She was a great organiser and manager, but she didn't like the words related to that. However, when we got to Caplor Horizons people were drawing pictures and talking about what they did when she photographed them. I interviewed them a bit and we produced a booklet and it came alive.

Because in the end organisations are groups of companions – companions with a common purpose. But above all they are people, interesting people, or they wouldn't be valued. So, when we found out what their interests were and what they contributed, suddenly everything came alive. So Caplor Horizons wasn't just a name and an idea, it was a group of fascinating people. Suddenly it was always a thrill to meet some of them.

Early April 2020 marks the sixth birthday of Caplor Horizons: reflecting on the following poem by A.A. Milne, do you think this has any relevance to Caplor Horizons or any organisation reaching this milestone?

When I was One, I had just begun.
When I was Two, I was nearly new
When I was Three, I was hardly Me
When I was Four, I was not much more
When I was Five, I was just alive
But now I am Six, I'm as clever as clever.
So, I think I'll be six now for ever and ever

Now we are Six by A.A. Milne

Well yes in the sense that I think all organisations when they reach this early midlife have to think of themselves as perpetual explorers. Perpetual young kids. Young people are curious and young organisations soon cease to be curious because they go up to the first curve and become successful and think that they've got it now, we've got the model. But I think that's dangerous. I mean I do actually remember when you produced your Caplor House model, I thought, "Hmm, this is a bit dangerous." Not because it isn't good, but because it stops you from making another one.

And I say the great thing about being six forever and ever is that you're forever asking questions. Quite fundamental questions like, "Why did God create the world?" or "Why do we exist?" and "Would we exist if we didn't exist?" and so on. So, don't lose your curiosity just because you're successful.

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But it's very tempting. Both as individuals and as organisations. Very tempting once you've got through that early stage of doubt and insecurity and found that it does work. You think, "Ah it's OK, I've got the recipe." Well you have, but it may not be the best recipe. And so asking people questions like you're asking me is a very good discipline I think.

What "second curves" might Caplor Horizons consider over the next three years and, in particular, what do you think might be the biggest opportunities and risks during this time?

Well I'm the wrong person to ask. You ought to ask yourselves. However, if I were to say something, I'd say that I don't think you've plumbed the possibilities within your organisation enough.

It seems to me that your project teams, I'd like to know what dreams they have. Because they know roughly what Caplor Horizons is capable of. I think dreams are very interesting things. Unless you're Martin Luther King, it's not your dream that matters, it's the dreams that come from within the organisation. And it's worth asking them "in their wildest dreams what do they think Caplor Horizons should be doing?" My children always used to say, "Dreams give wings to fools," but I actually think that's OK. I think you can be foolish, just as children are foolish.

So I'd ask them to come for another gathering and this time talk about dreams. Think as unrealistically as possible because dreams don't have to be real. "What in your wildest dreams would you like to see Caplor Horizons doing?" You have some very capable people in your organisation, but I don't think you are using their dreams and curiosity enough.

What is the best way for organisations to measure and demonstrate their successes?

I remember once I gave a talk and John Humphrys was in the chair at this conference and afterwards he turned to every speaker and asked them questions, you know. And I wasn't worried about that because I know John quite well from my radio talks I used to do but John catches you unawares. So he turned to me after my talk and he said, "Well Charles, you've given advice to many organisations, how many of them have actually done anything as a result?" And I couldn't answer the question. So what I did in the end was that I answered a different question. I said that I don't advise organisations. I work with individuals who hopefully do something different as a result in the organisation. I don't keep statistics, but I can tell you some stories. And I can imagine you have lots of stories. And I think that's the most interesting way of convincing people that you've got something important to offer. You ought to have two or three stories up your sleeve to show how your intervention has actually changed things around or made things more exciting.

For example, "When we arrived everybody was rushing around, it was a very busy organisation, but it was a boxy organisation. Everyone was busy in their own box. And someone had written down for them what to do in those boxes. But they weren't talking to each other. The boxes were on paper all linked up like an organisation chart. The fact that these boxes were full of human beings seemed to have escaped their notice. And one of our great triumphs when we left was that they were singing a song and they were connected and working together. When we arrived, it was all busy but boring and when we left it was busy but joyful." Make it as personal as you can.

You do need some numbers to show that people wanted your intervention. But stories are actually the only way you can convey what it is you do. You could have lots of boring managerial words like "communication" and so on. But you need to bring it alive with a story. And simple words like a "boxy organisation" help people know what you mean, don't use managerial words. And the more personal you can make it the better. Give people a feel of what you do. And metaphors are very important. It's what Luther King and Churchill were very good at. Finding metaphors that catch people's interests.

What do you think the soul of an organisation is all about and how can it thrive if you think it's a valid idea?

I think you know from your experience when you walk into an organisation. You sort of feel, "This is a good place to be," or "This is an exciting place to be," or "This is a very dull place". I mean I always say if you want to cheer yourself up go into an English primary school in the early morning and you feel the joy and excitement and thrill of learning that's in the room. It's just a feeling actually. And so the soul of an organisation is a kind of feeling that drives you on, why you're there. In the primary school you're there for these kids.

You must feel that when you go into an organisation. I remember going into an organisation in India with Caplor Horizons and feeling that this is a very laborious organisation full of worthy people doing worthy things. It wasn't until they started talking about what they did every day and I got to understand what drove them that it became clear that it was quite an exciting organisation. So suddenly you discovered that there was a soul there and a heart. Something that they felt was important to them.

But it's a feeling really and I don't think you can find words. People write vision statements and so on but I don't think that's it. Unless you're Martin Luther King it's very hard to find the right words to describe dreams and so on. But it's a feeling. And its captured mostly by stories. People will say, "Well I remember the time that we went to this Indian organisation and it wasn't until people started talking about their own experiences that it came alive."

And as I say, I think what Caplor Horizons really does, at its best, is set the spark that gets the fire going. And that's probably just by talking with people. People love to talk about what they're doing. And I'm sure one of the things you could get them to do more is that. And getting them to talk in the semi-public and they'll resonate with it or not. I thought it was very exciting that morning it really did come alive.

Another example is Jaipur Rugs, who I visited with you last year. You had to see the women weaving to understand what they're all about. They were really about two things. One was making the rugs and the other, more importantly, was about giving meaningful work to the women in the villages. You had to be there to find it. It's hard to find the right words for it. I mean to me it was so revealing I can never forget it. It's so obvious to me that they were about making these rugs with these wonderful women who were all so beautifully dressed. And I thought that there's something about organisations where the women dress up to go to work, it was very moving.

I remember, I'm sure they don't do it anymore, but Marks and Spencer used to have a tradition when the Chairman and the top management team would meet every morning for their regular routine management meeting, the first thing they did was pass around an item of clothing just to remind themselves what they were all about. They were about high-quality clothing for the middle classes. It was just this is what we're all about. And I think you need to have visible, tangible evidence of what it's all about and stories help.

I had a very interesting time in hospital. I remember lecturing the more senior nurse about the curse of efficiency. They were so keen on improving efficiency that they'd forgotten why they were here. And why they were here was to help me get better. And they seemed to have forgotten that and they were trying to make you behave like a robot and get up at a certain time and eat certain food and so on. I said the danger is of course an organisation has to be efficient, it has to work well we all know that, but there's such a thing that philosophers call a "category error". If you take what is a necessary condition and make it into your purpose you have made a category error. It's very easy to do because it's very easy to improve efficiency and to make things work better like getting rid of a few people, you can tighten up targets on certain areas, you can improve communication or shorten waiting times. It's very easy if you know where your benchmark is. But in the process, you forget why you're there. So you need people like me around to say, "Hey you're here for me."

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Businesses have to make a profit to survive, but it probably becomes their purpose, so they lose the spark. They've made a necessary condition into a purpose. This is very dangerous and it's so easy to do. Particularly if you're a consultant. Because you see things that aren't working very well, like people not talking to one another, and you think if we can do that then we've done a great deal. Well yes you have, but you may have missed the point.

The most important person in an organisation is the receptionist. They are the first person that nearly all of the outsiders meet. So they're incredibly important. If they're friendly and welcoming and interesting then that gives a flavour of the organisation. I remember once when I was still working for the BBC they handed over the reception to Securicor. And you'd walk into the BBC and there would be people with guns on the reception desk. That gave you a funny feeling about the organisation. But when I pointed out, "Doesn't that matter?" they said there needed to be a security force and I said, "Well yes but that's not the image of the BBC that you want to present to strangers, is it?" So that's all about the feel, you know.

One of the first things I think you should do when your teams visit an organisation is that they should record their first impressions of the organisation and feed them back and say this is what we felt when we walked in. "This is a cold, efficient but inhuman place," or whatever. Because most of the organisations you work with are engaged in the people world so they must be welcoming. And it takes time. I mean with Caplor Horizons we eventually got the feeling that it was an exciting organisation, but it took quite a long time to dig through all the words and the managerial stuff until people started talking about their own experiences.

We are living in a complex, volatile, ever-changing world; what strategies or tips would you give to organisations to remain relevant in this complex world?

It's easy to say, but difficult to practise, but remaining curious. You need to be doing what other organisations are doing. Keep your eyes open all the time. And your ears open. Organisations are fascinating things; you can get ideas from all sorts of places if you think how they go about things.

I think it's very important that you become what I call a "learning organisation". By which I don't mean you have lots of courses and so on, I mean you should know how to learn from your experiences. I think that real learning is experience interpreted in tranquillity and reflected upon away from the actual experience. That's how we learn in real life. We have an experience and say we won't do that again or we could've done that better.

But in order to do that you have to have a blame free culture. For example, the American Seals have a very detailed debriefing procedure after every operation which is totally confidential and totally blame-free so that they can actually say, "Well I made a terrible mistake there," "I fired my gun when I shouldn't have," or whatever. So you could actually say, "I made a mistake." But it's very difficult.

You're in a great position to do that exact sort of thing and in the process, you develop a wonderful comradeship amongst your teams. Everybody loves it when someone makes a mistake and you have this great comradeship and so on. I discovered when I became a professor and started giving talks to students that they loved it when I told them about my mistakes. They didn't want to know what I had achieved. So you develop a great comradeship and trust in the group. You have to trust them that they won't spill the beans and say, "Do you know what so and so told me?" You create this kind of trust. And you will see this permeate the whole organisation.

In your opinion, what do you think a next generation organisation looks like?

Well, I think the word they throw around is “agile”. I prefer “flexi” really. It’s interesting, I was reading somewhere in the paper about “flexi-schools”. Where there is a coordinating hub but basically they use all sorts of different mechanisms to get the kids learning things they ought to learn. Some are contracted out to people, some are linked up with other schools, some they create mini-schools, some they hire in experts or whatever.

But I think that new organisations can no longer do everything themselves. I mean when I first joined the Shell organisation everything had Shell on it. Shell was totally integrated. Even the people who furnished our houses were Shell employees. It’s incredibly expensive of course because they all had to be paid Shell pensions and so on. But the idea was that everything would be Shell. But it worked much better when they became more flexi. I think that’s what’s going to happen. But the stress will be how do you hold the whole thing together? You can have all the communication systems you like, but what really holds you together is this feeling of “soul”, why we’re here. It’s all about why we’re here really. Who are we trying to help?

What advice would you have to young people in their careers, given the challenges involved?

Dream! Think of times in your life when you were excited or felt inspired. I have this thing about everyone having a “golden seed” within them which is something they are very good at. And somebody will know what it is but probably not you. So keep asking your friends what your golden seed is, what your special skill or talent is. Go and talk to ten of your friends or colleagues that know you well and like you and ask them to tell you one thing you’re very good at and then come back and tell me what it is.

I remember doing this with an advertising executive who had just been made redundant. And he did this and came back and said, “It’s very interesting Charles, they said all sorts of wonderful things about me but no one said advertising executive.” So I said, “Well it’s time for you to move on.” But look at all these things you’re good at, group leadership, communication etc. Dream a little, put those things together in some other capacity. It turned out that he was also very interested in military history. So I suggested that he should set up an organisation touring battlefields and so on. Which of course he didn’t do because he couldn’t find a way to make money out of it. But now that he’s retired that’s what he does. And he’s doing very well. So he did it in the end. But you need help putting it all together.

Go and tell all your young leaders to find 10 friends and get them to tell you one thing about what you’re good at and you’ll be very surprised what it is and then try to translate what it means. You may need help with the next bit or how you put it together with something to make a career or a job.

I tell a famous story about my mother which I’ll tell you again. I was born as the son of a country parson in Ireland. And I knew my parents wanted me to be like my dad and be a country parson and maybe, if I was very successful, I’d be a Bishop or something. But they never tried to influence me and anyway I didn’t want to do that, I wanted to get rich and roam the world. So I joined Shell, a big international organisation that promised to make me rich and would keep me employed and send me around the world. I don’t know what they thought that was. They had no idea. I think they probably thought I was going to be putting petrol into people’s cars. Anyway, my first job was going to be in Singapore so they drove me to the airport and as I got out of the car my mother said, “Never mind dear, it’ll be great material for your books”. “Books?!” I said, “Mother, I’m an oil executive”. And she said, “Yes dear,” but when mothers say that you know they mean, “No dear.” And you know so 10 years later I sent her a copy of my first book. Somehow she knew, I don’t know how, that I really wanted to be a writer or could be a writer. So somebody will know before you do. Somebody will tell you, “Actually you’re just so good at understanding what people feel about you ought to be a social psychologist,” who knows.

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The most exciting thing about development for young people is that most of the jobs that will exist haven't been invented yet. So this is a huge area of opportunity it just needs creativity. It doesn't have to be a business, you can get paid for doing all sorts of stuff. And genes are very important. I never became a country parson but I have delivered more sermons than my father ever did and I've counselled more people than my father ever did, not in the vestry but at my breakfast table and I've written more articles than he ever did, I just never ran the services.

Climate change and biodiversity loss is very big in the world at the moment. What are you feeling about that and what should we be doing about it?

Well, it all seems to be very simple really. It just needs governments to pluck up the courage to do something and pass laws. You know, like we won't have any internal combustion engines after 2050. But you see governments are very unhappy about taking risks because they must win the next election. So there's a huge role for people like you, and to some extent people like me, to get the public ready for new change.

Like they could actually be bold and stop smoking because there was a campaign which basically alerted the public to the dangers of smoking and so when they passed the law everybody said, "That's very sensible so we know what we have to do, stop smoking."

So I think we are the sort of revolutionaries that go out and prepare people for major change in legislation because it's got to be by legislation, and technology too. But it seems to be quite easy really if you just think, "What laws do we need to say?" You could say no gas fires or fossil fuels and make it illegal.

I think the first thing is to make Britain car-free. Nobody's allowed cars. And how do you do that. Well you make all public transport free for everybody – not just for oldies like me! And then it makes it sensible for people. But for that to happen we do need thinktanks and so on to start plugging the idea of free transport everywhere. I mean in Ireland, once, they did do that. So my parents used to go on train journeys across Ireland just for the hell of it and they loved it and it was free. I'm sure it was a good thing to do. It just needs courage by governments.

But I can understand why they're frightened. I would wish that they use this conference in Glasgow (COP26) to dream a little about a car-free world, not by persuasion but by law. Persuasion has to come first however. I mean the first duty of the Government is to educate people about the future. But they don't do it very well so it falls to people like you and me in our different ways.

For example, earlier on I was very sure that the future of unemployment was self-employment. But it took some time. I remember Andrew Marr coming to interview me. And he was on the radio and I tried to persuade him that to create employment we had to have radical change to self-employment and I came up with this idea of "portfolio careers". And at the end of it Andrew stood up and he said "I've had a very interesting talk this morning with Charles Handy who believes self-employment is the answer to unemployment. And I went to the window and saw a flock of pigs flying by, it's never going to happen." And I was furious with him. And I mean, I was right and he was wrong about it. It gradually caught on. I came up with a portfolio career as an alternative. First of all middle-aged people, instead of retirement, adopted other forms of work in self-employment. And then the young people discovered it. And now of course we have the gig economy and everyone has work to do.

So, to get what you might call paradigm shifts you do have to have some wild thinking and then the mechanisms to make it happen and the words to make it happen. And that's the job for people like me and you and your organisation. To make the impossible seem practical is really what you're about when your teams go out.

Lastly, is there anything we should have asked you or any last comments?

I think in some sense you ought to do more dreaming the impossible and making it practical in your overseas work and indeed your work here.

I don't see you changing the world. I think, rather like me, you have to work through other organisations and get them to change the world. And I think on their own they will know what they need to do. It seemed to be quite clear in India that they knew what they needed to do. But they didn't quite know how to do it. Well they did really, but they didn't know they knew. They had the expertise in that room, and what was needed was for you to give them the confidence, the spark, to know that they could do it and to be curious and experimental.

And that's why learning from mistakes is so important. Because you can't dream the impossible unless you're prepared to do the impossible and make a mistake and learn from it. It's very exciting. So I would encourage you to dream the impossible in all of your work to make it practical and the more mistakes the better, because that's the only way you actually learn. You learn your limits and you learn your excitement. And learning from mistakes creates comradeship and trust.

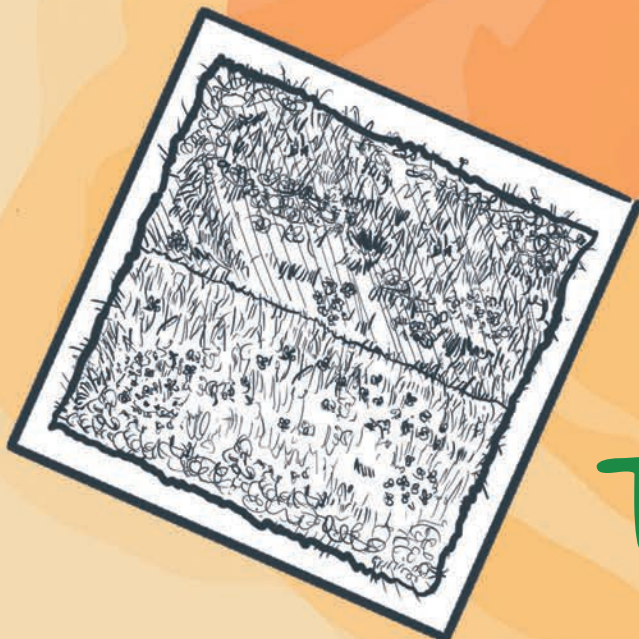
And I'm sure you have enough dreams around if you dig deep enough. You get people to be curious enough and exciting enough.

It's about finding out what the real soul of the organisation is and that's about why they exist and for what and for whom. And then having these landmark stories that you say, "Why Caplor Horizons?" And you say, "Have you ever seen a group of African ladies dancing because of their organisation? Well I have and it's exciting."

I do remember in Malawi too these women in this village, I remember watching this case study under the trees and it was lovely and at the end of it, to celebrate their learning, they danced and sang a song, it was sweet. And you thought if everybody within an organisation can dance after a session that would be wonderful. What is it that these people have that we don't have back in England? I mean if you start telling those stories and can produce a photograph people will get excited.

But I like the metaphor of setting the fire alight. Because I do think that's what you do even if it's not what you say you do. You talk about planning and strategy and all this kind of stuff, but I don't think that's as exciting as getting people excited about what they do. And singing about it, that's great.

No Man is an Island.
How can we learn
differently, think differently
and act differently within
the context of a changing
and challenging world?



Chapter 3: The Caplor House

3

THE CAPLOR HOUSE

“The ability to simplify means to eliminate the unnecessary so that the necessary can speak.”

– Hans Hofmann

Caplor Horizons is a unique organisation. It brings together a mixed community of individuals, with different backgrounds and specialisms, all of whom are driven by shared values and a desire to offer their skills and experience for the benefit of others. Within this community, everyone matters. Everyone has something they can contribute to our movement and everyone’s voice is heard.

However, from the beginning, it was clear that the diversity of individuals, their cultural backgrounds, varied experiences and different learning and teaching methods (all the things that added strength to the community) could also carry risks. Would a Caplor Horizons programme or event be unique and recognisable? Would we be able to create a common, unifying thread that would run through this work? Would clients identify with individuals rather than the whole body of the Caplor community? The answer lay in establishing a strong identity, through a simple and memorable core model that all Advisors and clients could embrace that would provide the basis of our services and programme offerings.

The model that emerged was the “Caplor House”. The Caplor House developed organically, nurtured by the whole team, and now provides security and a common language to everyone involved within our organisation.

Why is the model based upon a house?

The metaphor of the house or the home is universal. Although everyone’s home might look different, a four-walled fixture on a permanent foundation, a hut fashioned from straw and mud, a snowy sanctuary, a hidden cave, or even a floating boat, the concept of having a shelter exists across the globe.

A place to live is aspirational but it is also a fundamental human right. A home provides shelter, safety and a sense of belonging. The Caplor House offers all those involved with Caplor Horizons a shared, familiar and comfortable place to inhabit and a secure base in which to return. It allows them to leave, to work and influence others in the wider world, returning home in order to make sense of external experiences.

At Caplor Horizons we now use this powerful metaphor as a key component of our work to inspire and enable leaders to deliver a sustainable future. The Caplor House is an integrative organisational effectiveness and leadership model that is underpinned by learning.



The Caplor House in three dimensions

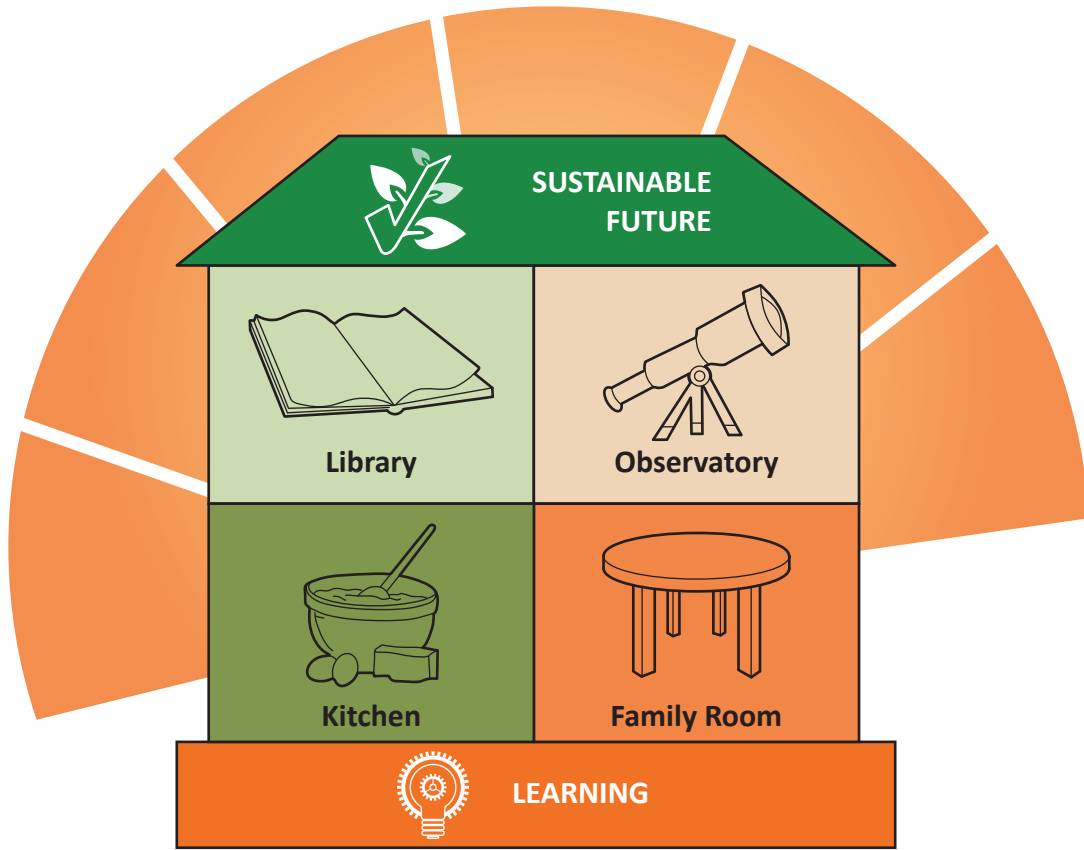
What is the Caplor House model?

The Caplor House is a representation of different aspects of the way in which we think and behave. It explores responses to different situations and offers a deeper understanding of individual preferences, prejudices and choices. It is built upon a firm foundation, has a protective roof and four distinct rooms. The rooms are linked by staircases and corridors.

- **The foundation of the Caplor House is learning.** Caplor Horizons aims to initiate and support change that requires learning. We do not believe that leadership capability and performance are sustainable without the ability to learn. All our work starts from this premise.
- **The roof of the Caplor House represents our overarching vision:** working towards a more sustainable future. The roof tiles contain four overlapping and balancing principles concerning purpose, people, planet, and prosperity.
- **The four rooms of the Caplor House** are places in which different aspects of individual thinking and behaviour are explored. They can be “visited” in order to see issues from different perspectives, understand other people’s points of view, recognise and challenge assumptions and explore different solutions to problems. A metaphorical walk around the house offers a holistic view of any issue and the potential for satisfying and considered decision-making.

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

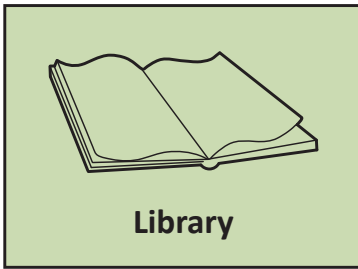
When you put all of these elements together, here is what you get:



The Caplor House

The Four Rooms of the Caplor House

The Library



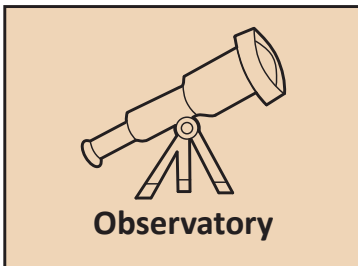
The Library (represented by an image of a book) is the focus of activity around reason, logic, critical and analytical thought.

When do we visit the Library? We go to the Library to identify and define problems. It is the place we go to work towards meaning, understand cause and effect, evaluate ideas and solve technical problems. It is where we build rational arguments, seek evidence and test and prove hypotheses.

We also go there to analyse and evaluate opportunities and options, against criteria such as the return on investment, short- and long-term benefits, efficiency and impact. Here we work on data analysis and measurement, creating the models and metrics that will enable us to measure success. We work with investors and stakeholders on issues of value and performance. We develop systems and plans here, as well as the operating guidelines and rules that will allow others to implement them.

The Library may sometimes feel cool, impersonal and academic – it is a space in which hard choices have to be made and the implications of these evaluated, without distractions or emotion. The Library is equipped with tools for measurement, calculation, data analysis and research.

The Observatory



The Observatory (represented by an image of a telescope) is where we work with vision, new ideas and the use of the imagination.

When do we visit the Observatory? We go to the Observatory to look to the future. We scan the horizon for new opportunities, possibilities and innovative approaches. We look beyond the house to new markets, new business models and new challenges. We use this form of thinking to imagine what the future will bring and seek the inspiration that will form a new vision. It is a strong part

of our search for purpose: the vision and direction that gives meaning to our lives.

In the Observatory, we work on generating new ideas, seeking inspiration from multiple sources. We challenge assumptions and the status quo. We take risks and are prepared to fail, as part of the innovation process. We collaborate with others, seeking connections and bringing together disparate parts into new wholes.

It is a space that is open, light and expansive. The windows are open, bringing in sounds and smells from the outside environment. A breeze blows through the room changing the shape of the shadows on the walls. The room is equipped with the tools of the artist and the inventor.

The Family Room



The Family Room (represented by an image of a table) is the social centre of the house. It is a place where people go to communicate, discuss, share and feel.

When do we visit the Family Room? We go to the Family Room in order to build relationships, partnerships and networks. We work there to develop the empathy and understanding that enable us to motivate and support other people. In this room we open dialogue across boundaries and communicate our values. We seek to inspire commitment and build trust and confidence,

through authentic sharing of our emotional responses.

In the Family Room we aim to build the social networks and partnerships that support and sustain us and we rehearse the interpersonal skills needed to mediate and resolve conflicts. At other times, we may go there as a safe retreat from the stresses and pressures of the external world. It is a place of emotional memories and feeling, where children have grown up and values and beliefs have been discussed and developed. There is a feeling of warmth but there may be echoes of anger or sadness. There may be music, poetry, stories and books in evidence.

The room is equipped with the communication tools that bring different and diverse perspectives to the house and where guests are welcomed.

The Kitchen



The Kitchen (represented by an image of a mixing bowl) is the operational centre of the house. It is where plans are followed, and routine daily tasks carried out. It is busy, functional and practical.

When do we visit the Kitchen? We go to the Kitchen when we need to implement something: to carry out the maintenance tasks that will keep us safe, alive and on track. These tend to be routine and administrative tasks that require attention to detail, the correct application of rules and procedures

and the accurate repetition of processes and procedures.

In organisational terms, these may be “business as usual” tasks: the things we must do to keep the organisation alive and functioning, even when it is going through change. They may be tasks of compliance or safety, such as the servicing and maintenance of equipment.

In modern-day Kitchens, it is as if we have translated our basic survival instincts into an instinctive drive to protect ourselves and to keep ourselves safe from the pressures around us – perhaps summarised as “keeping on top of the job”!

In the Kitchen we follow rules, using the materials and guidance that have been developed over time. The experience of being in the Kitchen may involve an instinctive and intuitive awareness, passed through generations, of what to do in response to challenging situations. The Kitchen is equipped with recipes, familiar tools and well-practised procedures.

How are the different parts of the Caplor House connected?

Links between the rooms – connecting doors and staircases – allow easy movement between the rooms and opportunities to explore. Effective individuals, in any type of leadership role, have the capacity to work well in each of the rooms, knowing when it is time to move from one to another and how to take people with them. This “movement around the house” enables us to explore aspects of leadership thinking, behaviour and influence.

How does the Caplor House help us to understand leadership?

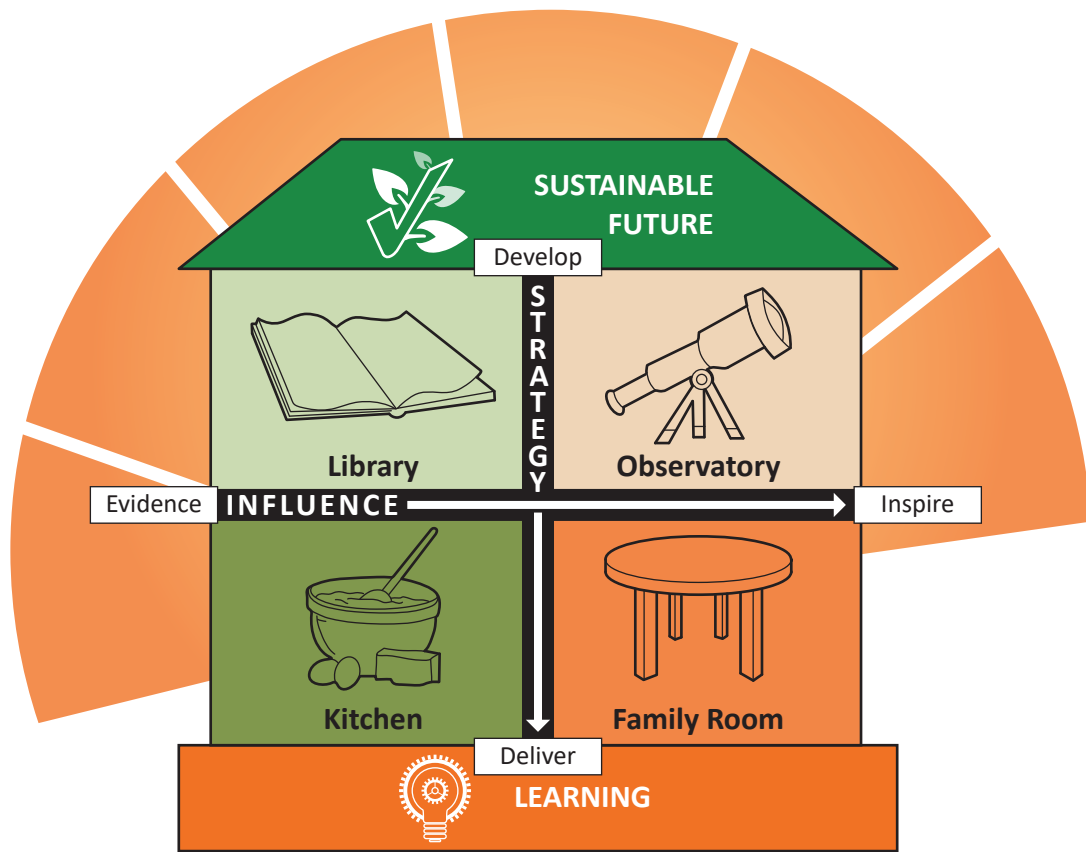
Leadership is about innovation, responsiveness to new challenges and demands, the development of strategy and the ability to engage with others and take them into an uncertain future. Leadership involves working with the unknown, embracing change and risk and enabling people and organisations to set ambitious new targets and achieve them. In this way, leadership becomes transformational. In order to transform anything – in a society, a community, an organisation, a business, a family – we need a number of things:

- **Firstly**, we need recognition of the need to change – a driver that is powerful enough to make us recognise that a current pattern isn’t working for us or that an opportunity exists that it is vital to grasp.
- **Secondly**, we need a vision of a transformed future – a clear and compelling sense of the change we want to bring about and what that would look and feel like if it was achieved.
- **Thirdly**, we need to develop a strategy to achieve the change and the criteria to know if we have been successful
- **Fourthly**, we need to influence others to engage them and take them with us on the uncertain journey that lies ahead.
- **Fifthly**, we need to ensure that those charged with the delivery of the strategy are resourced and supported, so that they are confident and capable to deliver their part.
- **Finally**, we need to create a process for monitoring progress and assessing impact, to ensure that our transformation project achieves what it set out to achieve and generates new learning in the process.

Effective leaders, whether in a formal leadership role or not, take their power and authority not from their position but from their ability to have a positive impact when it is most needed. In order to manage effectively, individuals must overcome personal preference and become comfortable operating in each room of the Caplor House.

However, to move from management, of themselves, tasks and other people, into real leadership, leaders must utilise the thinking and skills from different rooms in combination. Key to this is in developing and delivering strategy, influencing others and assessing impact.

Using the Caplor House to work with Strategy and Influence



The central pillar and crossbeam of the Caplor House

Strategy: The Central Pillar

In the Caplor House, the structure of the Roof is supported by a central pillar of strategy. From strategy development at the top, to strategy implementation at the bottom, the pillar is a constant reminder that strategy is, in reality, a top-down *and* bottom-up process, one that is deliberate and yet responsive to change at the same time. The central pillar represents the informed choices we make about what we will do to achieve our vision and goals and how we will do this.

In order to *develop* a new strategy, we need to bring together thinking and activity from the two upper rooms of the Caplor House: the Library and the Observatory.

Strategy, once developed, must be *delivered* by people. In order to empower people to take the responsibility of implementing strategy, leaders need to ensure that they are well supported and resourced and capable with the capability to achieve the targets they have been set. Thus, delivering a strategy occurs in the Kitchen and Family Room.

Influence: The Crossbeam

The crossbeam that runs from right to left in the centre of the house is influence. Influence is a combination of multiple factors, all related to encouraging others to “go with you” in your desired direction.

Influencing often starts in the left-hand side of the Caplor House: the Library and the Kitchen. It requires you to gather evidence, both through research and through practice. However, the most important part of influencing is gaining commitment. It is about ensuring not only that people will follow your lead but that they will do so willingly and with commitment. Therefore, in order to influence effectively, we need to bring together activity from the two right rooms of the Caplor House: the Observatory and the Family Room.

Demonstrating Impact

None of our strategic decisions, or ability to influence, engage and empower others to deliver strategy, has real value unless the chosen strategy achieves the aims and goals it was developed to achieve. In order to know the impact of our efforts, we need to bring together activity from the Kitchen and the Library.

In the Kitchen we create reliable systems of measurement and assessment, through which we can record and collate data. We can monitor standards and check that systems and processes are fully operational.

However, all of this information and data gathering is only of any value if we can analyse it, make judgements and determine whether the plans and procedures we have in place remain fit for purpose and continue to deliver against our overall objectives. This critical thinking takes place in the Library, where we ensure that we understand the meaning and ongoing relevance of the activity we undertake.

How does the Caplor House help leaders to know what to do?

Leaders can use the model of the Caplor House to check or change the interactions that they are having with those they lead or seek to influence. Every leadership action should be about one of the four key elements outlined earlier: the development of strategy, influencing others to adopt it, enabling strategy to be delivered through people and assessing the impact of activity against the original strategic goals. Leaders can ask themselves at any point in any process, “Which of these leadership interactions is needed and what do I need to be thinking about or doing right now?” (i.e. where in the house do I need to be?)

What else does the Caplor House enable us to do?

The Caplor House enables us to look at any issue through a lens provided by the foundations, the roof, a specific room, a corridor or a staircase. This helps to focus on one aspect of an issue or problem and, as we move from place to place, to use these to build a deep and thorough understanding of the whole issue. A “walkabout” in the House opens up different perspectives, asks new questions and highlights gaps in our existing thinking or activity.

Different places generate different questions. Different places elicit different types of response and different emotions. Different places may lead us to a better understanding of what we have to do next to make our organisations more exciting, sustainable, proactive, respectful communities.

