Rethinking leadership

becoming custodians of a shared-leadership culture

— **Bob Dick**

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I am going to propose that ...

... it's time to rethink what we mean by "leadership"

I read widely. Some of that literature is about communities and organisations and their effectiveness and improvement. In much of that literature, leadership is referred to from time to time. It is almost always assumed to be individualistic. Leadership is invested in an individual.

In other words, in many literatures, leadership is something that "a leader" does. A leader is a person who influences or persuades or guides others to act in certain ways. Good leaders are influential.

That's true of some of the actual leadership literature too. A lot of it is about how to be a better leader — leader as hero.

A growing counter-current depicts leadership as something different. Much of this literature is still about what *individuals* do. However, these individuals engage others more as peers. Some of the literature describes them as "post-heroic" — more a colleague than a superhero.

A further, minor, strand views leadership as collective. Joe Raelin, for example, writes about "leaderful" organisations — everyone a leader. [1*]

That's one of my interests, too. I'm especially interested in how we can get there from where we are. I don't believe we can go there directly from here. We may have to do it a bit at a time, via leader as colleague.

That's the topic of this document.

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* Notes beginning on page 48 provide more detail, and references to the literature

My starting point? People can achieve more when they work together to coordinate their effort and expertise. In other words ...

... *coordination* is a key imperative for teams ...

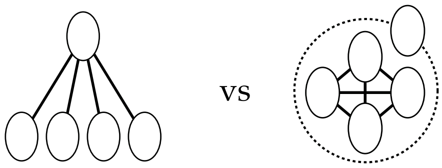
... and for organisations — perhaps *the* key imperative.

There are two *main* ways of achieving coordination.

You can glimpse the nature of the two ways from some of the labels that have been applied to them:

mechanistic	vs	organic
unilateral control	vs	mutual learning
redundancy of parts (cogs in the machine)	vs	redundancy of function (multi-skilled teams)

Within a work team, diagrammatically the difference may be something like this:



Take a moment to think about why we have teams and organisations. What can teams and organisations achieve that unteamed and unorganised people can not?

It seems to me that some tasks and some purposes are too large for individuals. One person does not have the range of skills or the amount of effort to succeed.

That's why I say, above, that

... coordination is a key imperative ...

To be truly effective,

I think that there are many things that teams and organisations can do. For most, one of them is to be *effective at coordinating effort and expertise*.

Of these two ways of coordinating one has begun to work less well

Join me as we explore the way forward — the obstacles, and the way past them

If you join me in this endeavour here are some of the features of the journey we are about to undertake ...

- To provide an important context I consider the long history of our species. This helps to explain why we can expect parts of the journey to be difficult. It also offers us some cause for optimism.
- At the level of a whole organisation, I compare the present state of traditional structures to a shared-leadership alternative. I also conduct the same comparison at the level of an intact work team.
- I offer some reasons why there seem to be so few examples of organisations with genuine shared leadership. I draw on some principles and processes from action science and cognitive science to do so.
- The journey to shared leadership, though rarely travelled, is very often dramatically successful when it is undertaken. The rarity arises partly from a lack of understanding. I present some concepts and models to deepen understanding of the issues. I offer some suggestions about a way forward.
- Practical processes are then described, some in detail. They show some ways in which the concepts and models can be translated into action.

I'm not claiming this is new. I do think it is still rare in practice.

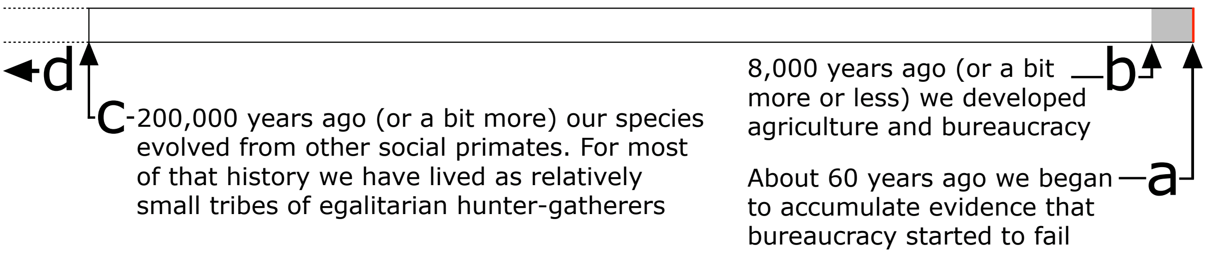
A lot of material, both research and experience, is relevant to our journey. I didn't want it to impair ease of travel. I've therefore parked the heavier material near the end of our journey, in copious endnotes and suggestions for further reading.

If you join me on the journey, I have a suggestion. Bring with you *your* recollection of some of the best and worst teams and organisations that you've experienced. Use them as case studies to evaluate and critique the ideas and processes that I offer. Why not take a minute to do that now.

There's a lot of white space in the document. It's deliberate. Please regard it as thinking time for yourself. I've purposefully written a page at a time. You could read it like that too. You could read a page, and — before moving on — take just a minute or two to pause and reflect. You might ask yourself "How can I use this?"

Contents

The long history of our species

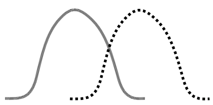


Let's work back from the present ...

a

The present liminal ("in between") period

Our organisational and team structures are suited to stable conditions. They deal less well with the current turbulence and uncertainty. It's not entirely clear what will emerge as their replacement(s).



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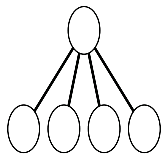
The age of hierarchy and regimentation

Regimentation allowed one person to control several. Hierarchy further amplified that effect. We were able to create social systems larger than the small tribes that were our earlier structures.



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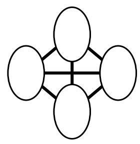
The age of small-tribe collaboration

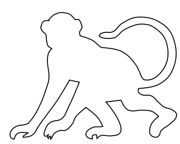
For most of the history our ancestors lived in small tribes. They survived by *collaborating* in hunting and gathering, child-rearing and war. Their individual efforts were devoted to their *collective* well-being.



d

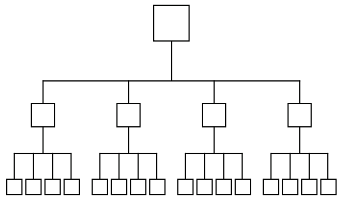
Our social primate pre-history

Survival — and therefore leaving descendants — depended on a quick and appropriate response to threat of fight or flight. The threat might come from other members of the same species, or other species.



We carry with us, still, the results of *each* of those historical phases

Currently we are lost in the liminal space between two cultures



I sometimes ask people about their abstract mental images of "organisation". Many of them have in mind something like a conventional organisation chart. (I would guess that *you* could probably expand that chart, from your own experience.)

Many people have also experienced organisations, especially large organisations, that are clumsy and slow. Bureaucracy has become a term of criticism or derision. There was a time when it was merely a description of how organisations could be structured. For some, it was *the logical and best* way to structure an organisation.

Most people have imprecise ideas about alternatives. Some of you may have had the good fortune to work in a happy, well-functioning team. That will have given you a sense of what an alternative might be like. Some have been fortunate to have a good boss. That, too, will colour your images of possible futures.

In general, though, the future is unclear. That's how it is in liminal periods.

And that's a dilemma. Our minds are still crammed with many stereotypes and images from our 8000 years or so of bureaucracy. Many of us believe there is a need for something different. We don't yet understand, sufficiently, what it might be.

As well, many of our images and assumptions are unconscious. We're often not aware of the extent of their influence on our beliefs and — importantly — our actions. We can't easily escape our history, or the history of the organisations and social systems we've experienced. Our perceptions are filtered through them.

