



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

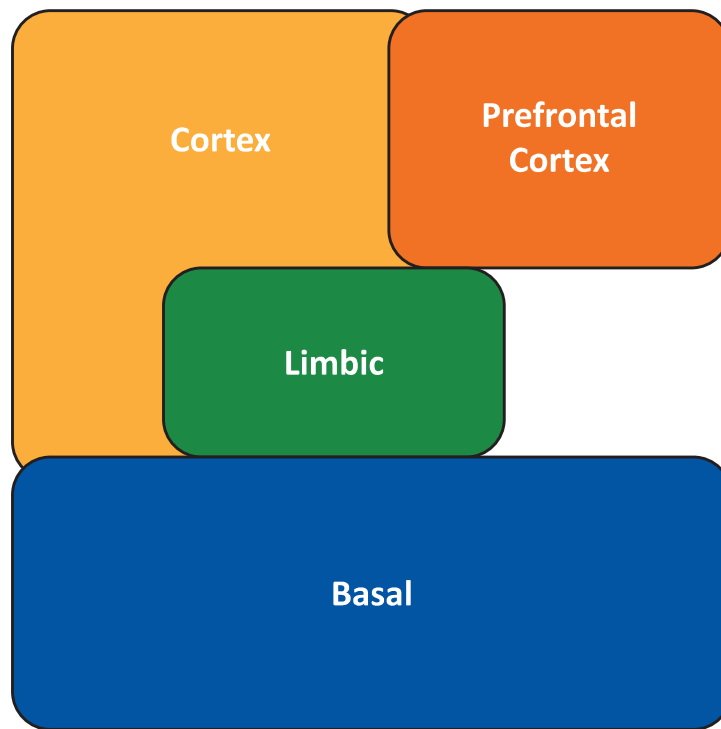
Humans are truly amazing creatures. We can reason and deduce. We can intuit and feel. We have an innate desire to expand ourselves to understand more complexity, assume more responsibility, make bigger contributions, and develop into an ideal version of ourselves. Our organisations need to be built to 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.