Each chapter that follows in this book uses the Caplor House to give it its internal structure:

- **The External Environment:** Looking at organisations (and organising) in a broad context, taking into account the external environmental factors and “contextual” background
- **The Observatory:** Identifying future possibilities and new ideas
- **The Library:** Understanding and researching options and building robust systems and plans
- **The Family Room:** Valuing people and considering organisational culture
- **The Foundations:** Valuing learning and exploring how learning can be embedded in organisational action
- **The Roof:** Keeping a focus on the future and identifying long-term opportunities to be more sustainable
- **The Kitchen:** Offering practical suggestions and next steps to “move to action”, including key messages, reflection questions, action and impact questions and further reading.

In addition, each different chapter is there because it represents a different perspective on how future organisations could be:

- Connected and Reflective (Observatory)
- Human and Reflective (Library)
- Human and Soulful (Family Room)
- Proactive (Kitchen)
- Learning (Foundation)
- Worldly and Sustainable Futures (Roof)
- Influencing (Crossbeam) towards New Horizons.

Chapter 4: The Learning Organisation

We choose to learn or not to learn.
By casting our net wide, we recognise
the many different elements
that enable us to learn more and
help us develop our learning capability.



4

THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

“Live as if you were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever.”

– Mahatma Gandhi

Learning organisations are places where people are consciously encouraged to continually expand their capability; where critical curiosity, creativity and collaboration are nurtured; and where everyone involved is committed to doing things better. This chapter provides insights about how to bring about effective lifelong learning at individual, team and organisational levels. Overviews are given about globally recognised models of learning, including links to relevant neuroscientific breakthroughs. We explain the basis of our distinctive approach at Caplor Horizons; this stems from research into lifelong learning and it is linked to our “Caplor House” model.

The External Environment

“Do the best you can until you know better. When you know better, do better.”

– Maya Angelou

Effective lifelong learning is very important to individuals, teams and organisations; moreover, to communities and to humanity as a whole. So many of us are doing the best we can. Yet how can we respond to Maya Angelou’s challenge to “do better”?

Education and learning can be defined separately though are, of course, linked. One of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is “Quality Education”. The United Nations explain that the Goal is about “ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promoting lifelong learning”.

Education and learning are vital if we are to achieve a sustainable future. They are fundamentally important in terms of greater inclusivity, reducing inequality and reaching gender equality.

An enlightened approach is required. One that is available to everyone and starts at a young age. As Malala Yousafzai contests, “I truly believe that the only way we can create global peace is through not only educating our minds, but our hearts and our souls”. Furthermore, considering the dire consequences of patriarchal societies around the world and the grave implications for gender equality that arise from this, she contests, “How can we succeed, when half of us are held back?”

We live in remarkable times. The backdrop of the environmental crisis, that requires transformational action on climate change and biodiversity loss, creates an imperative for learning, thinking and acting differently.

The health emergency is having profound consequences too. In 2020, as the Covid-19 pandemic spread, many countries announced the temporary closure of schools, impacting more than 90 per cent of students worldwide. By April 2020, approximately 1.6 billion children and young people were out of school, according to Unicef.

CHAPTER 4: THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

The accelerated shift towards fewer people being based in offices is having major consequences. A great focus now exists on virtual working and learning along with the implications of this. For instance, in a London Business School webinar series in 2020 (related to the pandemic), Lynda Gratton (2020) spoke about the revolution in virtual working and learning, and how this brings about significant opportunities, whilst Herminia Ibarra (2020) relayed the often challenging implications for diversity and inclusion.

We live in times where ingrained attitudes and behaviours are being challenged. For instance, the Black Lives Matter movement. These and other current and compelling contextual considerations need to be kept in mind as we consider effective lifelong learning and how things might be done differently and better.

The not-for-profit sector plays a critical role in bringing about change and effective lifelong learning is at the heart of sustaining movements and organisations. Many of our clients and partners have cutting-edge approaches to this. That is why at Caplor Horizons we always prioritise attention to learning and reflection.

The Observatory

“Any change starts from unlearning what you already know.”

– Srishti Gupta

The notion of the learning organisation has long been something of a cliché. Many have attempted to describe the learning organisation, but relatively few have made it work in a sustainable way. Real learning organisations are learning cultures. It is in their DNA. Individuals and teams participate in continuous learning. This in turn leads to the organisation continuously learning and changing for the better.

The concept of the “learning organisation” came to prominence in the late 1980s and early 1990s as rapid technological advances, changing demographics, early globalisation and increasing competition within established industries required businesses and organisations to reflect on, and challenge, established practices.

Original thinking by Mike Pedler, Tom Boydell and John Burgoyne in the late 1980s recognised the need for organisations to facilitate the learning of all their members and continuously transform themselves. In the 1990s, Peter Senge developed the notion of a learning organisation in his book “The Fifth Discipline” (1990), which conceptualised organisations as dynamic systems, in states of continuous adaptation and improvement. His definition of a “learning organisation” is still used today. Learning organisations are:

“... organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.”

For Senge, there are five interrelated disciplines that leaders should develop in order to create a learning organisation. These are:

- **Creating a shared vision** – A shared vision needs to be authentic, shared, and clear so that people can feel engaged in the actions needed to achieve it. It is much better if the vision is developed through a shared collaborative process, and not dictated from the top.
- **Changing people’s mental models** – Leaders should encourage openness and awareness of organisational culture and norms by turning the mirror inward and “bending the beam of observation” back on the self. Seeing how we see the world enables us to scrutinise our assumptions and norms. This then, in turn, enables change and openness to new ideas and ways of working to emerge through dialogue.

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- **Personal mastery** – Organisations are built on the strengths of their people. Everyone in the organisation is responsible for continuous learning and achieving “mastery” in their area.
- **Team learning** – In addition to the importance of individual learning skills is the need for effective teamwork to achieve organisational learning. Effective teamwork needs team members to be willing to learn from their colleagues, to be open to others’ ideas, to communicate effectively, and to build trust. Teams need to encourage the free flow of ideas, suspending individual assumptions in order to genuinely think together.
- **Systems thinking** – Senge encourages a systems view of organisations in order to understand and recognise patterns. This can be achieved by viewing the organisation holistically as though it were a living organism, rather than a series of small, unrelated manageable parts. Too often we concentrate on the silos of the organisation that divide us into functions and departments, or the “slabs” of the organisation which Henry Mintzberg (2015) has argued divide us by hierarchical levels.

Senge believes that systems thinking is vital for long-term organisational sustainability, lamenting that many leaders are driven too much by short-term, narrowly focused action:

“The systems viewpoint is generally oriented toward the long-term view. That’s why delays and feedback loops are so important. In the short term, you can often ignore them; they’re inconsequential. They only come back to haunt you in the long term.”

Like many others, Otto Scharmer (2018) argues that leaders are facing emerging complexity in today’s world. This, he says, can usually be recognised by the following three characteristics:

1. The solution to the problem is unknown
2. The problem itself is still unfolding
3. Who the key stakeholders are is not clear.

This is very similar to the VUCA (Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous) concept. Scharmer argues that most approaches to organisational learning are based on the view that the source of learning is the past. This, according to Scharmer, may no longer be helpful:

“But what if the future is different from the past? What if one’s past experiences aren’t relevant to the emerging challenges? Is it possible, instead, to learn from the emerging future?”

This viewpoint is supported by Liz Wiseman (2014) who says:

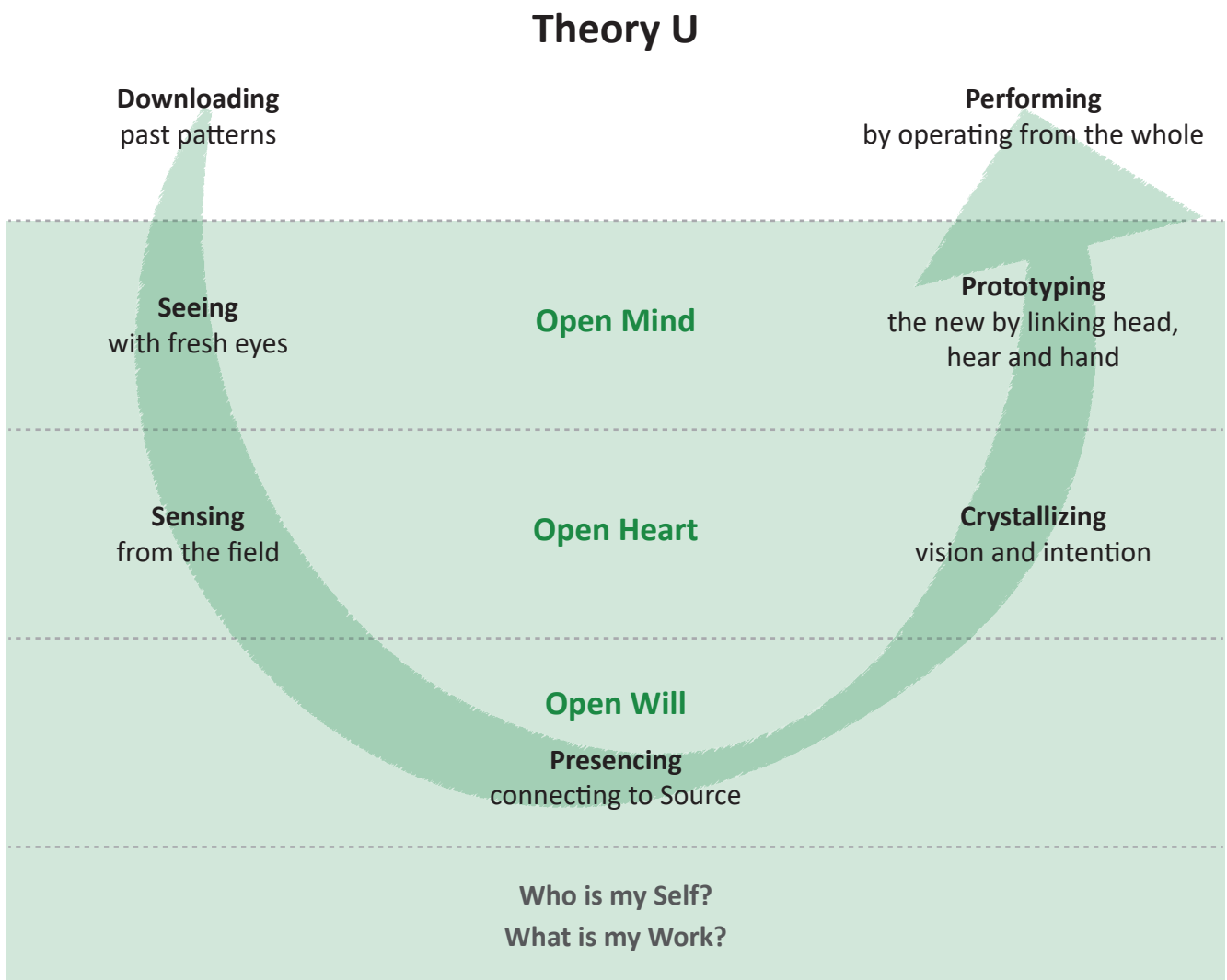
“In a stable world, experience is an asset, but in a VUCA environment experience can be a burden as strategies grow stale ... The knowledge economy is moving so fast that those who want to stay relevant need the ability to forget what they know and open themselves to learning from everyone and everything around them.”

Senge and Scharmer, influenced by David Bohm (1994), both highlight the etymological root of the word leadership – “leith” – meaning to “step across a threshold”. This is connected to the idea of “unlearning” or “letting go” of our narrow preconceptions or egocentric perspectives on an issue or problem. It is imperative that leaders shift their mindsets from a reliance on knowledge built on past experiences to focus on future thinking, and continuous learning and unlearning.

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This is supported by Ann Alder (2010) in her book, “Pattern Making, Pattern Breaking”. In this she encourages us all to challenge our patterns and experiment with new approaches. She explores the ways in which educators and facilitators can work to help people build those patterns that will be most useful to them, and also how you can enable people to break patterns; to help them move on in the learning process by recognising and rejecting long-held patterns of behaviour or assumptions that are unhelpful or redundant.

In line with these ideas, Otto Scharmer (2007) and his colleagues at MIT developed “Theory U”, a cutting-edge theory of learning for leaders. Theory U has been developed to enable leaders to shift from learning from the past to “learning from an emerging future”.



Theory U. Source: Presencing Institute (2020)

According to Theory U, pictured above, the left-hand side of the U is all about “taking off the blinkers”, observing, listening and opening the mind. This first and most important step is to break free from habitual patterns of the past, to move from “downloading” to “seeing and sensing”.

The right-hand side of the U is all about “bringing the new into the world”. This is about co-creating and co-evolving an emerging future, whilst being flexible and resilient to further uncertainties that may arise.

This means that as the world around us changes, leaders need to constantly scan their environments and contexts and be open to new and different interpretations of what they see and feel around them. For more on this read Chapter 5: The Proactive Organisation.

Furthermore, leaders need to get rid of “expert mindsets” which are often adopted and that prevent them from opening their minds to new possibilities and alternatives. These so-called experts can become trapped within the boundaries of the knowledge and assumptions that have served them well in the past, and this can limit creativity and innovation. These ideas are expanded further in Chapter 9: The Worldly Organisation.

An example of this can be taken from the Zen Buddhist story, “Empty your cup”, which highlights the importance of unlearning:

Nan-in, a Japanese master during the Meiji era (1868–1912), received a university professor who came to inquire about Zen. Nan-in served tea. He poured his visitor's cup full, and then kept on pouring. The professor watched the overflow until he no longer could restrain himself. “It is overfull. No more will go in!” “Like this cup,” Nan-in said, “you are full of your own opinions and speculations. How can I show you Zen unless you first empty your cup?”

This phenomenon was noticed in doctors treating Covid-19 patients. What they “knew” from prior medical school instruction or clinical experience had to be continually disregarded for new ways of comprehending how the disease was emerging. It was hard for most physicians to do this, but essential to saving lives!

The Library

“In vain have you acquired knowledge if you have not imparted it to others.”

– Deuteronomy Rabbah

A good way to understand more about the evolution of learning and how we learn is through neuroscience. Clive Hyland is an Advisor with Caplor Horizons and has published books in this field, including “The Neuro Edge” (2017). He also developed “Human Horizons” in collaboration with Haygrove, an international horticultural business, and Caplor Horizons.

According to Hyland's “Human Horizons” concept, the human brain is divided into four regions: the basal region; the limbic system; the cortex and prefrontal cortex. The basal region is the oldest part of the brain in evolutionary terms and sits just above the brainstem.

We learn in the basal system by real-time adjustment to our experience of the environment; for example if you touch a hot pan and burn yourself, you will learn not to touch it again.

The limbic system is located in the central region of the brain. It is sometimes referred to as the mammalian brain and it deals with emotions, memory and social networks. We learn in the limbic area by interaction with others. This is about energetic interchange which allows us to express and play with new ideas and test them out.

The cortex is situated at the top and sides of the brain. It can be thought of as the thinking brain and forms part of the essence of what makes us human. We learn in the cortex by creating new rules which then form new neural circuits. Hence the rational brain's search for clarity.

Whereas all mammals have a cortex, only humans have the prefrontal cortex. The prefrontal cortex is the centre of our conscious thought and self-awareness. It therefore deserves special attention when we are dealing with matters of behaviour, learning and personal change. Learning happens across the brain, albeit in different ways, whereas reflection occurs only in the prefrontal cortex.

Both the limbic and basal areas learn at an unconscious level through sensory experience in the moment, whereas the cortex and prefrontal cortex, by operating at a slower speed, allow us more information to choose our response. The most effective learning involves recruiting multiple regions of the brain.

CHAPTER 4: THE LEARNING ORGANISATION

For more insights into Clive's work, read Chapter 7: The Human Organisation.

It is possible to see the parallels between rooms in the Caplor House model and the four areas of the "Human Horizons" Brain:

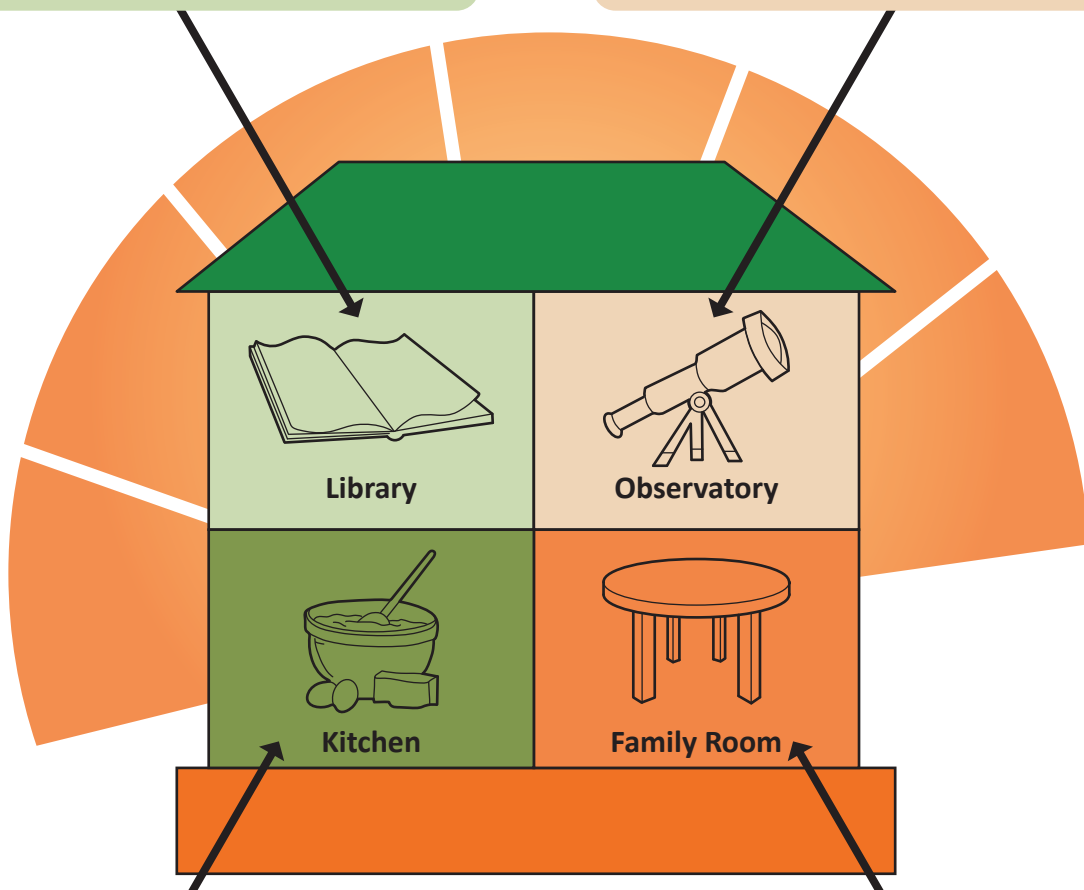
- Activity in the Kitchen parallels the basal system, the region of instincts
- Activity in the Family Room parallels the limbic system, the region of feelings
- Activity in the Library parallels the cortex, the region of thinking
- Activity in the Observatory parallels the prefrontal cortex, the region of purpose and meaning.

Cortex

Cortex activity that takes place in the **Library** includes reasoning and rationale, data analysis and logic. Here we set goals, think critically and develop structures and processes.

Prefrontal Cortex

Neocortex activity in the **Observatory** includes applying imagination, looking to the future and the big picture, painting rich pictures, finding purpose and inspiration.



Limbic

There is a connection between the limbic region and the activity that takes place in the **Family Room**. It is the world of emotion, culture and human social networks.

Basal

The **Kitchen** is the operational centre for unconscious, autonomic activity, where we carry out tasks that are critical to survival, safety and nourishment.

Hyland also talks about the wider human intelligence of the body and gut, in addition to the brain. The heart is an integrative part of our emotional experience and plays a defining role in accessing confidence and sustaining performance optimisation. The gut directly influences our instincts, although for now it is the area we know least about.

There are some interesting parallels between Hyland's work highlighting the neural networks and intelligence of the head, heart and gut with Otto Scharmer's Theory U idea of an open mind, open heart and open will. Both talk about coherence between these different centres and indicate that "peak performance" or being able to move into a generative space at the bottom of the U requires coherence and alignment.

For example, as Senge puts it:

"when a team becomes more aligned, a commonality of direction emerges, and individuals' energies harmonize ... a resonance or synergy develops, like the 'coherent' light of a laser rather than the incoherent and scattered light of a light bulb."

This implies that individuals need their neural networks to be aligned to enter a "flow state" which can lead to peak performance. Examples of achieving "flow" include when children are deeply absorbed in play or when athletes are in the zone. This connects to the idea that learning organisations need to be aligned in the same way. Each part of the system should be "in tune" or organically related, rather than mechanistically relating to each other like the separate parts of a machine.

The Family Room

"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn."

– Benjamin Franklin

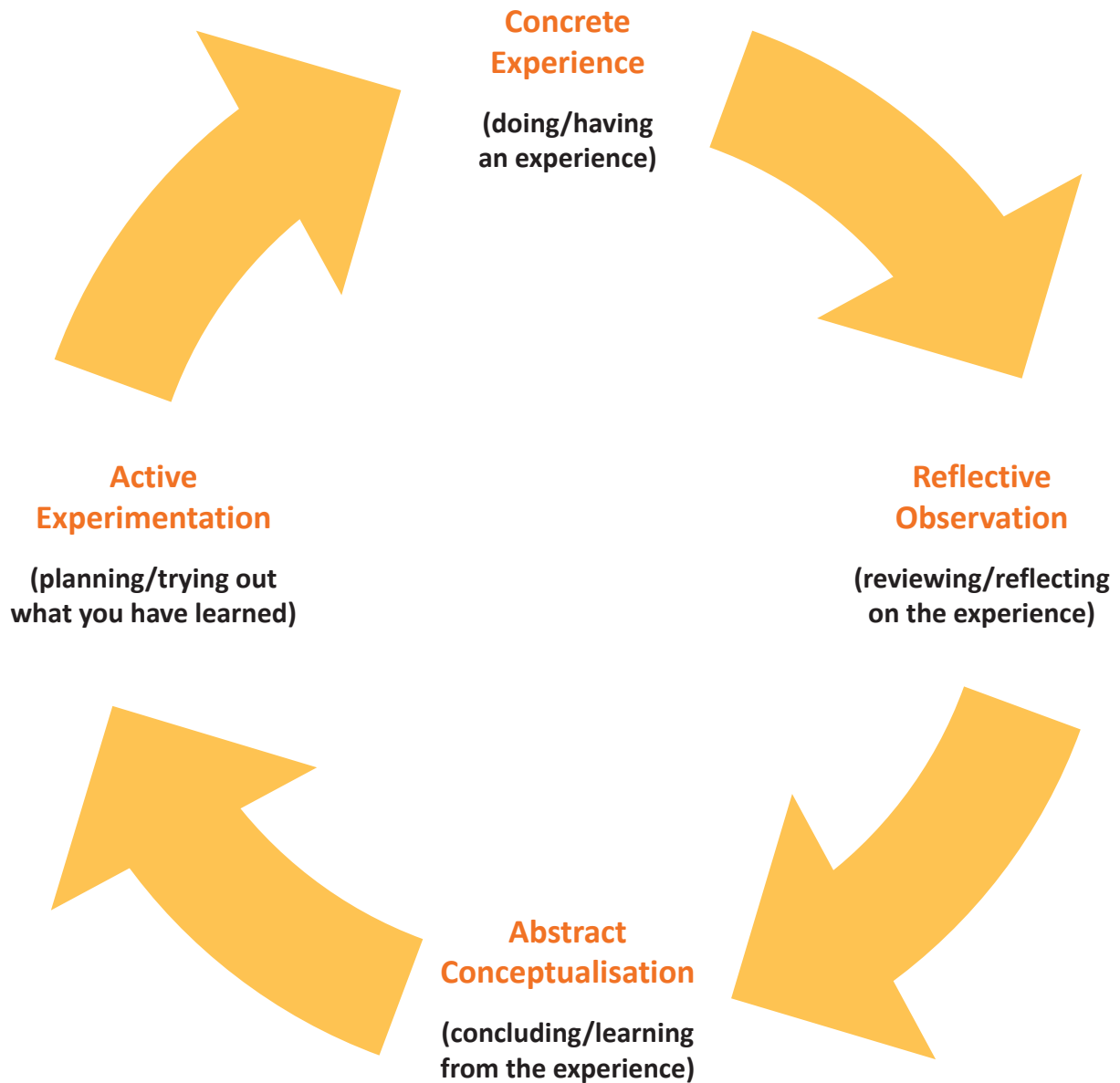
No one can learn for us. However, effective teaching, coaching, mentoring and support can help in the learning process. The first step is for both the learner and those supporting learning to understand how we learn effectively and how we can build the capabilities that enhance learning.

To make learning engaging, it needs to be real and relevant. To learn effectively, we need to be able to understand how what we are learning applies directly to us and our world. Learning is about being creative, generating new ideas through collaboration and enriching our knowledge. It is a two-way process – an exchange where those involved should be regarded as equals.

Most importantly, learning is a continuous journey. It is about looking forward and growing our skills whilst gaining a better understanding of ourselves, others and the world in which we live.

If we are interested in learning something new – like doing a cartwheel, or singing a song, or driving a car – we often combine some theory with a lot of practice and experience. This is why experiential learning, learning through experiences, is one of the most effective ways to learn. The experiential learning process may be intentional: attending a training programme; or unintentional: learning to put a coat on when it's cold outside!

David Kolb's learning cycle below, shows the four-step process of experiential learning (Kolb and Fry, 1974). He suggests that it involves having a new experience, reflecting on outcomes, conceptualising and choosing options, and experimenting with what you have learned.



Kolb's learning cycle. Source: Learning Performance (2020)

Kolb states that in order to gain genuine knowledge from an experience, the learner must have four abilities:

- The learner must be willing to be actively involved in the experience
- The learner must be able to reflect on the experience
- The learner must possess and use analytical skills to conceptualise the experience
- The learner must possess decision-making and problem-solving skills in order to use the new ideas gained from the experience.

Thus, experiential learning is more than just “learning by doing”. Patrick Felicia (2011) defines it as “learning through reflection on doing”. Reflection is a crucial part of the learning process. It links to Scharmer’s notion of “bending the beam of observation back on the self” and taking a deeper dive into the small self to connect with the bigger self (the whole). The process of reflection is expanded further in Chapter 11: The Reflective Organisation.

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Experiential learning is distinct from rote or didactic learning, in which the learner plays a comparatively passive role. Experiential learning allows one to question, challenge and reveal one's blind spots, be more open minded and learn by connecting learning with our lived and personal experiences in an active, not passive, way. Furthermore, the role of emotion and feelings in learning from experience has been recognised as an important part of the experiential learning cycle (Moon, 2004).

Experiential learning makes learning an experience that moves beyond the classroom. It ensures that the learning playing field is a more level and interesting one. In practice, experiential learning should be fun and engaging with everyone being able to access it and develop, no matter what their background. Furthermore, it is important that the learning environment is a safe one. One where people do not feel at risk from fear or failure: they should feel free to express whatever thoughts and ideas they have and be encouraged to do so.

At Caplor Horizons we use a variety of experiential learning exercises in order to mimic real life scenarios for individuals, teams and organisations. These exercises range from puzzles to card games, singing, dancing, and role play. We ensure that they are always simple, hands on, versatile across cultures, and relevant to the group. These exercises act as "anchors" which embed the learning and transform the participants' way of thinking. Groups are encouraged to reflect on their learning experience and apply it to the "real world" after each exercise, thus going through the Kolb cycle of learning.

Other ways to become better learning leaders include:

- Observing positive role models
- Being "thrown in the deep end", e.g. having to teach what you have learnt to others
- Having or being a mentor or coach
- Gaining international or multicultural exposure
- Getting involved in a team-based activity.

Your leadership will be shaped by a powerful mix of activities and experiences. Leaders do plan a great deal of their learning, but the balance is learned through opportunistic responses to life events. Some leaders are more "tuned in" to recognising and maximising opportunities for learning from both. As well as containing a balance of both planned and opportunistic learning initiatives, the leadership learning process invariably contains three critical elements – learning from doing (work-based learning); learning from books or courses (ideas and concepts) and learning from people (social interaction).

The Foundations

“When you talk, you are only repeating what you know; but when you listen, you learn something new.”

– Dalai Lama

The ability to learn effectively is a fundamental leadership requirement and a vital skill as we work towards creating a more sustainable future. But how can we help people to develop their own learning capability?

Caplor Horizons’ distinctive approach to learning was inspired by international research about effective lifelong learning, and perspectives from our Advisors, Dr Ann Alder and Dr Geoff Cox, who are both experts in experiential learning.

The Effective Lifelong Learning Inventory (ELLI) research, led by Ruth Deakin Crick, came up with “Seven Learning Dimensions” which offer powerful insights into how individuals learn and how they can enhance their learning capacity. From this we developed our “5 Cs of Learning” which are: **C**ommitment, **C**onsciousness, **C**ritical curiosity, **C**reativity and **C**ollaboration.

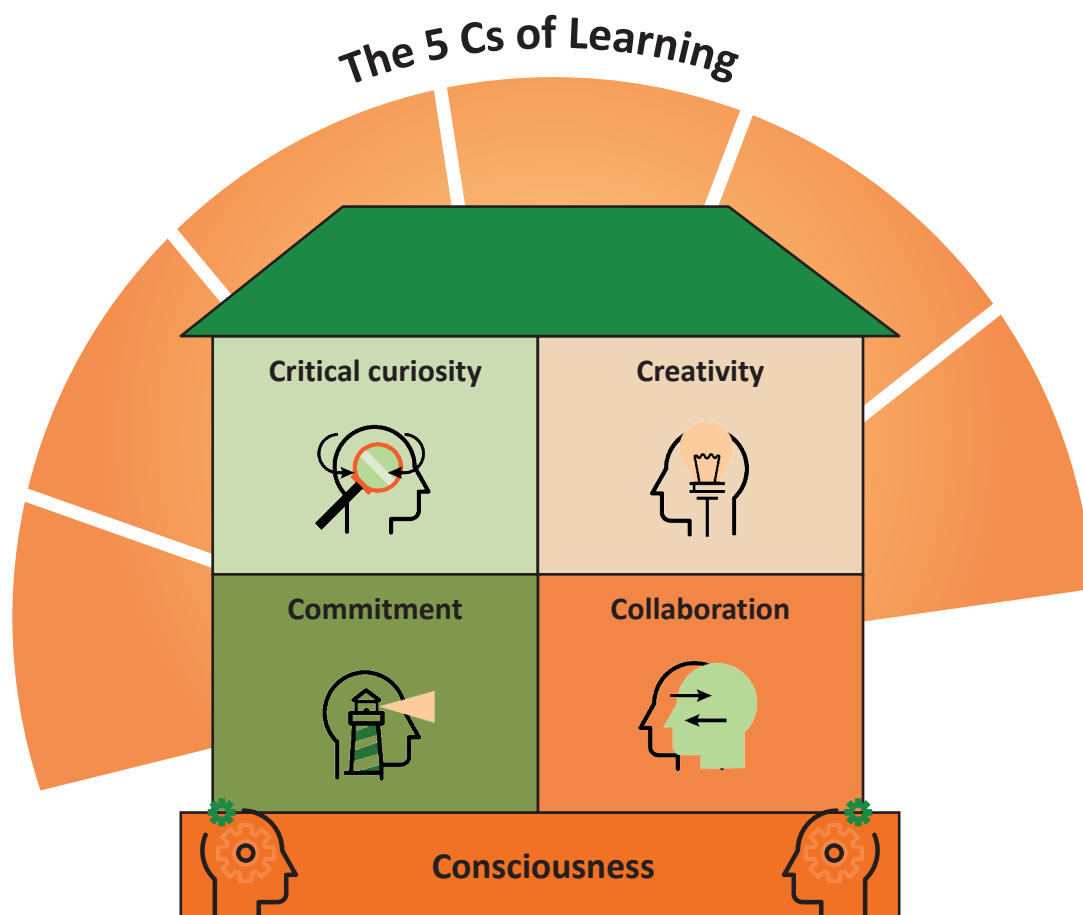
These five dimensions of learning are things that learners can work on for themselves and that facilitators can build into their learning programmes to improve the likelihood of learning being successful.

The 5 Cs are designed to help you to think about your own learning and how you can help other people to learn. They can help you to add variety and challenge to your learning and to create a culture and environment in which learning is valued and becomes a part of your everyday activity.



The 5 Cs of Learning

The 5 Cs of Learning closely relate to our Caplor House model (to understand more about this model, read Chapter 3). We believe that learning is an essential component of each of the rooms, and the foundations, of the Caplor House, and they each have a distinctive style of learning. As with the different areas of the brain mentioned above, the most effective learning involves paying attention to all of the learning styles in each of the rooms.



Learning and the Caplor House

The Foundations: Consciousness

In introducing the Caplor House model for the first time to groups, the early emphasis is on the Foundations and consciousness. Only when people have grasped the fundamental importance of learning to the organisation will the rest of the House be explored. This approach ensures that every person in the organisation is learning-conscious and recognises that you can always learn more and develop your learning capability. Although organisations should provide a space for individuals to learn, it is essential that individuals accept responsibility for their own decision-making about what and how they learn. This is a culture within which learning is not the responsibility of particular roles or functions, but is distributed across the whole organisation, creating what is by definition a learning organisation.

Learning is at the foundation of the Caplor House meaning that it should be at the foundation of every programme or intervention you implement.

Library Learning: Critical Curiosity

Learning in the Library is about developing the learning skills of questioning, challenging and seeking meaning. For example, drilling down into subjects, researching arguments and making sense of available information. It also includes using critical thinking to build understanding of complex topics or data, working out the right questions to ask, and building and testing hypotheses to learn.

Observatory Learning: Creativity

In the Observatory the learning skills of creativity and experimentation are developed. Here it is important to show willingness, and encourage others, to take risks and make mistakes as part of the learning process. Other characteristics of learning in the Observatory include looking for new ways of learning, challenging and breaking existing patterns, learning in a holistic way and making clear connections between current learning and future aspirations and goals.

Family Room Learning: Collaboration

Family Room learning involves building strong learning relationships and seeking to understand and empathise with other perspectives. Here we learn with and from others by sharing ideas and experiences. It also includes developing awareness of your emotional reactions to learning opportunities and being able to ask for support from others in dealing with the negative emotions that new learning can bring about.

Kitchen Learning: Commitment

Finally, learning in the Kitchen involves determination and commitment. Improved competence comes from practising and honing your practical skills to achieve specific and tangible outputs. Individuals that learn in the Kitchen are often systematic, driven and resilient.

We encourage organisations to use the 5 Cs as a tool to develop their learning capacity and to assess the progress being made.

The Roof

A new focus on developing learning organisations is vital if we are to influence global thinking around sustainability and have an impact on the leaders who will take their organisations forward into the ever-increasing uncertainties and complexities of our twenty-first century world. We aim to contribute to this development by offering a greater understanding of what a learning organisation is, recognising the importance of systems thinking and unlearning in the learning process, and also offering the Caplor House as a tool that helps to achieve this.

To inspire and enable people to deliver a sustainable future, it is imperative that we help build organisations which learn fast and effectively. In building these learning organisations, we must also ensure that we make the walls permeable, so that each separate learning organisation allows its learning to spread out to touch and impact the next organisation within the wider learning community. These different networks can produce greater resilience to the volatility and uncertainty in the environment through shared knowledge and enlightened collaboration.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming a learning organisation

- **Different thinking = different learning** – As unlearning is part of the learning process, use creative, innovative fun ways to challenge assumptions and develop creativity. Use the Caplor House rooms to encourage people to think and learn differently. Experiment with different learning opportunities, experiential learning, learning from the future and collaborative learning to broaden people learning experiences.
- **Develop a culture of lifelong learning that permeates every aspect of day-to-day organisational behaviour** – This is a culture within which learning is not the responsibility of particular roles or functions but is distributed across the whole organisation. Such an organisation is a place where people are encouraged to continually expand their capacity, where critical curiosity, creativity and collaboration are nurtured, and where the organisation as a whole is committed to transforming and improving its practices.
- **Ensure that people are enabled and empowered to learn** – Embed opportunities for learning in routine activities through initiatives like shadowing, visits to other parts of the organisation, and team meetings and ensure that space is made to reflect and review the learning that took place. Furthermore, spread the message that it is OK to fail and create safe spaces for learning as failure and experimentation is an integral component of learning.
- **Make learning engaging, real and relevant** – Involve people in their learning process and let them experiment with different ways of learning. Make learning accessible to all. Give time for people to have learning experiences in their work, see it as essential rather than a luxury.
- **Share learning in a holistic and collective way** – Use a systems approach to share learning and information through the organisation as if it were a living organism. And don't stop there. Extend this to other organisations, like organisms in an ecosystem, to impact the wider learning community and improve your collective learning through networked intelligence.

Key messages

- Make learning conscious! Identifying different ways of learning enables learners to adopt approaches that suit them and take responsibility for their own learning. We can use neuroscience (Human Horizons) and the Caplor House to understand more about the different ways and preferences of learning.
- Sustainable learning involves “unlearning” what you already know and observing what is in front of you. It is important to learn with an open mind, an open heart and an open will. Scharmer’s Theory U explains this further.
- Experiential learning is one of the most effective ways to learn. Kolb’s learning cycle shows that effective learning involves having a new experience, reflecting on outcomes, conceptualising and choosing options, and experimenting with what you have learned.

