

Improving Individual Interactions

The way we interact with each other is of critical importance for our personal success and equally for that of our organisations. " People Skills" training have been around for a while but is often seen as the soft side of leadership. Bill Jensen in "Fast Company" Magazine, February 2002 presents a different view.

"Productivity is personal," he argues. Our individual effectiveness is based on a blend of customised control and good senior-leadership clarity. **The essence of value is "peer-to-peer" interactions. The game is not managing individuals but rather amplifying their interactions.** And the best form of leadership, Jensen says, is "extreme" leadership. Extreme leaders are always asking, Am I doing enough to demonstrate that I respect the people around me?

As human beings we have many basic needs including the three dimensions developed by Will Schutz

Basic Feeling Needs	Significant	Competent	Loveable
Behaviours to meet	Inclusion	Control	Affection
these needs			

If we look at why people purchase goods or services (*The World of Goods, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood, Routledge*) their needs can be fitted into one of these categories. The authors suggest that the vital reason for purchasing goods is to feel included, part of your group and to keep lines of communication open.

Societies organise themselves in such a way as to enhance the meeting of these needs for different individuals. Each society will place a premium on one of the dimensions more than the others - the Japanese for example focus most of all on Inclusion and being part of the group. (See *Understanding Global Cultures, Metaphorical Journeys through 23 Nations, Martin Gannon, Sage Publications*) There is more emphasis on Affection in societies such as Brazil or Southern Italy. Western Anglo-Saxon societies and especially their economic organisations have a major focus on Control and Competence.

The business world is moving away from the focus on Control to more on Inclusion and Affection. The trends are to be seen in the *Cluetrain Manifesto* for example. The authors of this website and book suggest that the artificial barriers between employees and customers, controlled by the "company" will disappear due to conversations made possible by the Internet. The focus is moving towards communication and inclusion, not control. A new book by Meg Wheatley, author of *Leadership and the New Sciences* focuses on conversations (*Turning Towards Each Other*) and how they can change organisations.

In *Reading the Mind of an Organisation* by Annamaria Garden, Gower, 2000, the author uses the three Will Schutz dimensions to link the strategy of the organisation with the feeling needs of the people, within and without the organisation. This is supported by the Gallup book on successful companies (*First, Break All the Rules, Buckingham and Coffman, Simon and Schuster, 1999*). This identified six key questions for business unit success. Three of these were to do with individuals feeling wanted and cared for. Gallup also suggested that you should select for strengths not attempt to train individuals in areas for which they are unsuited. Their second book (*Now, Discover Your Strengths, Buckingham*) gives readers a chance to go online to identify their five key themes or talents for work. Gallup's contention is that organisations should go with these themes to help individuals perform at their best and to build a strengths-based organisation.

The concept of the SWARM intelligence from Complexity theory suggests that with increasing complexity people will be self-organising. Guided by simple "Rules" individuals will find their own practical solutions to issues rather than being directed top-down from a charismatic leader. (*Swarm Intelligence, A Whole New Way to Think about Business, Eric Bonabeau and Christopher Meyer, Harvard Business Review, May 2001*) Critical to all this is trust which can only come from face-to-face contact inclusion behaviours.

To sum up:

- Top-down control will not work in the medium to long term - the work of top leaders is to set clear parameters or "rules" for action and allow space for others to work within these as appropriate.
- People need to focus more on building relationships through Inclusion (networking, having conversations) and Affection (caring, relating personally)