Chris Argyris has some relevant ideas about this. We can use his ideas to

explore the dilemma more closely and suggest a way forward

We can use ideas from Chris Argyris and others to

learn how, more often, to practise what we preach

Much of Argyris's research and intervention were directed to answering a puzzling question — *Why do so many attempts to improve a situation or relationship instead actually make it worse?* His research suggested that, more often than we realise, what we practise is not what we preach, to *ourselves* as well as to others.

We espouse, to others and *especially to ourselves*, the virtues of honesty, collaboration and fairness. We believe that's how we act. Faced with threat or embarrassment, instead we act differently. We control the situation. We secure benefit for ourselves.

Argyris claimed this as a near-universal truth.

You may be sceptical. If so, that's reasonable. Initially, so was Argyris. His results seemed so unlikely that at first he mistrusted them. Eventually, however, the sheer weight of evidence led him to conclude: [2]

> *"Although we say we value openness, honesty, integrity, respect and caring, we act in ways that undercut these values—not just once in a while, on very rare occasions, but regularly and routinely—whenever we face threatening or otherwise difficult situations."*

Still sceptical? That's OK. Perhaps you are a rare exception. How could you check?

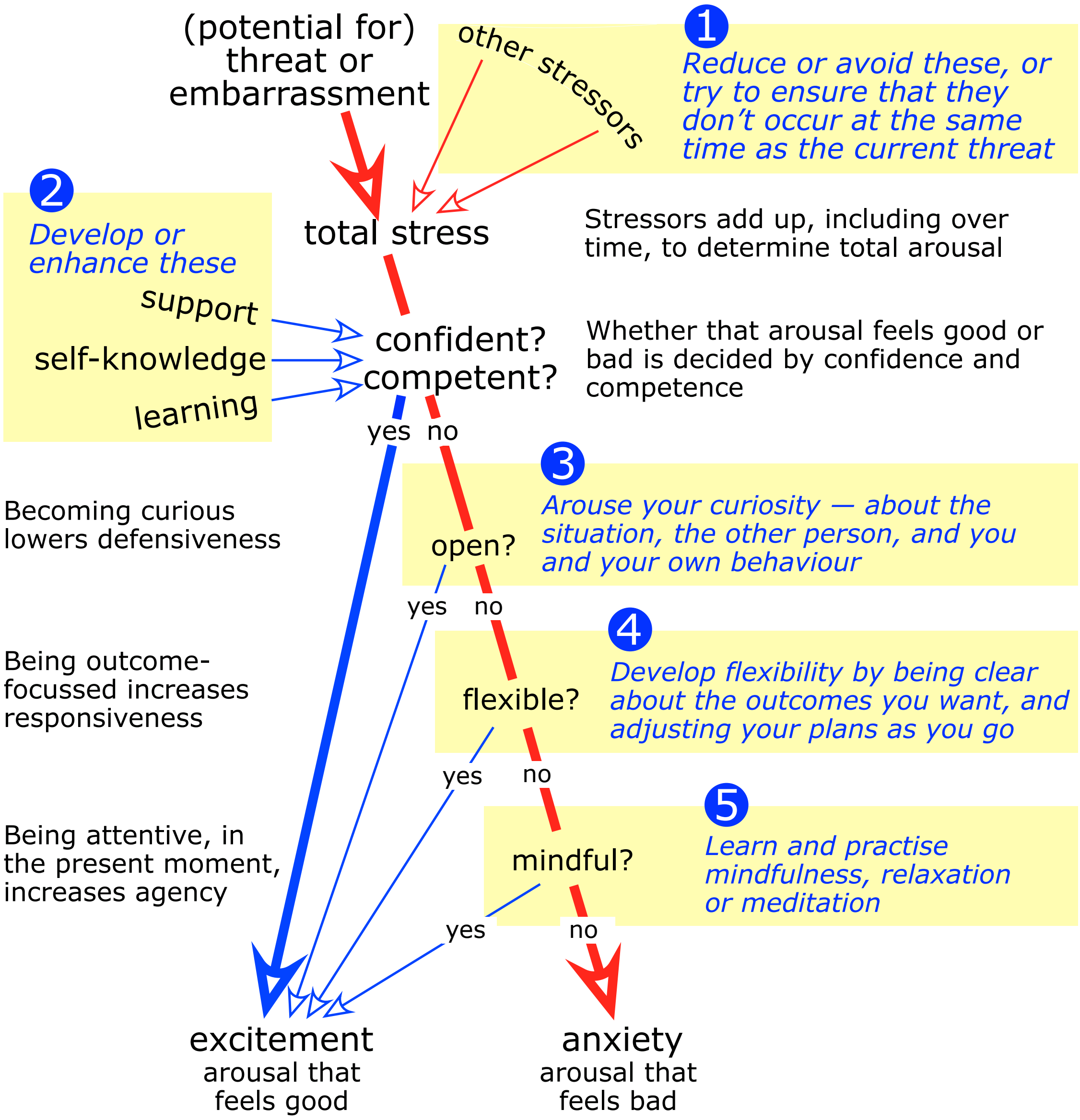
After some exploration I decided that Argyris was correct. I do have self-protective behaviours that are well practised. Partly, they are driven by inbuilt habits inherited from forebears going well back beyond my primate inheritance. Partly, they are skills I began to develop in my earliest years. I've been using them for so long that I am aware of them only when I pay deliberate attention. Often, not even then.

If I wish to change something I have to start with myself. Fortunately, I can.

Change begins with me, and you if you wish

I can learn to take control of my reactions to threat

Suppose I (or you) wish to respond more thoughtfully to the stress of threat or embarrassment. Here in overview are five strategies I can decide to use:



Take your time. It doesn't have to be all at once. It can be step by step

(more detail below ↓)

5 strategies for learning to respond to threat or embarrassment

Here is a little more detail about the five strategies on the previous page.

1 **Timing.** (a) Many issues become more entrenched and more difficult as they develop. We can learn to recognise the early symptoms that an issue is developing. We can intervene earlier. (b) We can choose times to confront an issue when we and other people are under less pressure from other issues.

2 **Performance.** Good performance is more likely when we have relevant competence, and the confidence to use it. (a) Supportive colleagues can add their competence, and build our confidence. (b) Self-knowledge allows us to work from our strengths rather than try to be what we are not. (c) Learning can contribute — both past learning from previous experience, and learning in the moment from the present experience.

3 **Curiosity.** A helpful mindset is one characterised by intense curiosity — about the situation, ourselves, and other people. It is then natural to pay close attention to what is happening. We are less likely to respond defensively.

4 **Flexibility.** We can pay attention to likely outcomes more than to plans. This increases our choice and flexibility. If the outcomes are shared (and preferably negotiated) with other players, they may be more easily achieved.

5 **Conscious control.** Responding automatically to threat usually results in fight or flight. Responding consciously offers more choice. To do so, we can deliberately pause, take control of our breathing, and *notice* what is happening. Over time we can become better at this by learning and regularly practising such techniques as relaxation, mindfulness, compassion or meditation.

At any level of an organisation or community, you may be a team leader. These may then be the qualities that you would like your team to develop

They may not be common qualities in your organisational context

Our structures have allowed us to build civilisations

As we shall see, for most of our species' 200,000-year (or longer) history, we were a small-tribe species. We lived in small hunter-gatherer bands. We spent much of our time within clans and villages that seldom exceeded about 150 people.

Then, somewhere between 6,000 and 10,000 years ago, two inventions changed the social fabric. Hierarchy and regimentation developed. My guess is that they developed very gradually. I suspect they coevolved with agriculture. Since then, their success enabled them to become almost universal. This was not just in organisations. It was also in many families and even some informal social groups.

Regimentation allowed one person to control many. I did compulsory National Service Training in the Australian army in 1954. On the parade ground the Regimental Sergeant Major could control the behaviour of the entire regiment of about 1200 soldiers — if we all did exactly the same thing at the same time.