Reflection questions

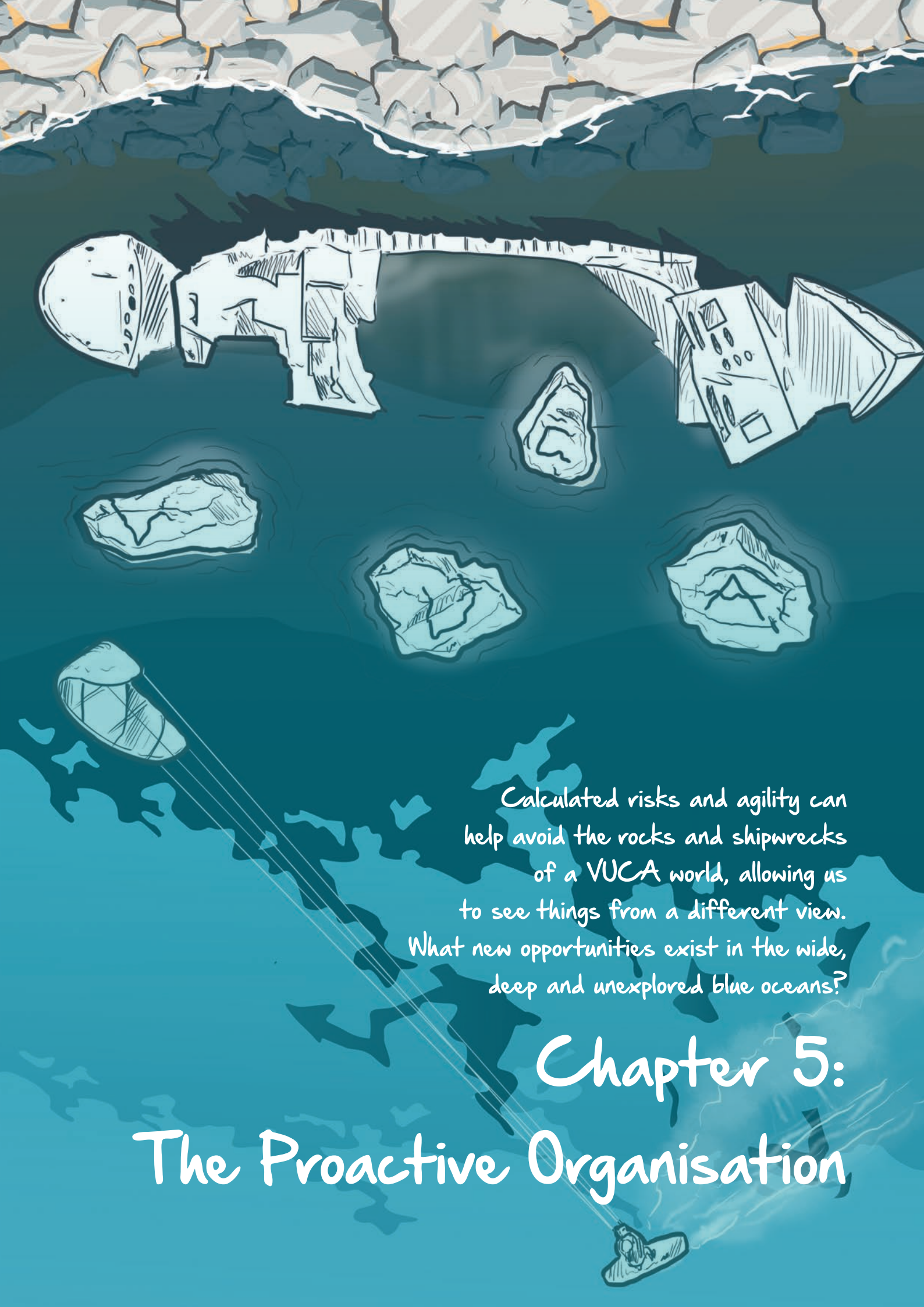
- Does your organisation embrace different ways of learning and providing learning opportunities across the whole organisation?
- How can you focus on the future to inform the present?
- Does your organisational culture allow for people to experiment, take risks, innovate and fail in order to learn?

Action and impact questions

- How can we support broader and more inclusive approaches to learning across the whole organisation?
- What opportunities can we provide to encourage shared and collaborative learning?
- How can we make the learning in our organisation more conscious to help embed learning?

Further reading

- **Alder, A. (2010)** *Pattern Making, Pattern Breaking: Using Past Experience and New Behaviour in Training Education and Change Management*. Gower.
- **Scharmer, O.C. (2018)** *The Essentials of Theory U: Core Principles and Applications*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- **Kolb, D.A. and Fry, R.E. (1974)** *Toward an applied theory of experiential learning*. MIT Alfred P. Sloan School of Management.



Calculated risks and agility can help avoid the rocks and shipwrecks of a VUCA world, allowing us to see things from a different view. What new opportunities exist in the wide, deep and unexplored blue oceans?

Chapter 5: The Proactive Organisation

5

THE PROACTIVE ORGANISATION

“On such a full sea are we now afloat, and we must take the current when it serves, or lose our ventures.”
– Shakespeare

The proactive organisation has a bias for action, is flexible and creative, learns fast through experiment and is thirsty for information and ideas. This chapter focuses on the way in which future organisations must have proactive strategies that pay attention to culture in order to navigate change effectively in a Volatile, Uncertain, Complex and Ambiguous (VUCA) world. We provide two useful tools, the Voyage Board and the Caplor Islands, as frameworks for proactively leading strategic change.

The External Environment

Jane looked out of her window in Manchester on a hailstorm in July. Her Monday morning was not turning out as expected. The meeting with her Senior Management Team had to be postponed as Arjun and Monique were on a train from London, delayed by software problems. That was just as well as the morning’s emails sprang a host of surprises:

- Her NGO’s Country Director in India requested her urgent approval of a strangely worded press release on interfaith cooperation that was needed for unspecified political reasons.
- Could their logo be used by a corporate sponsor which was part-owned by an international food company which was a target for climate change activists?
- One of the main partners in Kenya asked for help in organising a delivery of much-needed medicines in South Sudan by a route that was threatened by ethnic conflict and possibly illegal under South Sudanese law.
- Charity Finance had just reported that the organisation was one of those most likely to be hit by a Government change in pension policy, owing to the way it had been formed through NGO mergers. The Finance Director was away on a week’s leave.

Jane’s world seemed to be ever more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous. How could her organisation hope to do more than respond to crises as they emerged? How could it become better at seizing opportunities as they appeared, learning fast and coping with challenges without being deflected from its mission? In other words, how could it become a proactive organisation? We shall explore some answers in this chapter.

Our Thought Leadership paper, “Leading our way through change in the coronavirus world”, by Sharon Turnbull, describes why today’s world is changing faster than ever, and why the challenges we face are becoming even more complex than those we have faced in the past. In this, she talks about living in a “VUCA world”. VUCA means Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity.

CHAPTER 5: THE PROACTIVE ORGANISATION

Some of the key organisational responses to the VUCA world are as follows:

- The speed and scale of change in a volatile world require organisations to have a bias for action, getting on with things rather than standing back to analyse for too long.
- Uncertainty requires organisations to be flexible, adaptable, creative and innovative.
- Complexity makes it hard to plan, so organisations need to be comfortable with an experimental approach, taking risks, seeking feedback, learning fast and being willing to change plans frequently.
- The ambiguity of information in a complex and fast-changing world puts a premium on finding ways to gather and present information quickly and clearly.

This may sound unsettling and demanding but there are great rewards as well. The world's changes and complexity present opportunities for new ways of working, new partners and greater organisational impact. "Blue oceans" may open up. These are unknown market spaces, unaffected by competition, with ample opportunity for profitable and rapid growth, where the rules of the game are waiting to be set (Kim and Mauborgne, 2005).

This may also mean becoming what Joseph Bower (2003) calls a "Velcro organisation": one that can be arranged and rearranged rapidly to meet multiple changing needs and opportunities. Like a garment held together by Velcro, they operate effectively in one configuration but can be pulled apart and rearranged to a very different shape when the sun comes out – or a hailstorm arrives.

The Observatory

"The optimism of the action is better than the pessimism of the thought."

– Harald Zindler

The people of a proactive organisation are always seeking information and ideas about the big picture and long-term trends. As a result, the proactive organisation has an Observatory-style approach to strategy. It sees strategy as a matter of deciding an overall direction rather than attempting to write down a detailed plan.

A VUCA world makes detailed long-term strategies a waste of time. For example, as a result of the coronavirus pandemic, many organisations have had to discard or adapt their existing strategies as they have quickly become outdated and irrelevant in such a rapidly evolving landscape. Proactive organisations recognise the fruits of going beyond the normal data gathering and assumptions of a three to five-year horizon. Instead they develop strategy at a higher level, looking 10–30 years into the future, for example for a "Big Hairy Audacious Goal" (BHAG) as described by Jim Collins and Jerry Porras (1994). This is more about compelling dreams than rational analysis.

Coupled with this visionary approach to strategy is the recognition that plans need to be reviewed frequently, perhaps every six months, because changes in the world throw up opportunities and new ideas. It is only the overall purpose and values that can remain steady in a fast-changing world.

As a way of holding fast to the overall direction amidst the buffeting of a VUCA world, it may be helpful to use Caplor Horizons' Voyage metaphor and materials.

The Voyage Board, pictured below, provides a creative way to explore past events, notice patterns and to strategise and plan for the future. It uses the metaphor of a voyage to explore, articulate and understand significant events and incidents which have shaped your experience to date and also creatively consider where you might "sail" in the future. The Voyage board encourages individuals or teams to consider their ultimate destination (the horizons) and the benchmarks along the way (the islands).

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

The icons on the right of the board each relate to important elements that organisations should consider when planning for the future. For example, the lighthouse represents your organisation's envisaged future, the diver represents the value of learning and reflection on your journey, the crocodiles represent the challenges and threats you may face along the way, the flying geese represent how you might collaborate with others, and the whale represents how you will communicate your vision and strategy to others. For more insights into each of the icons, read our "Voyaging to New Horizons" paper.



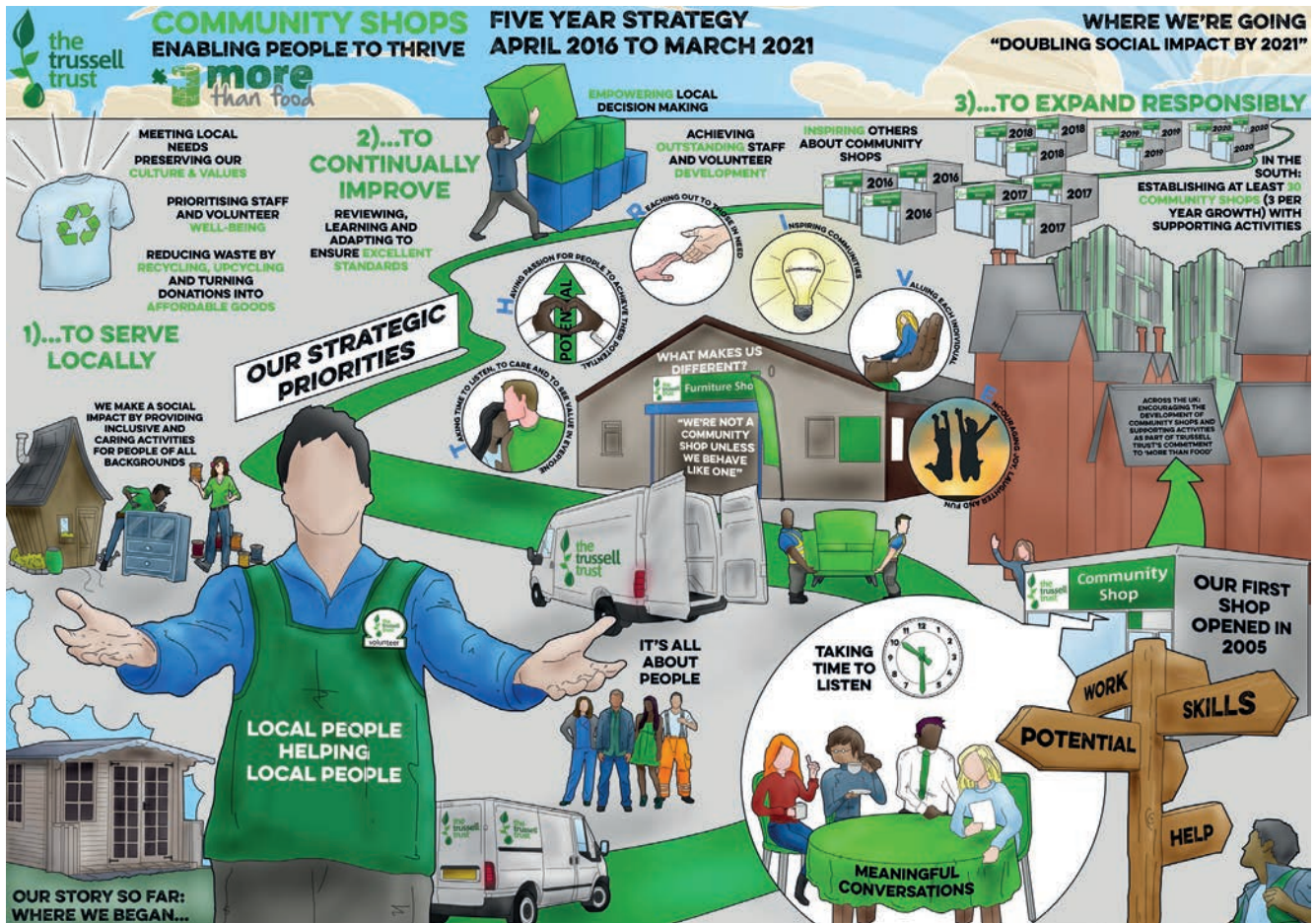
Caplor Horizons Voyage Board

This visual exercise can be adapted for different contexts, for example, some of our clients working in the hills of Maharashtra in India have used the metaphor of climbing a mountain instead. As well as using this tool to review and develop strategy, it can be used for one-to-one coaching or mentoring, or alternatively for team work to address a specific issue common to everyone.

Another key component of staying on track is clear and simple communication of your direction and envisaged future. Research has shown that strategies fail far more often through failures of communication than because the strategies are themselves weak. Distilling the message down to a single page is a helpful discipline as it forces those involved to concentrate on what matters most. Developing a "strategy on a page" through a process that involves broad participation in the organisation is itself a powerful means of communication and source of commitment.

CHAPTER 5: THE PROACTIVE ORGANISATION

At Caplor Horizons we enable organisations to develop creative and compelling images to tell their story, including about their strategic direction. An example from the Trussell Trust, a food bank charity in the UK, can be seen below:



The Trussell Trust "Strategy on a Page"

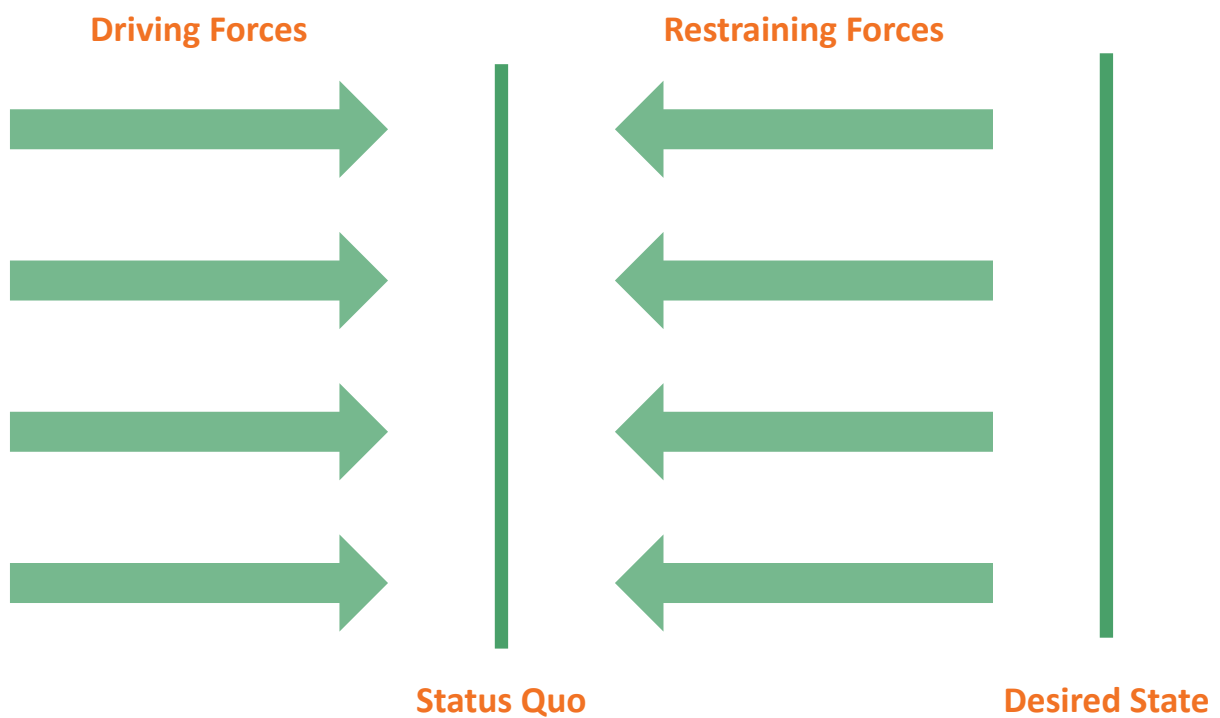
The Library

“Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.”

– Albert Einstein

Members of a proactive organisation are constantly in the Library, seeking and recording information and ideas at all levels to maximise the chances of success amid so much change, complexity and uncertainty. One way to understand what's needed for a sustainable future is to conduct a “force field analysis”. This powerful strategic tool (seen below) was originally developed by Kurt Lewin (1951) and can be used to help understand change processes in organisations. In order to reach your “desired state”, you must ensure that the “driving forces” outweigh the “restraining forces”. Successful change is achieved by either strengthening the driving forces or weakening the restraining forces. When using this tool it is important to consider both the internal and external driving and restraining forces.

Force Field Analysis



Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis

The Family Room

“When the winds of change blow, some people build walls whilst others build windmills.”

– Chinese Proverb

No matter what strategy you try to implement with your team, its success and efficacy are going to be held back by the people implementing the plan if the culture does not support it. It means that if the people driving the strategy aren't passionate about the change, or worse, are apathetic to their job and to the organisation, then you stand no chance of implementing a plan. The Family Room fosters the culture that enables the organisation to be proactive.

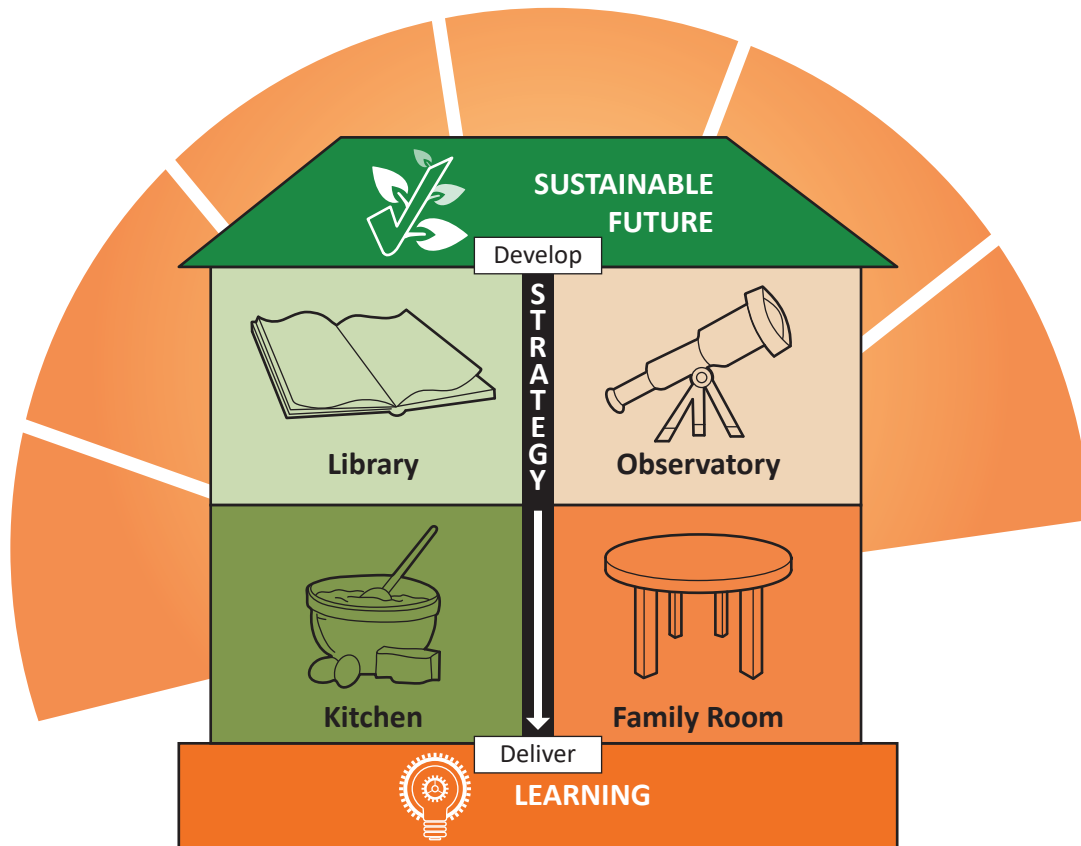


Caplor Horizons “Culture Eats Strategy For Breakfast” poster

The importance of culture can be seen by looking at strategy within the framework of the Caplor House (to understand more about the Caplor House, read Chapter 3). Strategy development tends to happen upstairs: in the Observatory where fresh ideas happen in a context of reflection and seeing the big picture and in the Library where ideas are tested and evaluated.

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

Strategy, once developed, must be delivered by people. Thus, strategy delivery tends to happen downstairs. Even if a good idea generated in the Observatory has been analysed with data to support it in the Library, it will not actually happen without good systems, policies and operations in the Kitchen. And even a great idea, well assessed with great operational attention to detail, will come to nothing unless people actually want to deliver it, which takes us to the Family Room. Experiences in the Family Room help us to build motivation, confidence and self-awareness, as well as the ability to coach, develop and train others. There is a big emphasis on communication as a core skill in building influence.



The central pillar of the Caplor House

The culture, more than anything else, is what distinguishes the proactive organisation. Some of the features of the distinctive culture of a proactive organisation are as follows:

- An external orientation, eager to gather the perspectives of beneficiaries, supporters, customers or partners.
- Enthusiasm for learning, questioning, challenging and constructive debate and feedback.
- Not being overawed by seniority and status but recognising that new information, ideas and insights can come from everyone.
- Willingness to take risks, feeling able to try something and fail without being penalised for taking the risk.
- If you want to reach a desired destination, you sometimes have to act first and make any necessary adjustments and corrections as you go along.
- An openness to the collaboration that is an important part of learning, working with beneficiaries, supporters, customers, partners and even competitors through benchmarking, joint research, alliances and secondments.

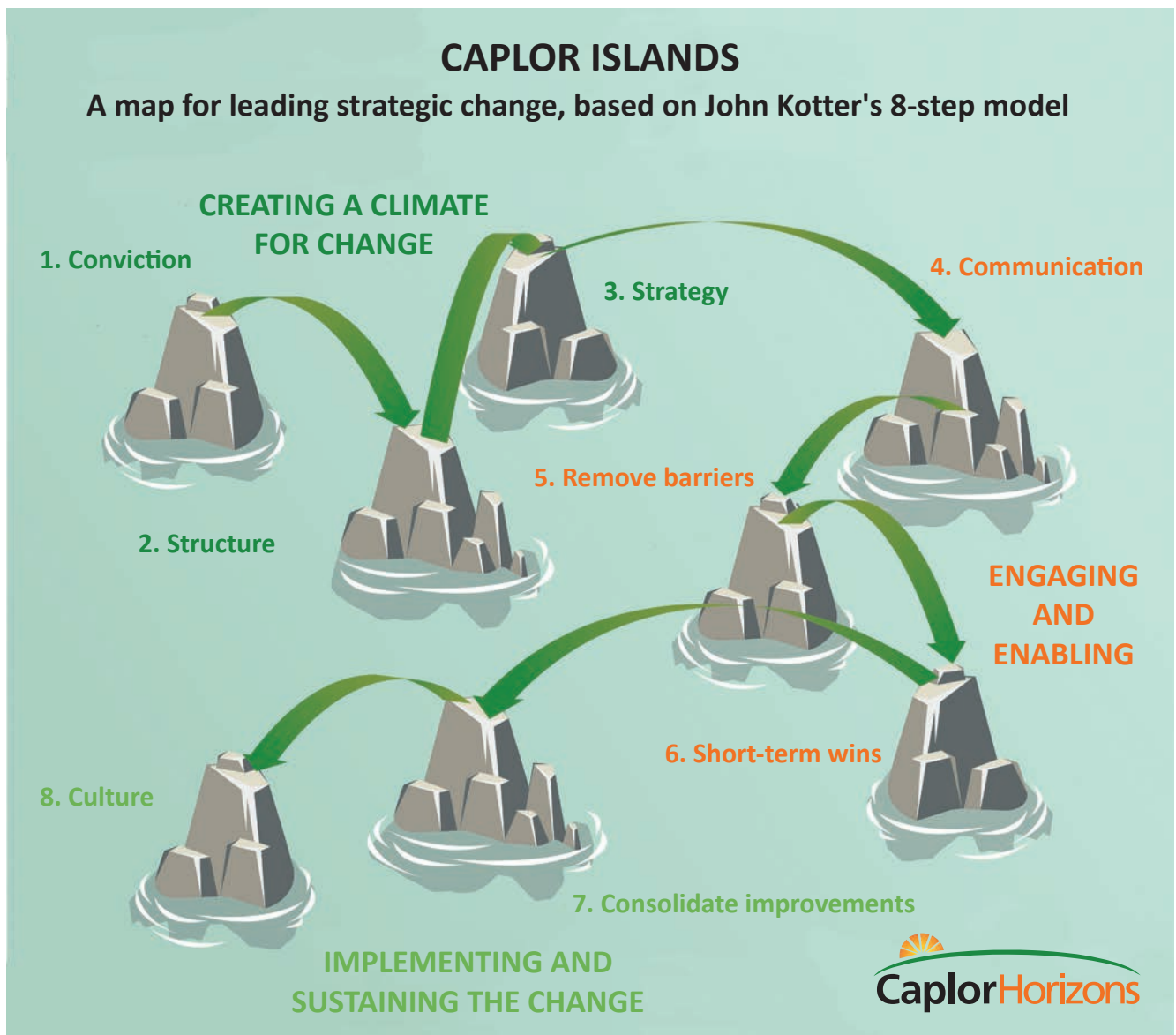
The Foundations

“Try a lot of stuff and keep what works.”

– Jim Collins

The proactive organisation is truly based on the Foundations of learning. A culture that values, seeks and rewards learning, especially learning from trying and sometimes failing, is the central feature of a proactive organisation. This learning comes partly from outside the organisation, from research done by others, and experiences and data reported by others. It also comes from inside the organisation, based on experiments, suggestions, reflection and collective processes aimed at improvement. The success of a proactive organisation is based on learning within a continuous loop (see Kolb’s learning cycle in Chapter 4).

Progress in leading strategic change to implement a strategy rarely follows a simple path. Our Caplor Islands model (depicted below) illustrates this and links the key components of strategic change as islands to visit. It provides a map for hopping consciously between the islands during processes of learning and reflection. It is based on the 8-Step Process of John Kotter (1995).



Caplor Islands

An awareness of the eight islands enables leaders and teams to develop a deeper understanding of what is involved in delivering change. The islands can also act as an audit tool to facilitate the delivery of change – identifying strengths, opportunities and potential barriers. Three of the islands relate to “creating a climate for change”, another three are about “engaging and enabling” the change to happen, and the final two islands are about “implementing and sustaining the change”.

The Roof

“How wonderful it is that nobody need wait a single moment before starting to improve the world.”

– Anne Frank

The sustainability of a proactive organisation comes not from detailed strategies and fixed ideas but from a well-informed, responsive, proactive and learning culture. The people of a proactive organisation think long term, beyond conventional strategy cycles of three or five years to 10 years or more. They are therefore led to deliver a sustainable future at the same time as, paradoxically, responding to a fast-changing and complex world by being open to changes of short-term plans every six months or so.

In terms of the 4 Ps of sustainability in the Roof of the Caplor House (for background read Chapter 2), the culture of a proactive organisation, with its emphasis on scanning the external environment and seeing the big picture, is more likely to be fast in picking up emerging damage or opportunities. People are better placed to see the signs and implications of, for example, climate change and to develop the organisation's response as part of its contribution to the environment.

Epilogue

The suggestions in this chapter may not solve Jane's immediate problems, but they will help her and her colleagues to build an organisation better fitted to respond to fast-changing reality and the opportunities it creates in the mid and longer term. The ideas about learning opportunities, flexible budgets and so on may sound impractical to hard-pressed leaders, however, our contention is that if an organisation takes the various steps recommended in this chapter then its individuals, teams and the organisation as a whole will be better able to deal with the challenges of a VUCA world and make progress towards their long-term goals.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming a proactive organisation

- **Develop a strategy that can be put on one page** – It is key that your strategy is responsive and adaptable to the external environment. It should remain higher level, looking 10-30 years into the future, and be open to short-term changes every six months or so. Use Caplor Horizons' Voyage mapping exercise as a useful framework to strategise and plan.
- **Foster a proactive culture by leading by example** – The behaviour of leaders has a strong influence on culture. Leaders, therefore, need to consider carefully the messages they send by the following: what you measure – are you focused on innovation or just the money; what you ask about and are curious about, for example when visiting work sites or programmes; how you respond to failure; your openness to training yourself; how successfully you seek and value diversity to stimulate challenge and gain new perspectives; and what you communicate and celebrate within your organisation.
- **Facilitate and encourage sharing within your organisation** – Sharing within and between teams in the organisation is key to spreading and benefiting from new ideas and information. Ways to do this include team meetings and awaydays, events for the whole organisation, and IT tools such as intranet, social media etc. Furthermore, the physical layout of spaces makes a great difference to behaviour, such as shared coffee machines and nearby seating, and flip charts or whiteboards to scribble on.
- **Be willing to take risks** – It is important that leaders feel able to try something and fail without being penalised for taking the risk. If you want to reach a goal quickly, you sometimes need to act first and make any necessary adjustments and corrections later. Furthermore, leaders should be willing not only to take risks, but also to get comfortable with others taking risks as part of creating a proactive culture.
- **Remain receptive to the changing external environment** – Some possible ways of doing this include: talking with experts in universities, think tanks and consultancies through contacts and conferences; following blogs and Twitter and studying books and papers; collaborating with organisations in other sectors; or appointing individuals to thought leading roles to roam freely as part or all of their jobs.

Key messages

- Successful organisations must be proactive in order to navigate change effectively in a VUCA world. This means taking a visionary approach to strategy, looking 10-30 years into the future, while recognising that plans need to be reviewed frequently, perhaps every six months. Changes in the world throw up opportunities and new ideas as well as new threats. The Caplor Horizons “Voyage Board” provides a tool for reviewing plans and progress in the context of the long-term vision.
- Remember: culture eats strategy for breakfast! It is the culture that distinguishes the proactive organisation: enthusiasm for learning, taking risks and a desire to innovate.
- Proactive organisations respond promptly to the changing external environment through analysis of barriers and drivers, communication networks, collaborating with partners, and flexibility within their processes and structures. Awareness of the eight islands in the “Caplor Islands” tool enables managers and teams to develop a deeper understanding of what is involved in delivering change.

Reflection questions

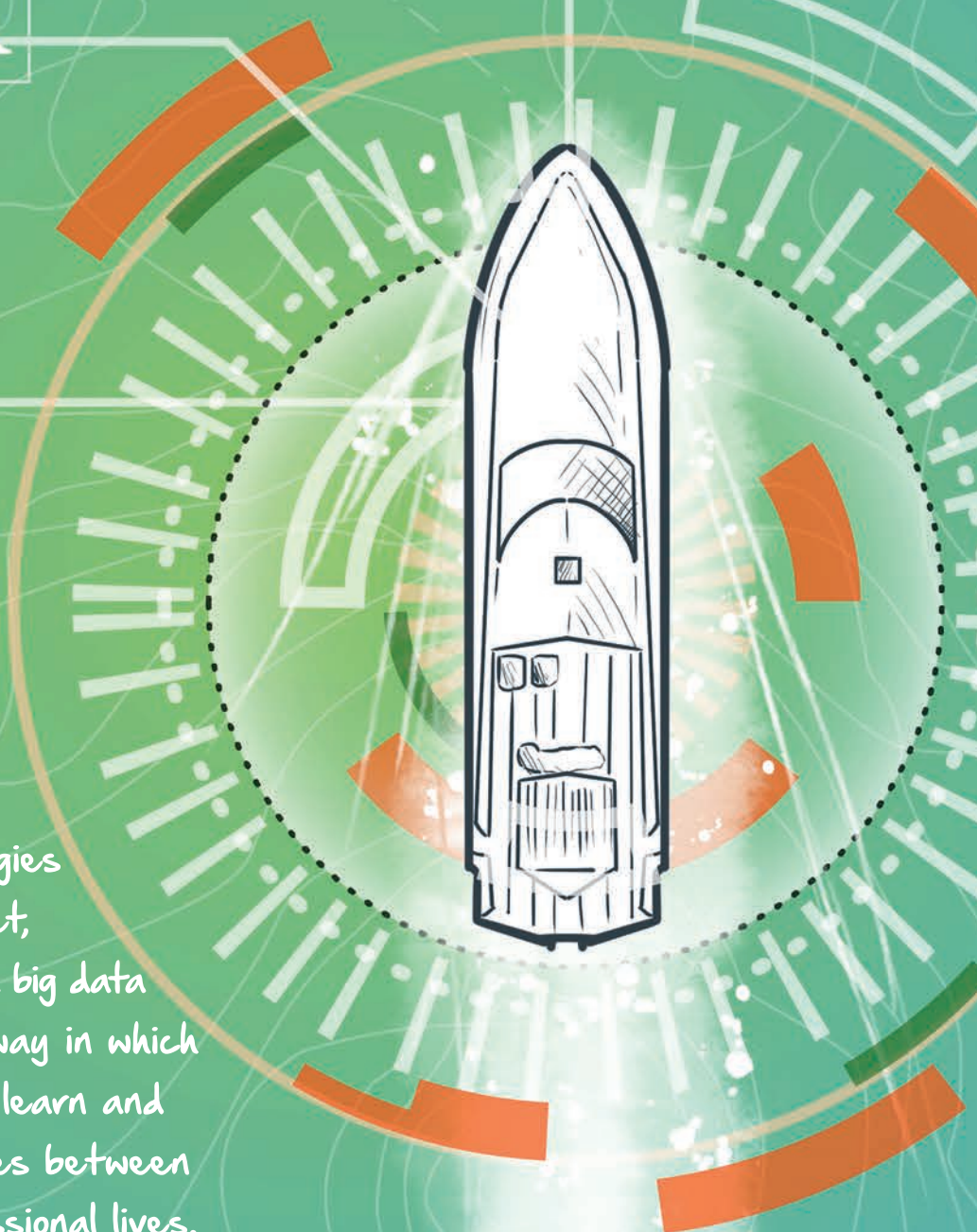
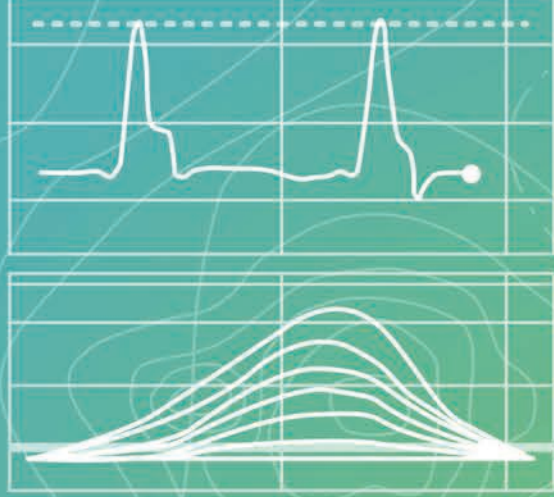
- Are changes in our context seen as interesting prompts to a new approach or annoying disruptions of what we had planned?
- Do our people feel able to question their leaders, presenting a different view of what is happening or suggesting a new approach to what should be done?
- Are people praised or penalised for taking considered risks and failing?

Action and impact questions

- How can the senior team encourage a proactive culture by their example?
- Does our strategy enable us to review plans every six months while holding on to our long-term vision?
- How can busy people be encouraged to search the world for new ideas, tools and contacts?

Further reading

- **Turnbull, S. (2020)** *Leading our way through change in the coronavirus world*. Caplor Horizons: Thought Leadership paper. Online.
- **Collins, J. and Porras, J. (1994)** *Built to Last: Successful Habits of Visionary Companies*. New York: HarperBusiness.
- **Caplor Horizons (2020)** *Caplor Islands model: a map for leading strategic change, based on John Kotter's 8-step model*. Online.



