

EXECUTION TO DIE FOR

The Manager's Guide To Making It Happen

R.I.P.

Inadequate Planning

Insufficient Communication

Insensitive Management of Change

Lack of Organisational Alignment

Unenthusiastic employees

Poor Teamwork

Graham Haines

Index of Contents

Page No.

Why things don't happen!..... 23

PART I PLANNING..... 35

Section 1.1 – The Hub of the Plan – what we are going to do.....41

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
1.	The Plan did not take into account the new environment we were operating in.....	42
2.	The rationale behind the Plan was never incorporated in the final written document	52
3.	There was no overall goal that everyone could relate to	67
4.	The Plan was just a series of activities – there were no clear results to aim for	71
5.	Those responsible for the Plan's execution were not sufficiently involved at the planning stage	88
6.	The Planners failed to integrate the Plan with the current circumstances facing the organisation.....	89

Section 1.2 – The Support Functions – how we are going to do it.....95

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
7.	The implications of the Plan were not sufficiently worked through by the Planners	96
8.	Insufficient time was spent planning before moving to implementation	100

Section 1.3 – The Enabling Functions – what resources do we need?103

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
9.	The implementation of the Plan required changes to the current organisational structure	104
	that management was not prepared to make.....	92

10.	The Planners underestimated the costs of implementation.	114
11	There were no clear subsidiary objectives.	116

Section 1.4 – Action Planning117

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
12.	There was no Action Program that set out the objective of each action, who was to be responsible for it and its completion date.	118
13.	Management underestimated the time required for implementation – those charged with its implementation did not have enough hours in the day to complete the actions that they were responsible for by the date indicated and do their “normal” jobs at the same time. ...	120

PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION – MAKING IT HAPPEN! 121

Section 2.1 – Organisational Alignment127

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
14.	There are differing views on where the organisation is “now” and this has resulted in varying levels of commitment to the implementation of the Plan.	128
15.	Staff were each told what to do but not how their role fitted into the “big picture”.	129
16.	Coordination between the various functional groups is lacking.	131

Section 2.2 – Management of Change133

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
17.	Management adopted the attitude of – do it or else – there was no consultation, no feedback, nothing!	135
18.	The rationale behind the proposed changes was not sufficiently explained to those most affected by them.	137
19.	Many employees are very anxious about the changes they are being asked to make – yet they are made to feel that such anxiety is both unreasonable and unnecessary.	138
20.	A lot of people couldn’t see the benefit of the changes proposed so after the initial push ran out of steam, they resorted to their old ways.	142

Section 2.3 – Leadership145

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
21.	Leadership at the top of the organisation is largely invisible and remote from those charged with the detailed implementation.	148
22.	Strong leadership at the top is not mirrored by good leadership at lower management levels – the pressure to manage “things” leaves no time to lead people.	153

Section 2.4 – Teams and Teamwork155

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
23.	Our organisation has embraced the concept of teams and teamwork but their establishment is seen as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end.	157
24.	Management started a team development program but money became tight so it rather fizzled out.	163

Section 2.5 – Employee Engagement167

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
25.	The general view among employees was that their knowledge, feelings, needs and aspirations were being ignored by senior management.	168

Section 2.6 – Communication – the good oil181

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
26.	Communication at all levels of the organisation is lacking.	182
27.	Feedback from those at the coalface of the organisation was never responded to so ceased to be given.	187

PART 3 MONITORING, MEASURING, ADAPTING 189

Section 3.1 – Monitoring193

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
28.	Processes for monitoring the implementation of the Plan are insufficient and undisciplined.	194
29.	We can never find time to hold meetings that everyone who should attend can attend.	200
30.	Our meetings are not as productive as they should be.	201

Section 3.2 – Measuring205

No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
31.	We tend to place too much reliance on quantitative measures.	206
32.	When issues are identified we tend to take action before sufficient analysis has been undertaken.	207

Section 3.3 – Adapting215

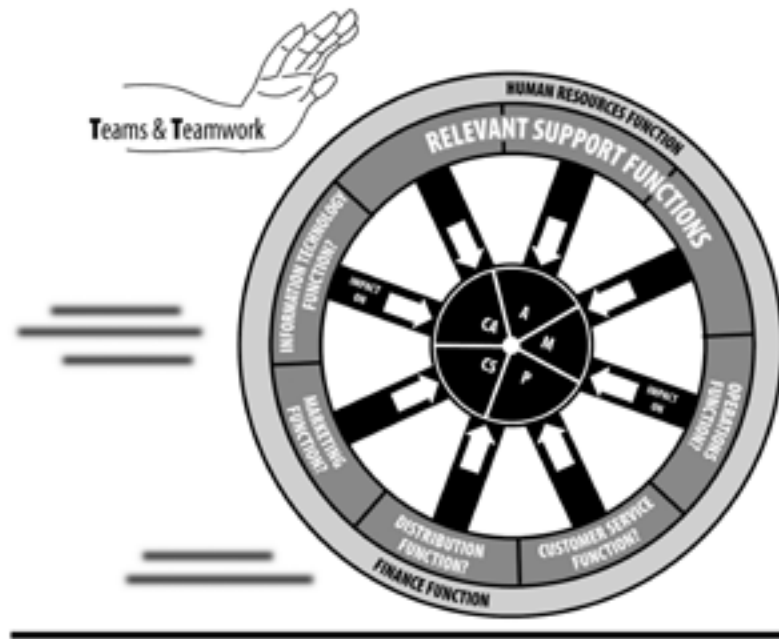
No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
33.	Action programs to rectify problems are initiated with insufficient thought given to their implementation.	217

PART 4	REINVENTING THE WHEEL OR REVISING THE PLAN	219
No.	Barrier to making it happen	Page No.
34.	Changes in the external environment made the Plan increasingly irrelevant and so it was gradually abandoned	224
35.	Although we recognise that the external environment is changing, we continue to focus on implementation rather than revise the Plan	225
36.	Although we recognised that the external environment has changed and we needed to change our strategies accordingly, we chose the wrong strategy	228
PART 5	EXECUTION TO DIE FOR - THE WAGON WHEEL WAY	237
Postscript		251

Section 2.4 – Teams & Teamwork

The following barriers to making it happen are addressed in this Section

Barrier	Page No.
Barrier No. 23 – Our organisation has embraced the concept of teams and teamwork but their establishment is seen as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end	157
Barrier No. 24 – Management started a team development program but money became tight so it rather fizzled out	163



OMELETTE

2.4 Teams and Teamwork

Teams and Teamwork represents the fourth egg in the implementation **OMELETTE**. Its position is not a reflection on its importance as an implementation factor; it is simply that effective **Teams and Teamwork** cannot exist in the absence of Organisational Alignment, effective Management of Change and Leadership at all levels of the organisation.

Many will be familiar with the metaphor of migrating geese as an exemplar of teamwork. How by flying in a V-formation, the whole skein adds at least a 71% increase to its range than if each bird flew on its own. How when the lead goose tires, it rotates back in the skein for a rest and another goose takes its position. How geese honk from behind to encourage the leaders to keep up their pace. Yet the foundation of the geese's remarkable teamwork is their organisational alignment. People sharing a common direction and a sense of community and commitment to a goal will achieve it more easily and quickly when they travel on the uplift of one another.

I have a particular interest in **Teams and Teamwork** as the co-developer of a feedback instrument³⁰ that measures how effectively members of a team work together. However, we do not use the word “team” generically. Rather the term “team” is reserved for those workgroups that achieve the highest levels of performance. The collective noun that we use is “Workgroups” and we have identified six levels of workgroup effectiveness as follows:

- Group of Individuals
- Embryonic Workgroup
- Developing Workgroup
- Established Workgroup
- High Performance Workgroup
- High Performance Team

Suffice to say that High Performance Teams are a very rare breed and a good part of the reason for this is that, as is the case with Leadership, the culture, the climate, the environment – call it what you will – is not conducive to the development of **Teams and Teamwork** at the highest level.