Regimentation and hierarchy allow the creation of organisations larger than 150.

Regimentation also allows **specialisation**. I was in 14 Platoon, Artillery Signals, within D Company, Artillery. In 14 Platoon my 29 colleagues were all apprentice electricians (as I was) or trainee telecom technicians.

When different units had to do different things, control devolved — to companies of about 200, then to platoons of about 30, and then to sections of about 10.

Hierarchy allowed the behaviour of different units to be *coordinated*. When the entire regiment was on manoeuvres, commands originated at *regiment* level. They were then transmitted to the different levels of the hierarchy. Different units were able to do different activities. Those activities were devised centrally to contribute to some collective endeavour. In other words, *coordination* was *centrally planned*.

Within the platoon, the platoon sergeant or lieutenant were responsible for *enacted* coordination. The rest of us did what we were told ... or we were punished.

In hierarchies, *leaders coordinate subordinates' behaviour by controlling it*

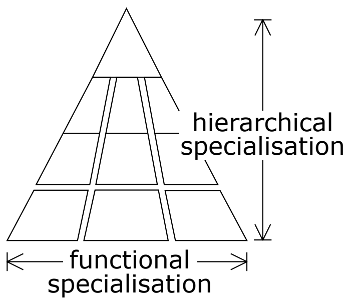
Massive organisations can succeed at massive tasks

Organisations coordinate the effort and expertise of large numbers of people, many of them with specialised expertise. That allows enormous and complex tasks to be undertaken. It's worth exploring in some detail how organisations are able to do so.

It's also worth exploring the more traditional forms of bureaucracy. These days they are often much modified. The traditional form, however, has been around long enough that it has coloured our language and our assumptions about organisations.

As mentioned, "bureaucracy" wasn't always a term of disapproval. For Max Weber (1864-1920) it was the rational way to achieve efficiency. Organisations were to be controlled by rules and procedures that everyone would observe, eliminating bias. [3]

Traditional bureaucracies were characterised by two forms of specialisation — functional and hierarchical. Staff were grouped with others with similar responsibilities and expertise. Managers and workers differed in their responsibilities. Managers • forecast the work, • planned it, and • organised, • commanded and • controlled it. [4]



That is, *managers* coordinated what workers did by *instructing* workers what to do. Workers followed the instructions. Most communication was vertical. It consisted of rules, procedures and instructions downward and reports upward.

Within a work team the team leader coordinated the work. Between work teams, coordination was done at managerial levels of the hierarchy.

Traditional bureaucracies have been immensely successful. They helped us build much of our civilisation. They influence many of our habitual behaviours and assumptions. They have overlaid, *but not erased*, our earlier inheritance ...

... Let's examine that extensive pre-bureaucratic history

For much of our existence as *homo sapiens* — as humans —

we lived in collaborative and egalitarian small tribes

Piecing together evidence from many different sources, researchers have arrived at some likely conclusions about the nature of earlier *homo sapiens*. [5]

We were a tribal species of hunter-gatherers:

- Our species came into existence about 200,000 years ago, or possibly sooner
- For much of that time we lived in small bands of hunters and gatherers
- Those bands were organised into clans or villages seldom larger than about 150. [6]

The tribes, and their smaller components, were egalitarian:

- The bands and tribes were egalitarian, working together, sharing resources
- Unlike all or most other primates the sharing often extended beyond kinship groups.

The tribes managed personal dominance for collective benefit:

- Dominant tribal members (often dominant males) devoted their skills and efforts towards tribal, not selfish, goals
- Dominant tribal members who breached these expectations were punished. In extreme cases they were exiled or executed by tribal decision.

That is a very different existence to the hierarchical and regimented social systems that replaced it about 8,000 years ago.

However, there is evidence that

we still have these personal qualities of cooperation

We are still capable of egalitarian sharing and caring

We haven't lost the egalitarian sharing and caring of hunter-gatherer tribes. It is overlaid by the beliefs and habits of bureaucracy. But it exists. We can re-activate it.

There has been a longstanding debate about the relative influence on human actions of nature (our genetic inheritance) and nurture (our upbringing and learning). In the 1980s it was widely believed that nurture was by far the most important.

Since then, genetic and other research has demonstrated that both nature and nurture are important. Genetics does matter. We still carry with us the inherited results of our species' history within cooperative and egalitarian social systems.

Multiple lines of evidence, [7] most based on extensive research, support the conclusion above:

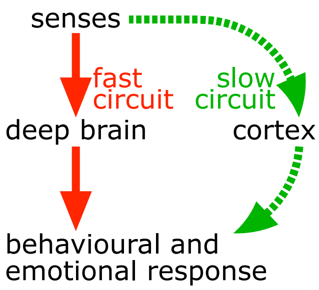
- By the age of two, young children exhibit caring, sharing and helping behaviours.
- Common pool resources ("the commons") such as forests and fishing groups are at risk of exploitation by users who act for themselves rather than for the common good. However, there are multiple exceptions where users have collaborated to manage such resources sustainably and for shared benefit.
- The characteristics of early hunter-gatherer tribes noted above have also been found in currently existing hunter-gatherer tribes. This includes their egalitarian social dynamics, and their control of dominant members.
- The same features are evident in Peter Munch's accounts of the behaviour of the Tristan da Cunha islanders. Tristan da Cunha is an isolated, anarchic society. It isn't a surviving hunter-gatherer society, however. Early settlers *adopted* the island's customs voluntarily. Later arrivals accommodated to that culture. [8]

(Later, we explore ways of activating these attitudes and behaviours within teams.)

We also still carry the genetic inheritance from even earlier species

Our more primitive genetic inheritance is powerful and present

Two abilities are strongly selected because of the nature of evolution — • to *survive* and • to *have offspring*. That is how evolution functions. Creatures can have offspring only while they survive. Those that *do* have offspring bequeath the reasons for their survivability. When survival is threatened, we respond.



In deep parts of *our* brains these responses still exist. [9] In the interests of our survival the deep brain reacts very quickly. It takes over whenever our survival is threatened.

This happens without involvement of our conscious mind. We often react to a threat before we become consciously aware of it, let alone consciously process its significance.

This is the "fight, flight or freeze" response. Whichever is chosen — fight, flight or freezing — depends on a judgment by the deep brain. It chooses the response that offers us the best chances for survival.

These fight-flight-or-freeze responses formed in a much earlier world. They developed within very different species. They still reflect that world, and the threats faced by those species. Since then the world has changed.

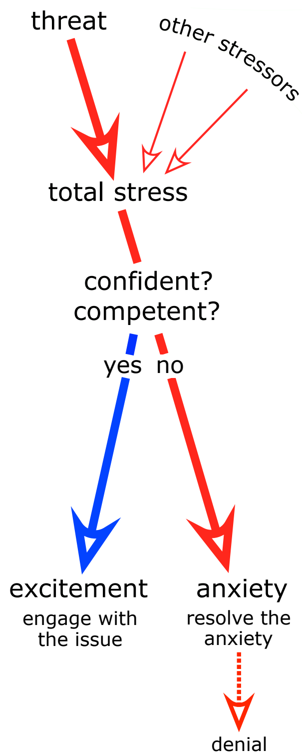
The deep brain reacts almost instantly. It doesn't analyse in depth. It doesn't wait for our approval. It responds, urgently. We can therefore expect that the responses are not always appropriate for many of the situations that we face today.

Appropriate or not,

when it is our ego that is threatened we react similarly

Dealing well with ego threats and embarrassment is difficult

Assume our deep brain has sensed some threat or potential threat to us. It has taken control and responded. By the time we become consciously aware of what is happening we may have already reacted. What then?



Let's integrate some of the earlier material in this document.