Our world is shaped by the influential technologies of our time. The internet, artificial intelligence and big data have transformed the way in which we communicate, work, learn and create, blurring the lines between our personal and professional lives.

Chapter 6: The Connected Organisation

6

THE CONNECTED ORGANISATION

“If you want to go quickly, go alone, if you want to go far, go together.”

– African Proverb

In this chapter we discuss how the next generation organisation can engage with its next generation staff, partners and other key stakeholders and enable different generations to connect and work together for success. Next generation leaders will be social-networking, digital natives who multitask and create impact through technology, and who often reject leadership in its traditional forms. This poses new challenges and opportunities for organisational change makers with a focus on the future.

The External Environment

“The young, free to act on their initiative, can lead their elders in the direction of the unknown.”

– Margaret Mead

Every generation is unique – our developmental years are defined by the influential cultural, economic, political and technological world events of the time, shaping our view of the world, including the ways in which we live, work, and consume. This chapter will discuss the importance of collaboration and of valuing individual differences for the benefit of the organisation as a whole. It also discusses the challenges and opportunities of truly engaging cross-generational collaboration; how to better engage the younger generation, both within and outside of the organisation, and how to embrace new technology and new ways of working in order to truly become a connected organisation.

When we think of early career professionals we are often referring to those born in the early 1980s to the mid-1990s (sometimes referred to as Gen Y or “Millennials”) and those born late 1990s to early 2000s (also known as Gen Z or “Digital Natives”). Both of these demographics are “tech savvy”. The former being the last generation to experience a childhood before the dawn of the internet, the initial early adopters of new technology, and the latter known as Digital Natives who have never known an offline world. Digital Natives have grown up with their smartphone as an extension of their arm, their childhood seen through the lens of a camera phone, and their activities documented online like never before. It is hard for them to conceive of a world without instantaneous communication and access to information. Indeed, many in this generation will never have even seen a fax machine or typewriter.

Some of the authors of this book grew up without a computer at home and still remember the unforgettable tone of the dial-up internet, which you could of course only use if no one was needing to use the phone. A far cry from today’s continually connected living.

Worldwide an average of 57% of the global population is now connected to the internet, spending an average of 6.5 hours per day online (Hootsuite and We Are Social, 2019). Additionally, 98% of consumers have used a social media network in the past month; being an internet user means being a social media user. Of these 6.5 hours online per day, an average of 2 hours 23 minutes is spent on social media, with users aged 16–24 being the biggest users and also the group with the most social media accounts (Global Web Index, 2019).

CHAPTER 6: THE CONNECTED ORGANISATION

Furthermore, we are currently living in unprecedented times. Due to coronavirus, many countries are experiencing “lockdown” and “social distancing” measures being put in place. This is resulting in a greater focus on virtual working, where individuals are working online from their homes. In their pandemic webinar series, Lynda Gratton (2020) spoke about how this revolution in virtual working and learning is bringing about significant opportunities, whilst Herminia Ibarra (2020) relayed the often challenging implications for diversity and inclusion.

This demonstrates just how integrated technology and the ability to be constantly connected have become in our lives. It is truly staggering to think that this nebulous online world has only really come about in the last twenty years. It now permeates almost every aspect of our lives from the way in which we communicate and interact with others, to how we consume information, purchase products, learn, entertain ourselves and work.

Technological advancement is not the only generational change which has impacted the ways in which younger generations live and approach their careers. More people are now attending university and leaving their hometowns in order to do so, and the younger generation is also the generation that has been most impacted by the 2008 global recession. This has prompted a change in how people go about finding work with an increase in the “gig economy” of temporary assignments, zero-hours contracts, internships, fixed-term contracts, and a greater need and therefore willingness to relocate to pursue career goals.

For example, in the UK, the housing crisis has contributed to an increase in people renting homes, with many delaying getting married and having families until later in life, focusing instead on developing their career and being less confined by location in order to do so. Furthermore, 43% of Millennials envision leaving their jobs within two years (Deloitte, 2019). This increases to 61% of Digital Natives showing a large shift from previous generations who focused on finding a job and working up the ladder over a number of years.

Lifestyles have changed and job security in the traditional sense has become less relevant. If organisations wish to remain competitive, attract the best candidates and appeal to younger generations, they also need to embrace new attitudes towards working and continually evolve with social norms.

The Observatory

“Not until diversity is made the logic of production will there be a chance for sustainability, justice and peace. Cultivating and conserving diversity is no luxury in our times: it is a survival imperative.”

– Vandana Shiva

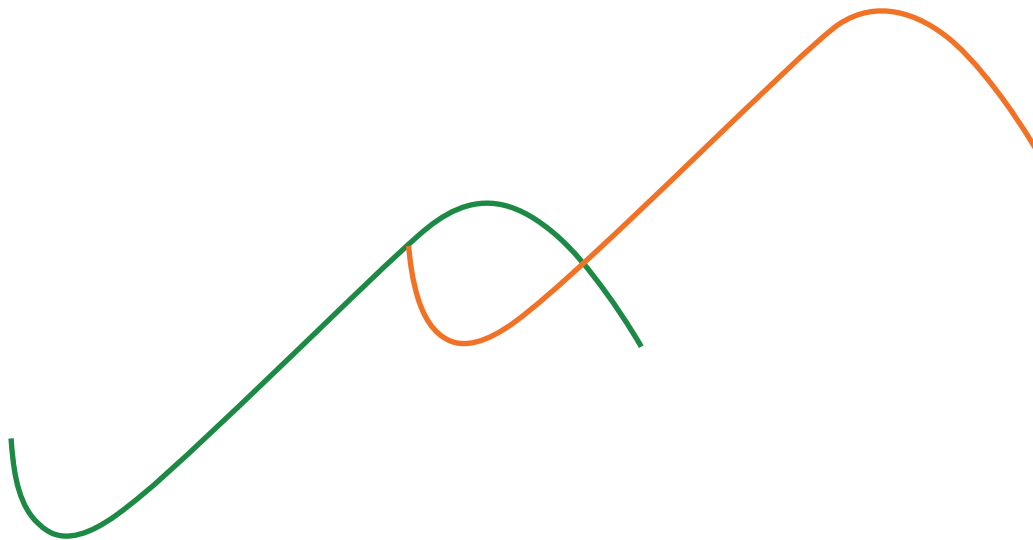
A connected organisation is consciously and actively connected and will need people who are able to adapt to a rapid pace of change and an organisational culture that is open and positive towards new ways of working.

The undeniable fact is that in the future a greater percentage of the workforce will be made up of Digital Natives. Therefore, engaging the next generation of future leaders is vitally important. Creating an environment and organisational culture that reflects their values and skills, where they can lend their expertise to others as well as learn and develop themselves is essential, because otherwise they will look for opportunities elsewhere.

As we move into an unknown future full of uncertainties: environmentally, politically and culturally, we need to envision new ways of living and working. Organisations will need to be adaptable to change in order to rise to new challenges and not only embrace change but anticipate it and create value from it.

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

Charles Handy's (2015) "second curve" states that all things (products, services, organisations, ideas and so forth) come to an end, usually after following the traditional model of introduction, growth, maturity and eventual decline. Handy argues that the way to remain sustainable and relevant is to be innovative, think differently and try to anticipate what the next thing might be for your organisation. Like in this diagram of impact plotted against time, if timed well, organisations must seize the initiative to act when things are going well, i.e. near the peak of the first curve. Change can be hard; it takes time and investment is required. Productivity along with confidence and enthusiasm can go down before the benefits of the change start to be felt. Resilience and patience are necessary. Thus, finding your second curve while you have the energy, time and resources is the key to remaining relevant and sustainable.



Charles Handy's Second Curve

So how can an organisation ensure it is responsive to change, innovative and creative, and ultimately future-proof, finding its second curve? The key is likely to be in engaging a diverse range of people, from different backgrounds, age groups, genders, cultures and more that can offer a diverse range of skills. A team that is comprised of a diverse set of individuals will benefit from a range of different perspectives, skills and idea-sharing. We all need people on our team who are able to think outside of how things have always been done and can envision how they might be done in the future.

As already mentioned, the next generation may move around more frequently than before, but instead of seeing a problem we might also see the value in having a workforce that is constantly changing and evolving. The culture of the connected organisation needs to promote exchanges of experience and opinion, encouraging learning, fostering trust, and enabling transparent communication. This may mean embracing new technologies, changing recruitment and staff engagement practices, putting policies in place to ensure that diversity, equality and inclusion are not only tolerated but actively practised, and being open to experimenting with new ways of working. This could be implementing "idea sprint sessions" to generate creativity, mentoring schemes, remote working options, flexible working hours, creating learning opportunities and discussion spaces.

A willingness to embrace innovative ideas and to accept that failure is yet another learning opportunity will present new opportunities as well as creating a culture in which staff feel more connected to their peers and feel valued as part of the wider organisation.

The Library

“So powerful is the light of unity, that it can illuminate the whole earth.”

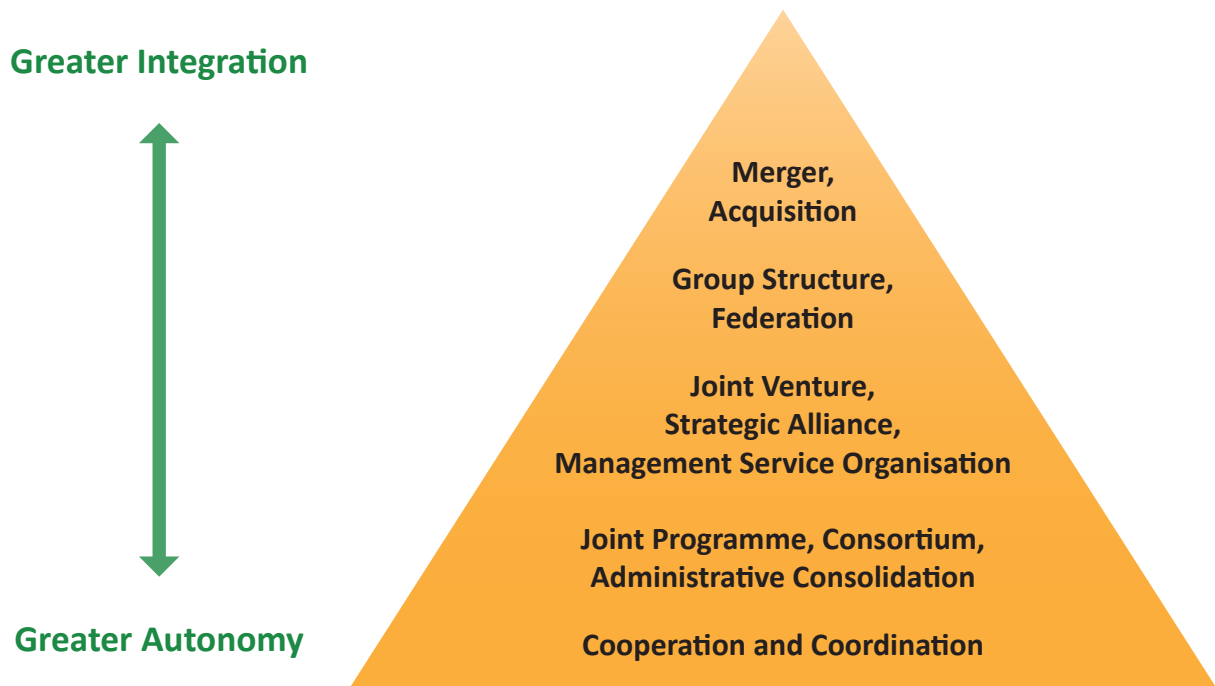
– Bahá'u'lláh

Connected organisations are intrinsically collaborative. Not only do they keep abreast of developments in society, across the globe and in cyberspace, they also have a collective mindset and recognise the value of collaboration both internally and externally.

In the Western world people live in an individualistic culture where they feel compelled to differentiate themselves from others in order to progress and compete for visibility and recognition. Collaboration, therefore, has been a rather overlooked and underestimated leadership capability. In contrast, collaboration has for many years been well understood in many non-Western cultures. In African and Asian cultures, more collective mindsets have enabled many societies to flourish.

There are many forms of collaboration, ranging from informal coordination to full-scale mergers. It is generally considered that the greater the integration, the less autonomy individual organisations retain. However, if handled well, even more strategic forms of collaboration can still lead to teams feeling a strong sense of autonomy. The type of integration and collaboration that will be most appropriate for your organisation will depend on the drivers and desired outcomes.

Here is a model developed by Mike Hudson (2005) representing the various levels of collaboration possible:



Collaboration Triangle

- **Cooperation and Coordination** – for example; running joint events, networking, shared advertising, shared office facilities or just simply shared ideas for working towards a common goal. At this level, each organisation tends to maintain its own identity and independence, although a collaborative event may fall under a joint name. Usually this type of collaboration is achieved fairly quickly. It generally has relatively low cost.

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

- **Joint Programme, Consortium or Administrative Consolidation** – within this form of collaboration, the relationship between organisations will be underpinned by more formalised and strategic level arrangements, including agreements about objectives, roles, cost-sharing arrangements and so on. The organisations remain independent.
- **Joint Venture, Strategic Alliance or Management Service Organisation** – for example, in a joint venture, the parties involved come together for a medium- or longer-term initiative; a legal entity is typically established which they jointly own and control. There is some loss of independence for the organisations.
- **Group Structure or Federation** – in this form of collaboration, a formal structure for separate organisations to work together is usually created, for example, a parent not-for-profit to all the organisations involved. In some cases of deeper level collaboration, an umbrella organisation might exercise a degree of control over local independent not-for-profits. In these circumstances, members might be affiliated with the umbrella body and have access to the resources and expertise offered.
- **Merger or Acquisition** – some collaborative working arrangements at lower levels of integration can lead, over time, to a merger. On other occasions organisations opt to select this option straight away. A merger or acquisition is where two or more separate organisations come together to form one organisation. When this happens, either a new organisation is formed to continue the work of the original organisations (a merger), or one organisation assumes control of another (an acquisition).

Beyond these initial considerations, it is often useful to have an enduring way of evaluating what the most appropriate form or structure of collaboration is at a given time, especially taking into account the fast-changing environment and the need to change and adapt to new realities. Different forms and structures for collaboration have emerged, including for movements: for example, a holacracy is a decentralised form in which decision-making is distributed throughout self-organising teams.

We have often found that using a simplified set of principles is very helpful to organisations when considering different forms of collaboration:

- **Effective decision-making** – It is more effective, as well as more motivating, for people involved with collaborative structures to retain as much autonomy as possible within their respective contexts. For this to happen, it needs to be agreed what is going to be decided collectively and what freedoms of decision-making exist for different elements of a collaborative entity.
- **Sense of belonging** – It is important for people in collaborative ventures to feel a sense of belonging at several different levels. For instance, a person might feel a sense of belonging to a local team, a country and a region along with the movement or organisation as a whole. It is important to understand and respect different identities at different levels. People's feelings of belonging and identity are a very significant part of organisational culture.
- **Interdependence** – It is important for people to feel committed to the principle that each part of a collaborative initiative needs the help of the other parts, as well as any coordinating body that might exist, in order to develop and thrive.

In all forms and structures, it is essential to keep in mind what is helpful for people to feel connected; to feel human. This includes taking into account the digital transformation happening internationally, accelerated as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and the challenges and opportunities involved with developing meaningful relationships online.

The Family Room

“Individually, we are one drop. Together, we are an ocean.”

– Ryunosuke Satoro

Next-generation leaders are likely to reject traditional, hierarchical leadership styles, valuing flatter structures where collaboration is encouraged, and where they feel their voices are heard. If an organisation leaves their team members stagnating in roles, then they are likely to lose valuable people who could contribute in a myriad of ways. Harnessing talent and applying talent speedily and efficiently in different configurations to new challenges is the hallmark of an effective connected organisation.

Connected organisations encourage people to work on varied projects, with people from different teams, in different capacities. Not only does this foster a great exchange of ideas and relationship building among people within the organisation, but it also ensures that staff remain challenged and their work does not become monotonous or mundane.

Building diverse teams can also mean expanding and re-imagining the workplace. Technological advancements, as well as the impact of Covid-19, mean that for many being in a physical office space every day is no longer required. Cloud computing solutions enable team members to work together remotely on the same document at the same time. Equally, communication apps and videoconferencing software have made it easy to talk in real time with colleagues located around the world. These may not completely replace face-to-face meetings and collaboration, but it can enable us to rethink the traditional nine to five, office-based job. Greater flexibility allows people greater work-life balance, and additionally can make them feel trusted and valued to manage their own time to the best of their ability. Connected organisations encourage the connection between home and work, enabling careers to be an enjoyable part of life, creating meaning and forging deeper connections with the wider world.

However, there are many challenges involved with these new ways of working. For example, Colleen Ammerman (2020) believes that the current crisis and an increase in working from home is putting organisations at risk of losing female talent. With schools shut for over five months in many parts of the world, parents were managing round-the-clock childcare while trying to meet deadlines, keep connected to colleagues, and demonstrate their value. Home life and caregiving roles are now much more visible. Ammerman notes that:

“Being seen in a caregiving role tends to boost men’s reputation and elicit warmth from others but when women’s caregiving is visible it triggers doubts about their capabilities.”

She calls this the “fatherhood premium” and the “motherhood penalty”. With the increased blur between work life and home life, it is important that we are more understanding and respectful of different circumstances and the multiple different roles that women, and men, have.

Furthermore, with increasing use of online working and video calling, it’s extremely important to ensure that digital spaces are kept inclusive. This means making sure that everyone within your organisation has access to a computer and internet, that meetings aren’t being held at times that disadvantage certain groups (e.g. parents feeding their children or people in different time zones), and that side conversations using the “chat” function aren’t excluding individuals. Work-life balance, mental health, and diversity and inclusion were already important subjects pre-Covid-19 and these challenges are potentially being exacerbated now that many of our offices are virtual.

The Foundations

“If you do things well, do them better. Be daring. Be first. Be different.”

– Anita Roddick

Individuals no longer need to go into a classroom to learn new skills as online learning courses have become very commonplace and high quality, often with tutors from top institutions contributing to the course. Free, short-term courses are available to learn the basics of a new piece of software, writing or report writing skills. In addition, long-term courses at masters or PhD level are available for those wishing to explore certain topics in great depth and gain a valuable qualification without necessarily needing to relocate or leave one's job in order to do so.

Mobile apps also can help learning on the go, for example language learning can be done in bite-size pieces, and lectures can be listened to via a podcast. It might be that staff wish to explore learning in areas not directly related to their current role, for example, a coding course, or presentation skills. Enabling people to further learning beyond directly related fields can enhance creativity and motivation. Giving staff the ability and freedom to select what and where they would like to learn, rather than limiting them to further learning only in directly related fields, not only demonstrates trust in your staff but can also foster innovation and enable the whole person to come to work, connecting home and work identities.

Furthermore, dedicated days spent learning a new skill, or working on a shared problem, mean that staff can focus on this learning without worrying about staying on top of day-to-day tasks and bowing to the demands of their inbox.

Allowing freedom of what to learn, how to learn it and where, enables people to create more meaning in their careers and develop new skills which can help them both personally and professionally, and dramatically develops in-house organisational talent. Having the trust in staff to complete their jobs without being constantly “seen” whether in person or online, can allow people the time to do deeper thinking without being distracted by minor tasks or demands. Constant multitasking is not compatible with deep, creative and insightful thinking. Managing expectations, and having senior staff take the lead in setting an example, can help enable others to take the space and time they need for deep thought and learning.

The Roof

At Caplor Horizons we frame sustainability in terms of Purpose, People, Planet, and Prosperity (to understand more, read Chapter 2). We can look at each of these aspects in turn to see how improving connectivity both within the organisation and externally with the wider world not only enhances sustainability but is key to it.

Purpose

What you choose to do as a career has always, to some extent, been a defining part of a person's life and identity. However, the lines between our professional and personal lives are becoming increasingly blurred; the ability to be constantly connected makes it harder to leave your work at your desk, the increased visibility of career and education opportunities can widen the choice of where people decide to dedicate their time, and make it easy to explore new options.

Enhanced awareness of ethical issues has resulted in a visible move towards people wanting to contribute positively to worldwide issues and work for an organisation that enables this. More openness around topics such as workplace depression and stress has prompted a change in how we view the role of work. No longer is it seen as simply a means to an end, but as an end in itself. People actively want to find meaning and soul in their work and are increasingly willing and able to change careers and organisations in order to pursue this.

CHAPTER 6: THE CONNECTED ORGANISATION

A shared purpose can mean many things, but a sustainable and connected organisation sees its staff members and consumers as valued members of its community, working towards shared values and goals.

Organisational cultures will need to support this aspiration, and should be managed collaboratively, with input from all areas of the organisation, as well as by actively engaging and responding to the wider world.

People

The internet has enabled greater choice than ever before in all aspects of life, be this buying clothes, reviewing a new organisation, or selecting a new life partner! Everything can be done at the click of a button or the swipe of a fingertip. The same goes for selecting the organisation you wish to work at. It's easy to read customer reviews, look up previous and current staff members, and access the vast amounts of data on organisations freely available online. Previous generations did not have this array of choice and comparison, and therefore may have been unaware of better options elsewhere. Whilst the grass is not always greener, companies need to ensure that they treat their staff correctly: implementing ethical working standards, safe working environments and fair pay. Going above and beyond by offering good work-life balances, excellent health care, flexible working policies, and education opportunities can help organisations to stand out to prospective employees as well as improving the wellbeing and retention of existing staff.

In recruitment and promotion practices, ensuring equality of opportunity and diversity of gender and ethnicity, amongst other things, is key. If prospective staff members look at your website or come along to an interview and only see non-disabled, white, male faces staring back at them, they may wonder what that signifies about the underlying culture of the organisation. Actively pursuing inclusion practices and policies, and addressing any issues to the contrary, will also improve connections within the workplace as well as communicating this to the wider world.

Planet

The environmental bottom line refers to an organisation's commitment to sustainable environmental practices. As both consumers and employees, the younger generation have been educated to be more socially conscious, wanting to engage with organisations they feel are acting ethically and in line with their own social values. Indeed they want their employers to be connected to the planet and its future needs.

As future leaders, young people are telling their employers that they should encourage a shift in perspective and deepen the connections between business and the natural world. In the last decade or so people have become much more aware of their impact upon the environment, and the real dangers and consequences of climate change.

The environmentally conscious consumer is actively looking for sustainable products, materials, production methods and practices. They are able to research and access information about business practices and are not afraid to call out a company on a public platform or boycott a brand that is seen to be environmentally detrimental.

Connected consumers can be an organisation's biggest advocates as well as its worst critics. If your organisation is dedicated to environmental sustainability, not only does this in itself contribute to the sustainable future of the organisation (as arguably environmentally sustainable business practices are the most profitable in the long run), but it can attract others sharing the same beliefs.

Not only should the organisation work towards reducing its negative impact on the environment, but it should create a positive impact. Eco-volunteering opportunities for staff is one way to do this. Allowing them to have paid time away from their desk to contribute to an environmental or social good cause not only is beneficial for building relationships and morale among staff, but also has a direct benefit for the wider community and the planet as a whole.

Prosperity

We have already discussed the need to engage the younger generation in order to future-proof an organisation, help it to continually evolve and be able to adapt to a fast pace of change. Whilst this may incur short-term costs, or investments that don't always pay off, in the long term this is necessary for ensuring the economic sustainability of the organisation.

Technology can help make processes more efficient, cutting down time and cost, and enabling staff to focus on the bigger issues. More efficient ways of working may mean less time in the office is required. Online meeting software may not fully replace face-to-face meetings, but it can mean that there is less need for international travel, saving both the monetary and environmental costs. Working collaboratively using cloud-based solutions can also reduce the need for lots of hardware and storage space.

To work towards achieving financial sustainability, organisations need to engage the younger generation now, as not only will they become the leaders of tomorrow, but also the largest consumer group with increased purchasing power over time. Given the shift towards the socially and environmentally conscious consumer, the sustainability of the organisation and the planet are becoming more closely aligned and connected than ever.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming a connected organisation

- **Foster an inter-generational exchange of ideas through mentoring schemes** – Many organisations are now using “reverse mentoring” where young people are coaching older generation colleagues in new technologies and social networks. One tool that can enable inter-generational mentoring within your organisation is “Donut”. Donut automatically pairs up different team members so that dedicated time is set aside to simply chat over a coffee, hear about different projects, learn from one another’s experience and build stronger relationships.
- **Explore potential opportunities for collaboration** – Whether it is informal coordination or a full-scale merger adopting a more collaborative mindset is vital to deliver a sustainable future. This could include running joint events, sharing office facilities, putting in a joint bid for a competitive contract, collaborating on a medium- or longer-term initiative, or becoming a member of an umbrella organisation.
- **Use technology to improve efficiency** – Technology can ensure that processes can be efficient, particularly the most basic and necessary. Simplifying tasks such as managing expenses, calendar management, or updating records can mean that people can focus on bigger issues and explore new projects and ideas, as well as encouraging a culture of continuous improvement and adaptation. Furthermore, working collaboratively using cloud-based solutions enables team members to work together remotely on the same document at the same time.
- **Encourage innovation, experimentation and collaborative projects** – Implementing rapid prototyping can enable freedom of idea-creation, getting things done quickly rather than perfectly, and then working on shared solutions across teams. “Sprint sessions” are a good way of doing this: bringing together a group of people from across the organisation to work on a shared project for a short, dedicated period of time. This can often bring to light individual skills or attributes that had been overlooked and can open new doors and opportunities for people within the organisation.

Key messages

- Connected organisations are consciously and proactively connected. This means using digital technology and data effectively, exploring potential opportunities for collaboration, promoting innovation and experimentation within projects, and encouraging diverse and flexible teams.
- Digital technology provides greater opportunities to be connected. Worldwide an average of 57% of the global population is now connected to the internet, spending an average of 6.5 hours per day online. Most people will use the internet as part of their day-to-day jobs, transforming existing jobs and creating many new career opportunities.
- Next generation leaders will be social-networking, Digital Natives who multitask and create impact through technology. This provides an exciting new opportunity and perspective which needs to be harnessed and encouraged to achieve a sustainable future.

Reflection questions

- How “future proof” do you consider your organisation to be? Is engaging the younger generation a priority? Is the organisation environmentally and socially sustainable as well as financial?
- Does the culture at your organisation encourage or hinder innovation?
- Do you and your colleagues have a sense of shared purpose and community? What does community mean to you?

Action and impact questions

- Are project teams inclusive, comprising of people with a variety of backgrounds and experiences? If not how could cross-organisational collaboration be improved?
- Challenge the status quo. Could working norms and recruitment processes be improved to attract and recruit a diverse pool of candidates?
- Could you review administrative processes and technology to see where “quick wins” can be made and efficiency improved?

Further reading

- **Handy, C. (2015)** *The Second Curve: Thoughts on Reinventing Society*. London: Penguin Random House UK.
- **Hudson, M. (2005)** *Managing at the Leading Edge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- **Henson, S. (2018)** *A New Era of Conscientious Engagement: How Small Nonprofits Can Engage the Millennial Generation to Support Their Work*. Online.



All our behaviour is a consequence of the internal dynamics of our minds, bodies and life stories. Exploring how our emotions, instincts and thoughts drive our decisions, can take us to a whole new level of personal and interpersonal understanding.

Chapter 7: The Human Organisation

7

THE HUMAN ORGANISATION

“You give but little when you give your possessions. It is when you give of yourself that you truly give.”

– Kahlil Gibran

In this chapter we use a neuroscience perspective to explain why traditional “machine” organisations need to be replaced with “human” organisations that recognise the *whole* person and our collective potential. Human behaviour is not predictable and putting people in organisational boxes denies the reality of who we really are and what we are capable of. We introduce the Human Horizons tool, which gets below the surface of traditional understandings of behaviour, revealing the internal dynamics of our brains, bodies and life stories. Understanding this helps build greater self-awareness and an understanding of what motivates us, and others, as humans. This chapter concludes that organisations of the future need to encourage the “freedom to be human” through adopting a fundamentally different approach based on optimising our collective human performance.

External Environment

Both people and organisations are facing huge resilience challenges due to Covid-19. Stress levels are up across the board, alongside illness, absenteeism, isolation and depression. Traditional management approaches and organisational models are struggling to address the needs of younger generations who do not accept hierarchical authority as some natural law and rarely subscribe to the “put up and shut up” viewpoint. Leaders of large organisations are facing huge obstacles in recruiting and retaining an increasingly diminishing pool of accessible talent. Younger entrepreneurial businesses are rapidly changing the organisational landscape. More than ever, organisations are having to face up to the reality that the way we lead, manage and organise individuals has to radically change.

So why are these “traditional” organisational models failing? One possibility finds its roots within the concept of “dualism” which emerged around the 17th century. Until then in many Western societies the Roman Catholic Church was seen as the guardian of “body” and “soul”. However, an increasingly influential medical and scientific community, spurred on by the research of Isaac Newton and his contemporaries, demanded access to deceased human bodies for purposes of clinical research. The result was a “deal” between the two communities whereby the church retained responsibility for “mind” and “soul” and science took on the guardianship of the “body”. This laid the foundation for the split in our thinking between body and mind that has stayed with us ever since and has remained largely unchallenged until very recent times.

So, science and “non-science” (religion, spirituality, mysticism etc.) went their separate ways, to the extent of being at times in direct opposition to each other, with science dismissing any claims of the non-scientific community that did not meet its rules of research and validation. In parallel the rules of westernised business management practice were laid down by Frederick Taylor in his scientific approach to industrial practice, based on reducing human activity to the lowest controllable level and relying on science to produce predictable results. Taylorism itself, designed initially for factory environments, is based at its core assumption of distrust; humans need to be controlled by process, procedures and methods that will predict their output. No room here for the expression of humanity.

Yet science itself is starting to discover the flaws in such an approach. Quantum physics is exposing the limitations of Newtonian thinking in terms of our understanding of the universal building blocks of life. Ultimately, human behaviour is not predictable and putting people in organisational boxes denies the reality of who we really are and what we are capable of. None of us operates in a vacuum: we are defined largely by the relationships we develop with those around us.

“Machine” organisations were and still are the opposite of “human” organisations. People brought their professional self to work but left their “whole” selves at the door. To deliver a sustainable future, organisations need the whole person.

The Observatory

“Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another’s uniqueness.”

– Ola Joseph

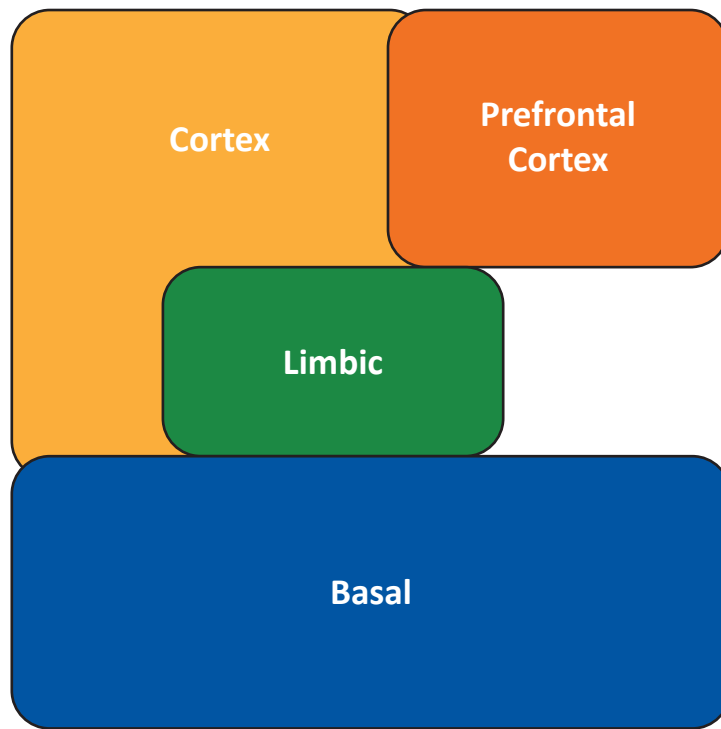
Humans are truly amazing creatures. We can reason and deduce. We can intuit and feel. We have an innate desire to expand ourselves to understand more complexity, assume more responsibility, make bigger contributions, and develop into an ideal version of ourselves. Our organisations need to be built to harness the full potential of our selves. They should be built with an understanding that each of us is sometimes a visionary, sometimes an accountant, sometimes a writer, and sometimes something that can’t even be described.

Organisations should be built with an understanding that we each hold multiple intersectional identities that give us powerful and unique insights that we can express and operationalise in any variety of ways. We need to create organisations like this in order to unleash the greatest potential for collective action in service of social change. And we need to build them to make sure that those of us that work in these organisations can live the lives we desire while we do it.

The leading edge of this fundamentally new view of humanity is provided by neuroscience. Since the 1990s imaging technology, such as fMRI scans, have allowed us to look at live human brains in action for the first time. Psychology, whilst flourishing in the 20th century, had to rely on understanding based primarily on theoretical models and behaviour observation. Now we are increasingly able to underpin or overturn such theories by examining activity in the brain itself.

Our neuroscience Advisor, Clive Hyland (2013; 2017), in association with Haygrove Ltd, created the Human Horizons model for Caplor Horizons. This model clearly and coherently represents the four regions of the brain which most directly impact our behaviour:

- The basal system
- The limbic system
- The cortex
- The prefrontal cortex.



Human Horizons brain

Understanding the dynamics of each of these brain regions can offer fresh and significant insights into human behaviour. Becoming aware of our own unique blend of these processing styles offers a whole new dimension of self-awareness, helping to build greater self-actualisation, self-esteem and self-confidence inside and outside the workplace.

The Basal Region

This is the oldest part of the brain in evolutionary terms and sits just above the brainstem. It is often referred to as the “reptilian brain”, the world of our instincts, the region where our responses to stimuli are preprogrammed either genetically or as a “hard-wired” reflection of life experience. To understand this, think “crocodile”. Above all, crocodiles know how to survive. They are not trainable and spend their lives doing exactly as they want, either soaking up energy from the sun or executing their next kill. They are not concerned with relationships. Even their parenting skills are negligible: if their offspring overstay their welcome (about three months) they will eat them!

Likewise, in humans, the basal region of the brain is concerned with unconscious autonomic (automatic) activity. Its purpose is to conduct the basic functions of life, including balance and movement, reproduction and digestion. These activities require no conscious input: they just “happen”. In behavioural terms, our instincts are only aroused when there are matters of survival at stake or if we see a significant opportunity to thrive. This part of the brain operates at very high speed (much quicker than thoughts). If it perceives a “survive” or “thrive” stimulus it will engage immediately and decisively: if it sees no such significance, it will disengage.

We know that there is an important neural connection between the basal region and the gut. The gut has its own independent neural network and we understand this to be an essential element of our instinctive responses, our “gut feel” and our hunches. The basal region is therefore the home of our instincts and is focused specifically on our own survival and that of our genes.

The Limbic Region

The limbic system is located in the central region of the brain. It is sometimes referred to as the mammalian brain, which reflects its evolutionary stage of development. Above all, the limbic system is designed to enable mammals to cooperate. When our pre-human species were confronted by the climatic challenges of surviving on land, evolution worked out that cooperation would be the key to our survival. So the mammalian brain evolved the distinctive capacity for emotional connection through relationships and to build family units and social groupings: hence the emergence of clearer hierarchies amongst mammals, with the alpha male sitting at the top.

It is this emotional bonding that keeps us together as humans. Unlike instincts, they act as a source of sharing with others. There is highly sophisticated resonance circuitry built into the limbic region, which enables us to excel at matters like facial recognition. It also enables us to empathise with others by replicating their emotional experience within ourselves. This internal experience involves close neural connectivity to the heart.

Energy, not thought, is the key transmission medium for emotions; the energy we share as part of the universe. Emotions and body language were the cornerstone of mammalian communication long before humans created language.

The limbic brain operates as an analogue network, which means it is energy state sensitive. The limbic system is also the source of our creativity and essentially entwined with energetic flow. It is the realm of our subjective inner experience. The limbic system is therefore the region where we seek to create relationships, to feel a part of families and societies, to build trust and to be loved.

The Cortex

The cortex is situated at the top and sides of the brain. It can be thought of as the thinking brain and forms part of the essence of what makes us human. It does more than thinking, for example processing of auditory and visual data, which means turning sounds and images into something meaningful.

However, it is our thinking capacity that sets us apart from other species. It is the region of the brain where we lay down the learned rules of our existence. This is done by laying neural pathways which operate like digital circuitry processing electrical signals through a series of decision gateways, known as synapses.

The cortex is therefore the world of information processing and rules, logic and detail, where we create mental structures, processes and systems. It relates very much to the external environment and our perception of objective reality.

The Prefrontal Cortex

The prefrontal cortex, as its name suggests, sits at the front of the neocortex (the modern cortex). Whilst it is still essentially a thinking region, its location in the brain means that it has wider access to data across the whole brain, including emotional and instinctive data.

It is therefore capable of much wider thinking, the bigger picture perspective, intuitive intelligence and insightfulness. Evolution worked out that this wider thinking ability gave us even greater advantages over other species and therefore rapidly accelerated its development.