Many still believe that teams can be created. Call a group of people a team, appoint a team leader, subject them to a weekend of abseiling and watch them grow, mushroom like, into a team that the SAS or Manchester United fans would be proud of. Of course, it doesn't work that way. **Teams and Teamwork** evolve over a period of time but as with the development of a strategic plan and the order in which each component of the Implementation **OMELETTE** is addressed, there is a process that can be followed that will foster their evolution.

There are many different types of teams – or workgroups - but the basic division is between permanent and temporary. The latter type is established to achieve a specific goal and when that has been achieved, it is disbanded. This type of workgroup is often referred to as a Task Force or Project Team.

30 Towards Ten Thousand – workgroup performance accelerator – a joint venture between bpi consultants and Compass Motivational Solutions

The permanent workgroup has two basic forms. First there is the Functional Workgroup whose members all perform very similar roles, often providing specialist services to other workgroups. The members of the IT department or an accounts receivable workgroup are typical examples. The other permanent type is the Cross-functional or Multi-skilled workgroup. Both types of workgroup would typically handle a complete process such as managing the growth and profitability of a particular product group or groups of products or managing sales and business development in a particular geographical region or market sector. Equally a cross-functional workgroup might handle a specific process such as order fulfilment or product development.

With the Cross-functional or Multi-skilled workgroup, each member has a very different role but each is required if the workgroup is to carry out its intended purpose. The difference between these two types of workgroups is that with the Cross-functional workgroup each member has a particular role whereas with the Multi-skilled workgroup, as the name suggests, members are capable of handling a number of workgroup roles as circumstances dictate.

The trends in organisational structures are twofold. Firstly, the concept of workgroups is now much more likely to be applied to permanent ones and with Cross-functional and Multi-skilled workgroups, teamwork is mandatory for effective operations. Secondly, Cross-functional workgroups that operate across departmental or functional boundaries are far more prevalent as organisations strive for greater speed, flexibility and responsiveness.

Barrier 23 – Our organisation has embraced the concept of teams and teamwork but their establishment is seen as an end in itself rather than as a means to an end

One of the pitfalls that many organisations fall into is that their focus is on the appearance of teamwork and not on the substance. By that I mean the initial emphasis is on “team building”, the development of interpersonal skills and familiarisation with such concepts as Active Listening, Conflict Management and Emotional Intelligence. Whereas the initial focus should be on such basics as the development of a common purpose, performance objectives and approach. In that excellent book “The Wisdom of Teams” by Jon Katzenbach and Douglas Smith³¹, the authors define a team as a “small number of people with complementary skills who are committed to a common purpose, performance goals, and approach for which they hold themselves mutually accountable”

When I was first approached by a client to develop a survey that would measure a “team's” effectiveness, I initially reviewed my own work experience to gain a basic understanding of what contributes to effective workgroups. I concluded that over a period of twenty years, there was only one instance, lasting for three years, when I enjoyed membership of a high performance team. The role of the team was business development, identifying opportunities, developing and negotiating business proposals with prospective customers and then finally writing the legal agreements that set out the agreed terms and conditions, liabilities and responsibilities of the two parties involved. I then went on to analyse why this period of my work life had been so satisfying both from a personal and work perspective and came up with the following reasons.

31 “The Wisdom of Teams” by Jon Katzenbach & Douglas Smith, published by Harvard Business School Press 1993

- It was a true cross-functional team – each member performed an essential role in the team’s performance
- The team was responsible for carrying out a key component of the Company’s business strategy – thus the purpose and goals of the team were highly aligned with those of the Company as a whole
- The team had a high degree of autonomy
- The team was a small one – it had a nucleus of four members but drew on many others on an as needs basis
- The team had very clear cut goals and an obvious means of assessing its performance – we either won the contract or lost it

The curious thing was that we never consciously thought of ourselves as a team and we certainly neither requested nor received any training in interpersonal relationships. The process of working together so closely on complex and significant projects was sufficient to generate an enormous respect for each other’s expertise and commitment to the team’s goals. We would engage in hotly contested debates as to the best course of action but I never recall us not reaching a consensus that everyone fell in behind. There was a lot of hard work but also a lot of laughter and we all became friends as well as work colleagues. However, in the final analysis it is the team’s achievements that provide the best evidence of effective teamwork. Over the three year period, we played seven, won five and drew two.

My own brief experience as a member of a winning team is echoed by Katzenbach and Smith in “The Wisdom of Teams”. As part of their research the authors approached Hewlett-Packard with a request to interview a selection of H-P teams. When they first spoke of this interest to Dean Morton, then executive vice president and chief operating officer of H-P his initial comment was: “We don’t really think that much about teams here – I’m not sure we have that many that would be of interest to you”. However, as Katzenbach and Smith were to discover, H-P is populated by hundreds of teams formed – for the most part informally – to exploit new business opportunities in new markets and new products. The formation of such teams is seen as the natural corollary of H-P’s performance ethic and management philosophy. The catalyst to team formation is a “significant performance challenge”. In short, teams are regarded as a means to an end rather than as an end in themselves.

What Katzenbach and Smith identified in their examination of teams was a fundamental change in the philosophy behind their formation. When organisational – as opposed to sporting – teams became the focus of research among consultants and organisational psychologists and sociologists after the end of the Second World War, the primary purpose in their formation was to benefit the work life of the individual members. The spin-off was enhanced organisational performance. Today, it’s the other way around. The primary benefit of teams is seen as enhanced organisational performance with the spin-off being quality of individual work life. The philosophy of workgroups is undergoing subtle but far reaching change. The following table builds on one taken from – “Managing Teams”³² by Lawrence Holpp

Workgroups (teams)	
Emphasis	Emphasis
from	to
Rationale <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As an end in themselves • Quality of Working Life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As a means to an end • Organisational performance
Focus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operational 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic & Operational
Purpose <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To get along better • Employee engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve work performance • Organisational alignment
Usage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside main organisational structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main building block of organisational structures
Measure of effectiveness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do we all feel? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have we achieved our goals?
Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team building groups, interpersonal skills, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team skills, quality tools, problem solving, personal growth tools, communication skills, process skills
Performance appraisal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workgroup & Individual
Lifespan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Permanent
Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elitist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way we do things around here

32 “Managing Teams” by Lawrence Holpp, published by McGraw-Hill 1999

The fundamental changes in the rationale for teams clearly have a major impact on the attributes one is seeking to develop among its members and the criteria used to measure their effectiveness.

One of most significant changes is the trend away from temporary teams to permanent ones. Workgroups are no longer the preserve of project teams and task forces: the concepts of **Teams and Teamwork** are being increasingly applied to permanent teams, particularly those that make or do things.

In general, temporary teams have two things going for them that permanent teams don't have. Firstly, there is usually greater clarity over the team's goal – to develop a new product, to introduce a new IT system or to exploit a new business opportunity. Secondly, when teams are temporary, there is more latitude in the selection of team members. Team members may be selected not just for their technical expertise but also for their ability to perform a particular team role. Such teams are often seen as the proving ground for the organisation's best and brightest – they are the elite, the Navy Seals of the organisation's forces.

However if the company moves to introduce permanent teams at all levels of the organisation, members will be selected on the basis of technical expertise alone and the goals of the teams will be less readily defined. However, the need for each workgroup to develop team status in order to attain the required standard of performance is neither feasible nor necessary. It is for this latter reason that our own workgroup assessment program reserves the title of high performance team for only the most outstanding workgroups. Moreover, the achievement of "high performance workgroup" is usually more than adequate for a workgroup to play its role in turning plans into reality.

Our workgroup assessment program measures the effectiveness of workgroups under eight main headings.