With *awareness* we have a choice about how we deal with our initial reaction and its consequences. We can proceed as most people do. You will recall that Chris Argyris discovered most people maintain their defensiveness. Faced with threat we act to protect our ego. To his surprise he found that we are not fully aware that we are doing so.

Our unconscious mind protects us from awareness. Rather than admit that our behaviour is self-protective, we *rationalise* it. We find a way of denying those parts of it that reflect badly on our view of ourselves.

From our early years this behaviour can be triggered by the protective and almost instantaneous response of the deep brain. Eventually the behaviour becomes habitual and overlearned. Many of our self-protective behaviours have been practised from our earliest childhood. Being highly practised, they are now automatic. They are triggered and acted out without our conscious awareness.

Once survival is assured our deep brain involvement is no longer required.

Our normal decision making can then take control

Some thinking is fast and effortless. Some takes time and effort

I invite you to join me in a miniature experiment. Pause, close your eyes, and relax. Notice what you can *hear*. ... Unless you are in very quiet surroundings there may be voices. If you are indoors perhaps you can hear a fan or air conditioner. Are there perhaps footsteps, or papers rustling, or keyboards being tapped. ...

How does that work? Sounds are just vibrations in the air, yet you "heard" *events* or *people acting* or *objects moving or functioning*. Some part of your brain made sense of the sound vibrations and informed you what they were. How much of your effort did it take? Almost none, I would guess. It just happened.

Now try this — count back silently from 96, by 7s: "96, 89, ..." Did that take more or less effort. More, I assume.

Yet, of the two tasks, which do you think is really more complex and challenging?

Dan Kahneman [10] explains that we have two different thinking systems. (This is in addition to the threat response explored on the previous page.) "Slow thinking" in his terminology is slow and effortful and *limited in capacity*. However, we are aware of it, and we can control it. We can think of it as our conscious mind.

He calls the other system "fast thinking". As in the listening experiment above it takes in information from our senses and our recollections. It attributes meaning to the overall collection of information. It's not as fast as our deep brain response to threat. However, it delivers the end result, often rapidly, usually confidently, and seemingly without effort.

Our fast thinking system favours speed and efficiency more than accuracy. For our wellbeing it is better to react to a risk that isn't there than to ignore a risk that is. Our fast thinking system uses "heuristics" — short cuts — to allow very quick judgment. Its judgments *feel right* to us, and sometimes they are. *And sometimes they are wrong*.

Each of the two systems has shortcomings. However,

used skilfully, they complement each other

The two decision-making systems can be used in tandem

> For her PhD, Jenny Rudolph [11] used a very sophisticated life-size plastic "patient" in a simulated operating theatre. Her study confronted anaesthetists with an ambiguous problem. A real patient's life would be at risk. Diagnosis and remedial action would be urgently needed.
>
> Jenny's interest was in 'diagnostic fixation'. She hypothesised that anaesthetists who fixated on an initial diagnosis would do poorly. She thought those who postponed their diagnosis and collected more information would do better. To some extent they did. However, in most instances the "patient" would still have died.
>
> The anaesthetists who were most successful used a third strategy. They *did* form an *early* diagnosis. However, they didn't trust their diagnosis fully. They set out to challenge it. They looked for, and noticed, any evidence that it wasn't correct.

There have been other studies [12] of people with considerable experience making urgent decisions under conditions of high risk. As with Jenny Rudolph's PhD research, above, they make immediate judgments about the situation they face.

It's notable that they *don't consider multiple options*. From their prior experience they accept the first decision that seems to fit the situation. To check its adequacy they imagine the *actions to take* in response. If the actions seem unlikely to succeed they modify their judgment, if possible, or they abandon it and explore a second option.

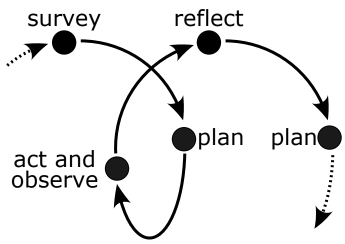
In summary, the fast system makes almost immediate sense of the situation. It does so by drawing on *the tacit knowledge* of past experiences of similar situations. The slow system can then be used to challenge that judgment. It does so by *imagining* how to act on the judgment. Possible reasons for failure are identified. Imagined actions are modified until they seem likely to be effective.

The actions can then be further modified in the light of experience

In some situations, intelligent trial and error works best

Some situations repeat, often and perhaps regularly. We develop some habitual way or responding. If that works, it makes sense to keep on doing it. The habits we develop allow us to respond, easily and with little or no effort.

In other situations our easy response may not work. Perhaps it often did not, yet we persisted. Or perhaps a recurring situation has changed. Or perhaps this is a novel situation. Now is the time to arouse our curiosity and engage in trial and error.



I suspect you do this already. Sometimes you face a new situation and must respond. You survey the situation, to gain an initial understanding. In the light of this you plan an overall approach, and probably a first step. As you take that first step you pay attention to what happens.

You reflect. Did the step work as expected? —yes, you take the next step. If it didn't, you reconsider. You choose a different first step, which you try. And so on ...

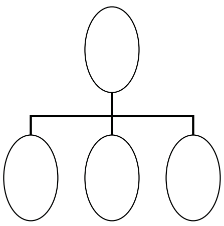
It's very likely, I think, that you use your fast thinking system to gain an initial sense of the situation that you face. It also provides a "hunch", you might say, about your overall approach to the situation and your first step. You're drawing upon your past experience.

In effect, you are *researching* the situation, and also your response. In a novel situation you're probably also alert and attentive, and perhaps curious about what is happening. You use your slow thinking system to guide the research process. Some of the literature would call what you are doing *action research*. [13]

There can be further advantages in involving the whole team

Turning conventional workgroups into collaborative teams

In a conventional workgroup within a conventional bureaucratic structure, the responsibilities are divided between the group leader and the group members:

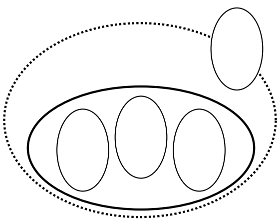


As mentioned previously, the group leader forecasts, plans, organises (that is, allocates), commands and controls the work

The workgroup members are each allocated some part of the action. They carry it out, sometimes under close supervision.

Within this structure, the resources and outcomes are decided elsewhere in the hierarchy. The workgroup leader is responsible for deciding how the workgroup members will convert the allocated resources into the requested outcomes.

In an alternative team-based design, much of what the workgroup leader previously did can become a collective team responsibility. Provided the team is functioning well, the leader's responsibility is to manage relationships with other teams.



The team leader now forecasts future work, and helps the team to develop the skills and understanding to achieve the outcomes

The team collaboratively plans, organises (allocates) and controls the work, and carries it out.

In this approach the team takes over much of what the leader previously did. The leader becomes a "boundary rider" looking after coordination with other teams. [14]

This doesn't happen overnight. In the later pages of this document we'll explore how to bring it about, and how to develop team responsibilities further.

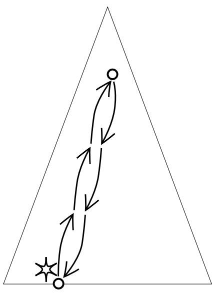
We know how to do this well at team level. We're less confident about

scaling it up to organisational level

Organisations struggle to manage complexity and uncertainty

As mentioned, traditional bureaucratic structures were characterised by hierarchy — coordination by managers, not workers — and regimentation — like grouped with like. As mentioned, this worked so well that it became almost universal. It survived for about 8000 years (and more or less still does). It created much of our civilisation.

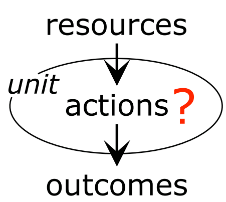
Why did it begin to work less well about half a century ago? That was when evidence began to accumulate about the effects of volatility and uncertainty. [15] Recall how coordination is achieved in traditional bureaucracies. Actions are driven by rules and procedures developed in higher levels of the hierarchy.