Crucially, it is also the area of self-awareness, where we constantly explore the boundaries between ourselves and our environment, both now and in the future; where we seek to understand our impact on others and where we seek validation of who we are. It is the world of meaning and inner purpose. The prefrontal cortex is the gateway to personal change and therefore critical for all personal development activity. It is also the region where we can open ourselves to the appeal of leadership, especially through the sharing of a collective vision.

The Wider Human Intelligence: The Body (Heart And Gut)

Both the heart and the gut play a critical role in our wider intelligence system. The heart is an integrative part of our emotional experience and plays a defining role in accessing confidence and sustaining performance optimisation. The gut directly influences our instincts, although for now it is the area we know least about.

Both organs have their own neural networks, which means they are not dependent on the brain to function. They are partners, not subordinates, and together form the wider human intelligence system comprising mind and body. There is some congruence in referring to the body as the foundation of the brain, and certainly deserving of its own care and attention.

The Library

“We have what we need if we use what we have.”

– Edgar S. Cahn

Human Horizons gives us the tools to explore our own internal world, to become more self-aware and to be able to empathise more with others as we understand more about their instincts, motivations, thoughts and emotions.

As mentioned in Chapter 4, the Human Horizons model also links to the Caplor House.

- The Kitchen represents the basal system
- The Family Room represents the limbic system
- The Library represents the cortex
- The Observatory represents the prefrontal cortex.

The Caplor House represents the environment in which we carry out our activities, whether they be personal or professional. It illustrates the different type of behaviours we adopt when we react to different stimuli within any given environment, and it provides insights about our own responses as well as those of other people.

We may feel more comfortable in one or more of the particular rooms, believe that our skills fit well there, or simply enjoy the kind of activity within that room.

However, as we develop as leaders we need flexibility in our behaviours and the application of our skills. Entering the different rooms of the house and developing awareness of what is needed to feel comfortable and be effective in those rooms, is a way of thinking about our roles and relationships in organisational settings. Some illustrations to help understand the connections can be seen below:

Example 1:

In the Caplor House I may be working in the Library, as a leader within my team.

Moreover, I may have a personal preference for working in this room. Our activity is part of our strategic development – we are using analytical tools to examine financial data and consider ways of eliminating overspend on a budget. My visible activity and behaviour is calm and structured. I am challenging anything that is not evidence based and building up a robust business plan.

However, what is not visible to others is the anxiety and stress that I am feeling about being unable to find a viable solution to our financial problems and the fear I have that I am simply not capable of doing my job. This is where Human Horizons, with its brain-based approach, comes in. Some basic neuroscience helps me to explore my own feelings and, perhaps, recognise the signals that other people are giving that suggest they may share my concerns.

Example 2:

In the Caplor House I find myself spending a lot of time in the Family Room, where I feel comfortable coaching, mediating and sharing my experiences with others. I am perceived as a good listener and a wise counsellor.

However, other people have pointed out my reluctance to spend time in the Observatory, commenting that I do not seem to want to look to the future and do not want to initiate any change. Why is that? Human Horizons helps me to explore my own internal feelings and how they impact on my behaviour in the Caplor House.

The Family Room

“To handle yourself, use your head; to handle others, use your heart.”

– Eleanor Roosevelt

Above all, the family room is a place of social connection. It represents the home of our emotional needs where we seek the warmth, stimulation and validation of others. This is no “nice-to-have”: it is a fundamental human need which strikes at the core of our very being. Throughout our lives our relationships define us. We are constantly reviewing and modifying our thoughts and behaviour in response to the feelings we experience through our connection with those around us.

As we explore the dynamics of this further, we come to what you may consider to be a surprising observation. The essence of our interconnectedness lies more in our bodies than our brains. Yes, we process thoughts and reflections in our brains, but the first point of contact is the energetic interaction between our bodies. In evolutionary terms, we had bodies before we had brains! Our brains, whilst a vital source of intelligence integration, do not always call the shots when it comes to our behavioural responses. In fact, in most circumstances the brain itself responds to the information transmitted to it by the intelligence system which sits within and across the body. Every cell in our body is a sophisticated sensing mechanism which responds to energetic changes in its environment. When we sense danger the brain responds to the body’s call.

Our emotions are indeed “energy in motion” which we experience as tangible sensations across the body, especially the heart and gut regions. Behind the feelings that we take for granted is a complex body intelligence system which equips us for survival in groups. Although rarely covered in popular literature, the essence of this is energetic resonance or dissonance, whether we are attracted or repelled by a stimulus. This takes us into the world of physics, and in particular, quantum physics, as we start to reveal a new model of humanity.

Energy is emerging as the key currency of human interaction in this new world of understanding that is unravelling before us. The landscape is changing rapidly. The role of our emotions and energetic responses sits at the heart of this inspirational scenery.

These insights begin to explain why modern organisations are fighting a losing battle against employee stress. Traditional thinking starts with forcing people into organisational boxes, typically job descriptions or management hierarchies. The essence of this is control, reducing human activity to the predictable. Emerging science is demonstrating more than ever that ultimately human behaviour is not predictable. We are designed to flow. Our brains and bodies are optimised in terms of performance and resilience when we are enabled to follow our passion, that in which we believe and where we feel equipped to thrive. Yet, most corporate organisations still cling to rule-based environments as a source of comfort, even though the comfort blanket is increasingly torn and tattered.

This has to and will change. More and more organisations are recognising the size and urgency of this challenge. Optimisation of collective human performance requires a dramatic shift in our perspectives and practices.

The Foundation

“As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

– Nelson Mandela

Embedded learning will become a feature of future organisations. It's more about facilitated learning matched to our experiences at the time we need it and less about training “excursions” when the corporation has deemed it to be timely. Personal and organisational development and growth need to run hand in hand. Organisational hierarchies still appear to persist in the belief that “they know best”; that the really clever intelligence sits at the top of the organisation and that it is therefore a matter of cascading this down through the managerial structure. The emerging science shows us the vast potential of human beings, especially when they are committed to a cause. Those “at the coal face” are the ones that really understand what's going on. The challenge of leaders becomes tapping into this. The real power of future leadership will be the ability to nurture and harness this potential in a way that supports both organisational and individual growth.

The Roof

“Real generosity towards the future consists in giving all to what is present.”

– Albert Camus

Organisations of the future will have to address these fundamental human needs. Of course, we need an appropriate level of rules to guide our collective activity, but not at the expense of the vast human potential that currently lies untapped within its ranks. Successful organisations will recognise the power of building trust as a much greater source of productivity than hanging on to control. Communities will be organised around those who share a passionate commitment to a common vision underpinned by a strong sense of collective values. Although sometimes talked about, these principles are rarely afforded the level of importance they deserve. Excellent leaders will understand this at a deep intuitive level and will have the courage to pin their colours to the organisational mast.

At an individual and personal level, we will all need to find our own ways of re-connecting with our bodies. In the West, in particular, we have so often closed our eyes to the personal insights available to us through our own body intelligence systems.

Analysis has subsumed intuition and rationale has enveloped our emotional senses. This has taken us down some very dark alleys. We need them all! Our brains and bodies are always purposeful in the intelligence they offer. Evolution has explored and verified the value of our own internal information systems. Every source is to be cherished, whether instinctive, emotional, rational or reflective. It is finding the blend of these rich sources of data that provides us with our unique human advantage. Meanwhile, we continue the journey of discovery to take our species to a whole new level of personal and interpersonal depth of understanding.

Whilst still relatively small in number, more organisations are starting to recognise the value of this new and radical approach. Traditional management thinking centred around hierarchical control and heavy-duty rules has run its course. Current levels of stress and disaffection among staff members are not sustainable. It is time to take the lid off the pressure cooker we have created and adopt a fundamentally different approach based on a renewed and insightful understanding of who we really are and what we can do together to embrace our opportunities to thrive.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming a human organisation

- **Encourage “wholeness”** – By replacing the fiction of the “professional” with the more liberating concept of the “whole self” we can make our organisations more effective, more sustainable, and more transformative. This involves acknowledging intuitions, discomforts, fears, and hopes. This might happen with a “check-in” at the beginning of meetings to give everyone an opportunity to share something that will help them become present and humanised. It could expand to include an honest “check-out” where people share their experience of the meeting in order to discharge any tension and give the facilitator constructive feedback. Other examples include discussing mistakes, sharing personal challenges, and spending time outside of your workplace with one another.
- **Reconnect with your body and encourage others to do so** – It is important that you listen to the signals that your body is sending you as they are often more accurate than your brain signals. Practices such as mindfulness, body therapies, meditation and self-reflection can help you to do this.
- **Take the Human Horizons online test and discuss your results with your team** – Have you ever wondered why connecting with some people is so much easier than it is with others? Do you relate better to people who get straight to the point and focus on results? Or is it easier for you to connect to people who focus on building relationships and energise the people around them? Or maybe you would prefer it if the people you work with focused on facts and details. We are all different and the Human Horizons test will help you understand why. To take the test contact a member of Caplor Horizons.
- **The Happiness Index** – The Happiness Index is an employee engagement company which supports organisations to maximise the potential of their people through targeted enquiry and feedback. They believe in the “freedom to be human” and they support organisations to harness this. Neuroscience principles have guided and reinforced their approach.

Key messages

- Traditional “machine” organisations need to be replaced with “human” organisations that recognise the whole person and our collective potential. Human behaviour is not predictable and putting people in organisational boxes denies the reality of who we really are and what we are capable of.
- The leading edge of this new view of humanity is supported by neuroscience. The Human Horizons tool gets below the surface of traditional understandings of behaviour, revealing the internal dynamics of our brains, bodies and life stories. Understanding this helps build greater self-awareness and an understanding of what motivates us, and others, as human.
- Current levels of stress and disaffection among staff members are not sustainable. It is time to adopt a fundamentally different approach based on a renewed and insightful understanding of who we really are and what we can do together to embrace our opportunities to thrive.

Reflection questions

- What are the triggers that bring the “best” and “worst” out of me?
- Where and when in my life were my own reactions shaped?
- What environment (people and place) would get the best out of me?

Action and impact questions

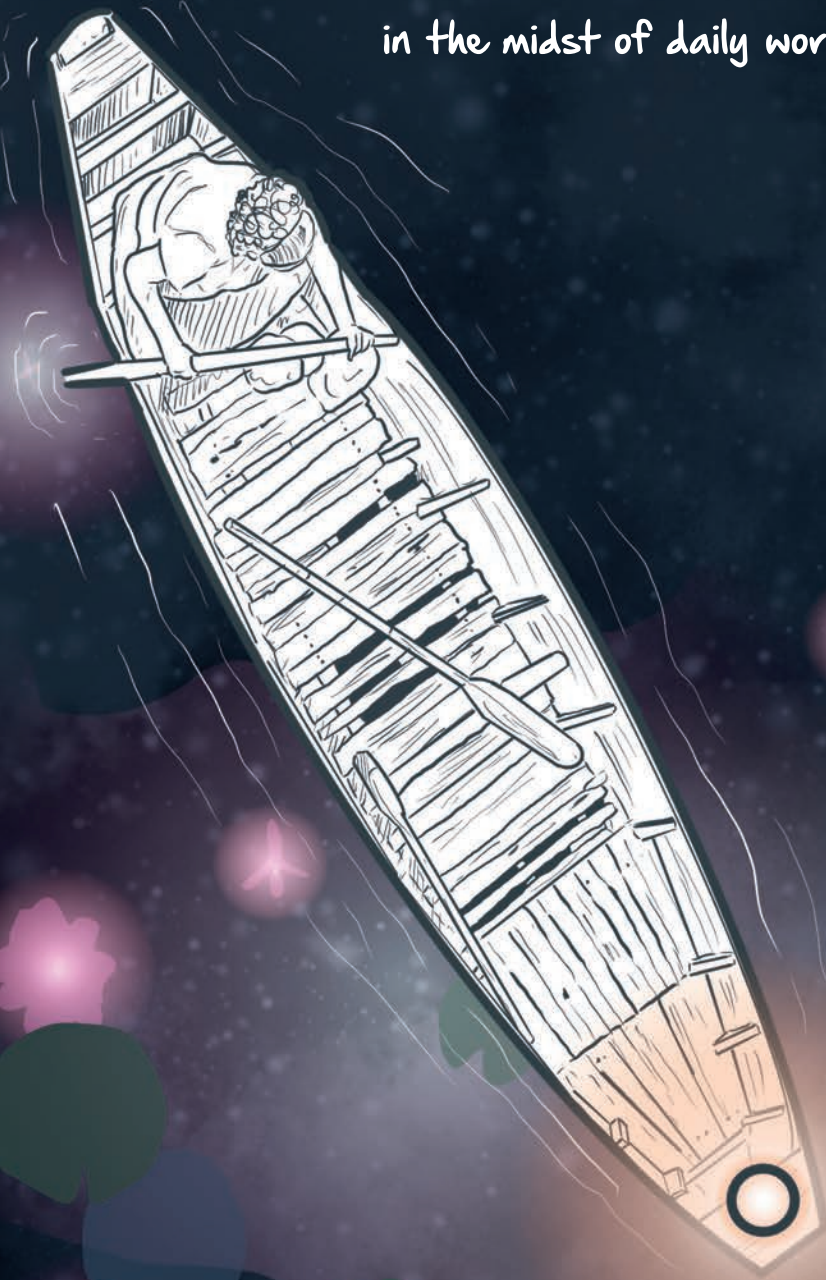
- How can I build a consistent habit of honestly evaluating my own behaviour? What role do my instincts, emotions and thoughts play in this?
- How can I create time “in the moment” to slow down my instinctive and emotional responses to give me time to think and make sense of what is going on around me and within me?
- How do I let go of judging myself and focus instead on understanding?

Further reading

- **Hyland, C. (2017)** *The Neuro Edge: People Insights for Leaders and Practitioners*. St Albans: Panoma Press Ltd.
- **Lieberman, M.D. (2013)** *Social: Why our brains are wired to connect*. Crown Publishers/Random House.
- **Siegel, D. (2011)** *Mindsight: Transform Your Brain with the New Science of Kindness*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications.

Chapter 8: The Soulful Organisation

Benevolence and humanity within an organisational culture enable people to flourish and succeed. How can we foster soulful nourishment and be true to ourselves in the midst of daily work pressures?



8

THE SOULFUL ORGANISATION

“Call the world if you please The Vale of Soulmaking.”

– John Keats

In this chapter we explore how leaders can respond to the numerous and complex challenges and demands they face through cultivating their inner life. In particular the fostering of soul in both leaders and organisations to encourage wellbeing and resilience through soulfulness. We offer the Caplor Horizon’s “Leaderful Way” to illustrate that leading with soul is possible, desirable even, in whatever environment you work in, bringing countless benefits for you and everyone involved.

The External Environment

Another meeting, another agenda, another
list of buzz-words, initials and initiatives.
PSU is entering Phase Three
while the CDR wants G2 to go to Level Five.

*If we go the full nine yards on this one;
if we get pro-active, get out of the box, get
our teams together and on the same hymn-sheet;
if we hit the ground running, if we downsize HR.
if we get the money on board, and our asses into gear,
then we can change something, make a difference,
change what the other guys changed last week.*

Meanwhile the god has left the garden,
the muse lies minimised in the corner of our screens.
Not dead, not buried, but ignored and unseen,
like a doodle at the edge of an action plan.

Me? I say make a sacrifice to the doodle;
pick some flowers, speak a poem, feed the tiny muse.
Draw, paint, sing or dance, and you’ll bring the gods
back into the board-room; the laughing, smiling,
weeping gods of the night-time and the wild.

A Doodle at The Edge by William Ayot, with kind permission

We live in a complex and highly challenging world. Issues such as coronavirus, the Black Lives Matter movement, climate change, the expansion of social media and the ever-increasing pace and demands of daily life are all changing the way we live, feel and behave. Levels of stress, behavioural and mental health problems for many are rising significantly.

Several polls and research findings indicate that many people today are in a crisis looking for meaning, they feel that something is broken in their workplaces. Laloux (2014) describes how most employees are unhappy and bring their bodies but not their whole selves to work; certainly not their spirit or souls. His research evidences that this feels true at every level of organisation, including top leaders. People are tired of the rat race, unproductive meetings, office politics, infighting, bureaucracy and all the things that restrict and disempower them. Benefiel (2005, 2008) describes how many leaders feel compelled to focus on performance and targets. What is measured becomes what is given attention. While it is appropriate and important to deliver results, the price paid is that external results and pressures take priority. As a consequence, the place and value of our inner life is neglected.

Yet for many people complexity and challenges stimulate a desire, a need even, to go inwards to find balance, respite or even a sense of meaning and purpose. To find the resilience they need to lead effectively.

So how can leaders not only thrive themselves but also enable their organisations and the people within them to thrive? To create what Margaret Wheatley (2017) calls “islands of sanity”.

The Observatory

“Put your heart, mind and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.”

– Swami Sivananda

In this section we explore what soul is. We hope to inspire you to step deeper into your inner life, to experience your soul as a leader, and as a person. You may identify as agnostic, atheist, spiritual or religious. You may dislike all labels and regard yourself as a free spirit. Yet inside us all is a place that many refer to as soul.

What is Soul?

We hope you will explore and find your own answer to this question. There have been differing views in different periods on what the soul is and yet key aspects have persisted through the ages. These include:

The soul

- is beyond, or more than, the body, physical self or material world
- is essential, deep, true, spiritual or authentic self
- can be directly experienced in a personal and transforming way
- constitutes the true fabric of reality beyond our egos
- is where our true unique individuality arises
- lives on beyond death as an individual or cosmic entity
- is seeped in the everyday, the minutiae, mundane and depth – (whereas spirit is more inclined towards the higher realms and perfection)
- is experienced through imagination rather than reason
- is expressed through symbols, myths, rituals, dreams, metaphors, mythical characters, poetry, storytelling and art.

There is also the concept of the collective or “Cosmic Soul”, of which the human is a unique individual manifestation while simultaneously interconnected. Theories, experiences and expressions of soul exist in various schools of philosophy, and in Indigenous, Western and Eastern faith traditions. Modern writers on soul include Thomas Moore, Patrick Harpaur, Rosalie Osmond, Roger Scruton, Susan Greenfield, Roger Penrose, John Polkinghorne, Almaas and Alain De Botton.

Fostering a Leaderful Soulful Organisation

In today's complexity it can be limiting for there to be only one leader recognised at any one time, holding all, or most of, the power. The more a leader can be collaborative and model soulfulness, the more everyone will feel able to express their own soulful leadership capability.

We suggest that moving mentally and practically from a heroic individualistic model of leadership to a collective one can significantly assist in soulfulness. Moving from "I" to "We", beyond ego to soulfulness, from conventional notions of leadership into "Leaderful".

Thus, we offer the Caplor Horizon's "Leaderful Way", developed by Lynne Sedgmore (2019), for leaders and organisations to illustrate that leading with soul is possible, desirable even, in whatever environment you work in, bringing countless benefits for you and everyone involved.

The Leaderful Way offers an integrative approach and is designed to foster highly effective leading in turbulent, fast paced and complex times and comprises three integrated pathways of "Soul", "Service" and "Synchronous" as illustrated in the diagram.



The Leaderful Way

- **Soul** – As a leader, the more skilled you are at knowing yourself, and your soul, the more effective you will be. When a leader is self-aware and soulful, it makes it easier for staff members to focus on their work and to bring their whole selves into their workplace, resulting in improved wellbeing and performance. Nurturing our own souls alongside the soul of our organisations offers greater strength and capacity to deal with ever-increasing demands.

CHAPTER 8: THE SOULFUL ORGANISATION

- **Service** – Service involves everyone thinking and acting beyond themselves to make a wider contribution, seeing the greater good and the larger picture. This means that individuals, teams and organisations have a purpose that is bigger than themselves. It means that people are aware that they need to succeed for the benefit, happiness and flourishing of others. Emotional intelligence (EI) and spiritual intelligence (SQ) are important capabilities to serve and connect.
- **Synchronous** – Being synchronous means “existing or occurring at the same time”. To be truly synchronous everyone willingly and consciously shares power with each other, moving consciously and deliberately from “power over” to “power within, with, for and through” others as the purpose and task requires. In today’s complexity it can be limiting for there to be only one leader recognised at any one time, holding all, or most of, the power until replaced by the next heroic hierarchical authority. Distributed leadership allows for more possibilities and more solutions and ideas to be generated fostering more sophisticated and better answers to complex situations.

These pathways are distinctive in themselves yet, if all three are developed, integrated and practised simultaneously in the behaviours of everyone who chooses to be leaderful within a community or organisation, they can bring huge liberation, performance outcomes and satisfaction.

Simultaneously manifested within the collective culture, the integrated pathways enable every person to attain their full potential as individuals and as leaders to initiate change within their lives and workplaces. More than one leader can step forward and act at the same time, involving and encouraging others to behave overtly and deliberately as multiple and soulful leaders in a synchronous manner, dedicated to service. Being leaderful is an interconnected, plural, collective, collaborative and sharing endeavour – not an individual phenomenon.

Leadership no longer derives from individualist charismatic or heroic influence but manifests as caring, loving people leading together inter-connectedly, soulfully, simultaneously and peer-fully to a common higher purpose.

The Library

“This is the first, the wildest and the wisest thing I know: that the soul exists and is built entirely out of attentiveness.”

– Mary Oliver

Academics who study leaders who work with soul and spirit in organisations are clear that significant impact occurs. Margaret Benefiel (2005, 2008), Louis Fry and Yochanan Altmann (2013), Louis Fry and Melissa Nisiewicz (2012), and Frederic Laloux (2014) have researched in many organisations and have written case studies of the benefits and impact of soulful and spiritual leadership. Fry’s extensive research explores the correlation between a leader cultivating their inner spiritual/soul life through daily practice and the impact such leaders have on their organisations.

The main themes of impact include increased staff motivation, creativity, connection, higher energy and improved engagement for individual and collective tasks. Soulful leaders frequently co-create high performance and generate significant surpluses on financial targets. Their organisations often overachieve across all aspects of the organisation as well as contributing to the communities they serve, support charities, and are proactive in recycling and contributing to the “saving” of the planet.

Often the atmosphere of a soulful organisation can be felt as soon as you enter it. You know one when you experience it. Those of us who are working consciously to be as soulful as we can know palpably that our organisations and staff feel happier, healthier, creative and more productive.

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

Spiritual Intelligence, SI or SQ, developed by Cindy Wrighlesworth (2012) is “the intelligence with which we access our deepest meanings, values, purposes and highest emotions”. Daniel Goleman (1998, 1998a) brought emotional intelligence into the mainstream of organisational and leadership development. He claims that 80% of leadership effectiveness is down to EQ (Emotional Quotient) not IQ (Intelligence Quotient). Exploring EQ is invaluable in being soulful as high EQ is considered a prerequisite for spiritual intelligence. We believe that explorations of SQ will encourage soulful organisations to a deeper level.

Below we share some of the most significant benefits and challenges of fostering a leaderful soulful organisation that have occurred in many organisations:

Benefits

- Significant success across all bottom-line results due to enhanced engagement and contribution
- Greater meaning and clear collective purpose and commitment with everyone bringing their whole self, and their maximum potential to each situation and context
- Increased trust within the community with more time to be creative and innovative
- Fostering service encourages humility, appreciation and caring
- Different forms of power can arise – power for, with, through, within and from below
- Everyone holds the possibility of stepping into being a leader and contributing their best
- Being able to feel at ease and to depend on others because everyone who is involved is considered as decisions are made and as actions are taken
- Nothing is hidden or unspeakable due to openness, a sense of safety and transparency, including constructive dissent and open challenge
- Things get done and outcomes are overachieved; there is high impact
- A healthy playfulness, gratitude and genuine joyfulness in working together abounds
- The fostering of more post-conventional perspectives through leaderful practices, processes and systems.

Challenges

- It takes courage to experiment within conventional cultures
- Seeing our own shadow and blind spots takes considerable work, requiring coaching, mentoring and self-awareness
- It takes courage for people to speak truth to power
- Not everyone likes transparency or sharing power
- Some people may choose to leave in reactivity and discomfort
- Letting go of control or hierarchy can be difficult for senior leaders already in role
- It takes courage and persistence and time to co-create a culture in which it is genuinely comfortable to discuss emotional intelligence, spiritual intelligence and soul
- Stakeholders may not understand what you are doing or why
- It may take up significant time and energy to bring about the necessary change in culture and behaviours.

The Family Room

“Soul is not a thing, but a quality or a dimension of experiencing life and ourselves. It has to do with depth, value, relatedness, heart and personal substance.”

– Thomas Moore

Co-creating organisational values and a culture that encourages open and free expression of soul is critical. Many yearn to bring their whole self into the workplace but feel it is not safe or possible. For those who feel it is undesirable or impossible the only way they will open is by seeing palpable evidence of others doing it without negative consequence. Before any sharing and expression of our inner life can happen in the workplace there needs to be a safe enough culture and sufficient encouragement and space to allow soul to arise, to be visible and eventually to have an impact.

This starts with individual soul awareness. As a leader, the more skilled you are at knowing yourself, and your soul, the more effective you will be. When a leader is self-aware and soulful, it gives others a feeling of safety even in uncertain times and environments. It makes it easier for individuals to focus on their work and to bring their whole selves which leads to improved wellbeing and performance. A self-aware leader with high EQ and SQ, comfortable in expressing their own soulfulness, will be able to modulate his or her own behaviour to alleviate organisational stress and create an environment in which soul thrives.

Developing and fostering self-awareness in the workplace requires feedback. This can be done through offering opportunities for critical self-reflection and awareness, including the soul dimension. We can experience soulfulness through creativity, imagination, silence and connection as Ayot (2014) describes in his poem at the beginning of the chapter. Soulful organisations encourage their staff to express their soul individually and together through sharing their hobbies, interests, books they have enjoyed, their passions and creativity. Things that are usually kept outside the workplace. They find ways to connect together beyond work tasks as interesting, soulful human beings.

The Foundations

“Wherever you stand, be the Soul of that place.”

– Rumi

Continuous learning is a key component of becoming a Soulful Organisation. Being soulful means honouring mistakes, recognising limitations, and learning from failures. Caring for soul involves working with “what is” rather than “what you wish were different”. Fostering learning and reflection from mistakes within a no-blame culture will encourage risk taking and innovation in the future.

Soulful organisations are also cognisant of pace and its vital role in learning and improving as an organisation. Ironically, while technology is continually invented that saves us time, we use that time to do more and more things, and so our lives are more fast-paced and hectic than ever. Slowing down is a conscious choice, and not always an easy one, but it enables you to be more present, mindful and reflective creating a more conducive learning environment.

Learning is also embedded within soulful leadership. Soulful leadership involves being self-aware of who and how you are, constantly learning and growing to wholeness, while serving the greater good and the interconnected whole or web of community. Moreover, a soulful organisation has multiple leaders meaning multiple perspectives and capabilities. This also allows leaders to learn from one another and to be accepting of different viewpoints. It is only through distributed models of leadership that learning is sustainable.

The Roof

“A mind committed to compassion is like an overflowing reservoir – a constant source of energy, determination and kindness.”

– Dalai Lama

Leaders who have focused on their inner life express significant benefits – feeling clearer, stronger, self-aware, resilient and nourished from within. Confident in fostering high performance and experiencing a connection with not only the financial bottom line, but also with the “quadruple bottom line” – purpose, people, planet and prosperity (for more background, read Chapter 2). A focus on this has been introduced in many organisations wanting to improve all aspects of the sustainability of the organisation.

One of these bottom lines is “purpose”. This can also be described as “soul” and is represented by our “north star”. Sustainable soulful organisations are guided by their values and a common purpose, so that the team can each find meaning and soul in the work they are doing within the organisation.

Seeing sustainability and soulfulness as a whole rather than a combination of sub-parts will improve longer-term impact, way beyond the usual three-to-five-year horizon timescales, encouraging and understanding the impact of any organisation for future generations. A sustainable organisation needs a healthy sustainable culture in which every member feels connected to the core purpose of its quadruple bottom line approach.

As described earlier, organisations are impacted every day by the volatile environment that surrounds us. None of us can escape the unexpected shifts and critical events that shape our world. We are arguably the first generation that has really understood the nature of our interconnected world, the perils of climate change, and how actions in one location can impact directly on the lives of others across the world.

We are leaders who can be truly networked across the world through the speed and power of social networks, internet communications, and real time newsfeeds.

Juggling such complexities therefore requires greater resilience than ever before. Nurturing our own souls alongside the soul of our organisations offers greater strength and capacity to deal with ever-increasing demands. We hope you will join and support our aspiration to be the generation of sustainable soulful leaders and change agents who play a vital and collective role in nurturing and impacting the soul of many organisations to find a way to bring and ensure the “best future” of the world.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming a soulful organisation

- **Work collectively from meaning, purpose and service** – co-creating organisational values and a culture that encourages open and free expression of soul is critical. Integrate questions about soulfulness into appraisal and other processes, providing opportunities annually to reflect on an individuals' experience and expression of soul.
- **Practise The Leaderful Way** – simultaneously develop, integrate and practise the three pathways of the Leaderful Way (Soul, Service and Synchronous) within your community or organisation. For more practical ways of doing this, read our Thought Leadership Paper titled, "The Leaderful Way".
- **Celebrate, recognise and support diversity** – commitment to diversity and dignity at work is so important. This means that all differences are truly celebrated and respected, while seeing through to the connection, unity and harmony of what, at the deepest soulful core, unifies staff together in meaningful, soulful and common purpose.
- **Express appreciation** – drawing on the "power of appreciation" can be deeply soulful, gratitude often arises when the soul is touched. A simple but sincere thank you or acknowledging achievements can be inspiring. Fostering learning and reflection from mistakes within a no blame culture will encourage risk taking and innovation. Finding ways to express sincere appreciation to others can bring deeper connection.
- **Respect and respond to dissent and challenge** – there is tremendous liberation in acknowledging dissent with sensitivity and providing safe spaces for staff to express their full and authentic views in a constructive manner. Staff encouraged to speak truth to power and working together to keep everyone's ego, excesses and flaws in check can be immensely energising.
- **Embed soulful practices in rituals and routines** – for example, daily practice of quiet time to connect directly with your inner state of being or beginning a meeting with silence to shift the depth and tone of a meeting to a more profound place. The soul and a sense of unity can be heard more clearly in silence.

Key messages

- Today's organisations require their leaders to build and sustain heart and soul. This means liberating the whole person and co-creating organisational values and a culture that encourage an open and free expression of soul. This starts with individual soul awareness. As a leader, the more skilled you are at knowing yourself, and your soul, the more effective you will be. Nurturing our own souls alongside the soul of our organisations offers greater strength and capacity to deal with ever-increasing demands.
- Leaders who have focused on their inner life and soul express significant benefits such as feeling clearer, stronger, more self-aware, resilient and nourished from within. A soulful organisation reaps benefits such as increased staff motivation, creativity, connection, higher energy and improved engagement for individual and collective tasks.
- Soulful organisations practise the Leaderful Way. This occurs when leadership no longer derives from individualist charismatic or heroic influence but manifests as caring, loving people leading together inter-connectedly, soulfully, simultaneously and peer-fully to a common higher purpose. Practising the Leaderful Way involves embedding soulful practices in rituals and routines such as having quiet times or reflective practices, being creative, and spending time in nature.

Reflection questions

- Are you in touch with your soul? If not, how might you be?
- In what ways does your soul influence or shape your personal approach to your leadership?
- What is the place of soul in your organisation?

Action and impact questions

- How can you co-create organisational values which include soul?
- How might soulfulness be made visible in your organisation? How might soul be reflected in any of the formal structures?
- How can individuals feel able to express their own soul?

Further reading

Sedgmore, L. (2020) *The Leaderful Way*. Caplor Horizons: Thought Leadership paper. Online.

Wheatley, M. (2017) *Who Do We Choose to Be?* Berret-Koehler.

Laloux, F. and Appert, E. (2016) *Reinventing Organizations: An Illustrated Invitation to Join the Conversation on Next-Stage Organizations*. Nelson Parker.

Chapter 9: The Worldly Organisation

Worldly organisations are open, tolerant, curious and diverse. How can we ensure that we are genuinely connected and interconnected with many different communities, societies, cultures and peoples across the sea?



9

THE WORLDLY ORGANISATION

“In diversity there is beauty and there is strength.”

– Maya Angelou

In this chapter we introduce the Worldly Organisation and what it means to have a “worldly mindset”. We look at some of the blocks that prevent inclusivity, diversity and creativity inside many organisations and some of the ways we might overcome these blocks to make our organisations more sustainable, future proof, and worldly. Worldliness enables cross-cultural partnerships and collaborations. In this chapter, we offer some tools and models for enhancing these partnerships: the Six Senses of Partnerships and the Culture Tree.

The External Environment

“Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.”

– Verna Myers

The world is becoming “flat” according to Thomas Friedman’s (2005) seminal book. In this, Friedman points to the acceleration of globalisation, the breaking down of barriers that had hitherto separated and privileged Western economies, and the enhanced internet connectivity that we now enjoy worldwide as a result of advances in digital communication technologies. Friedman was indeed prescient too about the rise and economic growth of China and India, and the increasing contribution to the global economy of other fast-growing economies. On the other hand, many have criticised Friedman’s one-sided enthusiasm for globalisation, and his lack of attention to the billions who still live at the “bottom of the pyramid” without access to the wealth created by our increasingly connected capitalist world (Collier, 2007). Inequality, racism, exploitation, hunger, migration, and most recently Covid-19 all conspire against Friedman’s flat and equitable dream for globalisation. Indeed, it could be argued that inequalities have got worse as the effects of the global pandemic become apparent. We still have much to do!

So that is why we believe we need a chapter in our book called the “Worldly Organisation”.

We should first explain that we have deliberately avoided the use of the words “global” or “international” in our discussion, and instead adopted Jonathan Gosling and Henry Mintzberg’s (2003) term: Worldly. Global and globalisation along with “international” are terms that can cause misunderstanding and reinforce stereotypes. For instance, globalisation is often described from the perspective of the developed world looking out at the opportunities in the rest of the world, the “Other”.

CHAPTER 9: THE WORLDLY ORGANISATION

For us, a “worldly organisation”, by contrast, is one that is open, tolerant, curious, anti-racist and embraces difference. Worldly organisations care strongly about our planet and seek to address the injustices and inequities in our world. Worldliness does not privilege one culture over the other but embraces the rich tapestries of our many cultures. Gosling and Mintzberg (2003) have defined a “worldly mindset” as embracing the many different worlds within worlds that make up our globe and taking action. For them, simply understanding “the other” is not enough. Worldliness is what we do with that knowledge, and how we act in and for our world to advance progress towards a fairer and more inclusive society. We are now seeing such “worldly” action taking place through the Black Lives Matter movement. The death of George Floyd in Minneapolis was a pivotal moment that symbolised the racism and structural inequalities that are embedded at the heart of our societies, and the response to this action will hopefully advance a fairer and more inclusive society.

Like connected organisations (Chapter 6), worldly organisations are genuinely connected and interconnected with many different communities, societies, cultures, and peoples in our world, and care passionately about the future of the planet as a whole. With internet technology such connectivity is possible, even for those not able to immerse themselves physically in other geographical locations. We share the perspective of Gosling and Mintzberg that worldliness is about creating a shared and collective web of endeavour across our planet to collectively provide a sustainable future for the next generations. It is about building shared understanding, and the empathy that is derived from seeing the situation of the “other” from close up. We admit that this sounds an idealistic notion. But we firmly believe and have evidenced first-hand that the cumulative effect of many local connected and interconnected actions lie at the heart of this common endeavour. Our organisations today are well placed to contribute, and in the next section we reflect on how they can do this.

Worldliness, of course, starts “at home”. Inside aspiring “worldly” organisations, real fairness a level playing field for all, calling out racism and acting on racist practices is a top priority. This means looking at the practices and cultures that perpetuate such inequalities and having the courage to embark on a journey of transformation. As worldly leaders, we aspire to always improve our equality and diversity practices. For example, we act to abolish the gender pay gap. We name and combat racism, whenever and however it is manifested. We go beyond compliance to make our workplaces accessible and supportive to those with disabilities. We are enlightened about mental health issues. We act and offer support when we see people suffering from health issues in our workplaces, whether these be physical or mental. We act to stamp out bullying and harassment so that everyone in our organisation can thrive and be themselves with pride.

A worldly organisation is inclusive, both internally and externally. Externally, we seek out novel collaborative relationships wherever they might bear fruit, and wherever we see that together we can create more than the sum of the parts. We look for partners who bring different skills, viewpoints, and outlooks, and offer the same opportunity in return. A worldly organisation knows that the most impactful learning and entrepreneurship can often come from embracing and working with difference, even though this takes more time and effort: we seek to learn from and work with different cultures, different backgrounds, different sectors, nationalities, faiths, technologies, and generations (and so on!). Some of the most fruitful and most innovative partnerships are the product of such different world views.

And yet, becoming a worldly organisation is not easy and there are many barriers that can derail us from the outset. Unconscious biases, fiefdoms, silos, fear of difference, fear of losing power, and resistance to change all pervade every day organisational (and indeed all) life for us all, and, unless we take action, these very understandable human responses will prevent the seamless flow of collaboration and knowledge creation we are seeking.

So how can we combat these human instincts, and the resistance to diversity that erects so many barriers between humans, whether inside our organisations or across the world as a whole? How can genuine “worldliness” be developed, and how can each of us apply these ideas in practice?