- Workgroup Purpose & Goals
- Workgroup Structure
- Workgroup Accountability
- Workgroup Development
- Interpersonal Relationships
- Workgroup Culture
- External Relationships
- Organisational Culture

The order in which the above are listed represents a hierarchy of the factors that contribute to workgroup performance. Thus defining a Workgroup Purpose and agreeing on a Workgroup Goal are seen as the fundamental prerequisites. Additionally, the workgroups' purposes and the workgroups' goals must reflect those of the organisation as a whole. So once again, we pick up on the issue of organisational alignment. Secondly the Workgroup needs to have a structure. Workgroup members must understand their roles in the workgroup; the Workgroup must have ground rules that set out how it is to operate and have regular workgroup meetings at which all members contribute. The Workgroup needs a leader who is preferably a workgroup member. The section on Workgroup Development focuses on technical, process and communication skills rather than interpersonal skills and personal growth. These first four factors address the basics of workgroup effectiveness. The only valid measure of workgroup performance is whether the Workgroup achieves its goal and this will not happen unless the goal meets

the SMART³³ criteria, and the Workgroup has the basics of workgroup effectiveness in place. If this is the case, many of the positive elements of interpersonal relationships and Workgroup Culture will develop as a natural consequence. It is also important to appreciate that we are not considering issues and factors that are black or white. Indeed, one of the more interesting findings from our workgroup surveys is the variation in responses from members of the same workgroup to the same question. However as one would anticipate, the variation diminishes as the effectiveness rating increases. Yet, even with high performance workgroups (rated second only to high performance teams) variations of five or greater (out of 10) between the lowest and the highest ratings are not uncommon. When an overall rating that equates to a Developing Workgroup is recorded, such variations are commonplace. There are simply wide variations in the perspective of workgroup members due to a whole variety of factors such as time in the Workgroup to lack of role and goal clarity.

The last two factors used to appraise workgroup effectiveness are External Relationships and Organisational Culture. One aspect of External Relationships refers to one workgroup's understanding of the role and purpose of other workgroups within the same organisation. This section was added as a consequence of the feedback from the original pilots. Understanding what other workgroups do not only facilitates meeting the needs of the internal customers and suppliers but also aids organisational alignment.

High Performance Workgroups, even occasionally High Performance Teams, can and do exist in organisations where the culture is not particularly favourable to their development. A "significant performance challenge" is usually the catalyst. In my own case our business development team was not officially recognised and it existed and prospered in an organisation structured along functional lines. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that a climate that is conducive to their development can greatly aid their effectiveness. For example, we have found a direct correlation between workgroup effectiveness and external leadership as measured by the response to this statement in the questionnaire – "our supervisor/manager takes an active interest in our Workgroup's development". In one of the early validation programs, I was actually present when a group of Sales Representatives completed the survey. This was in the days before the survey was on-line and so it was arranged that the representatives would complete the survey form in hard copy in time set aside during an internal sales meeting. The meeting occurred just before Christmas and was chaired by the Regional Sales Manager. It was very clear to me during the discussions prior to and after the completion of the survey that the rapport between the Manager and his Sales team was an excellent one. Not only did all his team have an understanding of the overall sales goals for the region and for the Company as a whole but they also knew how their own performance would impact them. In addition, the Sales Manager answered any question put to him straightforwardly and with great frankness and was keen to get his Sales Team's feedback on all manner of subjects. There was mutual respect between the Manager and his team and the team members, themselves, appeared to enjoy each other's company. There was the usual swapping of "war stories" and plenty of group problem-solving. It therefore came as no surprise to find that this workgroup achieved the highest rating among the six in the same company that participated in the trials.

Our work also supports Katzenbach & Smith's finding that the organisations that foster the most effective workgroups are likely to be more performance focused than team focused. In the former case, performance is the end, the team is the means. In the latter, the team is the end and performance is a hoped for consequence. This leads to what Katzenbach and Smith call a pseudo-team, a group that displays the outward trappings of a team but

which lacks the essentials of team performance – purpose and goals, structure and process. No amount of abseiling (rappelling), PD and training in interpersonal skills can compensate for these shortcomings.

One might assume that of all the potential teams in an organisation, the one whose effectiveness would have the greatest impact on the organisation's performance would be the Executive Team. As a consequence, members of the Executive Team should aim for nothing less than to qualify as a High Performance Team. In practice, it would take a remarkable group of executives to achieve this distinction. Almost by definition, top executives in organisations are ambitious and competitive. These are two of the traits that got them there in the first instance. Their own interests – in the final analysis – come before those of the organisation that employs them. If they are thwarted in their ambitions for further promotion, they tend to change organisations. Rather than work together in problem solving activities, there is a tendency for members to wash their hands of a problem if it relates to an issue that is clearly someone else's responsibility. I have seen this happen many times when presenting the feedback from a Customer Feedback Survey. If, for example, customers rate "delivery-on-time" as poor, everyone turns to the Distribution Manager to provide an explanation and proffer a solution. There is an attitude of – "that's his problem, not mine" rather than "that's our problem, let's analyse it and solve it together". Criticism of the Distribution Manager is muted to non-existent because you can almost see the thought bubble coming out of everyone else's heads, enclosing the words – "don't be too critical, it might be your turn next!" The fact that each member of the Executive Team manages a separate function is the major barrier towards the achievement of team status. There are two potential solutions to this problem.

The first is to restructure the Executive Team along process rather than functional lines. Assume that the organisation has a matrix structure with the usual functional heads but also cross-functional workgroups responsible for each of the major processes. Furthermore, assume that it is the managers of the processes rather than those of the functions that form the Executive Team. The General Manager has the unusual title of General Manager - Customer Satisfaction. This ensures that the other members of the management team are there to manage the processes that will optimise customer satisfaction. This form of organisational structure has two major advantages.

One – it aligns the whole company behind the aim of satisfying the customer and, two, it gives the management team a central *and* common purpose. In contrast to the functional Executive Team, the primary loyalties of this management team are not to their functional departments but to each other. Adopting such a structure has the potential to fundamentally change the dynamics of the Executive Team's behaviour.

- Instead of the individual attitude of – it's not my problem – the team "owns" the problem
- Everyone weighs in with ideas and suggestions as to what the root causes might be and how they may be solved
- Instead of sitting on the sidelines, those who are not primarily responsible for the issue under discussion make a contribution to the debate because they want other team members to help them when something that they are primarily responsible for comes up.
- This team manages both realities and perceptions with equal commitment. Members acknowledge that customer perception is reality and if those perceptions are negative, they are *not* ignored. The issue is simply – how do we change those negative perceptions into positive ones?

As one of the outcomes from our customer feedback surveys is a weighted index of customer satisfaction to which every function and process contributes, the management team has a common goal to complement its common purpose.

In many organisations, however, moving to the "process" structure is not possible for any number of reasons. Nevertheless, there is a way to develop executive teamwork even if the functional management structure is left in place.

The solution is to identify a common goal that requires the *collective* efforts of the executive team to analyse, develop solutions and plan for implementation. The sole criterion is that the goal should have a significant impact on the future health of the company. Here are some suggestions.

- Setting a new goal for the Customer Satisfaction Index
- Setting a goal for "accurate, in full, on time" deliveries
- Reducing overall costs by a specific percentage
- Reduction of the organisation's carbon footprint
- Increasing the percentage of recycling
- Setting a target for Employee Job Satisfaction
- Reducing employee turnover to a specific level

There are many more common goals than those examples above but whatever the Goal chosen, it will need to satisfy certain criteria.