If a procedure no longer works, it must be reported to management for revision. The initial report of the faulty procedure travels to management. The revised procedure travels back to where the actions take place. By then, some time has elapsed. Sometimes the situation has again changed by the time the revised procedure has returned. If so, the process must be repeated.

I think of it like this. *When the half-life of a procedure is less than time taken to change it, it is no longer functional*. Procedure-driven actions are then no longer appropriate.

Earlier I mentioned my experience of extreme regimentation on an army parade ground. However, the armed forces have known for at least a couple of centuries that too much regimentation on a *battlefield* leads to defeat. Who decides the *actions*? On a parade ground, senior officers do. On the battlefield, commanders specify *desired outcomes*. In pursuit of the outcomes the actions are decided, often in the moment, by those who carry them out. [16]



We know how to devolve responsibility for action within a small team.

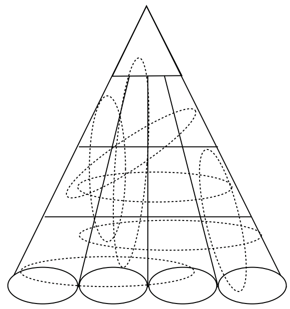
Devolving action within a large organisation is more complex

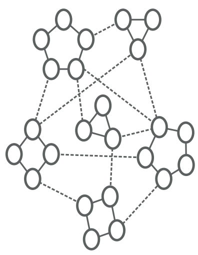
Many of our present organisations are awkward hybrids

There are some organisations where most teams at the workface have become genuine teams. They are given team responsibilities. Elsewhere in the organisation, other teams may function as teams, too, making collective decisions ... at least some of the time.

Genuine teamwork requires a different culture and different leadership. Some organisations understand that. In my experience, though, they are still substantially outnumbered by the many exceptions to this.

Meanwhile, most organisations face an environment that continues to increase in its volatility and speed of change. Coordination across the organisation inevitably has become more difficult. Many organisations respond by dealing with urgent coordination *outside* the hierarchical structure. They thread the organisation with committees, task forces, project teams and the like. Some teams are ongoing. Some are temporary, existing until a need for coordination is met.





Other organisations, fewer in number, have taken a further step. They have abandoned or dramatically reduced the hierarchy. The organisation has become a network of shifting relationships, adjusting to the changing imperatives. [17] This is more common when most of the organisation's work consists of projects — for instance, in software development. [18] And even then, many organisations are hybrids. They consist of semi-autonomous teams functioning within a bureaucratic structure.

Most organisations persist with variations to a conventional hierarchy. Or they continue to struggle with a hybrid that grafts teams onto a hierarchy. This can result in different cultures in different parts of the organisation.

Many team leaders operate at an interface between two cultures

The journey from leader control to team (semi-)autonomy

Does your team face situations that are becoming more uncertain? Is the pace of change increasing? Does the team leader look after coordination within the team by instructing team members *how* to do what they do, and then controlling it closely?

If so, coordination has very probably been growing in complexity and difficulty. It may be worthwhile for the team to set out on the journey towards more team autonomy and responsibility. Initially, the way to do so is to shift the responsibility for *within-team coordination* from team leader to the team.

This won't just happen unless someone starts it. If you're team leader, it's easier for you than for anyone else to invite the team on the journey.

It won't happen overnight, no matter who begins it. There's more to it than redrawing organisation charts or rewriting role descriptions.

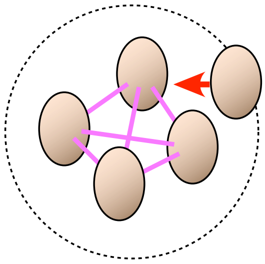
I think of it as taking place in four main stages. (They are described in more detail on following pages):

1	**Begin the journey**	Enlist the collaboration of the members of your team to begin the journey.
2	**Build the team**	Strengthen personal relationships and work relationships within the team and negotiate how you will achieve your outcomes
3	**Link the team**	Strengthen relationships between your team and other stakeholders within the organisation and beyond
4	**Champion the team**	Manage upward and outwards to ensure that the team has the resources and support it needs to perform well.

In a **fifth** ongoing stage you keep an eye on culture, engagement and performance. When necessary you encourage the team to **sustain** what they have created.

You begin by negotiating with the team how this will be done ...

1. Begin the journey collaboratively with the team



In this first step you negotiate the boundaries with your team members.[19] You explain that you wish to offer them more involvement. You intend to do this is such a way that it is good for team members (including you), the organisation, and all the stakeholders (include external ones). See *Freedom within limits*.*

Ideally, this will be more of an exploration than a planned journey. In this step, and especially the later steps, please regard this document as a guide rather than a recipe. It will work best when you and the team tailor it to fit the team purpose, the surrounding organisational environment, and you and your team's preferences.

In what follows I will assume that you're a team leader. You would like to explore ways of helping your team enhance its performance and its enjoyment and satisfaction.

Begin with yourself. I will assume that you have a number of goals:

- improving the teams contribution to the organisation's goal and vision;
- doing so in a way that is good for *all stakeholders* — that is, those people inside and outside the organisation that can be affected in any way by your teams performance and behaviour, or can affect the team and its performance;
- increasing the satisfaction and enjoyment, individually and collectively, of the team members — including yourself; and
- further developing the skills, initiative, engagement and understanding of team members, including yourself.

Describe your intentions to the team. Make it clear this is all negotiable. Knowing all this, how willing are the team members to accompany you on this journey?

With the team's assent, help them and yourself *prepare* for the journey

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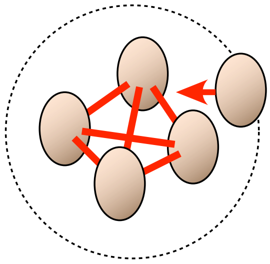
* Conceptual resources begin on page 32, activities on page 40

2. Build purpose and relationships within the team



At this step, as a team, you prepare for the journey ahead. To do so, you clarify the present purpose of the team. To increase enjoyment and performance, you improve the relationships within the team — both personal and work relationships. There's a natural sequence to this:

- First, **enhance personal relationships** [20] because then everything else is easier and more enjoyable.

  Here and elsewhere, modelling of appropriate behaviour by the team leader does much to set the scene and ease the path for others.

  This document includes two activities for relationship building: *Turning points*, and the *Challenge activity*.

  There's a cultural component too. When most interactions within the team are positive, engagement and performance are usually improved. See *Positivity*.

- Then **clarify purpose** because without clarity of purpose you won't know which work relationships are most relevant and most important for effectiveness.

  As team leader, you can again model the behaviour. At all times you can make an effort to be clear and transparent about *your own* motives and purpose. *Freedom within limits* again offers some strategies for team leader behaviours. The same model has implications for team culture. It is relevant to team purpose and to work relationships within the team.

  As a team, you might obtain and explore the organisational vision and mission (both official and actual). A *Search* activity for the team may also be relevant.

- Then **improve work relationships** because relationships alow effort and expertise to be *coordinated* to achieve the purpose and other collective outcomes.

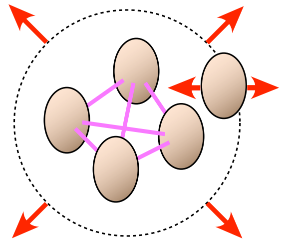
  See the previous entry for clarifying purpose. Also, the activities *Role clarification* and *Role negotiation* are explicitly designed to improve work relationships. Alternatively, the activity *Team redesign* may be relevant, especially if the work of the team is more physical than conceptual.

During this stage you may also choose to begin preparing for the next stage.