The Observatory

“Collaboration has no hierarchy. The sun collaborates with soil to bring flowers on the earth.”

– Amit Ray

Organisations have been organised for a long time in roughly the same way. Hierarchies have been the default position for many years, until in the nineties this type of organisation was challenged. A fashion for “matrix organisations” (networked, fluid forms of organisation) then took off, designed to free people from the constraints and inflexibility of hierarchies. At that time, many people found themselves with more than one reporting line, one being functional, and one that was product or project based. The aim was to break down silos. This structure did succeed to some extent, but it also led to confusion. People experienced conflicting objectives and conflicting loyalties. Burn-out often ensued, and some organisations reverted to hierarchy once again. Since then, new organisational forms have been slow to take hold. Those that foster creativity and inclusivity, and flatter structures that encourage shared leadership are not yet widespread.

This is why ideas from thinkers such as Charles Handy have become so popular. Handy has long challenged the rigidity and impersonal nature of corporations and argued in favour of federalist models that support the coexistence of local decision-making with national or even global connectivity. There is some evidence that organisations are starting to follow this sound advice. Decentralised models now favour a smaller staff core combined with a larger peripheral, more flexible workforce, but managing this peripheral and sometimes voluntary labour, particularly in the not-for-profit sector is often poorly executed, resulting in demotivation and lack of engagement.

In the Observatory, we aim to look to the future of organisations and ask to what extent they are fit for purpose in the future. The answer is that most organisations are still not maximising the potential of their people. Our belief is that despite many years of research into organisational forms, the value of empowerment, shared leadership, and other ways to tap into the potential of our people, only a fraction of the ideas that exist inside our organisations are ever expressed and still fewer are heard. And of those that are heard we reject, bury or dismiss still more! Of course, it is not our intention to do this. As leaders, we start each day with the intention of being open-minded to alternative thinking, whether this comes from inside our organisation or from outside. But this intention can be derailed. When our own ideas are challenged by those with different viewpoints, open-mindedness and inclusivity can often be harder to practise than we imagine!

The Library

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

– Helen Keller

So, what are the blocks that prevent inclusivity and creativity inside our organisations? And what are the blocks that prevent us from exploring what those who are different can offer us? And how might we overcome these blocks to make our organisations more sustainable, future proof, and worldly?

The following ideas come from many years of conversations with leaders in many different organisations across the globe.

Block: Suspicion and rivalry

The blocks that prevent synergies from emerging across the internal silos inside many organisations usually stem from suspicion, competition, or rivalry. We often inadvertently encourage these behaviours when we promote and reward individual, local, or a specific team's performance instead of focusing on people's contribution to the whole. Insufficient resources can lead to political manoeuvring by leaders seeking to safeguard their own performance or that of their colleagues in their immediate team. We have all experienced this. But this need for self-preservation or promoting a narrower team performance above organisational impact can in turn lead to lack of trust. As the leader seeking to deliver results for the whole organisation, this can quickly become self-defeating as energies are turned inwards towards defeating the internal opposition, instead of outwards towards producing innovative solutions for our clients.

Solution: Build networked holistic thinking

Break down and disenfranchise the silos wherever they appear. Lead on this by example. People will note what you do, not what you say! Wherever possible, the stories and symbols of the organisation should engender pride in the "whole", through success by the "whole" organisation. Behaviours that manifest internal rivalries or competition should be outlawed and actively discredited. Reward people for their service to the "whole", especially behaviours that demonstrate active support for the work of other departments, services, or regions; or simply seeing and acting to progress the big picture. Reward and give credit to shared leadership models and pay less attention to local heroes building local fiefdoms. Whilst these people may deliver good results locally, fiefdoms can be highly damaging to organisations seeking to become more connected and worldly.

Block: Fear

It seems to be part of the human condition to fear the unknown. From an early age we learn the values, beliefs and behaviours of our parents and those of our wider society and culture. These values and beliefs become deep rooted and are what guides our actions, choices and decisions. They have many benefits in that they provide us with a moral compass, provide stability and a framework for living. Inside organisations the same pattern is evident. So, unless we have a compelling reason to do otherwise, most people choose like-minded colleagues to work with. This inevitably reinforces the very beliefs and values that we have already brought to our work. This is generally unconscious, of course. We most notice our own beliefs and values when we are confronted by difference. At that point, we might reject the new or embrace it. Our natural position is likely to be to fear them.

Only the bravest will test out these new ideas and adopt those that work into their own repertoire. The timid, however, will unconsciously shut out the new ideas, and often encourage others to do so too.

Solution: Immersion

The antidote to fear of difference is to deeply immerse ourselves as close up as possible in the worlds of the "other". Reading about the other is not the same as experiencing it ourselves. When we experience another organisation from close up by immersing ourselves in it for even a few hours or days, we gain a proper glimpse of the culture and its underlying values and beliefs and start to understand its internal logic. This does not (necessarily) mean travelling the globe in search of other cultures! We co-exist with other cultures in our own backyards. There are different sub-cultures inside our own organisations, our clients and our partners. Let us start with understanding the cultures in our close proximity first. It is the only way to build lasting trust-based relationships.

Block: Fake news

In today's social media we are all subject to fake news at some time whether we know it or not. Often this is aimed at discrediting particular viewpoints or organisations and can make the likelihood of collaboration or partnership much less likely. It also prevents us from gaining a real understanding of the "other". The media are prone to focus on the negative, the risky or the different, rarely on building harmony and collaboration. Leaders may therefore become risk averse when it comes to new partnerships or alliance.

Solution: Invest time and effort to find the right partner for you

If you believe that a partnership with another organisation will help you to achieve your future goals, it is worth investing some time to find the right partner. Complementary skills, knowledge, expertise, markets or products are likely to be what draws you to each other and tempts you to partner. You might have expertise, for example, in different parts of the globe. Or you may be known for different, but complementary services. Your leadership capabilities might be in different fields, filling an identified gap for the other potential partner. First signs indicate that this potential partner is worth exploring further. First, however, check for the cultural compatibility of any potential partner. If they are from different national cultures, they are likely to do things very differently. However, this does not mean that partnership is not possible. There are more meaningful checks to undertake first beyond their surface behaviours. Ask, do you share the same values? Do you share a common purpose? Is there transparency in your communications? Can you build shared trust? If the answer to these questions is yes, it is worth investing time to get to know each other and to reduce risk by exploring any areas of tension or doubt early on. If the signs look good and if there is a win-win for both parties, it will be worth progressing to the next steps.

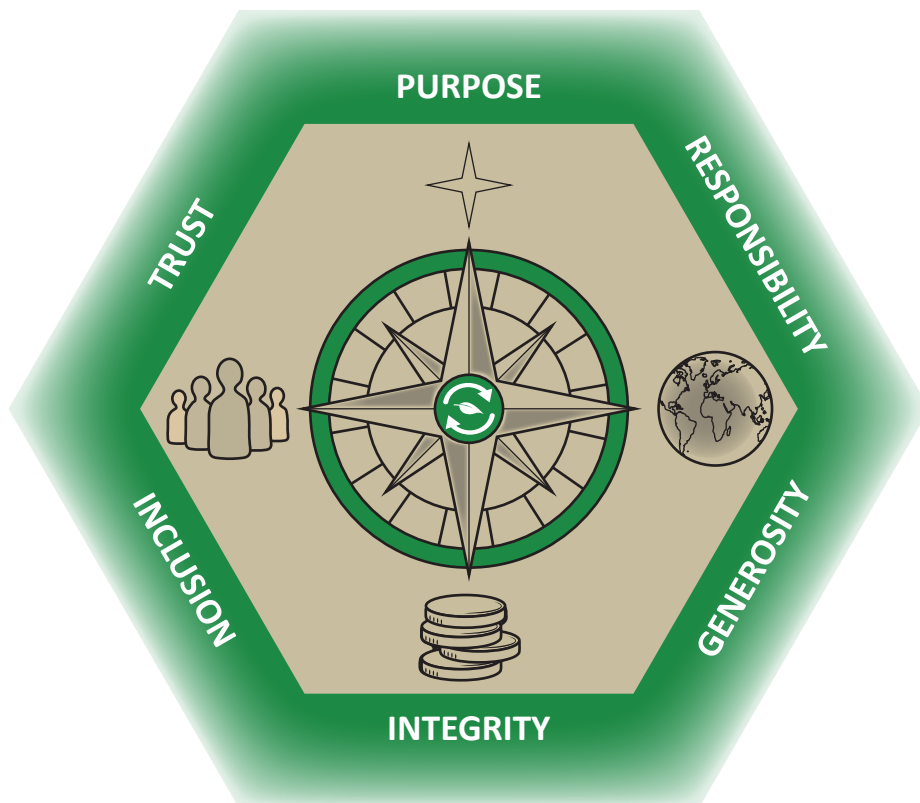
There is no substitute for spending time in each other's organisations. Deep immersion in the other's context is usually more fruitful than many hours of meetings. For more information, read Chapter 6: The Connected Organisation.

The Family Room

Sustainable partnerships are at the heart of becoming a worldly organisation. Some partnerships are stable, long-term groupings with well-defined tasks and partnership roles. However, other partnerships may be formed only for a set period of time, in order to complete a specific project or purpose, and then disperse to form other collaborations. Some partnerships may be located in the same place (or same geographical area), some may be geographically spread, whilst others could even be “virtual” partnerships, with very little day-to-day contact.

In the light of these challenges, what does it take for people to identify with a partnership and feel confident and capable of doing their best work?

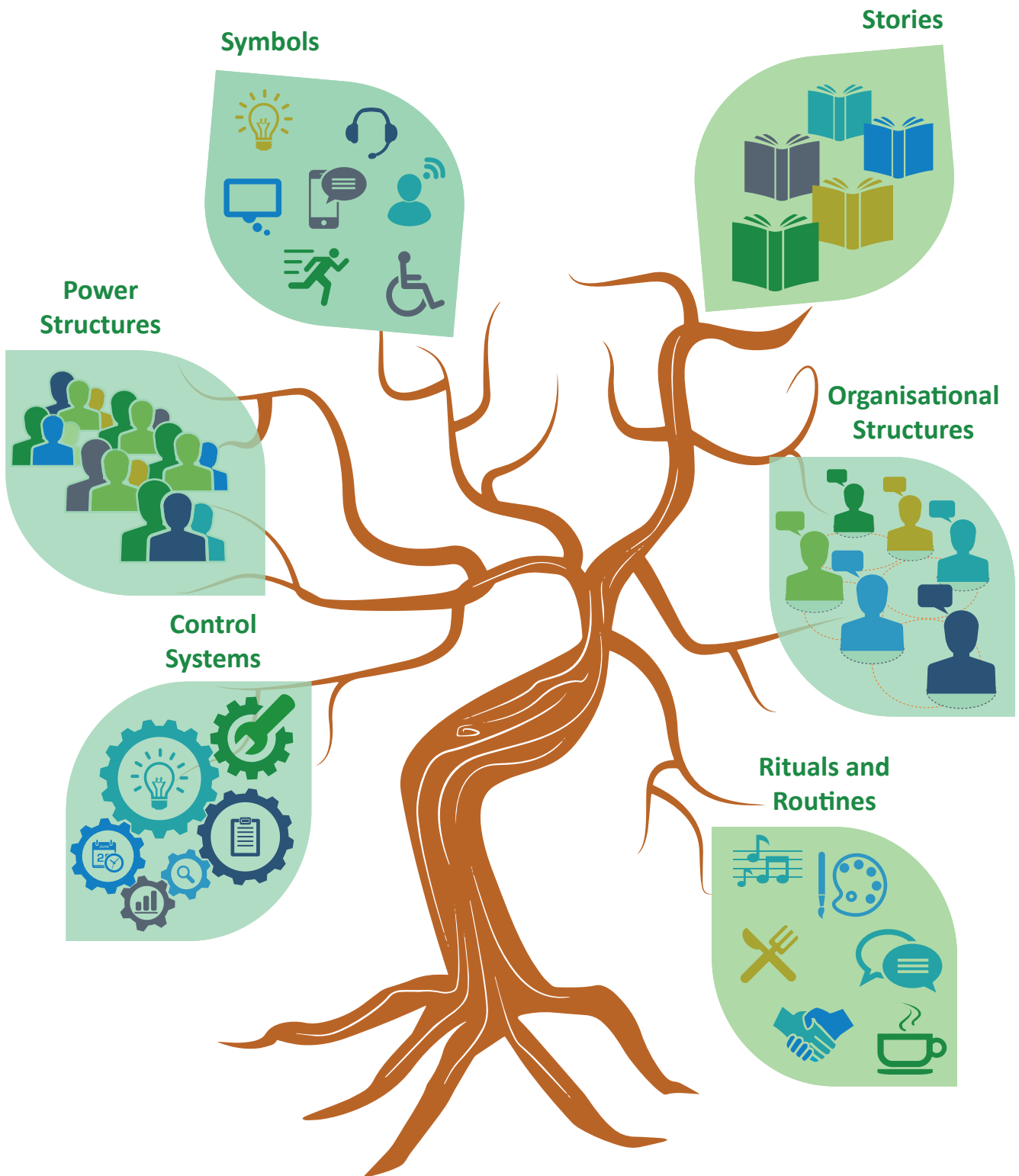
At Caplor Horizons, we believe that individuals need to have strong connections within a partnership – not only to all the people who make up the partnership, but also to its shared goals and objectives. We describe these connections in terms of six “senses”. These are: a sense of purpose; a sense of responsibility; a sense of generosity; a sense of integrity; a sense of inclusion; and a sense of trust. These have been developed from the research findings of John Adair.



The Six Senses of Partnership

If each of these six “senses” can be cultivated and strengthened, not only by each individual but also by the partnership as a whole, we believe that people will both demonstrate commitment to the partnership and offer positive and productive contributions.

Another model that can be used to map the compatibility of your organisation with another organisation is our "Culture Tree". This is based on Gerry Johnson and Kevan Scholes' (1992) Cultural Web and can be a useful framework for collating and sharing your findings.



Organisational Values

(influencing all elements of culture and at the heart of all decision-making)

The Culture Tree

CHAPTER 9: THE WORLDLY ORGANISATION

- What are the **Stories** inside the organisation and what do they tell you about who is valued?
- What **Symbols** around the organisation tell people that you value difference and embrace equalities irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation, religion, disability, age and so on?
- Is there a level playing field for opportunities and progression that is supported by the Structures?
- Are your **Control Systems** measuring the right things or do they promote bias?
- Do your **Routines and Rituals** celebrate inclusivity and collaborative behaviours?
- Is the **Power** and influence in the system only vested in an “old boys’ network” or is it possible to rise to the top or influence outcomes on merit and irrespective of background?

Completing a Culture Tree for your own, and then for your potential partner’s, organisation as a way to compare them can reap quick rewards and prepare you both for a genuinely open conversation about the compatibility of your two organisations. Does the other organisation fill gaps in your own organisation? Does it offer expertise and “know-how” that you are lacking? And at the same time, do you share compatible values about what matters? Do the missions and visions of your two organisations support each other, or do they conflict?

Share and discuss your insights with your potential partner, bringing in relevant people from across your two organisations who can bring different perspectives and insights. Ask lots of open questions in the interest of establishing shared understanding of your and their values and goals. Ask what they want from a potential partnership. If you have concerns or doubts, air these gently in order to find out whether they are deal-breakers or not.

As the partnership progresses create an ongoing environment in which you can give and receive feedback regarding what is working and what is not working, addressing understanding early and clearly but with cultural sensitivity. Many misunderstandings stem from culture, so try to understand first, and frame your feedback with care. In doing so your aim is to build trust that will enable the deepening of a genuine long-term and sustainable partnership. Always remember this will only happen if there is a win-win for both partners, and, beyond this, if both partners are enjoying the collaboration, learning from it, and having fun!

The Foundations

A truly worldly organisation will inevitably be a learning organisation (Chapter 4). Why? Because a worldly organisation is founded on curiosity and the desire to learn from the “other”. Worldliness means seeking out partnerships with those who see the world differently, bring different skills and knowledge, yet share our values and purpose. Learning is embraced in all that we do.

A worldly organisation encourages creativity internally by blending different perspectives for innovation. Silos and competitive behaviours are actively discouraged. Fiefdoms and heroes are replaced by shared leadership and collaboration. Structures are flexible and can be reconfigured with relative ease to respond to and learn from new external events.

Externally, a worldly organisation is purposefully connected to other organisations through building a complex web of interconnected networks. There is inherent learning across the systems. For a worldly organisation, learning is operating everywhere.

The Roof

In this chapter, we have made the argument that inclusivity, diversity, curiosity and cultural sensitivity are the essential components of the worldly organisation. Worldly organisations are led by worldly leaders who embrace these qualities in abundance. In the previous section, we demonstrated how learning is embraced and constantly generated in worldly organisations.

Finally, what unites aspiring worldly organisations is the desire to tread lightly on our planet, conserving our fast depleting resources for future generations. To be worldly means to care: to act ethically and sustainably; to support the struggles of disadvantaged people across the globe; to act and advocate for social justice; to advocate for and act on anti-racist practices; to campaign for an end to poverty and hunger; and to lobby for politicians and businesses to come together to combat climate change. These issues are not distant and detached, but real now, and requiring action.

Worldly leaders are global citizens, and worldly organisations become sustainable by embracing the diversity of their people, acting with care to preserve the planet and ensuring a healthy bottom line in order to continue to deliver their mission and vision for a better world.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming a worldly organisation

- **Ensure true diversity and inclusion within your organisation** – Do you have a diverse mix of staff? Board members? Partners? Is your organisation balanced? Does your Board and staff team reflect the diversity of the people you serve? Are your equality and diversity policies and training up to date? How often do you reflect on and review these aspects of your organisation? Do you have gaps in your people mix? What kind of people would enhance the balance of the organisation? Who would bring in fresh ideas and perspectives? Ask how you could attract those people to join you?
- **Mix up your people to create new thinking** – creativity and innovation in organisations tend to happen where different ideas, experiences and knowledge are brought together in a synergistic relationship to create something new. If your people are currently working in homogeneous groups, mix them up to produce new thinking.
- **Maximise the contributions of the next generation** – never underestimate the potential of young people. They have grown up with digital technology and have only known a globalised world. Many organisations are now using “reverse mentoring” where young people are coaching older generation colleagues in new technologies and social networks. Try to tap into this invaluable source of ideas. For example, give them early responsibility and above all ask for their opinions. Value the power of learning from the emerging future and not just the value of past experience.
- **Use tools and models to maximise the benefit of cross-cultural partnerships and collaborations** – strengthen your partnerships using the “Six Senses of Partnerships” and map the compatibility of your organisation with another organisation using our “Culture Tree”.
- **Develop an awareness of cross-cultural communication** – as a worldly organisation, it is likely you will be working across multiple cultures. Thus, developing an awareness of cross-cultural communication is vital. To find out more, read our Thought Leadership Paper titled “Cross-Cultural Communication”.

Key messages

- A worldly organisation differs from a global organisation in its cultural depth and understanding. Worldly organisations are sensitive, embracing and respectful of difference. They are curious to understand the many cultures in which they operate, and the many different worlds within worlds that make up our globe. They pay constant attention to check their unconscious biases.
- Worldliness enables cross-cultural partnerships and collaborations. It values and exploits for good the different lenses and cultural interpretations in our world. It goes beyond respect to produce rich cross-cultural innovation and knowledge. This requires a sensitive understanding and awareness of cross-cultural communication.
- Sustainable partnerships are at the heart of becoming a worldly organisation. However, it is important to invest time and effort to find the right partner for you. Check for the cultural compatibility of any potential partner. Use the Caplor Horizons “Culture Tree” model to check whether your values and purpose are aligned.

Reflection questions

- Who are the people in my organisation who are most different from me in their backgrounds, experience and ways of thinking?
- Have I listened actively to these people recently? What have I learned from them? How can I do this more frequently and more actively?
- How can I encourage a culture of inclusion in my organisation?

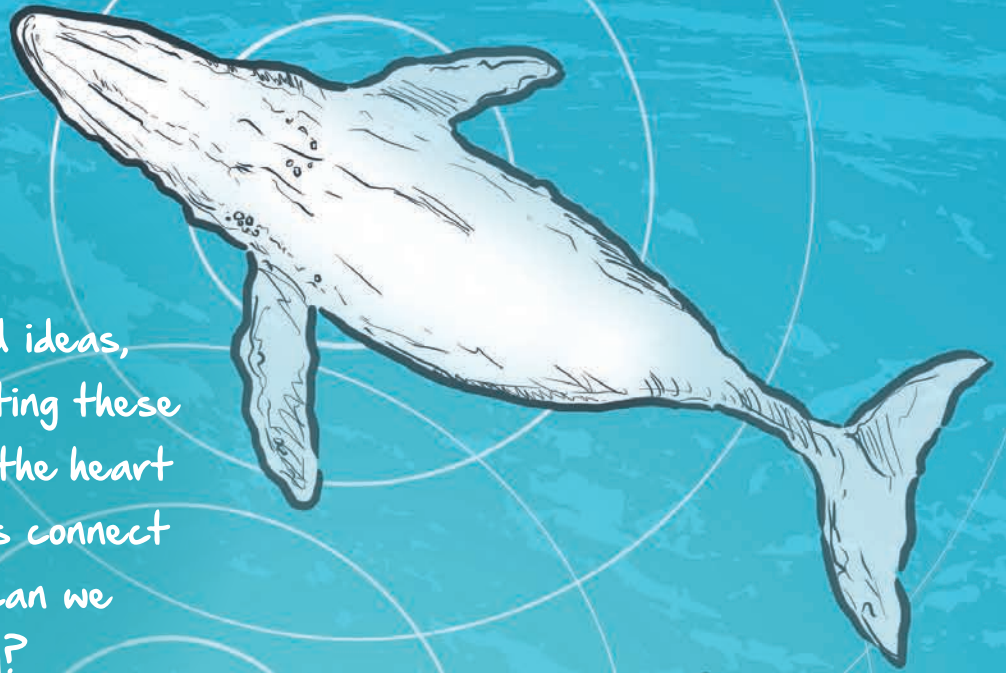
Action and impact questions

- What actions can I take to break down silos and encourage cross-silo working?
- What actions can I take to create more heterogeneous teams?
- How can we ensure we are creating a level playing field for all?

Further reading

- **Sweeney, C. and Bothwick, F. (2016)** *Inclusive Leadership: The Definitive Guide to Developing and Executing an Impactful Diversity and Inclusion Strategy*. Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.
- **Frost, S. (2014)** *The Inclusion Imperative: How Real Inclusion Creates Better Business and Builds Better Societies: Courage, Creativity and Talent*. Kogan Page.
- **Caplor Horizons (2020)** *Cross-cultural communication*. Caplor Horizons: Thought Leadership Paper. Online

Creating insight and ideas, and then communicating these with others, lies at the heart of influence. Stories connect people. What songs can we sing to tell our story?



Chapter 10: The Influencing Organisation

10

THE INFLUENCING ORGANISATION

“You can never leave footprints that last if you are always walking on tiptoe.”

– Leymah Gbowee

This chapter outlines different aspects of communication and influence, from thoughts on how best to create a communications culture, to analysing the key elements within your communications strategy, and how you can effectively influence on a personal level. This chapter also gives suggestions on how you can learn from various communications initiatives as well as highlighting the importance of what to do when something goes wrong in the communication process using the “connected communication” model.

The External Environment

“When the whole world is silent, even one voice becomes powerful.”

– Malala Yousafzai

It is often stated that communication is the means to achieving influence. Paul Watzlawick (1921–2007) was an Austrian-American psychologist, communication theorist and philosopher. One of his most cited observations is that “*one cannot not communicate*”. Every behaviour is a form of communication. And because behaviour does not have a counterpart (there is no anti-behaviour!), it is impossible not to communicate. Even if communication is avoided, that is a form of communication.

This applies to both people and organisations. Organisations cannot accomplish their goals if they don’t communicate effectively and therefore fail to influence their people to do what is required. And their people can’t do what is required – whilst also feeling that they are a *valued part* of the higher organisational purpose – if they can’t communicate successfully and influence what goes on in their organisations.

However, when individuals and organisations *do* communicate effectively and influence one another, then that’s when the best mutually successful outcomes can be achieved.

As organisational hierarchies and managerial layers diminish, developing personal influencing skills has become an essential ability in today’s workplace. Successful outcomes can only be achieved through, with and from others. Being able to communicate well and influence without formal authority is now an essential skill for those wishing to make an impact.

Organisational communication is also important because it significantly impacts three very important areas: staff engagement, client satisfaction and public perceptions. All three areas are critical to sustainable influence and success and we’ll look at each in turn.

Firstly, employee or volunteer engagement. This is how willingly and enthusiastically an organisation’s staff members or volunteers focus not only on their own tasks, but also their organisation’s wider objectives. Going beyond dedication to their role, which can be related to obligation, engagement is directly connected to how valued individuals feel. And one of the best ways to help them feel valued is through communication.

CHAPTER 10: THE INFLUENCING ORGANISATION

Given that any organisation comprises many different individuals, all with their own personal “style” of how they operate, it’s worth asking some basic questions: does your organisation recommend a preferred “tone of voice” when communicating companywide? What kind of language is used? Is it informal and friendly or authoritative and detached? Is the style collaborative, or dictatorial? Do organisational messages empathise with the recipients explaining the “why” behind the message, or do they simply inform? Are the timings of communications considered? It might suit the sender to email early in the morning or late into the evening, but will the recipients want to engage with those communications during “family time” at home? Establishing a consistent and positive communications approach is a crucial component of staff engagement and forms an important part of an internal communications strategy.

Secondly, client satisfaction. This is how satisfied people are with an organisation, be it service related, product related, or just their interactions with the organisation. It is a matter of fact that client satisfaction is critical to sustainable organisational success. An organisation can have a brilliant product or service, but if a client feels that they aren’t valued by that organisation, then the chances are that they’ll start dealing with a different one. Once again, how well an organisation communicates with its clients is critical, as that determines how valued they feel.

Clients are satisfied when they feel they are listened to and empathised with, and that their experience matters. They’re satisfied when their organisational interactions leave them feeling valued which, as research has demonstrated, can override any poor customer service or product experiences that they have had. Service and product faults will inevitably happen, but how an organisation deals with the issue will ultimately determine client satisfaction. Therefore, this needs to be an important element within an external communications strategy.

Thirdly, organisational perception. This is how people see your organisation, not how you see it yourself. It’s what people outside your organisation think that you stand for: your ideas, your vision, your reputation, your experience and your professionalism. Even though there are probably countless organisations that you’ve never done business with, the chances are that you still have an opinion about them, for better or worse. What’s interesting about how we develop these perceptions is that it’s not necessarily based on any direct experience. It’s often based on the stories we’ve heard, the articles we’ve read, the advertisements we’ve seen, or the social media sites we’ve visited.

These are all forms of second-hand information and yet they are equally as powerful as direct experiences. We have an emotional response to what we’ve heard, or read, or believe to be true.

Apart from advertising or news articles, all this second-hand information is usually based on the direct experiences of those passing this information on.

Now that the internet is part of everyday life, there are vast numbers of people constantly giving their own opinions about everything through, for example, Facebook, Twitter etc., and there are very many websites dedicated purely to this activity such as Trip Advisor, Amazon Reviews, Trustpilot, etc. But it’s worth noting that it is far more likely for people to share negative experiences that they’ve had with an organisation than positive ones!

So, it goes without saying that if an organisation’s communication (in any of its many forms) is creating poor direct experiences, those direct experiences will negatively impact how the organisation is perceived by potential customers, clients, or employees. This, in turn, certainly impacts the organisation’s ability to grow and thrive.

The Observatory

“If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader.”

– John Quincy Adams

Developing and strengthening organisational influence is really all about creating insight and ideas and then connecting with people to get those insights and ideas across.

It's about understanding your personal and your organisation's place in the world and then communicating that effectively to other people. It's about appreciating what's important to the people that you're talking to. It's about discussing shared goals and shared objectives. It's about engaging with other people's concerns or disagreements in a constructive and open way. It's about agreeing a preferred communication “style”: the language used and the tone of voice. And it's about not being afraid to be creative in how you get your message across.

However, from the outset, it's important to understand how to communicate effectively with others, and therefore influence others, both internally and externally to your organisation.

When you are trying to engage people to support an idea, it's always best to *inspire* them, rather than just *inform* them. A good way to achieve this is through storytelling. Stories connect people. With storytelling, you create vivid images that are memorable and engage people's emotions. In addition, the language that you use is very important. Using, “What if we were to ... ,” and then encouraging feedback, engages people far more than just telling them what you want them to do. Good leaders tend to spend as much time requesting information and ideas, as they do imparting them!

A simple but powerful model for how leaders inspire action is Simon Sinek's Golden Circles. This involves starting with the “Why?” – the long-term vision, moving to the “How?” – the process and culture, and ending with the “What?” – the result and evidence. If people understand the purpose behind your idea this usually has a greater chance of eliciting their support. When all three are in balance, other people will say, with clarity and certainty: “We know who you are and we know what you stand for.” Whether they realise it or not, all great and inspiring leaders and collaborative organisations, think, act and communicate with these principles in mind. This is what distinguishes them and enables them to achieve greater influence.

If you are communicating to a wide audience, we often recommend structuring it around the four rooms of the Caplor House (read Chapter 3 to understand more about his model). This involves starting your communication in the observatory (vision, big picture), then sandwiching it with information from the Library (evidence and rationale), Kitchen (process and detail), and Family Room (how it affects and benefits people) and then finishing off with Observatory again (excitement). This should help you to reach all audiences effectively. However, if you know that your audience has a preference for one room of the Caplor House you may wish to sway your communications more heavily towards this room in order to get through to them on a deeper level. As described later, targeting your communication to your audience is the key to success.

Finally, as recognised by Stephen Covey's (2005) 8th Habit of highly effective people, a key characteristic of successful leadership is to “find your voice and inspire others to find theirs”. He believes that once you have found your voice, you can inspire others to find theirs through fulfilling four roles:

- Modelling – setting a good example, demonstrating integrity, honest and good habits
- Pathfinding – ensuring that the vision is shared and wholeheartedly embraced at all levels of the organisation
- Aligning – creating structures, systems, and disciplines that bring your vision into reality
- Empowering – igniting your team's passion and trusting them to use their initiative to achieve the vision you have created together.

For so long, the choice of leaders has been based on mental intelligence (IQ) – the quickness of mental comprehension, but that has proved to be inadequate. Nowadays we talk of Emotional Intelligence (EQ), which is self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management (the ability to inspire, influence, and develop others). In today's turbulent and unpredictable world there is plenty of evidence that leaders achieve more sustainable success by enabling their team members to achieve their potential. This is a more distributed form of leadership and legitimates and encourages the idea of influencing upwards.

The Library

“If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.”

– Albert Einstein

Gaining influence can be made more effective by thinking through a detailed approach that helps you to set expectations, measure outcomes and derive insights.

This ensures that you are reaching the right people, at the right time, to get your key messages across. It requires an analytical approach and, like any good strategy, it begins with research. While you might be able to guess the general audience of whom you want to get your message across to (and thereby influence), you may be surprised to find additional groups of people or market segments to tap into.

Once you've completed the research, it's time to get down to the detail of your strategy. This can be as simple or as complicated as you want to make it; however, it should have five basic components:

- **Identifying the Audience:** *Whom are you going to communicate with?* Perhaps there are multiple audiences for either the same or different messages; however, identifying your audience is the first step in your strategy.
- **Determining the Goals and Objectives:** *Why communicate? Why is it important? What do you want to achieve?* All too often, people communicate for the sake of communicating. Your communication efforts should always be in support of your larger organisational goal. Never lose sight of this goal when communicating.
- **Evolving the Key Messages:** *What do you need to communicate? What is it that really matters? What will resonate with your audience? What will make them not only understand your key messages, but also believe them and want to pass them on?* Develop clear and concise messages that communicate, in simple, easily digestible language why you're doing what you're doing, what you do and how you do it. These messages need to remain consistent and be communicated regularly – when you keep them fresh in everyone's minds, they usually create a greater impact.
- **Developing the Strategy:** *How will you communicate, to whom and how regularly?* The blueprint should include a linear strategy for reaching your goals. An outline that shows how various communications tactics support various communication strategies, and how these strategies support your goals. This will include establishing, in detail, the content for the various communication channels that you intend to use (website, social media, publications, news releases, email newsletters, etc., etc.).
- **Identifying Measures of Evaluation:** *How will you know if you're getting your message across?* Metrics are important. Unless you know where you are, you can't improve.

Whether or not you've reached your various organisational objectives should be fairly easy to determine, but applying metrics to determine if your communications were ultimately successful, and what role they played in reaching (or not reaching) your organisational goals, can be more difficult. There are, however, various options for capturing this data, especially in digital communications where analysis is regularly provided by the site. For example: How many people opened your weekly newsletter? What level of response did you receive to online campaigns? How many people visited your website last week? What activity has there been on your Facebook or LinkedIn page, etc.? Where possible, try to apply outcome metrics instead of output metrics and use all your networks to constantly get feedback.

Whilst by no means all-encompassing, the above five basic components should be included within any communications strategy and regularly reviewed. When planning any specific organisational communication, it's important to first understand what the precise purpose of the message is and make this very clear.

By keeping your communications simple, this helps to ensure that the people whom you're talking to "get it". We often encourage organisations to keep any communications to one page, for example a "Strategy on a Page" or SOAP for short, and to use the "elevator pitch" concept. These tools encourage clear, concise, memorable communication that gets key messages across to people in short bursts.

The Family Room

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

– Maya Angelou

A key component of creating a positive communication culture is building trust. As Stephen Covey says, "When the trust account is high, communication is easy, instant, and effective." Well thought through communication builds trust, whereas poor communication leads to mistrust. With this in mind, all communication needs to be consistent, transparent and truthful. Good communication provides the reasoning for any decisions, or intended actions, and it ensures that all important information is shared quickly, in a language that can be easily understood. When leaders fail to communicate in a timely fashion, people will always fill in the gaps with assumptions, distorting the intended message.

A common mistake that many management teams can make is not sharing key information throughout their organisation. Concerns about "information overload" is almost always unfounded, when compared to the negative impact of certain people or groups feeling "left out" and therefore undervalued. Sharing information throughout your organisation creates an environment of trust and a feeling of "all being in it together".

When taking on new staff or volunteers, make sure that you have communicated the organisation's values and beliefs to them and taken time to discuss these. The sooner people understand *why* your organisation does what it does and support the organisation's purpose and vision, then the sooner that they can feel that they are also part of a purpose, greater than just the responsibilities of their role. Communication is fundamental to relationships and relationships with your staff are how you fulfil your purpose.

Within your strategy always have a communications process for dealing with people's concerns and anxieties in an open and honest way. It's important to openly communicate what's not gone so well and the learning derived from this.

And remember to always support your values, purpose and vision by leading by example. What you do and how you do it is far more important, and believable, than what you say. Remember, you cannot *not* communicate!

The Foundations

“Leaders accept feedback. Good leaders welcome feedback. Great leaders demand feedback.”

– Matt Dunsmoor

Liz Wiseman (2014), an American author and business management expert, suggests ways to review the learning from our personal interaction with other people, as well as the learning from various communications initiatives:

- **Constantly monitor what is new, what is happening and what is possible** – This is a call for leaders to be constantly scanning their environments and contexts. It requires leaders to polish their antennae and be open to new and different interpretations of what they see and feel around them and then communicate this in an authentic way.
- **Keep an open mind and do not be afraid of asking questions** – Leaders often adopt an “expert mindset” that prevents them from opening their minds to new possibilities and alternatives. Leaders have traditionally been reluctant to ask questions and to learn from subordinates and colleagues in case this should be construed as weakness or ignorance. Many leaders feel that they are expected to know more than their staff and often feel that they must demonstrate their expert knowledge at all times. This is a futile aspiration in today’s world. The challenge we all face is not finding information but dealing with the excessive overload of information available and then deciding what is relevant and how best to communicate what really matters.
- **Push the limits of what is possible** – The idea of “expert leaders” can often be self-limiting. These so-called experts can become trapped within the boundaries of the knowledge and assumptions that have served them well in the past, and this can limit our creativity and innovation. Learning leaders, by contrast, are future-focused, willing to try new things, push their boundaries and communicate their ideas in compelling ways.
- **Seek out the advice and guidance of others, to learn and innovate** – Leaders who are learning and future-focused do not work in isolation. They continually connect with others by building and reinforcing communication networks both inside and outside their organisations. They seek to link themselves and their organisations with others. These different networks can then produce greater resilience to the volatility and uncertainty in the environment through shared knowledge and enlightened collaboration.
- **Ask questions** – Think for a moment about the leaders you have known. Did they ask the right questions, and did they ask them often enough? When *you* communicate, do you yourself ask enough questions of the people around you?
- **Ask for feedback** – Self-awareness is a fundamental requirement for leaders. But how can we learn to know and understand ourselves? Of course, developing self-awareness on our own is a very long slow process without the help of others. How do we really know how others see and perceive us? How do we know how we make them feel? Even the most empathetic leader can only guess at the answer to this question without asking directly for feedback. Learning leaders give and seek feedback often, build trust in this process, and see the feedback they receive as a vital source of data and learning. It is a fundamental part of how they communicate and influence. Learning leaders not only seek to really understand themselves and others, they also seek to understand how their actions affect others, and then try out different communication strategies for modifying and reviewing their behaviours.