- All members of the executive management team must understand that they and their departments have a role to play in its accomplishment
- The Goal must be a **SMART** one – **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, a **R**esult – not an activity – and **T**ime related
- Progress towards the Goal must be capable of objective and quantitative measurement
- The Goal must be one that both energises the executive team and the organisation as a whole
- Although the executive management team takes the leading role in the achievement of the Goal, it requires a specific contribution from all the other Workgroups to accomplish it.
- Executive management should hold regular meetings at which the sole topic on the agenda is progress towards the Goal

Barrier 24 – We started a team development program but money became tight so it rather fizzled out

The greatest danger facing the proponents of teams is to regard them as an end in themselves. In these circumstances, teams are adopted as the latest management fad – the new panacea that is going to transform the organisation's performance. No real structural changes are made. The functional departments are simply relabelled "teams" or, slightly more radical, cross-functional teams are formed that are superimposed over the traditional functional structure to form a matrix. However, in practice, the original functional structure remains virtually unchanged since no attempt is made to redistribute the levers of power. The establishment of teams is launched with

a great fanfare of trumpets and trainers and consultants are brought in to put the new teams through their paces. Instead of focusing on purpose, goals, structure and process, the emphasis is almost exclusively on interpersonal skills – active listening, giving helpful criticism, assertiveness, constructive conflict etc. Team members learn how to relate to one another in a more team-like manner but the skills acquired are not harnessed to the task of achieving clear performance goals. And, of course, the goals will not be clear if there is a lack of organisational alignment, inadequate management of change and poor leadership. In effect, a team development program is established that runs in parallel with the main program of implementing the organisation's operational strategies. Lacking integration with the latter, the former will be vulnerable to changes in executive management and budgetary constraints. It will be seen as a nice-to-have rather than a must-have initiative. In contrast, when teams are established as a means of achieving clear performance goals and when they become the building block of the organisational structure, a convergence takes place whereby team and organisation goals merge. **Teams and Teamwork** are seen as a means to an end and are thus accepted as the way “we do things around here”. When teams are fully embedded in the organisation and teamwork flourishes not just within teams but between teams, the ability of the organisation to turn plans into reality will be greatly enhanced.

It's appropriate to end this section on **Teams and Teamwork** with a practical example of what can be achieved by embracing this form of organisational structure for the execution of the Plan. I have already referred to the work of Marvin Weisbord in the Section on the Management of Change³⁴ and one of the reasons I find his teachings so powerful is that Weisbord, in his formative years, far from being an academic, ran the family business that had been founded by his father on the eve of World War 2. The business involved printing technology and direct mail marketing and through a willingness to adopt new technology and a favourable business environment, the business grew at an annual rate of 25%. Weisbord knew nothing of management concepts, had never read a management book but despite describing his work life as “going to war every day”, he was subconsciously absorbing a mass of experience that was to stand him in good stead when his management epiphany came. It arrived in the mid 1960's when a friend of his, who was a compensation specialist for a large corporation, gave him a copy of Douglas McGregor's “The Human Side of Enterprise”. He devoured it in one weekend and in his own words, “it blew my mind”.

Despite being philosophically and emotionally inclined towards Theory Y, Weisbord realised that their business was structured according to the dictates of Theory X – “time clocks, narrow work rules, jobs so subdivided even an idiot would be bored, grown people treated like children, never let in on decisions, having no consequential information about the business or even their own work, expected to deliver for management and not to reason why, all in return for a \$5 raise every six months, a turkey at Christmas, and a chance, if they didn't die of boredom in the meantime, to become supervisors.” Emboldened by what he had read, Weisbord decided to introduce work teams beginning with the order processing department. This particular department was extremely vulnerable to absenteeism. There were approximately 25 people in this department where the process was subdivided into five narrow functions. One group opened the mail and sent out samples; another group entered the orders; a third group checked the credit worthiness of customers and a fourth typed up production orders that were then passed to the production department. Finally a fifth group sent out new invoices and checked incoming receipts against unpaid bills. The total group processed between 200 – 300 orders that arrived each day by phone and mail. One absentee in one function could effectively reduce output by 20%; two absentees in the same function and output shrank by 40% despite the

fact that 90% of the workforce was still present. Weisbord's concept was to establish five self-contained multi-skilled teams, organised around groups of customers. Once the members became skilled in all of the five functions, the absence of one team member would have no effect on the other four teams and a negligible impact on the team in question. Thus team members could acquire new sets of skills; they could set their own goals and priorities; they could better appreciate how their role related to the achievements of the company as a whole, and they would achieve unheard of levels of flexibility and hopefully productivity. The proposal was presented to the five supervisors with mixed reactions. Two were enthusiastic about the scheme, two didn't think it would work and one was neutral. The first two became floating coordinators and coaches to the teams and the others elected to work on a team together. Weisbord's instructions to the teams consisted of one sentence - “teach each other your jobs”.

Rather than the smooth transition that Weisbord naively anticipated, problems started to surface thick and fast caused in the main by the previous job specialisation. No one appreciated the total process and so when problems occurred either at the boundary of one role with another or pre or post process, the team members didn't know what to do. None had been taught to think for themselves. The reality of the situation was that the Company had more than 200 inventory items, tens of thousands of customers and 25 order processors each of which only really understood 20% of the order processing sequence. There were plenty of opportunities for things to go wrong; for mistakes to be made and unhappy customers to result. Weisbord's colleague, the one who had given him McGregor's “Human Side of Enterprise” and who now worked with Weisbord full time, suggested that they hold a weekly meeting at which one member of each team would be present and at each meeting the representatives would raise the latest batch of problems and between them and the other participants they would find and implement solutions.

I shall have more to say about the role that meetings play in Part 3 of “Execution to Die For” but suffice to say at this stage that Weisbord was appalled at the prospect of holding meetings. After all, stretched as they were, when would the order processing teams make up for the time lost preparing for and taking part in meetings? Nevertheless, meetings were held that dragged on interminably and Weisbord could not believe “that such a little business could generate such a long list of problems, or that so many people knew so little about what they were doing – including me.” In the past, every little problem was passed on to the supervisors who in turn passed on a good number to Weisbord. They held four such meetings and still the problems kept on coming. With the fifth meeting scheduled, Weisbord decided to end the work team experiment – it was simply too time costly. Theory Y was great in principle but not in practice. He would revert to Theory X. At the end of the fifth meeting he would announce that the experiment had ended.

The meeting commenced and Weisbord somewhat wearily asked for the latest issues to be raised. “We don't have any this week”, was the response. “We knew how to handle all the problems from our other meetings”.

This episode had a profound impact on Weisbord. He understood for the first time “that the essence of effective organisations was learning, not coercing and controlling output. I realised that it took time; required real problems to be solved; involved trial, error, give, take, and experimentation. Above all, it generated tremendous anxiety. I also had my first hint of what good managers do instinctively; involve people in setting important goals, structure the chance to learn, offer feedback and support, provide tools and ideas, and stay out of the way.”

There are a number of post scripts to this story. Productivity in the order processing department rose by 40%. Order processing capability went from under 300 to more than 400 orders per day. The two reluctant supervisors

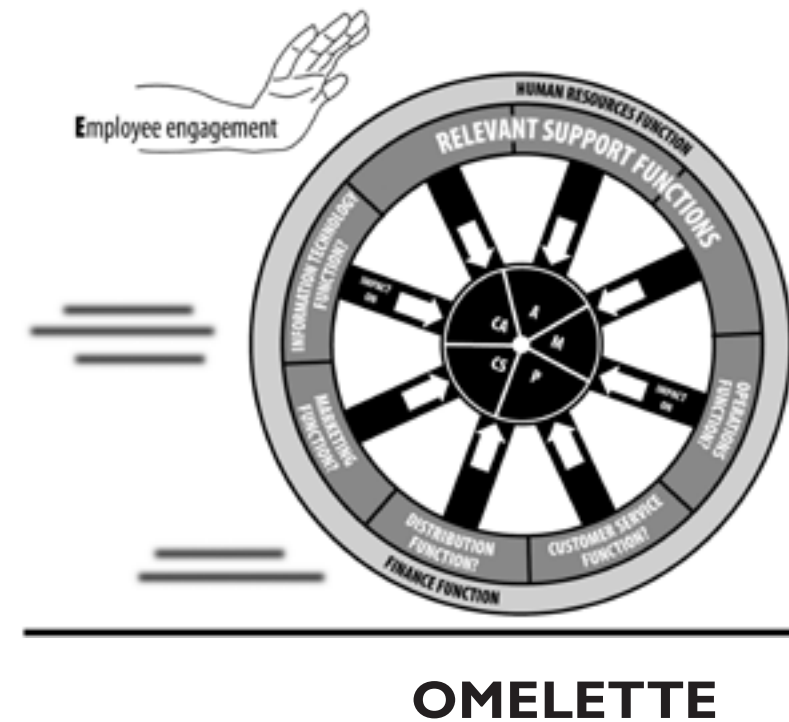
left for more traditional workplaces they would feel comfortable in. Absenteeism and staff turnover reduced to almost zero. Employee engagement rocketed. The final word from Weisbord. “Without any training, without any official team building, without any social technology except flip charts, we had gotten remarkable results.”