Then when the team is functioning well internally, you are ready for the next step

improving cross-team relationships

3. Improve links between the team and other stakeholders



For you, or the team, or the organisation, in the short term this may be a step too far. It may initially be beyond your skills and understanding, or too counter-cultural. If so, you can at least begin to improve relationships with those people where you and the other team depend most on one another. Other opportunities may increase later, as time passes.

This stage is again concerned with coordination — here, of your effort and expertise with that of *other* teams. You will wish to satisfy their purpose and yours. You will also wish to align their goals and yours with the organisation's vision and purpose.

Important question — Will *you* do this, alone or with other team members? Or will you delegate it to the team, either immediately or more gradually?

As before, there are three aspects to it: personal relationships, purpose, and work relationships. The work relationships achieve the necessary coordination of effort and expertise. Knowing what to coordinate depends on an understanding of purpose — theirs, yours, and the organisation's. That becomes easier after a *trusting* relationship has been built. Processes and activities can be as for the previous stage.

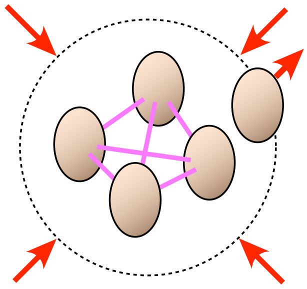
Note that you are no longer working only within the team. More caution may be desirable. The culture outside your team may differ from yours.

Which other teams? Initially you will probably approach those teams where existing interdependencies are most important. As you work with them you will find that your understanding of the organisation's dynamics will deepen. You may then, at a later time, come to identify other changes, or other teams, [21] or external stakeholders with whom it would be useful to negotiate different ways of relating.

By now, team morale will be higher and performance better. You may even have enhanced your credibility and influence within the organisation. You are ready to

renegotiate organisational relationships to better *serve* your team

4. Establish support within the organisation for the team



You and your team have now achieved high functioning within team boundaries. Within organisational constraints, you have also further improved your performance by strengthening your relationships with other teams. Are you now aware of other improvements you didn't pursue because of organisational constraints. Would you like to revisit them?

The nature of any opportunities will vary substantially between organisations and at different times. I won't offer any specifics.[22] Below are some possibilities that you may be interested in exploring. But first, here is what a colleague of mine did ...

> Zoë (let's call her) had accepted a new position in a different organisation. In her first week she listed all the people in the organisation who could use her services, or could influence her performance. She then organised the list in order of importance for organisational performance.
>
> She set up a meeting — during a break, over coffee — with the first person on her list. She described her job and asked "How can I be of better service to you?" She listened carefully and took notes. Then she asked "Are you interested in hearing how you can help me do a better job?" The other person agreed. Finally she asked, "Can we do this again in another month or two?" She honoured her agreements with them.
>
> Zoë repeated this procedure with everyone else on her list in turn. Then she began again at the top, and repeated it. And continued to do so.

Here are some other possibilities:

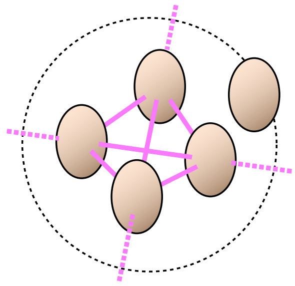
- Are there other teams where their talents and yours would enable a readjustment of responsibilities, with mutual (and organisational) benefit?
- Activities done by human resources (they may be named *People and Culture*). For instance, would you and they benefit if you were directly involved in recruitment, selection, development and so on of your team members?
- Are there people external to the organisation, perhaps in the value chain as suppliers or users, where a different relationship might be mutually beneficial?

Before acting it may be useful to negotiate this internally. See *Stakeholder analysis*.

The team now works well? They enjoy the responsibility and performance? Now

the task becomes sustaining what you have achieved

5. Help the team maintain its culture and performance



When the new team culture is established as "normal", that's not the end. There is an ongoing possibility that events and actions elsewhere will undo what you have achieved. [23]

If I were team leader, my aim would be for the team to manage the external interdependencies, and to undertake the ongoing maintenance. I would encourage them to make this part of their normal operating procedures — to treat it as "the way we do things around here".

This doesn't allow a team leader to abdicate a responsibility for leadership. It has become a *shared* responsibility, with the assent of the team. The organisation in most instances will still hold the formal leader responsible for team shortcomings.

What can a team leader do to support the team to exercise their responsibilities well? Many things:

- Maintain good person-to-person relationships with every team member, and with every person outside the team where interdependencies are important. Stay informed about how well their needs are being met.
- Continue to meet regularly and often with the team, preferably more as a colleague than a leader. Strive to keep the interactions positive and open.
- When conveying instructions from senior management, continue to specify outcomes rather than behaviour. *Negotiate how the outcomes will be monitored by the team*. Negotiate what information the team will provide to keep the formal leader and others adequately informed. [24]
- *Every* time there is a change of membership within the team, revisit the team purpose. Build relationships. Negotiate adequate mentoring for any newcomers.
- From time to time, pause and re-examine how the team is functioning. Check how well team culture and performance is being maintained.
- Continue to advocate for the team whenever organisational behaviour, procedures and rules hinder the team from achieving its desired outcomes.

If that describes you, congratulations for helping develop a high-performing team.

Now here are some ideas for further team development

Insights from concepts and models of team or organisation performance — high reliability organisations

A high reliability organisation is an organisation or unit that has low error rates despite facing ongoing situations of high risk. [25] Examples in the literature include hospital emergency rooms, bush fire fighters, and aircraft carrier flight decks. Such organisations or units are characterised by certain practices, five in particular:

- Recognise complexity. It is recognised that in a complex world, disasters can happen even when everyone does all that can be expected of them. In such a world, "accidents" are normal.
- Avoid blame. Attention is given to even minor departures from what is expected, especially errors and failures. People report exceptions and errors so that they can be analysed. This requires a no-blame culture. People are commended for reporting a mistake rather than censured for the mistake.
- Operations-focussed. Operations are given close attention. This and the previous characteristic require conscious attention in the moment to what is happening. Also, strategy and operations are integrated, not divorced.
- Respect expertise. Expertise outranks rank. People with expertise are expected to speak up, and to use their expertise to act, whatever their rank or status relative to others who are present.
- Practise recovery. There is regular practice in how to respond to expected negative events. When an accident happens, well-practised people can then respond quickly and effectively.

The five characteristics are related, and work well as a set. Avoiding blame is arguably the most powerful of them. It may also take a little bit longer, and more focussed attention, to achieve. In my view, though, it is worth the effort.

Your team probably doesn't face the same extent of risk as a high reliability organisation. That doesn't prevent you learning from, and adopting, their practices.

Or would the characteristics of a learning-oriented team suit your team?

Insights from models of team or organisation performance —

teams that pursue mutual learning

Recall the earlier material from Chris Argyris. He found that most people, faced with threat or embarrassment, are far less open, honest and caring than they believe they are. Here are some strategies that Roger Schwarz based on Argyris's work. Schwarz helps a team to move from a conventional "command and control" style to one of mutual learning. [26]

The intention is to move from a team structure characterised by unilateral leader control to one of shared decision making and responsibility. It is partly a set of supporting assumptions, and concrete behaviours to enact the assumptions. Team members assume that ▪ all are well intentioned and ▪ all have a contribution to make. They assume that ▪ all wish to learn from disagreements, and to ▪ avoid blame.

The concrete behaviours are:

- share the facilitation of decision-making processes
- when making decisions, openly share all relevant information
- engage with one another with supportive curiosity about each other's views
- voice and test assumptions (especially about others) before acting on them
- aid clarity and understanding — use specific examples and evidence
- explore the deeper reasons and interests that support stated positions
- find ways to surface and discuss the hard-to-discuss issues.