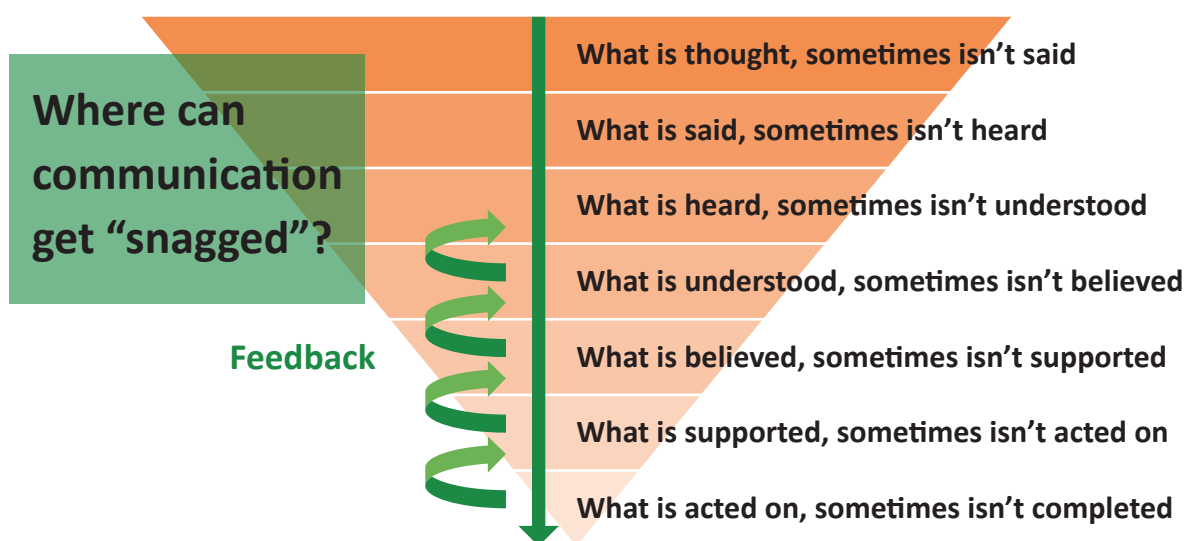
The Roof

“The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place.”

– George Bernard Shaw

At the outset of this chapter, we suggested that communication is the means to achieving influence. But what happens when something goes wrong in the communication process? You thought that you'd communicated an idea and yet nothing happened. Where might your communication have got “snagged” and therefore failed to influence an outcome?

A communication model, developed by Len Creswell, Jon Davidge and John White, asserts that to enable a successful outcome, and thereby achieve sustainable influence, there needs to be “connected communication”. This connected communication model sets out seven sequential stages where communication can get “snagged”, preventing an action happening or an idea taking root:



Connected Communication Model

You might have thought that you told somebody something, but perhaps you didn't. You might have thought that the person you were talking to had heard, but perhaps they hadn't. Even if they did hear, maybe they didn't understand what you were saying. And if they did understand, perhaps they didn't believe you. If they did believe you, then there is still a possibility that they didn't support what you said. Even if they did support what you said, they might still do nothing about it. And, finally, if they did do something about it, they might still not have completed what you wanted them to do.

If your communication snags at any one of these stages, this results in a failure in the communication process and therefore a failure in your ability to influence.

The best way to prevent any of these snags occurring is to develop a communication style that incorporates a “back-brief”. This involves asking the person, or people, with whom you're communicating to give you a quick synopsis of what you have just either told them, or asked them to do, at each of the different stages. This two-way interaction helps to determine whether your communication has been heard and also whether or not it's been understood, believed, supported, acted on and completed.

CHAPTER 10: THE INFLUENCING ORGANISATION

How you attain the back-brief, depends largely on your method of communication. If you're talking to a single person, or people, you can simply ask them. If you're emailing, you can ask for a response and follow-up. If you're an organisation, trying to get your key messages across, then you can ask for active feedback. Any of these methods will help to identify whether or not your message has been heard, understood and believed. Most importantly, though, it will also confirm whether or not your message is being supported, acted on and any actions achieved (completed).

In summary, then, communication entails the transfer of ideas, thoughts and feelings from one person to another, or one organisation to another, or a mixture of both. In any organisation wishing to achieve a sustainable influence, its communication strategy plays a vital role and needs to adopt a simple, direct and precise approach – whether the communication is internal or external, oral or written.

And it's especially important, within the global world in which we live, to take into consideration the gender and cultural variations in terms of how we communicate.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming an influencing organisation

- **Build trust** – Influence is most often and easily achieved through trust. Only when someone trusts you will they be open to your influence. The simplest way to do that is to be open and honest, no matter what. State your opinions, disclose your apprehensions, and don't keep secrets. It's as simple as that.
- **Cultivate confidence through consistency** – Inconsistency is the fastest way to make others doubt you. Consistency, on the other hand, reassures people. When you demonstrate a consistent style of leadership, this conveys reliability and dependability.
- **Be flexible** – Flexibility is important. Being too stringent or adamant in your beliefs may work against you. People could come to see you as intransigent and incapable of believing in anyone other than yourself. Instead, work actively to show your flexibility whilst holding firm on your beliefs. Negotiations and compromises are often the best ways to do this. Work with others to find a mutually acceptable solution.
- **Be personal** – A little personality goes a long way, especially when you're trying to build influence with colleagues or partners. If you go out of your way to have personal exchanges with others, then your level of communication increases, and people tend to respond positively to that.
- **Focus on actions** – If you try to build influence using just words your success will be limited. Remember the old adage "actions speak louder than words"? Walking the talk and consistently demonstrating your ideas through your activities gains influence.
- **Listen to others** – Finally, remember that influence is a two-way street. To build constructive relationships, you first have to listen. Encourage people to speak up, especially if they don't often voice their opinions. Take time to respect and acknowledge everybody's ideas, and let people know that you value them. The more you believe in the people around you and incorporate their ideas into your vision, the more they'll believe in your ideas and incorporate them into what they do.

Key messages

- Communication is the means to achieving influence. Organisational communications significantly impact three very important areas: staff engagement, client satisfaction and public perceptions. All three areas are critical to sustainable influence and success. The key component of creating a positive communication culture is building trust. All communication needs to be consistent, transparent and truthful.
- Simple, direct and concise communications are the most effective. In order to do this, it's always good to start with the "why", rather than the "what" or the "how". If people understand the purpose behind your idea, not just what the intended outcome is, or how it's going to be achieved, this usually has a greater chance of eliciting their support. When you're trying to engage people to support an idea, it's always best to inspire them, rather than just inform them!
- Sometimes communication can get "snagged". To ensure this doesn't happen, and thus to achieve greater influence, there needs to be "connected communication" that incorporates a "back-brief".

Reflection questions

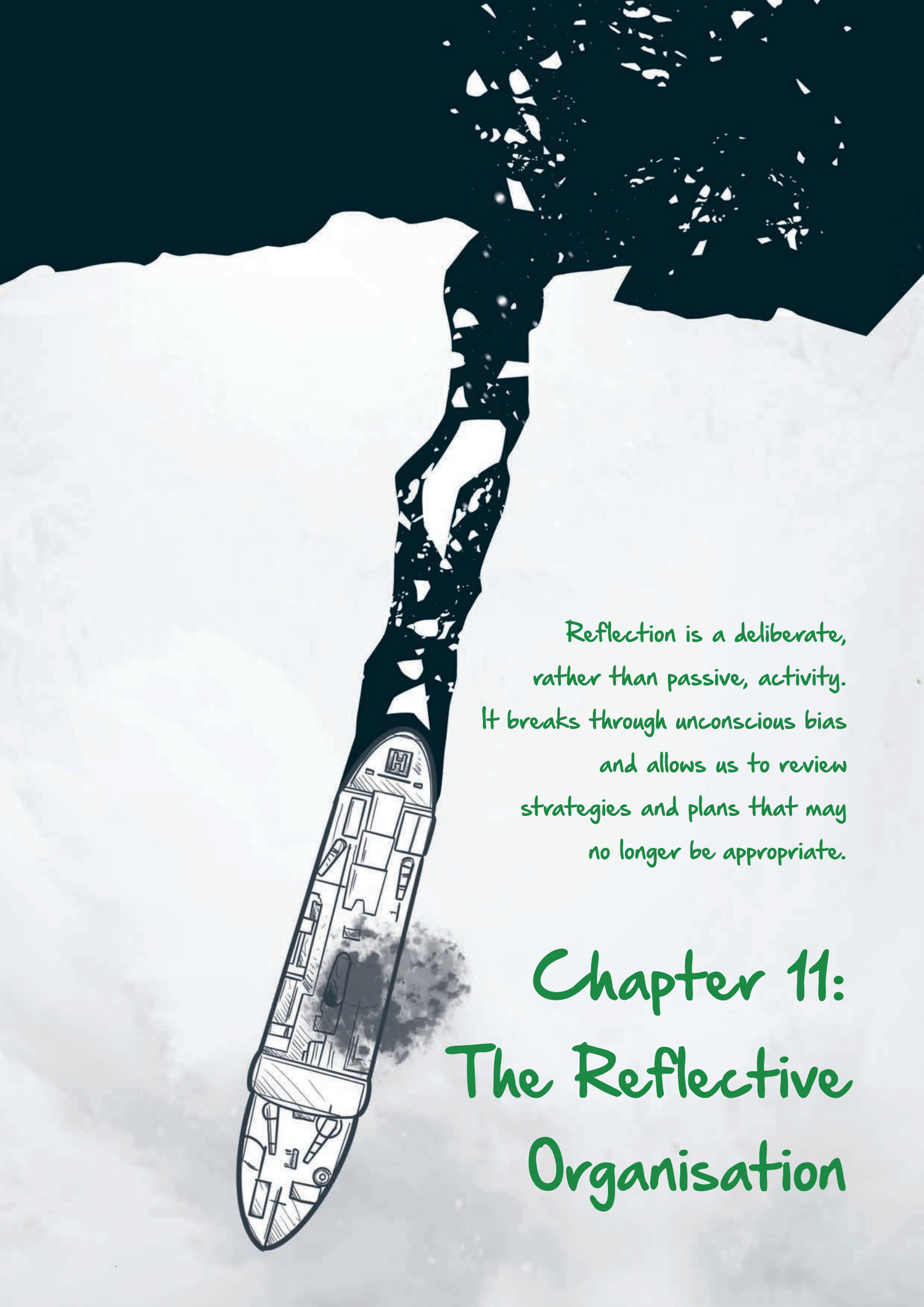
- What is your organisation's communication approach? Does it effectively engage with the right audiences at the right times?
- How can you embed your values within your internal and external communications?
- How can you ensure that your communications are sensitive to cross-cultural differences?

Action and impact questions

- What will make your audience not only understand your key messages, but also believe them and want to pass them on?
- How can you make sure your communication doesn't get "snagged", thus preventing an action happening or an idea taking root?
- How will you know if you are getting your message across and successfully influencing people?

Further reading

- **Caplor Horizons (2020)** *Cross-cultural communication*. Thought Leadership Paper. Online
- **Wiseman, L. (2014)** *Rookie Smarts: Why Learning Beats Knowing in the New Game of Work*. New York: HarperBusiness.
- **Covey, S. R. (2005)** *The 8th Habit: From Effectiveness To Greatness*. New York: Free Press.



Reflection is a deliberate,
rather than passive, activity.
It breaks through unconscious bias
and allows us to review
strategies and plans that may
no longer be appropriate.

Chapter 11: The Reflective Organisation

11

THE REFLECTIVE ORGANISATION

“Reflection without action is passive; action without reflection is thoughtless.”

– Henry Mintzberg

Reflection is probably one of the most critical, but least understood, and most underdeveloped management capabilities in today’s world, and in particular today’s modern world, where speed and fast action are revered above much else. In this chapter we explore what we mean here by reflection, why we see it as an essential leadership capability, how it relates to learning and sustainability, and most importantly how you can develop a reflective organisation.

Henry Mintzberg, one of the most noteworthy and inspired management writers, has long been arguing for reflection to be embedded in all management syllabuses. His seminal article, “The Five Minds of the Manager” (2003), and his book “Managers Not MBAs” (2005) both place reflection at the start of the management learning process, and throughout.

Reflection is often associated with inaction or slowness, but in reality, reflection is a highly proactive and conscious process that must be practised to become proficient. In his more recent writing, (e.g. *Managing*, 2009 and *Simply Managing*, 2013) Mintzberg has shown that reflection is a critical and integrative thread for skilled managers and organisations. Self-awareness, awareness of others, organisational awareness, the ability to constantly make sense of and interpret events and acting according to these new perspectives is an essential art that leaders often overlook.

Gosling and Mintzberg cite T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets* who wrote: “We had the experience but missed the meaning.”

“Reflection is about getting the meaning from everyday experiences .. Experts espouse a great deal these days about the importance of action in managerial work – managers must be doers. Absolutely. But they also must be thinkers. All effective managing has to be sandwiched between acting on the ground and reflecting in the abstract. Acting alone is thoughtless – we have seen enough of the consequences of that – just as reflecting alone is passive. Both are critical. But today, one – reflection – gets lost.”

– (Gosling and Mintzberg, 2004)

Leaders who are used to the increasing pace of organisational life find it hard to reflect. And indeed they often complain that they are too busy to stop, think, and question. But when they do learn to do so, our experience shows that many become strong advocates for the reflective process, and indeed take many of the techniques they learn back into their workplaces and actively engage in the education of their people in an endeavour to build reflective organisations.

At Caplor Horizons we continuously aspire to become a reflective organisation, and we frequently hold community days to question and challenge our assumptions. In this chapter we offer tips and guidance for doing this in your own context and becoming reflective practitioners yourselves whilst building a reflective organisation.

The External Environment

“Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences, and failing to achieve anything useful.”

– Margaret Wheatley

As the preceding chapters in the book have all indicated we are undoubtedly operating in unprecedented times of turbulence and change, consequently we are experiencing an inability to predict the future of our planet, our economy, our sector and our organisation. This feeling of uncertainty and being out of control often leads us to focus on action even if we do not know whether our action will help. At least we are “doing something”. As one leader told us when discussing his learning about reflection, “My manager will think I am not busy if I take time out to think!” This is a common response to the idea of reflecting. Our organisations expect us to be busy all the time, irrespective of whether being busy is leading to the outcomes we need.

Action without reflection has become a side product of Western style capitalism, whether this is practised in the US or UK or in Korea, China or India. However, Asian cultures have not always behaved in this way. If we look back at the ancient leadership wisdoms found in Eastern cultures, we find their origins rooted in spiritual beliefs and evidence that reflection has long been a core strength of most Asian cultures. Confucian leadership wisdom, for example, places reflection as the highest priority for acquiring wisdom:

“By three methods we may learn wisdom: First, by reflection, which is noblest; Second, by imitation, which is easiest; and third by experience, which is the bitterest.”

Echoes of reflection are also found in the ancient Hindu text, the Bhagavad Gita, which focuses on the value of self-discovery. And in Buddhist teaching too through meditation as a channel to enlightenment.

Against the stresses and challenges of today’s backdrop we now see the growth of mindfulness as a popular form of reflection loosely emerging from meditation – but marketed as a secular process with little reference to its spiritual roots. Mindfulness is recommended for mental health wellbeing on the NHS (UK National Health Service) website. Mark Williams of the Oxford Mindfulness Centre is quoted as saying:

“It’s easy to stop noticing the world around us. It’s also easy to lose touch with the way our bodies are feeling and to end up living ‘in our heads’ – caught up in our thoughts without stopping to notice how those thoughts are driving our emotions and behaviour.”

Mindfulness can be a very valuable process, and self-reflection is the first step toward becoming a reflective practitioner. For some leaders this is still felt to be a spiritual experience (see Chapter 8 on the Soulful Organisation for a deeper discussion), for others this is a health driven process that enables mental and physical wellbeing. Either way, a mindful organisation has some of the components of a reflective organisation, deploying active processes that require regular and sustained practice. We will discuss these processes later in the chapter.

The Observatory

“If you don't understand, ask questions. If you're uncomfortable about asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions, and then ask anyway.”

– Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

The challenge of leading from the Observatory is often preoccupation with how to anticipate “what might be” and “what could be” in a world where predicting is increasingly problematic and sometimes high risk. We tend to think of the Observatory as a room for thinking about the future, a huge challenge in this unpredictable world.

We have, however, found that aspiring reflective organisations nevertheless set out to imagine, create, and enable multiple futures in order to respond to these unforeseen futures. They build flexibility into their thinking and create alternative paths to success and sustainability. They are responsive and resilient, and ready to recalibrate their direction, strategy and plans as the context shifts. Indeed, reflective organisations and the people within them are both reflecting on and reflecting in action all of the time.

Unreflective organisations, or organisations that have few reflective processes embedded in their cultures, are often top-down hierarchical organisations, slow to change and pursuing a single direction, single mode of operation, and fixed end point. Such organisations can quickly be derailed if other players in their sector unexpectedly do something to disrupt the status quo, for example, by bringing disruptive “blue ocean thinking” to their sector (Chan Kim and Renée Mauborgne, 2004). Top-down leaders often lack an early warning system. They are not known for their antennae or listening skills. They often have poorly developed reflective ability.

By contrast the active reflective leader tends to reflect continuously, both when alone and also with others, valuing the diverse ideas of other team members and appreciating and seeking out ideas and challenges from other functions, backgrounds and even different generations. For the reflective leader, the Observatory can be a lively place for collective reflection. This is true whether a leader is leading at the top of the organisation or influencing from the middle or from lower down in the organisation.

The Japanese have a concept called Ba, which means a place or platform (whether physical, mental or virtual) for advancing collective knowledge and innovation (Nonaka Ikujiro and Takeuchi Hirotaka, 1995). This idea maps well on to our outward thinking Observatory as a collective place for reflecting on alternative and possible future(s) ahead, and for reflecting on the actions we need to take to handle the inevitable challenges and crises ahead, and for pursuing the wellbeing of our planet, society, community and organisations, and the people within them.

Organisations are busy places and we are always racing (sometimes literally) to complete projects, so how can we create a real or metaphorical space for collective reflection? And what kind of space would stimulate a different way of thinking?

The approach taken can vary. Some organisations take time to be outside with nature, for example a walk in the park or eating lunch outside. The wellbeing felt when at one with nature can create a new way of seeing. Others create adult “play” spaces for creativity, such as taking people out for team-building activities or pottery painting. Many organisations set up permanent reflective hubs or coffee spaces for cross-functional talk. Others choose remote or wild places for retreats. There is significant evidence that a change of setting can create a change of mindset. We recognise that carving out spaces like this is a privilege, it can often require resources, time and even money. However, carving out space for reflection does not have to be resource-heavy, for example making use of public parks and free, local attractions. Leading by example is often the most effective way to make change happen in an organisation, and a reflective mindset can often influence others around us even if we are not in a position to direct change.

CHAPTER 11: THE REFLECTIVE ORGANISATION

Mintzberg's International Masters Programme for Managers (IMPM) is an excellent example of creating temporary reflective knowledge-creating spaces. Each module is held in a different location (usually a different continent) creating a sense of strangeness and difference. Within each contrasting module, culturally specific places are visited to stimulate surprise, disorientation, and consequent personal and collaborative reflection. In England, for example, a well-preserved cotton mill from the industrial revolution provokes reflection on the past, as we now see it from the present, and on the future from the perspective of the present. Similarly, a walk in the Lake District where Wordsworth wrote his poems stimulates people to reflect on their own lives and purpose. In India, a Bangalore city walk that includes ancient Hindu temples and cows, set alongside multi-million dollar software offices employing youthful high-fliers and deploying state of the art technology solutions enable conversations in the classroom about social change, responsibility, justice, and the partnership between business, government and the third sector in society.

Learning by reflecting together in an unfamiliar place or space can produce powerful changes in assumptions, beliefs and values that do not happen often enough in our workplaces or our classrooms. Later in this chapter we will explore practical ways to capture this reflection.

The Library

“We do not learn from experience ... We learn from reflecting on experience.”

– John Dewey

There has been much research into reflection as a core management skill, yet our organisations seem to be less reflective than ever.

Education Reformer John Dewey, for example, was one of the first to highlight the value and importance of reflection. He noted that reflection is not a passive but a deliberate activity, an “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it, and further conclusions to which it leads” (Dewey 1933: 118).

In his book *The Reflective Practitioner* (1983), Donald Schön built on Dewey's work by identifying two types of reflection: reflection-on-action, an important and little executed retrospective process of reflection, and reflection-in-action, which happens concurrently with action, in other words, improvising as you act. Chris Argyris, a co-researcher with Schön, labelled the reflective process “double loop learning” (Argyris and Schön, 1974). By this he meant not simply questioning the execution of a project but challenging or deeply considering the underlying assumptions, norms, objectives and policies of the organisation. Doing this is much more difficult, of course, but nevertheless a critical skill for managers. Later Argyris and Schön added “triple loop learning”, which, in summary means learning how to learn and asking not, “Are we doing things right?” (single loop), or, “Are we doing the right things?” (double loop), but, “How do we decide on what to do?” (triple loop).

Russ Vince and Michael Reynolds (2010), in their paper, *Organizing Reflective Practice*, argue that there are four key models of reflection that are relevant for organisational life:

- Critical reflection – questioning the taken for granted discourses and power relations in society that frame our assumptions and beliefs.
- Public reflection – which is necessarily undertaken in the company of others, and as a result, creates different interpersonal dynamics of accountability, authority and learning, and engages with “experience generated collectively, for example, in project teams, internal groups and organizational sub-systems”. (p. 8)
- Productive reflection – which they define as “collective learning activities that change work practices to enhance productivity and to underpin improvements in personal engagement and meaning in work”. (p. 10)

- Organising reflection – which moves away from reflection as the responsibility of individuals to an emphasis on “creating collective and organizationally focused processes for reflection”. (p. 11)

In each of these interconnected modes, Vince and Reynolds argue, the role of reflection is made explicit and purposeful, with a view to uncovering hidden assumptions in our belief systems both inside the organisation and outside in wider society and engaging in collective questioning of the status quo. In all cases, this imperative is an important argument in favour of reflection as a productive and proactive activity that counters the assumption that we do not have time to reflect round here.

The Family Room

This leads us into the Family Room where people interact and work together. It is surprising to us that reflection has for so long been seen as only an individual activity. Perhaps this idea does stem from an image of a sage meditating. Perhaps it stems from Western individualist thinkers such as Abraham Maslow and later Frederick Herzberg's ideas that we are all individuals working towards “self-actualisation”.

Despite this image the majority of us are not recluses, and even those who do meditate spend most of our lives engaging with other people: family, community, and organisations. Building reflective places in which we can thrive alongside others, draw on the wealth of diversity in our organisations, and produce new thinking and ideas that will propel us sustainably and inclusively toward future success should, we believe, be a priority. And developing collaborative working processes in the Family Room for productive and organised reflection becomes a practice that no leader should overlook.

This does not mean that it is only in the Family Room that we should or can reflect. We have already indicated the value of reflecting on our sustainable futures in the Observatory. Without the foundations of learning, and the reflection theories of those early pioneers in the Library, we would lack the research foundations that give us the confidence to continue to invest time in reflective practice. Many leaders prefer to learn by doing, and abhor the idea of putting time aside to reflect in a structured way. For these leaders, the Kitchen is likely to be the ideal room for reflection. But, as the T.S. Eliot quote suggests, “We had the experience and missed the meaning”, doing is not enough. We must have practices in the Kitchen that enable us to combine Reflection with Action.

The Family Room is a critical place to share and internalise reflection as part of our everyday practice. For Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), to internalise reflection means embedding the learning to become part of the shared knowledge management system of the organisation. Do we, for example, always make time to come together at critical points in a project to review and reflect? This need not be a formal process, but it does need to happen consciously and proactively. And as leaders we do need to be guardians of this process. Without spending time in the family room where we can review our relationships, roles, responsibilities, and our collaborative processes with clients, partners and funders, how will we ever know how we are progressing?

The Foundations

The Foundations are the enablers of learning. Reflection is the most important fuel or nourishment of learning that we know! Without reflection, emergent learning is often lost or overlooked. Without reflection, latent insights and creative thinking may never take place. Much has been written about individual, collective and organisational learning, but much less on individual, collective and organisational reflection. This is puzzling to us as learning is so dependent on effective reflection.

The CIPD's (2018) article *What is Reflective Practice?* summarises the link between reflection and learning as follows:

“Reflection deepens learning. The act of reflecting enables us to make sense of what we’ve learned, why we learned it, and how each increment of learning took place. Moreover, reflection is about linking one increment to the wider perspective of learning – heading towards seeing the bigger picture. Through reflection, learning is integrated, internalised and personalised.”

The Roof

The Roof enables us to think about sustainable futures. In this chapter we have shown how vital the skills and capability of reflective practice is for organisations in today's turbulent world. Without a culture which values reflection, organisations are in danger of pursuing strategies and plans that may no longer be appropriate. They are in danger of overlooking dangerous signals in their environments, and they will not maximise the valuable contributions of the people in their organisation.

Reflection enables organisations to learn from the past, understand more deeply the present, and imagine alternative futures. It creates an early warning system and enables the collective imagination to flourish and knowledge creation to thrive.

Reflective practice is easily lost when seen as too time-consuming. It is not. A culture of continuous reflection is a vital indicator of a healthy culture. At Caplor Horizons we help organisations to embed reflection at every level of their professional practice and as reflective organisations to create and sustain their futures.

The Kitchen

Practical steps to becoming a reflective organisation

Individual Reflective Practices

- Keep a reflective journal each day of your observations and reflections on your practice. Summarise key moments of learning such as conversations, meetings, interactions, events that have led you to think and act in new ways.
- Take time out of every day to find a reflective space. This might be during a morning swim, a midday walk, an evening jog, listening to music, or even a long bath. This space will give you insights and ideas that you might have missed in the frenetic pace of life. Capture these later in your journal.
- Enhance your active listening and active observation skills. During meetings consciously focus on what is happening in the room, the exchanges and interactions, the body language. Too often we are too preoccupied with our own thoughts and what we want to say that we forget to do this. Enhancing our awareness is a key part of the reflective practice for leaders. The ability to really see and hear needs constant and regular practice.

Paired Reflective Practices

- The Exchange. Spend one to three days in the workplace of a colleague from inside or outside your organisation. Shadow and observe the colleague doing their managerial work. At the end of each day, feed back to your colleague on your observations and reflect on how this person's approach may differ from your own. What can you learn from them? Repeat this process in reverse, so that the observer becomes the host and vice versa. This process often has a profound impact reaping very deep learning from both partners.

Collective Reflection

- As discussed in the Family Room, co-create regular collective spaces for sharing insights and ideas. These might be face to face or even virtual. This space is different from a business meeting – with its agenda and pace. A reflective space is where new knowledge can be created. It requires clear minds and an invitation to be creative. Moving to a place that evokes calm and removes pressures can reap great dividends. Inviting a diverse group of people who will bring different ways of seeing and thinking is also a useful ground rule. This can produce results at any level of the organisation.
- One technique that can work well when seeking to create collective reflection is to move from individual to small group to bigger group. When asked to reflect on an event or a challenge we start by asking individuals to write their reflections as a stream of consciousness otherwise known as free-flow writing. When they have done this we ask them to share their personal reflections in small groups round tables of six to eight people. As a final step for larger groups the tables share their collective insights across the tables.
- Variations on collective reflections include “Keynote listening” when one member of a table group turns their backs in order to actively listen to the conversation, journaling their insights and then sharing these afterwards with the group. Or “rolling-in rolling-out”, a reflective process where four people sit in the centre of a larger group reflecting together on a topic. The larger group on the outer circle must listen carefully and may not speak. At any time a member of the outer circle may take the place of someone in the inner circle to continue the conversation. This productive process makes it very clear to everyone when they are in observation and listening mode and when they are in the speaking circle.

Key messages

- Reflection is a critical management capability. However, it takes time, effort and practice. Without setting aside time to engage in reflective activities it is very difficult to achieve reflective capability. Anybody can learn to reflect but it must be an active and conscious practice.
- Reflection can happen individually and also collectively. Organisations which practise collective reflection by setting aside space and time to reflect together can learn to become reflective organisations. This reflective capacity can create knowledge-creating spaces and often leads to innovation.
- Reflection and learning work together. Reflection acts as a catalyst for learning and enables learning to be deeper, more sustained and more integrated. Without reflection learning does not become embedded.

Reflection questions

- Do you use a reflective journal? Do you write in this every day? Do you allow your reflection to flow freely? Do you act on your reflections?
- Do you make space and time in your organisation for reflective conversation with colleagues, as well as to actively listen to others' reflections on what is happening inside and outside the organisation?
- Are you making space for more junior members of your organisation to learn to reflect?

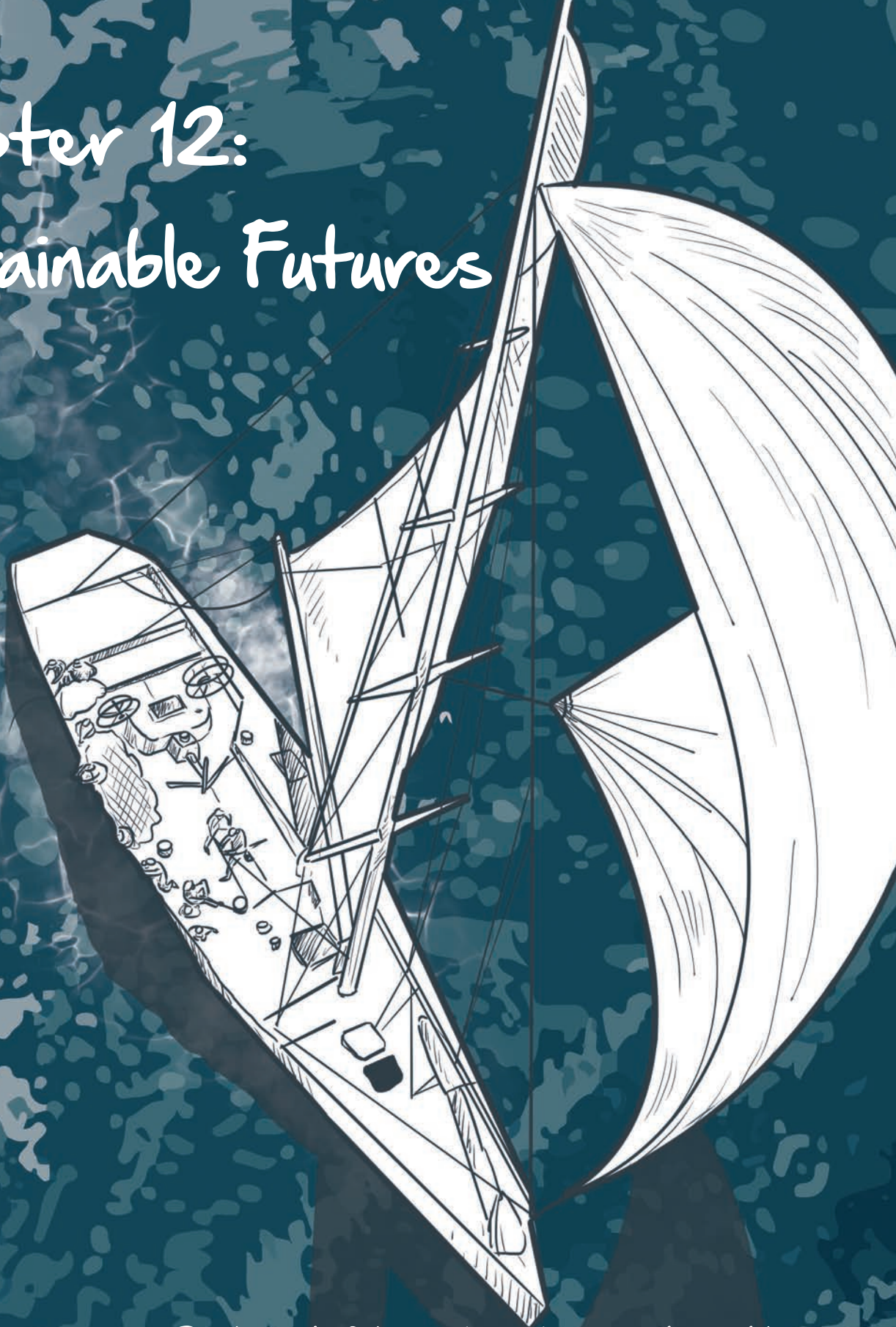
Action and impact questions

- How will you embed reflection into everyday practice individually, in teams or organisation-wide?
- How can you be more effective in doing reflection?
- How can you make sure that being reflective makes a clear difference in your life and in your work?

Further reading

- **Mintzberg, H. (2013)** *Simply Managing: What Managers Do – and Can Do Better*. London: Pearson Education.
- **Mintzberg, H. (2019)** *Bedtime Stories for Managers: Farewell to Lofty Leadership ... Welcome Engaging Management*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- **Mintzberg, H. (2015)** *Rebalancing Society: Radical Renewal Beyond Left, Right, and Center*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Chapter 12: Sustainable Futures



Sustainable futures depend on social equality, environmental protection and a more balanced economic growth across the planet. Will improved global cooperation and adaptability be sufficient for a successful outcome?

12

SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

“We do not inherit the earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”

– Native American Proverb

This chapter uses an “ecosystem approach” to recognise the value of connectedness, cooperation, collaboration and interdependence in achieving a sustainable future. It offers three sustainability frameworks: the 4 Ps (purpose, people, planet, prosperity), the SDGs and the Caplor House, as well as some practical auditing tools at an individual and organisational level. Becoming a sustainable organisation means balancing your impact on the natural environment and human and social welfare whilst maintaining long-term economic viability. However, the greatest success will come when sustainability is fully integrated into the purpose and soul of your organisation.

The External Environment

“You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make.”

– Jane Goodall

The health and state of our planet and the needs of future generations are becoming increasingly prominent in the thinking of both young and old. There is a growing shared aim to look after the environment, reduce the use of plastics and fossil fuels, protect habitats and wildlife, work together for peace and unity, reduce poverty and bring about equality and social justice across the globe. This increasing drive towards a sustainable future stems from a wider societal expectation. For example, the voice of young people heard in protests, strikes and marches across the world calls for governments, businesses and NGOs to take action on climate change and to do things differently to contribute to a sustainable future for all.

The coronavirus crisis has challenged all our assumptions about what is normal in today’s world, and what to expect in the future. Although it has disrupted the way we work and live, it has also provided an opportunity for us to reconsider the legacy we want to leave on this planet and how we need to challenge our practices in order to create a more sustainable future.

Organisational leaders are now faced with the challenge of leading their organisations sustainably into this new future.

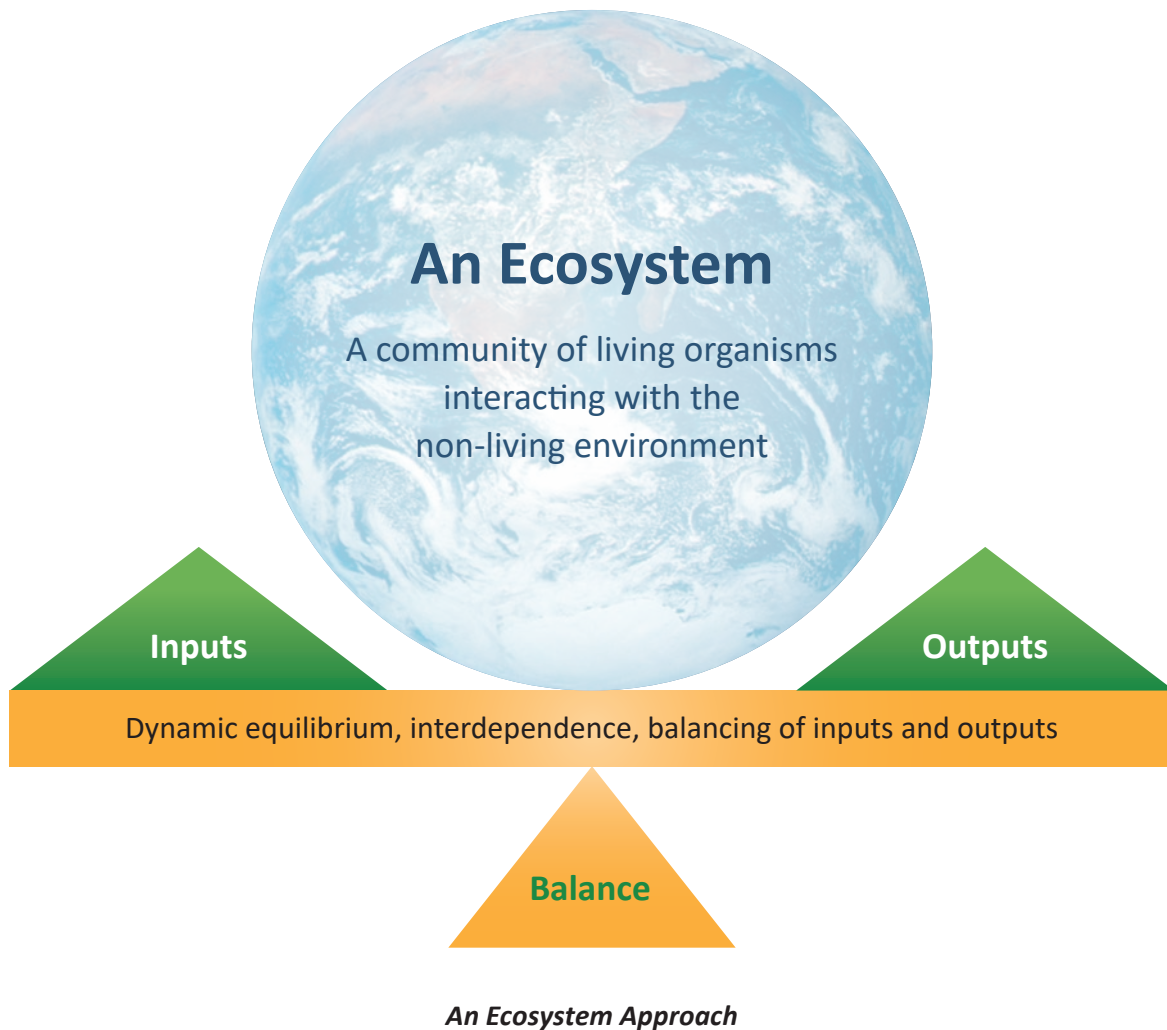
Sustainable development requires joined up thinking on the impact of climate change, biodiversity and habitat loss, social equity, social justice, cultural respect, human rights and long-term economic stability. There is no simple way of achieving this. The issues are complex and interconnected. Tackling one concern may have foreseen and unforeseen consequences which may positively and negatively impact on many other issues.