This Section on **Teams and Teamwork** completes the fourth component of the **OMELETTE** factors. So far the progression has been as follows. When we plan, we need to separate “what we are going to do” from “how we are going to do it”. The latter involves looking at the implications of the former on every function within our organisation and drafting up an initial Action Plan to commence implementation. If we have done our planning right, we should have aligned the Support and Enabling Functions to the functional objectives and hence to the overall goal. In the same way as we have aligned the business strategy, we need to align the staff. Organisational Alignment is the basis of effective execution. Next we need to understand and manage the changes that will be necessary to execute the Plan and this requires Leadership at every level of the organisation. Teams, each of which has a clear purpose and performance goal that is aligned with the organisation’s overall purpose and Goal, are the next step – and that brings us to the last **OMELETTE** factor – Employee Engagement

Section 2.5 – Employee Engagement

The following barrier to making it happen is addressed in this Section

Barrier	Page No.
Barrier No. 25 – the general view among employees was that their knowledge, feelings, needs and aspirations were being ignored by senior management	168



2.5 Employee Engagement

Employee Engagement is the fifth and last of the **OMELETTE** factors that influence the quality of execution of an organisation's plans. Its position in last place indicates that it is the most dependent of the five variables. I do not know who coined the term "Employee Engagement" but like so many terms in use today, it is promoted as some great new insight whereas the reality is that ever since human beings formed into groups and followed the dictates of their leaders, they have experienced highs and lows in their emotional attachment to the group to which they belonged. For hundreds of years we have used the word "morale" or the term "esprit de corps" to describe this feeling of collective well-being but now we refer to it as **Employee Engagement**.

Actually, I believe the term to be a misnomer. It should be Employer Engagement because I view it as the responsibility of the employer to engage with its employees rather than vice versa. I love the story of the Harvard Business Professor who asked his students what hospitals did. "They cure the sick" was the response. "No, doctors and nurses do that – the role of the hospital is to provide the environment in which the best doctors and nurses want to work". Now how about a collective exercise to adapt what the Harvard Professor said to your place of work?

Accepting that **Employee Engagement** is a vital ingredient for turning plans into reality, the process for engaging employees is as follows. It begins with a well-conceived strategic plan that reflects the macro and micro environment facing the organisation and takes into account the organisation's strengths and weaknesses. An overall goal to which every employee can relate and which meets the SMART criteria is agreed. The implications of the plan are then considered for every Support Function in conjunction with those that manage them. Finally the implications of the initiatives and changes in the Support Functions on the two Enabling Functions of Human Resources and Finance are determined. Based on this assessment, a judgment on the plan's feasibility can be made. This completes the Wagon Wheel. Only if the plan is deemed to be feasible is an initial Action Plan drawn up.

The first requirement for successful execution is Organisational Alignment. Everyone needs to appreciate where the organisation is now, the destination and the journey and their particular role in getting there. Everyone must appreciate the changes that will be required and the rationale behind them. Management can then begin the task of managing the change process. This involves firstly understanding change and the reality that different people move from the Room of Contentment to the Rooms of Denial and Confusion at different speeds before entering the Room of Renewal. Every effort is made to reduce the forces restraining change – to uncouple the self-closing mechanism to the door of status quo. Leadership is required at all levels of the organisation if the necessary changes are to be accomplished with the minimum of resistance and resentment. The transition to Teams and Teamwork will only happen if the basics of workgroup purpose, goal, structure and process are in place. If any organisation carries off this total procedure successfully, how could the vast majority of employees fail to be engaged?

Barrier 25 – The general view among employees was that their knowledge, feelings, needs and aspirations were being ignored by senior management

Answering the question as to what motivates people at work has occupied the minds of many social scientists and consultants. However, it was the American Frederick Taylor³⁵, born in 1856, who was the first to challenge the then existing philosophy of authoritarianism and employee exploitation that had been dominant since the early days of the Industrial Revolution. By the time Taylor had obtained his engineering degree from the Stevens Institute of Technology in New Jersey at the age of 26, his work experience as a pattern maker and machinist at the Enterprise Hydraulic Works in Philadelphia had already convinced him that coercion – or the exercise of the stick alone – simply did not work. Threatening workers with physical and mental violence merely encouraged a hundred ways of passive resistance and led to a vicious downward spiral. It became Taylor's life's work to reduce the debilitating conflict between workers and management. In 1915, he published his book – *The Principles of Scientific Management* – in which he explained how workers could make much more money and management could cut costs only if they cooperated on goals, work methods and quality. Taylor was the original time and motion engineer, measuring machine and human performance in his relentless search for the "one best way" to accomplish any task. However, whilst Taylor's scientific management methods were rightly regarded as enlightened in comparison with those that they replaced, they relied very heavily on extrinsic motivators such as pay and operated at the bottom two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Maslow, in his book – *A Theory of Motivation* (published in 1943) - identified five levels of need and postulated that it was only after the needs on level 1 were satisfied would that person focus on satisfying those needs on the next level. The five levels are:

1. physiological (food, water, sleep)
2. safety (protection, security, stability)
3. social (affection, friendship, acceptance)
4. ego (prestige, success, self-esteem)
5. self-actualisation (self-fulfilment)

Taylor's focus was on productivity but his experiments showed that productivity was optimised when Level 2 needs were recognised. Good working conditions (at the time, expectations weren't that high), permitted rest periods and work safety were all taken into account by Taylor in contrast to the Dickensian conditions that were associated with the Industrial Revolution.

A few years ago, I undertook an employee survey for a company that employed around 100 staff, of whom about 60 worked on the shop floor. Because of the number of Vietnamese employees, we had the equivalent number of survey forms translated into their native tongue.

It was noticeable that the satisfaction levels among the Vietnamese were significantly higher than those of the white Australians who had either been born here or had been resident here from an early age.

A closer examination of the feedback revealed the reasons for this observation. It was all to do with expectations and where people saw themselves on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

³⁵
1997

For those wishing to learn more about Frederick Taylor, see the "One Best Way" by Robert Kanigel, published by Viking Penguin

For many of the Vietnamese working at this company, their expectations didn't go far past Level 2 whereas those Australians who had enjoyed Levels 1 and 2 for their whole lives were seeking the satisfaction of needs at Levels 3 and 4.

Although Taylor never worked directly in the industry, his methods for improving productivity were embraced by the fledgling automobile industry – in particular by Ford³⁶. With the development of perfect interchangeability of component parts - that obviated the need to file and fit each component at the assembly stage - and the development of the moving assembly line in 1913, the task cycle for the average Ford assembler was reduced from 514 to 1.14 minutes. Productivity increased dramatically and Ford's Model T came to epitomise the concept of a virtuous circle. As productivity increased, the cars became cheaper to build so they were offered for less which stimulated sales that led to increased production and greater economies of scale and lower prices and greater sales and so on. But what of the Ford workers? A 1915 survey at their Highland Park site revealed that most of the 7000 assemblers were either from the farm or recent immigrants. Over 50 different languages were spoken and many could not speak English at all. The gains in productivity were achieved by taking the concept of division of labour to its ultimate extreme. The tasks performed by the assemblers were so simple – attach a wheel or place nuts on bolts – that they could be explained in sign language if necessary and were so repetitive that assemblers became highly proficient in doing them. It might have been stultifyingly boring but it met the first two levels of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. However, such was the nature of the work and the mediocre pay of \$2.38 for a nine hour day that high staff turnover became a very serious problem. Despite a program of bonuses, the establishment of a medical clinic and the provision of playing fields and playgrounds for the families of workers, the issue persisted. Ford's response to the problem was telling. Faced with a choice between tackling the issue of work practices or low wages, Ford opted for the latter and on 5th January, 1914, he announced a new minimum wage of \$5.00 per day and a profit sharing plan. Despite opposition from shareholders and other industrialists who felt that a ruinous precedent was being established, Ford was convinced that retaining more employees would lower production costs and that a happier workforce would result in greater productivity. He was right. Ford doubled their profit from \$30 million in 1914 to \$60 million in 1916 and Ford pronounced that his decision to more than double wages for an eight hour day was “one of the finest cost-cutting moves we ever made”.