Here is one way in which you might use this material (including the material on the previous page) to improve team functioning. From the characteristics and behaviours, choose one to be a focus of behaviour for a week or two. When it has improved, choose another one and make it the focus. And so on ... [27]

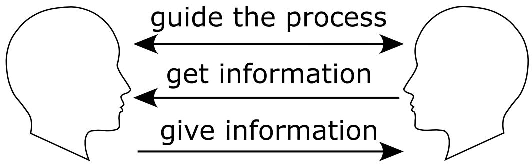
To aid you in your further journey, especially coordination of effort and expertise

the following pages provide useful models and processes

Successful coordination depends on effective communication

There are three relevant sets of communication skills, [28] in this order of priority —

1 Guiding the process of interaction
2 Listening for understanding
3 Speaking to give understanding



All three are important. Listening trumps speaking. Process trumps everything.

1 When guiding the process ...

- agree collaboratively on a process that will give good outcomes to all;
- then give priority first (or when they arise) to the other person's concerns;
- when those concerns are met, speak to address your own concerns;
- at *any* time, if the interaction isn't working well, pause and fix it.

2 When getting information ...

- listen with ears *and eyes*, and curiosity, to understand the *full* message;
- let the person know what you've understood by restating it in your own words;
- consent to what is specific and true; enquire further about everything else;
- minimise enquiry while the other person is upset — just listen, and restate.

3 When giving information ...

- clearly distinguish your assumptions from actual evidence;
- state the evidence for assumptions as clearly and concretely as possible;
- voice assumptions tentatively; include assumptions about motives;
- do all this without blame, criticism or demand, as an invitation to dialogue.

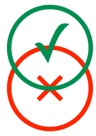
Note, in particular: ▪ restating your understanding and ▪ voicing your assumptions. These improve the quality of communication.

These skills can build effective joint collaborative decision making

Dialectic processes allow more effective collaborative decisions

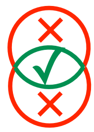
There are many styles of decision making, and many processes to achieve them. For me, they can be categorised into three varieties — ■ adversarial ■ consensual and ■ dialectic.[29] As you will see, dialectic processes combine some of the advantages of the other two varieties.

Adversarial processes are win/lose. One person or side wins. Others lose.



How? Do whatever it takes to win. What happens? People exchange selective information to support their case. Relationships may be formal, or antagonistic.

Consensual processes are soft win/win. (Some) joint goals are pursued.



How? Identify areas of agreement. Build on them to identify joint activies. What happens? If there are genuine shared goals and no "burning issues", results can be good. Useful conflict may be buried to preserve relationships.

Dialectic processes are tough win/win. They craft agreement from disagreement.

How? Pool information, resolve disagreements, decide collaboratively —

- communicate honest information, and do so clearly and directly
- vigorously seek out different views and information
- strive with genuine curiosity to understand other positions
- use disagreement to identify where understanding is inadequate.

What happens? Dissent is welcomed because it can lead to deeper understanding. Relationships are valued and (eventually) enhanced. Better decisions result.

There are specific processes for each of these process styles

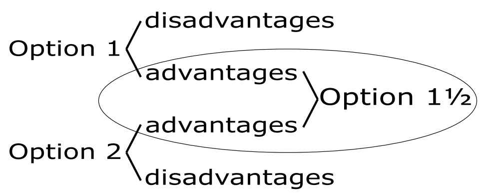
Examples of dialectic processes — Consent, and Option 1½

Decision making by consent [30] uses a combination of a structured process and a requirement that no decision is made until *everyone* in the team “consents” to it. The process structure consists of “rounds”, where each person in turn contributes or reacts to the current topic being discussed. When a proposal is being considered, each team member in turn can either *consent* or offer a *reasoned objection*.

Consent signifies that the proposal is within the range that the person can accept. A reasoned objection is a barrier to consent. It must identify some way in which the proposal hinders the team, or some team member, from achieving their purpose.

When a reasoned objection is raised, the team revises the proposal to take the objection into account. The round is then repeated, with team members consenting or objecting to the modified proposal. This continues until *all* have consented.

Option 1½ [31] uses dialectic decision making structures to resolve issues when two parties within a team or organisation have become polarised into strongly opposed positions. The following process can be used:

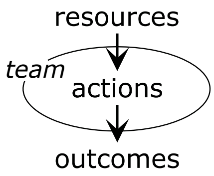


1. Working separately, the two parties define their position: options 1 and 2.
2. Unless numbers are few, the team or organisation divides into small groups, each containing approximately equal numbers from each polarity. Each small group works collaboratively to identify the advantages and disadvantages of each option. Participants are asked to give most attention to the *dis*advantages of their preferred position and the advantages of the other position.
3. Each small group designs a desirable third option, an “option 1½”. It is designed to include as many as possible of the advantages of both option 1 and option 2. It avoids as many as possible of their disadvantages.
4. Each small group develops an implementation plan for their Option 1½.
5. In the whole group the different versions of Option 1½ are collated. The best aspects of each are combined. Action plans are developed, people are identified to implement it, and processes for monitoring and reporting are agreed.

We’re almost ready to explore specific resources for the journey. But first, models

for guiding leader-team relationships

Leader-team relationships — negotiating freedom with limits



Until renegotiated, the organisation will hold team leaders responsible for ensuring that the team achieves specific outcomes within specified resource constraints. It will probably continue to do so even if that responsibility has been taken over by the team.

Team responsibilities gradually become more inclusive as team members acquire the understanding, skills and maturity to manage more responsibility. The boundary between leader responsibilities and team responsibilities, too, will shift over time. There will continue to be limits to the autonomy the team will exercise. The team will have freedom within continually renegotiated limits.[32] These three pairs of conditions can help leader and team understand the responsibilities and freedoms.

freedom	For people with sufficient maturity, freedom increases commitment
within	*Some responsibilities are the leaders, some the teams, some negotiable*
limits	Limits are constraints to ensure needs of other stakeholders are met
clear limits	Clear limits are easier to observe safely, and less easily exceeded
and	*The aim is to achieve both clarity and negotiability*
joint negotiability	Negotiability provides flexibility to adjust to a changing situation
high challenge	Challenge is best calibrated to suit the skills of the team members
and	*Challenge helps development, if people are supported unconditionally*
high support	The greater the challenge, the greater the need for support

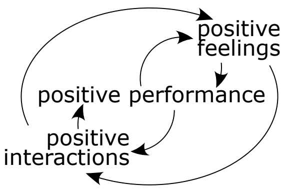
Note that
- all six characteristics are important; they also enhance one another,
- it's easier to negotiate limits outward than inward, it is better initially to negotiate them too tightly rather than too loosely, and
- team leaders can use this within the team, and also for negotiating their own freedom within limits at more senior levels.

Note that the same approach can be used to negotiate relationships between peers.

The tone of the interactions is also important, for several reasons

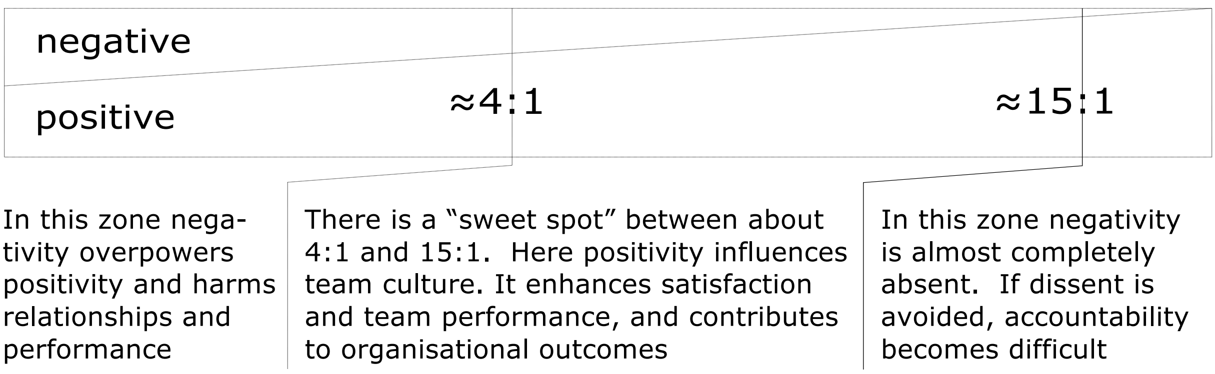
The ratio of positive to negative interactions has consequences

The culture and climate of an organisation can be influenced by the nature of the interactions between its people. Within the team, the effect is even more direct for the team members. Within limits, the higher the positivity ratio [33] the better.