The Ecosystem Approach

“Even if you never have the chance to see or touch the ocean, the ocean touches you with every breath you take, every drop of water you drink, every bite you consume. Everyone, everywhere is inextricably connected to and utterly dependent upon the existence of the sea.”

– Sylvia Earle

An ecosystem is an interconnected system of living beings and the physical environment. For the system to be healthy there needs to be balance of inputs and outputs (see diagram below). Ecological balance is defined as a dynamic equilibrium of both biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living/physical) components within a community of organisms in which diversity remains relatively stable yet subject to gradual changes through natural selection (WWF, 2020). Simply put, net inputs need to balance net outputs across all levels. The system will fail or will catastrophically affect and be affected by neighbouring ecosystems if there is an imbalance.



If we consider an organisation to be an ecosystem, its community of living things is its workforce and the abiotic environment is its geographical setting together with the numerous processes and functions which hold the organisation together. The actions and reactions of each individual within the organisation will impact on those functions, the inputs (e.g. resources) and the outputs (the product or service).

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

If the organisation is in balance it will naturally contribute and help balance its stakeholders and wider communities thereby contributing to a sustainable future. If an organisation is not balancing its inputs with its outputs, then it will cause its stakeholders and connected communities to become unbalanced and the knock-on effects can be difficult to trace and quantify. As Greta Thunberg (2019) states, “No one is too small to make a difference,” thus the actions of all individuals within a system can and do make a difference to the balance of the system, or organisation, as a whole.

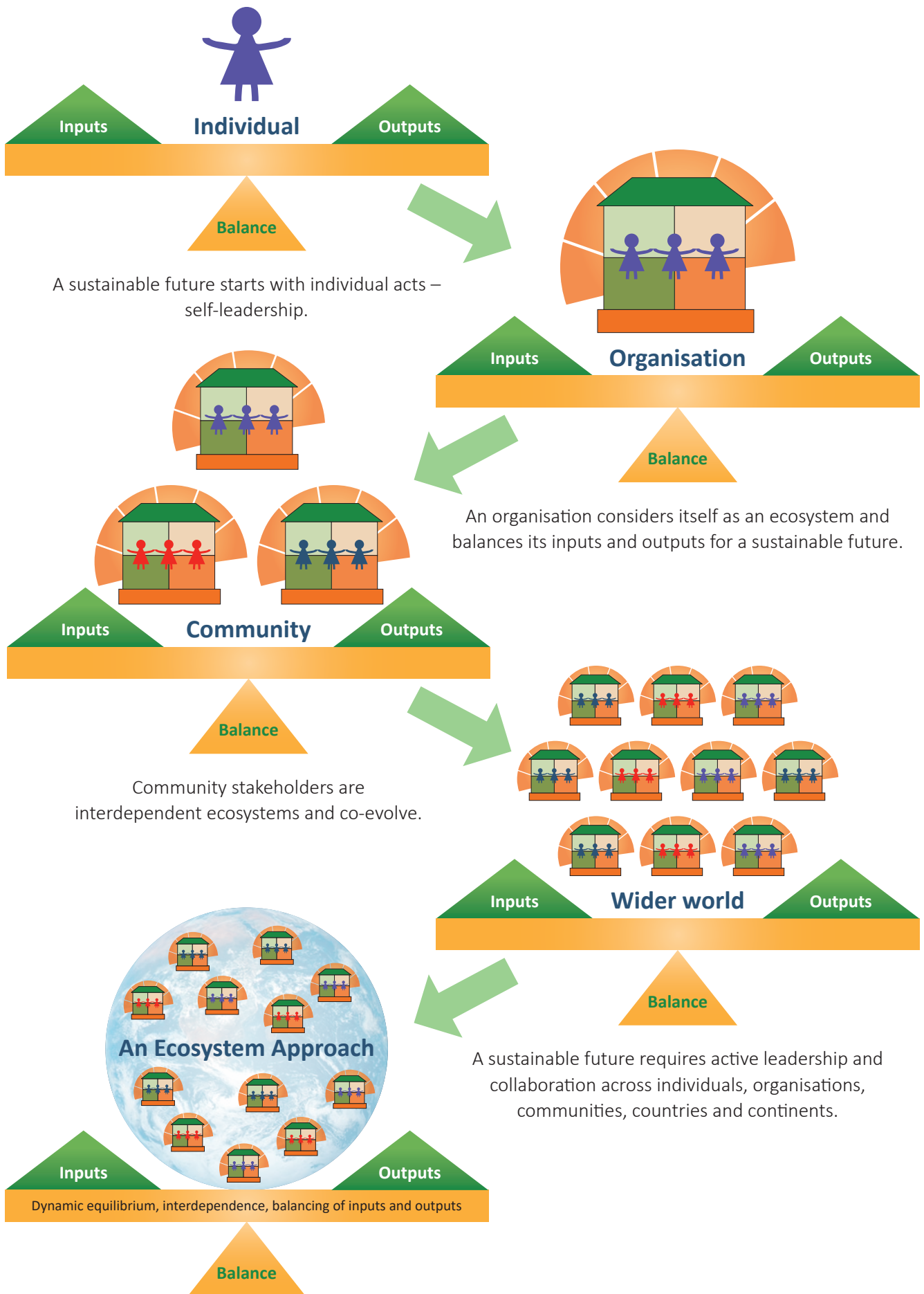
If we delve deeper into this ecosystem concept, we can see that interdependence is critical and is maintained by an interconnectedness and flow of materials and energy between other ecosystems. Natural ecosystems have both a top-down control on their function e.g. predator-related, and a bottom-up control which is reliant on the inputs and the producers of the system. This is the same for any organisation; there is top-down control e.g. from external pressures such as legislation, competition, economic climate, and public opinion. And bottom-up control again from outside sources, e.g. available resources, and the current economic climate.

The idea that organisations have equivalents to natural ecosystems where there is co-evolution, competition, collaboration, cooperation and interdependency provides useful insights into the complexity of the connectedness between organisations. Back in 1993, business strategist James Moore put forward the idea that in a business ecosystem, companies co-evolve capabilities around a new innovation: they work cooperatively and competitively to support new products, satisfy customer needs, and eventually incorporate the next round of innovations. He suggested that when an ecosystem thrives then all will benefit but if conditions change too rapidly then there can be catastrophic failure as there is imbalance in the system.

This ecosystem approach can be explored at different organisational levels; for example, individual, organisation and communities, as well as three different attitudes; informational, emotional and behavioural (Lozano, 2008). These attitudes have a determining effect on the sustainability of the ecosystem. For example, the ecosystem will thrive if the participants have developed patterns of behaviour that streamline the flow of ideas, talent and capital throughout the system (Hayes, 2019).

The ecosystem approach to a sustainable future is one which is recognised as being balanced at every level (from individual, organisation and community to wider world). It is understood that this balance is in constant flux and can only be worked at by recognising the value of connectedness, cooperation, collaboration and interdependence and acting on this as much as possible.

CHAPTER 12: SUSTAINABLE FUTURES



How does an organisation become sustainable?

“Don't judge every day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds you plant.”

– Robert Louis Stevenson

If the ecosystem approach provides a conceptual way of understanding the complexities and interrelationships that impact our future, how does an organisation contribute to a sustainable future?

Simply put, a sustainable organisation may be defined as an organised group of people aiming to advance a sustainable future either as part of its “usual” business or as its key purpose. For example, there is continuous thinking on the mission, purpose, values, goals of the organisation and these are fully integrated into the functioning of the organisation and its usual business and are not sitting outside it.

We need to change the way we think and act as individuals, we need to collectively change the way we work, both with and for each other. Becoming a sustainable organisation requires an approach that looks inwards and outwards on many levels, does not function in isolation and really does think long term.

A sustainable future is one where people can meet their needs without compromising the ability of people in the future to meet their own needs. In order to achieve this then it is crucial that organisations need to be open, sharing knowledge and information about best practice, be prepared to collaborate and support each other, and embrace the challenge of doing things differently.

In becoming a sustainable organisation it would be easy to go in search of a list of do's and don'ts, identify areas of concern and create policies and procedures to demonstrate sustainable responsibility. Yet, now there is a growing interest in there being something more. Research by Matt Gitsham *et al.* (2008) identified that both knowledge and skill sets (learning to do) and a set of attitudes (learning to be) are critically important for leaders to possess in order for their organisations to be able to respond effectively to the challenges and opportunities of corporate responsibility and sustainability. The key message of their work was that there needs to be a focus on developing the mindset and skills of individual leaders, rather than simply introducing new policies and procedures. The table below provides a reflective exercise to examine your own individual leadership skills and abilities.

CHAPTER 12: SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

Mind and skill sets for leaders	Description	Personal rating (1 low, 5 high)				
Systemic thinking	Understand the complexity of how one system impacts on another	1	2	3	4	5
Embracing diversity	Reflect deeply on the historical relationships, the impact on gender, class and other aspects challenging equality and equity	1	2	3	4	5
Thinking long term	Keep an eye on the long-term as well as the short-term outcomes of your or your organisation's actions	1	2	3	4	5
Emotional awareness	Deeply reflective and self-aware	1	2	3	4	5
Meaningful dialogue	Across organisations, communities, governments	1	2	3	4	5
Integration	Work in alignment for mutually beneficial, positive outcomes	1	2	3	4	5
Collaboration	Synergies and combined energies of collaboration enable essential creative thinking and innovation	1	2	3	4	5
Involvement	Developing and empowering others to become leaders themselves	1	2	3	4	5
Balancing local and global perspectives	Think about your consumption patterns and the impact of them on others	1	2	3	4	5

Mind and Skill Sets for Leaders of Sustainable Organisations

Frameworks for a sustainable future

“A healthy ecology is the basis for a healthy economy.”

– Claudine Schneider

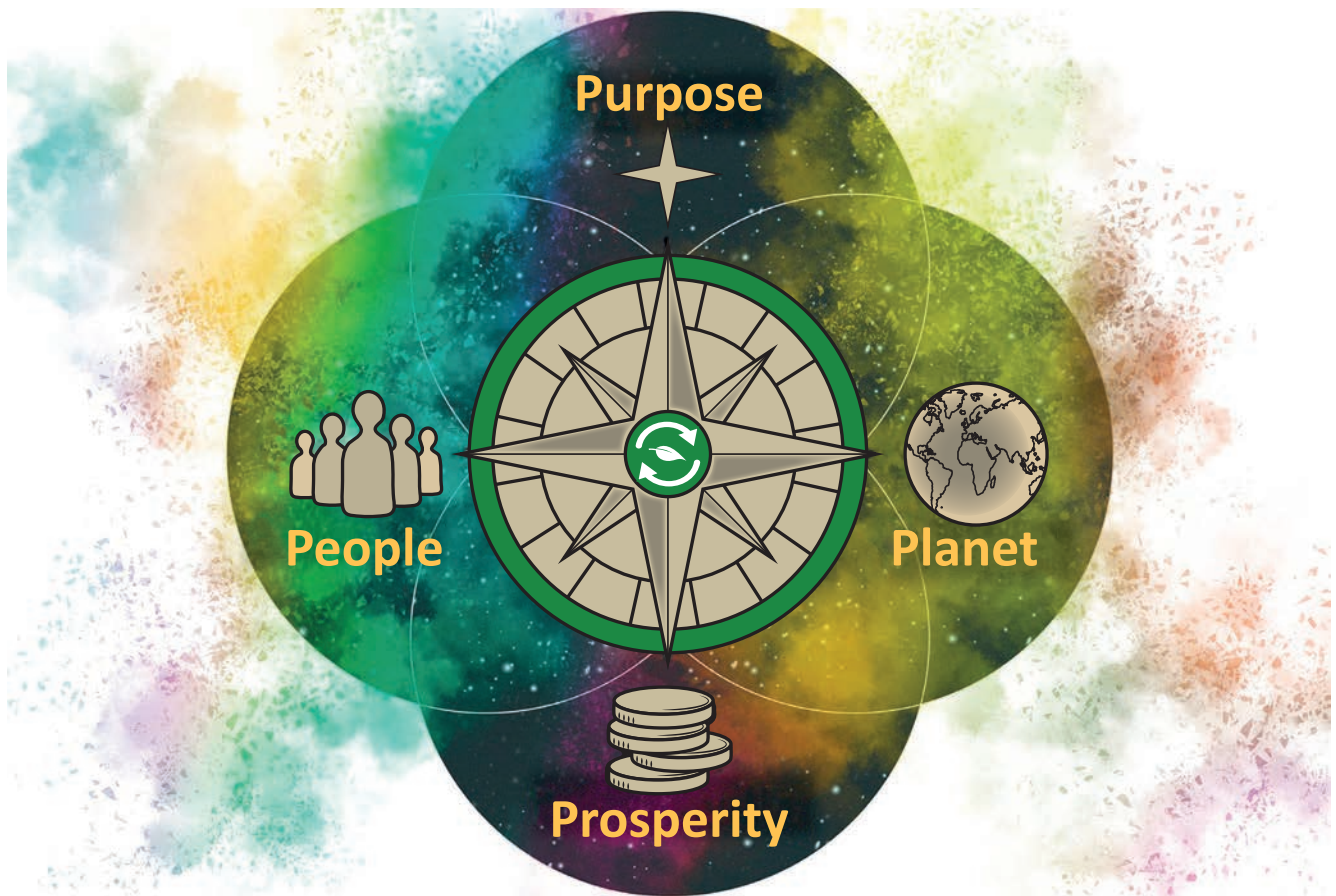
There are many different frameworks for looking at sustainability, including the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and John Elkington's “triple bottom line” approach (Elkington, 1998). At Caplor Horizons, we use three approaches for exploring sustainability and how we can be more sustainable in different aspects of our work. These frameworks are:

- The 4 Ps: Purpose, People, Planet, Prosperity
- The Sustainable Development Goals
- The Caplor House.

The 4 Ps of a Sustainable Future

As mentioned in Chapter 2, our definition of a sustainable future is one in which a healthy environment, economic prosperity and social justice are pursued simultaneously to ensure the wellbeing and a good quality of life of present and future generations.

The early development of our principles for a sustainable future are attributed to the late Ann-Marie Brouder, a leader in the global sustainability movement, as well as influences from John Elkington's “triple bottom line” (people, planet, profit), the 5 Ps of the Sustainable Development Goals (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace, and Partnerships) and the Brundtland Report's (1987) definition of sustainability. They have now evolved into four clearly defined principles: purpose, people, planet and prosperity. The guiding principle of “purpose” reminds us to be working with others rather than in isolation to achieve our shared goals and a common purpose that is bigger than ourselves.



Caplor Horizons' 4 Ps of sustainability

CHAPTER 12: SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

These principles need to be in balance as with an ecosystem. These principles overlap and we think of them as a complex system. So how does this work in practical terms? Is it really possible to balance these principles when they can often be in conflict with each other?

These questions have been the subject of various studies. In agreeing that the integration of environmental, social, and economic principles is often connected to conflicts between the principles, a study by Ralph Hansmann *et al.* (2012) suggests that efforts which consider the economic situation of future generations or enhance social and human capital can achieve considerable integration and such initiatives have less likelihood of conflicts.

Thus, having a clear purpose which focuses on taking a long-term economic view of a viable and thriving society may help to produce shared values, avoid conflicts between the principles, and provide the opportunity for greater cooperation and synergy. For example:

- Visionary thinking and innovation will generate social and economic benefits at the same time as resulting in the responsible use and reduction in natural resources.
- Education and sociocultural sustainability initiatives can simultaneously promote income and employment as well as improve social and environmental wellbeing.
- Protection of natural spaces and biodiversity and the reduction of environmental risks will improve the health and safety of the population and increase the potential for innovative ideas for economic prosperity.

The Sustainable Development Goals

There is a growing expectation (societally and legally) for organisations to demonstrate their credibility and approach to sustainability in a wide range of ways. This may be through monitoring, reporting and certification based on their practices and procedures. Pressure to do this may come from many directions including institutional traditions, rules and regulations, political will, social movements and media pressures. Such an approach may become the key focus of an organisation. For example, one practical way of your organisation demonstrating its commitment to a sustainable future might be to actively adopt and contribute to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



The Sustainable Development Goals. Source: United Nations (2020)

For many leaders, SDGs are a good place to start as they offer goals, define targets and help to focus the ambitions for an organisation. They are helpful in demonstrating interrelationships, emphasising the need for collaboration and uniting organisations and even nations in common action for the greater good. It is therefore pragmatic for any organisation to explore the SDGs and use them as an opportunity to create checks and balances and demonstrate sustainable credentials as part of what it is to be a sustainable organisation.

Adopting the SDGs may also offer global kudos and a “feel good” factor especially if the goals adopted are “easily attainable” and the organisation is already doing the actions. But is it enough? And is it also possible that using, incorporating and reporting on SDGs may be seen by your clients and staff as a form of greenwashing? Greenwashing is a form of spin where “green” public relations (PR) and marketing are deceptively used to promote the perception that the organisation is environmentally friendly and/or working for a sustainable future.

For the SDGs to have real meaning and value, organisations need to rise to the challenge of addressing the more demanding and stretching objectives, as well as scrutinising these for unintended consequences. Although SDGs can sometimes be used as a form of green-washing, Nikos Avlonas (2018) states that “they refine complex concerns to easily understandable concepts” and therefore are a reasonable platform for any organisation to move towards a sustainable future and address the global challenges we face.

So, this leads us on to how you can use these frameworks. What is required to balance the four principles and what might be the “core” actions that bring the principles together?

Sustainability and the Caplor House

As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Caplor House has a sheltering Roof that sustains it. The Roof is a place to consider how best our learning, thinking and actions can help to ensure a sustainable future. From the Roof, we use the lens of sustainability as our navigational tool taking into consideration what we have found out from all the rooms of the House and our awareness of learning from the foundation. We then plan our compass bearing and bring together all the elements that we need to think about for our voyage, going forwards.

Organisations can similarly use the Caplor House model to develop ways of thinking and working towards a sustainable future. The diagram below summarises some of the key actions you might take in each of the rooms.

- **The Observatory** – Moving towards a sustainable future requires us to do things differently. The Observatory is the place for new thinking. It is essential that organisations create an atmosphere and space to enable people to become more innovative, responsive and creative in how the organisation can become more sustainable. Organisations need to look outwards and ask the following question: “What do we need to do to work sustainably with others and the wider world?”.
- **The Library** – Having the critical curiosity to examine what other similar organisations are doing and having the confidence to collaborate may provide you with inspiration to look in new and different ways. There is also an opportunity in the Library to monitor and evaluate the impacts your organisation is having on others and the natural world and whether you are working sustainably to balance the four principles. Evidence garnered will support a greater commitment towards a sustainable future and likely provide information on where there can be greater improvements made.
- **The Family Room** – It is the activity in the Family Room which unites and strengthens the bonds between the deeper purpose of an organisation with the people. As leaders, if you are able to really listen to your colleagues and respond in ways that support, motivate and inspire belief, then it is more likely that each individual within the organisation will believe that what they do will make a difference and will contribute to a sustainable future. Individuals will and do make a difference, but your organisation can make a greater difference if all individuals work in alignment and collaboration.

CHAPTER 12: SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

- **The Kitchen** – Ask yourself, what are the practical actions an organisation can take? What SDGs are going to be implemented as a priority and how? What are the realities of balancing the four principles? What are we going to maximise? Minimise? How do we mitigate the negative impacts we are having on people, planet and our prosperity?



The Caplor House and sustainability

A sustainable organisation is one that will organise itself differently. It will look within itself to enable it to work better with those on the outside. The Observatory might be where there are the visionary ideas but it is essential to be working across all rooms to back up the ideas with evidence, introduce and adapt new and different processes and inspire the people to embrace new ways of organising to be more sustainable.

The key to becoming a sustainable organisation is holistic thinking; that in everything that it does, the organisation holds to a guiding principle that is understood, believed, advocated and acted upon by all within the organisation.

Sustaining a Sustainable Future

“A leader is someone who crafts a vision and inspires people to act collectively to make it happen, responding to whatever changes and challenges arise along the way. A sustainability leader is someone who inspires and supports action towards a better world.”

– Wayne Visser and Polly Courtice

As leaders of an aspiring sustainable organisation you also need to consider how you can sustain your goal for a sustainable future. What else might you need to consider and act upon to do this? Having a balance between four principles is just part of what makes a sustainable organisation. Maintenance and continuous development of sustainable practices can be an even greater challenge and requires active leadership and a sense of ownership and responsibility from each individual as well as mutual cooperation, collaboration, innovation and an openness to learn and to change. This relates to the many facets of an organisation as described in previous chapters.

Every organisation will be predisposed or biased towards certain directions of thinking in relation to a sustainable future. Simply put, a charity which works within the environmental sector may, if not considering carefully, put issues related to the planet before people and prosperity principles. A business may place more weight on profit and economics than social and environmental considerations for their view of a sustainable future. The reality is that these are all interconnected and if balances need to be reached you need to consider how your organisation will do this.

What is the practical starting point for any organisation and how can your organisation maintain momentum?

We would suggest that sustainability starts from the very core of the organisation – its purpose and its soul. An organisation which leads from the soul, where its purpose is integrated with sustainability, fosters deep connections between the 4 Ps. This enables its stakeholders to find meaning and connection within the workplace as well as generating new ways of working and leading each other and the wider world.

We have shown in Chapter 8 that the soul of an organisation is something more than the organisational culture. The soul lies at the deepest level of an organisation's culture, beliefs and values, yet is more, as it relates to its hidden essence; its fundamental sense of purpose, and the organisation's sense of itself as a whole in the many worlds that it inhabits. Deep awareness and understanding of the soul of an organisation allows an organisation to move beyond the check box approach to being sustainable and really examine what being a sustainable organisation means for that particular organisation, its people and the world around it.

A sustainable future requires leadership vision, flexibility, adaptability and agility as well as a proactive approach to meet the demands of this ever-moving goalpost. We know that balancing the 4 Ps requires collaboration, cooperation and compromise. It also calls for the organisation, its leadership and its people, to do things differently and to help people to overcome their resistance to change. If there is the imagination to grasp changing opportunities and a willingness from the leadership to adapt like an ecosystem, then it is likely that the sustainable organisation is also a viable organisation. An organisation which has the vision to see a different future is one which will reap the rewards for doing the right things for the right reason (Daly, 2013).

For an organisation to sustain its sustainability, Deborah de Lange *et al.* (2012) suggest three key factors:

- Develop and maintain sustainability strategies
- Examine honestly and critically whether reporting practices are substantive or symbolic (greenwashing)
- Analyse what the attributes required for sustaining sustainability are (rather than on what the factors affecting and facilitating the initial adoption are)..

CHAPTER 12: SUSTAINABLE FUTURES

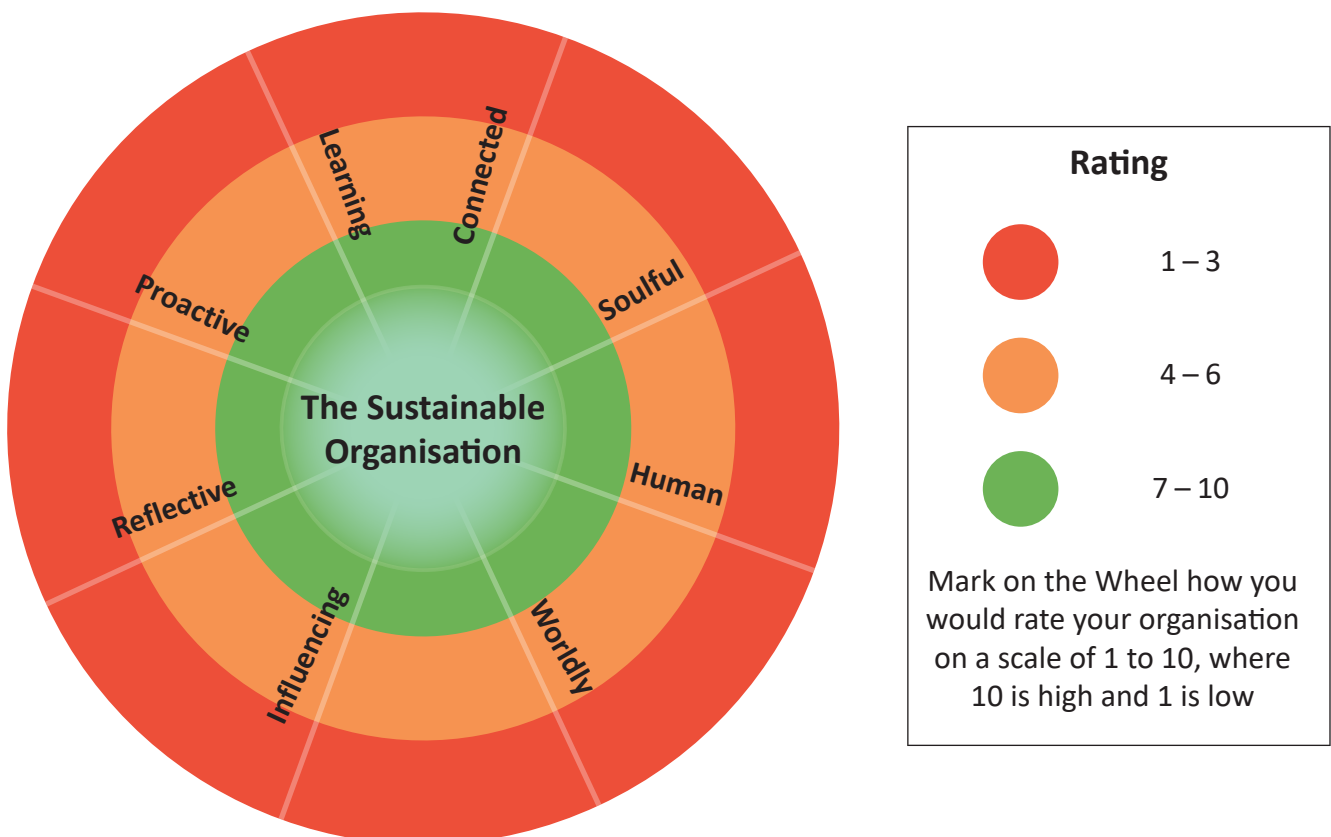
These are very much activities based in the Library and Kitchen of the Caplor House. Building on this we can see that the practicalities of sustaining sustainability can be reflected in the practices within every room of the Caplor House where there is continuous development of ideas (Observatory), constant analysis of the evidence (Library), regular review and refinement of the processes (Kitchen), and unbroken dialogue between all within the organisation and the outside world (Family Room). In working in this way, the sustainable organisation will contribute to a ripple effect which can further influence others to also make changes.

How does an organisation realistically manage to do this? We would advocate that a sustainable organisation needs to embrace balance. Leaders should focus on balancing the 4 Ps and doing this by balancing being:

- A Learning organisation
- A Proactive organisation
- A Connected organisation
- A Human organisation
- A Soulful organisation
- A Worldly organisation
- An Influencing organisation
- A Reflective organisation..

Each of these “types” of organisations are ways of working and organising, and all can create unique and individualised approaches towards becoming a sustainable organisation. There is no right or wrong approach, only a balance which is both conscious and unconscious.

We use the “Sustainable Organisation Wheel” (below) as a simple audit tool to review how balanced your organisation is. Reflecting on this will provide clarity on the nature of your organisation and help identify other perspectives worth considering when moving towards the goal of being a Sustainable Organisation. There is no “right” balance and balance also requires constant adjustment.



Sustainable Organisation Wheel

THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS

Setting out on the journey to becoming a sustainable organisation may seem complex, daunting, and difficult to achieve. It cannot be underestimated how multifarious your approach might need to be, yet, if the drive to be a sustainable organisation comes from within, from you the leaders and all the people within the organisation, then it is more than possible for your organisation to achieve the goal of calling your organisation a sustainable one, both now and in the future.

The reality is that working towards a sustainable future is both an art and a science. Although the desire may come from the soul and the ideas from the mind, the actions from our behaviours and the interconnectedness of our ecosystems mean that it will always be a challenge to balance the 4 Ps.

The practicalities of examining the far-reaching benefits and costs of any decision or action are not straightforward. Maximising and minimising functions and activities within an organisation may result in compromise, collaboration with partners, and mitigation until alternative solutions can be found. For a sustainable organisation such decisions need to be taken by: listening to the very soul of the organisation which defines the deeper purpose; examining the evidence; looking at the practicalities of each decision; and reflecting on how the people can work together and for each other and the future.

We believe that sustainable organisations are about leadership; not just leadership from the top of organisations but from within each and every one of us – self-leadership. If we can all take the time to consider:

- our own responsibility towards a sustainable future
- how we may need to do things differently
- how we can help to balance the 4 Ps
- and how we can find the courage to speak out and act,

then we are all contributing to the sustainable future of our own organisations and the wider world.

What is sustainable development?



Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Frameworks for a sustainable future

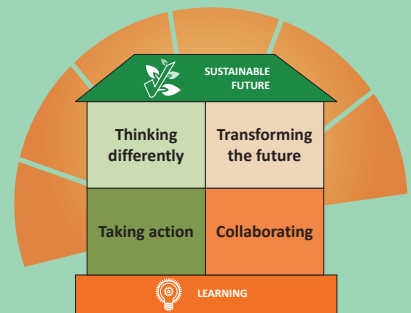
The 4 Ps



The SDGs



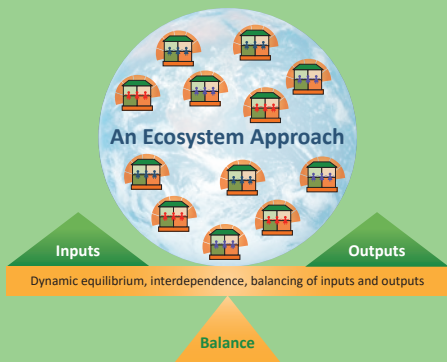
The Caplor House



Sustaining a sustainable future

An ecosystem approach

A sustainable organisation recognises it is not only a system in itself but part of a bigger, interconnected system.



Embed it in the soul

A sustainable organisation will fully integrate sustainability into the purpose and soul of the organisation.

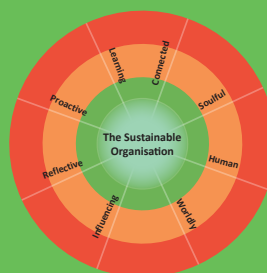


Sustainability auditing tools



Individual Assessment

Mind and Skill
Sets for Leaders of
Sustainable Organisations



Organisational Assessment

Sustainable Organisation
Wheel

Chapter 13: New Horizons

Water moves across the landscape as it drives ecological processes, whilst also being a consequence of them. As our Caplor boat voyages towards its north star, ripples of influence travel outwards, across boundaries, to broaden our impact.

13

NEW HORIZONS

“Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.”

– Arundhati Roy

In this book we set out to take our readers on a journey to new ways of organising. Our aim was to help our readers to reach “new horizons”. We wanted to provide a range of ways to think about how to organise differently, responsibly, fairly and collaboratively for a more sustainable world. We purposefully chose the words “organising differently for a sustainable future” because we wanted to focus on our individual and collective actions, and not present organisations as static entities (or machines) as has frequently been the case in the past.

This book has been written for all current leaders, managers and change makers – as well as for all aspiring future leaders, managers and change makers. We know that you are organising for many different purposes and bringing many different talents. What unites us with our readers is the desire to transform their organisations for the benefit of our communities, our society, and our planet.

Some of you will have read this book from the start to the end. We hope that it has nourished your soul, satisfied your curiosity, stimulated your imagination and provided you with many practical tools for building and sustaining new horizons for yourself, for your organisation and for society.

Some of our readers will have accepted our invitation to dip in and out of this book. Perhaps you have chosen specific chapters for a purpose. We hope the chapters you chose led you seamlessly into other chapters, and perhaps later the whole book. We have deliberately made each chapter as self-contained as possible. The opening chapters introduce Caplor Horizons, our core Caplor House model, the framework for the book and the structure of the chapters. For example, we wanted the book to offer many practical actions and suggestions for our readers, hence our Kitchen section at the end of every chapter. If you have dipped into the book and are now curious about how it is organised and presented and why, do please go back to the start to find out.

At Caplor Horizons we work locally, nationally and internationally to help other organisations think differently about themselves and the new horizons that they face. We support them in strengthening their leadership, renewing their strategy and improving their influence. We want to encourage and assist a new generation of organisations that are committed to making a positive and lasting impact. We believe that if we are to achieve real, sustainable change, we need to inspire and enable people to learn differently, think differently and act differently.

Leadership and strategy are core elements of our work. We find that leaders are very often appointed to their roles without any formal leadership training. Many of you learn to lead by observing others or you are dropped in the deep end. Our contribution is in enabling you to be the best leaders you can be, in your own unique ways, and in supporting those around you to take up leadership activities. We very much subscribe to distributed models of leadership where everyone has the potential to lead, and where leadership is multidirectional. We believe in collaborative leadership. Hence, our focus is also on the next generations, those who will take up their leadership in new and enlightened ways in the future, ensuring that sustainability is at the heart of all we do.

CHAPTER 13: NEW HORIZONS

Our readers will have noted that the themes chosen for the chapters of this book are not the usual topics you might find in books written about organisations. The themes emerged through many exciting discussions about what enables successful organising in today's world. We have mentioned VUCA more than once in our book. Like Covid-19, so many unforeseen global events connect our world today, both destructively and positively. Volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity are the new normal for leaders. We have to be able to organise and reorganise against this backdrop, mitigating the threats and challenges of living in an interconnected global world, as well as seizing the opportunities that our enhanced connectivity enables.

Our book is designed to enable leaders to become more self-aware, more reflective and in touch with their deeper purpose. Our organisations need to be more human and soulful. People, and human flourishing, must always be at the heart of what we do and how we organise. Let us organise together so that people do not feel like resources but are respected as unique individuals with the capacity to contribute authentically and collaboratively and bring diverse perspectives to any challenge.

We must become learning organisations and sustain our continuous learning mindset, even when times are hard. Learning is not just for smooth waters. We need learning and reflection even more urgently whenever we face a crisis. Learning means continuously responding to the stimuli from outside us, as well as listening to the people and creativity within. It means taking time to reflect on what has gone before and what is still to come. Learning and reflection are both individual and collaborative activities. Both must be conscious and proactive activities. Some of your organisations and movements are divided geographically, in different places across the world. With this separation comes creativity. There is much that can be done in today's world through new technologies to connect us.

Our organisations today need to be proactive in their leadership. Whatever our missions, visions and purposes we must be thought leaders first and action leaders second and learn to be confident to challenge when we see actions that are wrong, harmful, unjust or destructive. To take our place in society and to lead others we must influence: sometimes boldly, sometimes gently, sometimes politically and sometimes simply through the example of our own actions. As leaders we are always watched by others. What we do is worth 10 times what we say.

In writing this book we have sought to work together as authors and editors in the ways that we propose in the chapters of this book. We have learned a lot from this experiment. Taking a human, reflective, soulful, collaborative and proactive approach in our conversations, we have come together in the spirit of learning and shared endeavour. We have sought to anchor our ideas not in the limitations of a Western mindset but adopting as far as possible lenses that are worldly and embracing diversity.

Above all, we wanted to ensure that the quest and struggle for a more sustainable world lies at the heart of every chapter. Social justice and the sustainability of our planet are our overarching purpose, and we know we share this purpose with our readers. We look forward to your feedback and thank you for continuing this journey together.

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Rosie is the Co-Director of Caplor Horizons. She is motivated to address issues relating to sustainability, poverty reduction and gender equality. Her background is in international development. At Caplor Horizons, Rosie has worked with many not-for-profit organisations across the UK and internationally, including in Ireland, India, Kenya and The Gambia.



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ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS



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THE CHANGE MAKER'S GUIDE TO NEW HORIZONS



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