Then in the 1920's came Elton Mayo and the Hawthorne Experiments which revealed the significance of human relations in organisational behaviour and how productivity could be enhanced if employers sought to satisfy needs at Levels 3 and 4. Another – and in some ways even more instructive experiment – was that of a painting operation at a toy factory³⁷. In this operation, eight girls sat in a line with a chain of hooks moving in front of them at a predetermined speed into a long horizontal drying oven. The girls' job was to paint a toy and then hang it on a hook before it passed out of reach. Problems were encountered during the training period as the girls learned their roles more slowly than anticipated and hooks were entering the oven without a toy attached to them.

In a general discussion on working conditions, the girls asked if they could be responsible for setting the speed of the hook line. Reluctantly and with considerable misgivings, the engineers agreed to install a three speed control – low, medium and high. The girls themselves decided on the daily pattern. After a week or so of experimentation, the pattern adopted was as follows. Medium speed for the first half hour of the day was followed by two and a half hours

36 “The Machine That Changed The World” by James P Womack, Daniel T Jones & Daniel Roos. Published by Macmillan Publishing Company 1990

37 This story is related in “Money and Motivation” by William Foote Whyte et al, published by Harper & Row 1955

at maximum speed, low speed for half an hour before and after lunch before a period of high speed up to forty-five minutes before knock-off time when the line was slowed to medium. After three weeks the girls' output of painted toys was 30% – 50% above the level projected by the engineers and they were earning more than many skilled workers in other parts of the plant. The inequity in compensation caused growing friction that was only resolved when control of the line was repossessed by the engineers and returned to its original status. Within the month, six of the eight girls quit to be followed by the foreman a few months later. It would be nice to report that management subsequently out-sourced the painting to the girls that resigned but there is no record of what happened to them after they left!

Elton Mayo's work was followed by that of Eric Trist and Fred Emery at the Tavistock Institute in the UK who advanced the theory of Socio/Technical Systems, and Douglas McGregor in his famous work – The Human Side of Enterprise – published in 1960. At the same time, in 1959, Frederick Herzberg published his book – The Motivation to Work – where he introduced the notion of “satisfiers” – that he called “hygiene” factors - and “motivators” and once again, one can see the connection between these two sets of factors and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. According to Herzberg's findings, pay, benefits and working conditions do not motivate. As Henry Ford realised, they only dissatisfy if inadequate. The Motivators are recognition, achievement and responsibility.

Fred Emery, after working with Eric Trist at the Tavistock Institute for many years, returned to his native Australia and took up a post at the Australian National University in Canberra and refined Herzberg's concept of motivators and satisfiers. He came up with a list of twelve factors as follows:

Extrinsic Satisfiers – basic conditions of employment

- Fair & adequate pay
- Job security
- Benefits
- Safety
- Health
- Due Process

Intrinsic Motivators – conditions for high job satisfaction (& engagement)

- Variety & Challenge
- Headroom for decision-making
- Feedback & learning
- Mutual support & respect
- Wholeness & meaning
- Room to grow & develop

The research of Emery and others demonstrated that these two sets of factors both needed to exist if motivation and job satisfaction were to reach high levels. One set could not compensate for the other.

It is interesting to note in passing that the extrinsic satisfiers are what unions have always fought for whereas employers - or the more enlightened of them – have concentrated on the intrinsic motivators to give them a competitive edge

Emery also concluded that the first three intrinsic motivators had to be optimised for the individual. I recall a tour of a major manufacturing plant operated by my first employer where we watched one operative making up flat packs of cardboard boxes all day long. I asked him whether he ever got bored doing this for eight hours a day, five days a week. “Oh, no” was the reply, “I make up different sizes!” That was forty years ago – I wonder if they have anyone doing his job today?

Empowerment is the modern term for “headroom for decision-making”. Some years ago, General Motors – Holden, the GM subsidiary in Australia, generated a lot of publicity by its directive that any worker at its Adelaide plant was to stop the assembly line if a fault needed to be rectified. It represented one small part of Holden’s adoption of the principles of Lean Production with its emphasis on building good quality into the product rather than inspecting poor quality out. Prior to this announcement, stopping the assembly line for anything less than an industrial accident would have been a job threatening action. Contrary to what might have been anticipated, the assembly line continued to flow with very few interruptions. Armed with the knowledge that an operative further down the line might stop it to correct a fault that could be attributed directly to their workmanship, operatives were far more accountable for the quality of their work. It was one thing for a remote inspector to find a fault, quite another when one was shown up by a fellow operator. Rather than just accepting issues of access to the vehicle under construction that might contribute to sub-standard installation of component parts, the operatives now had every reason to “own” the problem and be involved in its solution.

Lean Production has its genesis in an earlier movement Total Quality Control or TQC pioneered by the American Dr W Edwards Deming³⁸. It was Deming who played a major role in the revitalisation of the Japanese manufacturing sector after its devastation in World War 2. Ironically, Deming remained virtually unknown in his homeland until he featured in a television documentary on NBC entitled “If Japan Can Why Can’t We?” It was aired in 1980 by which time Deming was also in his 80th year. Contrary to perhaps popular belief, Statistical Quality Control, used to purge product of defects caused by inconsistency of process, was only one aspect of Deming’s crusade for zero defects production. Not only did he believe that Statistical Quality Control should be in the hands of the operatives (Statistical Operator Control) but that a prerequisite to them taking on this responsibility was a high degree of Employee Involvement – which we now know as **Employee Engagement**. Total Quality Control gradually morphed into Total Quality Management and Deming encapsulated his philosophy in his Fourteen Points. What is highly significant about Deming’s Fourteen Points is that *all* of them relate to the behaviour and attitudes of people. In particular, Point 7 calls for supervisors to lead by acting as coaches and mentors; Point 8 emphasises the need to drive out fear of change and Point 9 demands the break down of barriers between workgroups or departments so that they do not compete with one another but cooperate.

It would be an impossible task to list all the organisations that have embraced the Deming Management Method but I suspect that of all those that have done so, only a small percentage have truly realised the benefits. One organisation that did was Harley-Davidson which staged a Lazarus-like revival in the 1980’s. Although its survival was aided by the US government placing a temporary but punitive import duty on Japanese motorbikes with an engine capacity of 700cc or above, its future prosperity was largely due to its adoption of Deming’s management methods, in particular, his insistence on the involvement of employees in the re-design of the assembly lines and shop floors. Tom Gelb,

38 For a highly readable account of Deming’s work and philosophy, see “The Deming Management Method” by Mary Walton, published by Mercury Books Division of W H Allen & Co Plc 1989

Harley’s senior vice-president of operations reported that “no changes were implemented until the people involved understood and accepted that change.” Like their counterparts on the GM-Holden assembly line, the Harley employees had a substantial stake in the decisions that would affect their company and their future.

Empowerment is particularly beneficial in service industries where many employees have direct contact with external customers. Nordstrom, the US up-market department store became famous for its Employee Handbook. It was a single 125mm X 200mm grey sheet consisting of 75 words as follows:

Welcome to Nordstrom

We’re glad to have you with our company. Our number one goal is to provide outstanding customer service. Set both your personal and professional goals high. We have great confidence in your ability to achieve them.

Nordstrom Rules: Rule No. 1: Use good judgement in all situations. There will be no additional rules.

Please feel free to ask your department manager, store manager, or division general manager any question at any time.

One can imagine that many new employees would be daunted by such a challenging directive because it provides too much headroom for decision-making. Nordstrom may have come to the same realisation as new employees are now provided with this card and a full handbook of other more specific rules and legal regulations. However, as consumers, we all know the frustrations that arise when we get transferred from person to person in our quest to resolve what we thought was a straightforward issue.

At first sight one might feel that no one can receive too much feedback or have too much variety in their jobs. To understand why Emery believed that these two factors needed to be optimised for the individual, one needs to appreciate the role of multi-skilling in Emery’s view of job re-design. Emery saw that multi-skilling was the key to providing the flexibility and innovation required to deal with rapidly changing markets, technologies and consequently jobs and even lifestyles. He recognised, however, that some people have a greater need for supervision (feedback) and a lesser need for job variety than others. In this context, it is worth recounting the experience of Marvin Weisbord as he set up multi-disciplined order-processing teams in the family mail-order business (see Teams & Teamwork). The great majority of the 25 person workforce came to enjoy the job-enrichment and increased variety that multi-skilling gave them. However there was one employee, Sydney, who worked in shipping. He was, according to Weisbord, “a world-class miracle of efficient distribution” but Sydney had no desire whatsoever in becoming an expert at anything else nor was he interested in being actively engaged in work design. In much the same way as the cardboard box maker was content to make up cartons, Sydney was content to pack and despatch orders. When it was pointed out to him that he could not expect to be promoted if he confined his skills and experience to this one operation, he responded by saying that he didn’t want any more responsibility and had already advanced as far as he wanted to. Weisbord thought that he would win him over when Sydney saw what was happening with his fellow workers – but he never did. “Even Sydney the shipper taught me something important: every management theory has its limits; not one of them fits everybody”

In contrast, Emery was of the view that no one can have too much of the second trio of intrinsic motivators. Providing support and treating one's employees with respect is straight from McGregor's Theory Y whilst the need for wholeness and meaning has already been illustrated by Jan Carlzon's parable of the two stone cutters. As for room to grow, I think Emery had his own career much in mind. Born in Narrogin in Southern Western Australia in 1925 as the son of a drover and shearer, Emery left school as Top Pupil of Fremantle Boy's High when aged only fourteen. Studying at night school, Emery received his first degree in science from the University of Western Australia in 1946 and went on to obtain his PhD at Melbourne University in 1953. UNESCO research fellow, pioneer of Socio-Technical Systems, originator of the Search Conference, prolific author and writer, Emery believed passionately that there was a viable alternative to the hierarchical, autocratic, initiative suppressing organisation that had developed in the latter half of the 20th Century.

Of the extrinsic satisfiers that Emery stipulated should be present the one most under attack in the modern world is job security. There is no doubt that the lack of job security is a major demotivator. It used to be that providing one performed, job security was not an issue. Nowadays, even those who do perform are under threat of being made redundant though a restructuring, the introduction of a new IT system, an arbitrary reduction in the head count or as the consequence of a merger or out-sourcing policy or the loss of a major account – none of which have any direct connection to an employee's performance.

Employee Engagement is heavily influenced by the qualities of leadership displayed by one's supervisor or manager. The following insight is based on an article that was posted on my web site under the title of "The Problems of Disengagement"

I have always maintained that as Automation and Information Technology results in fewer people being employed in a particular organisation, the more important the latter become. They are the primary source of competitive advantage. Given their value, one would have thought that every effort would be made to nurture and motivate them by creating a workplace culture that resulted in high job satisfaction and – to use the word of the moment – high levels of engagement.

I don't see this happening and recent studies on this issue have shown that less than 30% of employees are "engaged" with the organisation for which they work.³⁹

I believe that the problem lies with management – senior management.

It is said that people join companies and leave managers. Given the organisation's public persona and the new recruit's understanding of the role that he or she is being asked to play, expectations are high on joining their new employer. Over time they become disillusioned as their efforts are met with increasing levels of indifference. Eventually they leave – either of their own volition or because they are deemed superfluous to requirements.

Geraldine Doogue, the Australian TV presenter, journalist, speaker and author once said that she would believe in equality between the sexes when "there are as many incompetent women in positions of authority as there are incompetent men". And there are a lot of incompetent men.

³⁹ One of the best known polls was that conducted by the Gallup Organisation and published in the Gallup Management Journal in their October 2006 edition. Based on phone interviews with a representative sample of US workers aged 18 or above, their research showed that 29% of respondents were 'engaged', 56% were "not engaged" and 17% were "actively dis-engaged".

My theory is that incompetent people promote incompetent people because they don't feel threatened by them. If perchance, a competent one or two slip through the screen, eventually they either leave of their own accord or are destined to fall victims of restructures and the like.

I am a believer in the Peter Principle that Dr Laurence Peter formulated in his book⁴⁰ of the same name. "In a hierarchy, every employee tends to rise to his or her level of incompetence." My observation is that incompetence initially manifests itself in the management of people rather than in the management of the business. It reveals itself in an unwillingness to listen to ones subordinates in the belief that to act on any of their recommendations is to show a lack of confidence in one's own judgement – I'm a manager now, it's my job to make decisions. Poor decisions are made as a consequence and our manager, rather than admit that mistakes have been made and seek to re-engage with his or her subordinates, becomes more isolated and defensive. Before long, the subordinates, specifically the competent ones, are seen as threats to our manager's position and authority.

Some time back, a personal friend of ours introduced me to an impressive manager.

Our friend worked for him and suggested that I met with him as she thought that he might be interested in using **Towards Ten Thousand** – our Workgroup Performance Accelerator. Highly qualified, he spoke at international conferences but above all, he was well respected by his staff. In short, he was a leader. Then a few weeks later, he was told that he had been made redundant. No reason was given. He suspects that his boss had taken a dislike to him. Why? Because he was a lot more competent than his boss.

David Olgilvy, founder of the advertising agency bearing his name, used to give every newly promoted office manager a Russian matryoshka doll. Inside the smallest one, the manager would find the following message. "If each of us hires people who are smaller than we are, we shall become a company of dwarfs. But if each of us hires people who are bigger than we are, we shall become a company of giants".

It takes courage and leadership to hire people who are bigger than we are.

So many studies have been conducted on the issue of what motivates employees and the results are by no means consistent. I believe the apparent inconsistency is due to the context of the employee's workplace. Generally speaking, employees at Google⁴¹ will attach greater significance to Emery's motivators because they take the satisfiers for granted. Google sees that its ability to engage its employees is crucial to its success because high levels of engagement "inspire greater discretionary effort". In Google's case, the Company has institutionalised "discretionary effort". Taking the precedent established at 3M and at Stanford University where the two founders of Google, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, first started their research on Internet search engines, Google engineers are expected to spend one day a week or 20% of their time working on ideas and concepts that interest them. It's this "discretionary effort" – the pursuit of ideas, the solving of problems at the employee's own initiative that Google hopes will maintain its competitive edge in innovation. It is also, incidentally, an extreme example of "head-room for decision-making". In contrast, employees who have highly repetitive jobs in a factory environment for example may place greater emphasis on good wages and a safe work environment. However, it is unlikely that provision of these two satisfiers

⁴⁰ "The Peter Principle – why things always go wrong" by Dr Lawrence Peter & Raymond Hull, published by William Morrow 1969

⁴¹ "The Google Story" by David Vise & Mark Malseed, published by Random House Inc.2008

will result in “greater discretionary effort”. It is tempting, therefore, for employers of the latter to assume that a) they should focus on the satisfiers and b) that there is little to be gained by the employer for encouraging “greater discretionary effort” from their employees.

When my company conducts Customer Feedback Surveys, one of the phrases used by customers to describe suppliers whose performance is exemplary is that they are “low maintenance suppliers”. I am sure that this is a phrase that many employers would like to use of their employees – they are “low maintenance”. They start and finish work on time, they don’t complain, they just get on and do their jobs. They are paid the award rate, receive the required benefits – the employer abides by the OHS regulations, and policies and procedures have been formulated and form part of the Employee’s Handbook. As for job security, it does make the job of retrenching them a little less disturbing if they are not on familiar terms with their supervisors and managers. This sort of thinking is reflected in the study made by K A Kovach⁴² entitled “What motivates employees? Workers and Supervisors give different answers.” In the study, supervisors were asked to rate 10 factors in the order in which they believed they motivated their employees. Their employees were then asked to rank the same factors. The two sets of results were as follows:

Factors	How supervisors ranked what they thought motivated their workers	How workers ranked what they considered motivated them
Good wages	1	5
Job security	2	4
Possibility for promotion	3	7
Good working conditions	4	9
Interesting work	5	6
Loyalty of management to workers	6	8
Tactful discipline	7	10
Appreciation for good work	8	1
Help with personal problems	9	3
Feeling “in” on things	10	2

From the above, one can discern three groupings – those factors where the supervisors and workers approximately agreed on the rankings; those that the supervisors rated much higher than the workers and, lastly, those that the workers rated more highly than the supervisors.

Both parties were in approximate agreement in their ranking of job security, interesting work and loyalty of management to workers. Note how job security was ranked highly by both supervisors (2) and workers (4). This study was in 1987. Is job security greater or less today? I’m sure it’s the latter.

⁴² Kovach K A – “What motivates employees? Workers and Supervisors give different answers”, published in Business Horizons, Volume 30 No.5 September/October 1987

The second group that the supervisors ranked higher than the workers comprises good wages (1 v 5), possibility for promotion (3 v 7), good working conditions (4 v 9) and tactful discipline (7 v 10).

The key motivators from the worker’s perspective were appreciation for good work (1 v 8), feeling “in” on things (2 v 10) and help with personal problems (3 v 9). Now workers who want to be appreciated for good work, to be kept in the picture on the organisation’s current performance and future plans and feel sufficient trust and confidence in their supervisors to approach them for help with personal problems are not “low maintenance employees”. So from management’s perspective, is it worth the investment in time and resources to engage employees on their terms, particularly when job security cannot be guaranteed – especially if management is not convinced that the value of “greater discretionary effort” will offer an acceptable return.

On the issue of “showing appreciation for good work”, I remember having dinner with my General Manager. I was rather taken aback when he proclaimed that he knew better than anyone whether he had done some good work and therefore had no need of third party acknowledgement. Neither did he practice MBWA. I think he would have been surprised by the standing in which he was held by the great majority of his staff.

The problem is that it is hard to put a value on “greater discretionary effort”. I was recently talking with a long term staff member at a hospital and she was contrasting the present day culture with that of fifteen years ago. “Our lunchbreaks are, of course, staggered so there is always staff on the ward. In the old days, we would always tell the other nursing staff when we were going to lunch and we would tell our patients too. So if any one of my patients, for example, needed to use the buzzer, my fellow nurses knew that I wasn’t there and the patient would be expecting someone other than myself to come to their aid. Not only was this good teamwork which kept the morale of the nursing staff high but the patients sensed this feeling of camaraderie and it rubbed off on their well-being too. When I was administering to another nurse’s patient, I always wanted to provide the very best care and comfort because I knew that the other nurses would do that for my patients if I was taking a break. Nowadays, the younger nurses simply knock off when their lunchbreaks are due. They are under so much pressure – they have more patients, there is more paper work – there are too many part-timers – it’s hard enough to do what you have to do, let alone do a little extra.”

How do you put a value on “greater discretionary effort” that results from an employee’s emotional connection to the organisation that employs them?

The final irony in the case of this nursing anecdote is that one of the hospital’s key performance indicators is patient throughput. However, there is a substantial body of evidence to suggest that the healing process is as much emotional as physical and hence the patient’s recovery time may be compromised by the work environment created in the name of efficiency.

My conclusion is that there are three, rather than two, sets of factors that need to be present to create the work environment that results in the great majority of employees being engaged. Firstly, there are the satisfiers that Emery specifies or the hygiene factors that Herzberg wrote about. Their presence does not motivate but their absence de-motivates. And the key one is job security. Rather than list all the motivators together, my proposal is that they should be divided into two – environmental motivators and personal motivators. Thus the final listing is arranged as follows:

Satisfiers	Environmental motivators	Personal motivators
Job security	Clear goals & objectives	Appreciation for good work
Fair & adequate pay	Clear strategies for achieving them	Variety & challenge – interesting work
Benefits	Feeling “in” on things – wholeness & meaning	Opportunity for learning & growing
Safety	Good working conditions	Mutual support & respect
Health	A sense of community – teams & teamwork	Headroom for decision-making
Due process	Knowledge, experience & opinions valued at all levels of the organisation	Good leadership at supervisor/manager level
	Good leadership at the top	Possibility for promotion
	Performance culture	Good Micro-communication
	Good Macro-communication	

When one considers the above listing, it is perhaps not surprising that so few organisations can claim a majority of engaged employees.

Does it matter?

According to the **Employee Engagement** poll, carried out by the Gallup Organisation and referred to earlier, it does. Gallup identified three types of employees.

Engaged – employees work with passion and feel a profound connection to the company. They drive innovation and move the company forward

Not – engaged – employees are essentially “checked-out”. They’re sleepwalking through their workday, putting time – but not energy and passion – into their work

Actively disengaged – employees aren’t just unhappy at work; they’re busy acting out their unhappiness. Every day, these workers undermine what their engaged co-workers accomplish

Gallup found that 71% of workers were either not engaged (56%) or actively disengaged (15%) with just 29% being in the engaged category. When asked whether their current job “brings out (their) most creative ideas”, 59% of the engaged employees agreed with this statement versus 3% of the actively disengaged group. Likewise with customer service. 89% of engaged employees agreed that “at work, I know where to go with an idea to improve customer service” compared with only 16% of actively disengaged employees. Gallup’s research also confirmed the connection between employee engagement and customer engagement. Engaged employees demonstrated a greater willingness to change or to “learn and grow”. In response to the statement “I have grown in my ability to positively affect our customers”, 85% of engaged employees strongly agreed with this statement compared to only 19% of actively disengaged. The research by Gallup and others supports what our intuition tells us that engaged employees play a vital role in turning plans into reality.

The overall conclusion from the foregoing is that a) **Employee Engagement** is the responsibility of employers, not employees and b) that the benefits that accrue from an engaged workforce are well worth the effort required to engage them. The point is best summarised by the motivational speaker who asked his senior management audience: “How many people here have dead wood in their organisation?” When three quarters of those present put their hands up, he asked another question: “Did you hire them that way or did you make them that way?” Tom Peters put it another way. “The average person who works at the front line of your organisation is talented, loyal, thoughtful, caring, dynamic, energetic, and creative – except for the 8 hours a day they work for you”. As consumers, clients, passengers, patients, our perceptions of organisations, large and small, are formed by the tiny percentage of employees that we come into contact with. Jan Carlzon, the former head of Scandinavian Airlines Systems (SAS) called his book “Moments of Truth” and explained the term as follows:

“Last year, each of our 10 million customers came into contact with approximately five SAS employees, and this contact lasted an average of 15 seconds each time. Thus SAS is “created” 50 million times a year, 15 seconds at a time. These 50 million “moments of truth” are the moments that ultimately determine whether SAS will succeed or fail as a company. They are the moments when we must prove to our customers that SAS is their best alternative.”

Reflecting Emery’s motivational factor – “headroom for decision-making” Carlzon went on to say that “an individual without information cannot take responsibility: an individual who is given information cannot help but take responsibility.”

Employee Engagement completes the **OMELETTE** of key implementation factors that gets our Wagon Wheel rolling. There is one further factor to consider – Communication. Effective Communication is the Central Nervous System of any organisation. If it is damaged, paralysis is the result. In my experience, employees complain more about poor communication than any other factor – communication at both a macro and micro level. In the Wagon Wheel model, Communication is the lubrication that keeps the wheel spinning on its axle.

Communication is the good oil.