- Positive feelings at work lead to more positive interactions.
- The positive interactions in turn increase positive feelings.
- Positive feelings and interactions enhance, and are enhanced by, better performance.

When positive interactions between people substantially exceed negative interactions, positive cycles are established. Provided positivity exceeds negativity by a ratio of about 4 or 5 to 1, benefits are achieved. There is also an upper limit. This may be because if there are few negative interaction, issues are being buried.



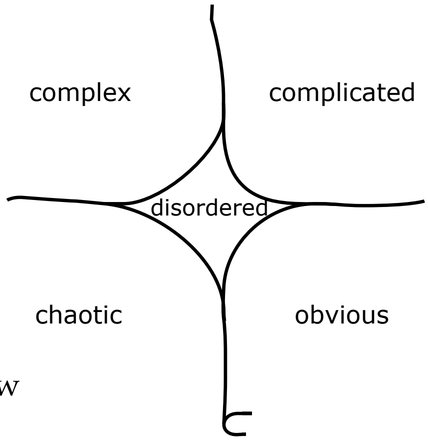
Here are some of the outcomes from positivity that have been documented in the literature — an increase in: ■ competence and confidence; ■ optimism ■ satisfaction with work colleagues ■ physical and mental health and ■ resilience and flexibility. I think there is also a very promising potential. With high positivity, it becomes easier to build a team climate in which team members give *and welcome* feedback.

Now, consider complexity before we explore some detailed processes

Using the Cynefin framework to recognise complexity

To resolve an issue it is often necessary to understand what sort of issue it is. As an example, complex issues are sometimes called "wicked problems" because of their intractability. They require an approach that takes account of their wickedness — their complexity and unpredictability. We'll use the Cynefin framework.[34]

The Cynefin framework, by Dave Snowden, locates issues in one of five domains:



- Obvious (or "simple", or "known"), where few causes are linked to few effects.

  If you know what the problem is, immediately you know how best to respond.

  collect data ⟶ identify problem type ⟶ respond

- Complicated (or "knowable"), where there are many dimensions, multiple causes and effects, but relatively few interactions. It can be understood (or understandable) by people though only with relevant experience and/or training.

  When you know the issue's broad nature, you know which experts to involve in analysis and planning.

  sense ⟶ analyse ⟶ plan the response ⟶ respond

- Complex, where there are multiple cause and effects, with complex interactions, and probably feedback loops.

  These issues require intelligent trial and error to *discover* what works. People are almost certainly involved in the issue. Involving them in the discovery and resolution process may be required for success.

  try something ⟶ see what results ⟶ refine your understanding ⟶ try again

- Chaotic, where volatility and unpredictability are magnified and risk is high.

  Respond with urgency to stabilise the immediate situation, and escape.

  act to stabilise ⟶ learn from what happens ⟶ respond until successful

- Disordered, where the issue is not yet categorised into an appropriate domain.

Approaches that successfully resolve issues in the obvious or complicated domains do not work well in the complex and chaotic domains — and vice versa.

We'll now explore some processes for a different approach to leadership, and will begin with ways of enhancing relationships

Building relationships using the "Turning points" activity

The Turning points [35] activity is a process in which participants, in groups of three or four, exchange true stories of significant events and people in their life. By legitimising genuine self-disclosure it develops empathy and builds relationships.

The process is as follows ...

Forming groups

- If the team is larger than about six, subdivide into groups of three. Participants form into groups with the people they know *least well*. Is this is not fully achievable, at least they avoid the people they know best. To the extent possible, maximise the *diversity* of small groups.

Individual preparation

- Working individually, each person reflects on their life so far. Each begins with their earliest reflections and works towards the present, identifying people and events (or both in conjunction) that made a different to them. Each aims for a list of at least six of these turning points.
- Each chooses three of the turning points that they are willing to talk about in their small group. For each of these they then take time to prepare: ▪ the story of what happened; ▪ a sentence on why it was a turning point; and ▪ in a sentence, what it contributes to their present nature and identity.

Exchange in small groups

- The turning points are exchanged in three rounds, with each person relating the story of one turning point in each round.
- The person relating the turning point engages with the other colleagues, looking at them rather than at any notes.
- The listeners to each turning point give the narrator *all* of their attention. They listen with intense curiosity. They strive to understand what they story tells them about the real person that the speaker is.

Timing: Allow about 15 minutes for set up and individual preparation, and then 15 minutes per person in the largest small group. For groups of three members each that equates to 1 hour. For each additional person in the small group add another 15 minutes. If timing is tight, ask each small group to select a timekeeper to ensure that everyone completes all rounds.

The activity is less effective if any team members are reluctant. If that is so, use an activity where the relevance to the team and its purpose are more evident.

The next activity legitimises task-relevant self disclosure

Task-relevant self-disclosure for building relationships

Some small groups resist activities that they do not perceive as relevant to their task and purpose. The Challenges [36] activity was designed to *legitimise* self-disclosure in such groups. It is not as reliably effective as the "Turning points" activity is in willing groups. Groups reticent about self-disclosure may accept it as appropriate.

The process is as follows:

Set up small groups

- In a team of 6 or more, self-select small groups of 3 or 4 per group. Group with those you know least well. If possible, also maximise small group diversity.

Prepare individually

- Identify three or four times during your life when you overcame a challenge.
- Choose the *one* that illustrates some skill or talent that your *workteam colleagues do not know about*, where: ■ the skill or talent is relevant to the team task and purpose; ■ the challenge was complex and substantial; and ■ *your* skills and talent contributed to overcoming the challenge. Recall: when and where it happened; who else was there; and what you did that achieved success.

Exchange Challenges in workteam or small group

- Appoint a timekeeper so that time is shared evenly between participants.
- In turn, for each team or sub-group member ...
  - The person whose turn it is tells the story of the challenge. Other sub-group members listen with curiosity for what they can learn about the person relating the challenge.
  - Other sub-group members supportively question the person relating the challenge to learn as much as possible about:
    - what (s)he did to overcome the challenge;
    - what skills and talents enabled the challenge to be overcome;
    - what (s)he learned about her/himself from the experience.
- If there are small groups, each reports what they learned to the whole team.

Timing: 15 minutes, plus at least 15 minutes per person, and preferably more, in a small group.

In the next activity

identifying the people to involve in an activity

Stakeholder analysis to identify participants for activities

From time to time you will wish to involve your team in activities with the potential to affect other people. It is then useful — and usually advisable — to involve those others where possible in the activity. Stakeholder analysis [37] is an activity to help you to decide who to involve, and how. Here's one version of the process:

- List the stakeholders who seem likely to be important.
- Draw up a stakeholder matrix as shown on the right below.
- Transfer stakeholders one at a time, in order of estimated importance, to the stakeholder matrix. Make a judgment about how far to take the analysis. It is usually adequate to analyse only the most important stakeholders. As each stakeholder is transferred to the matrix, conduct the following analysis ...

1 List stakeholders here

2 For each stakeholder assess their likely attitude. In the first "A" column, record:

++ strongly supportive
\+ supportive
o indifferent / undecided
– opposed
–– strongly opposed

In the second "A" column — how confident are you of the first "A" column estimate?

\+ confident
? some doubt
?? considerable doubt
??? wild guess

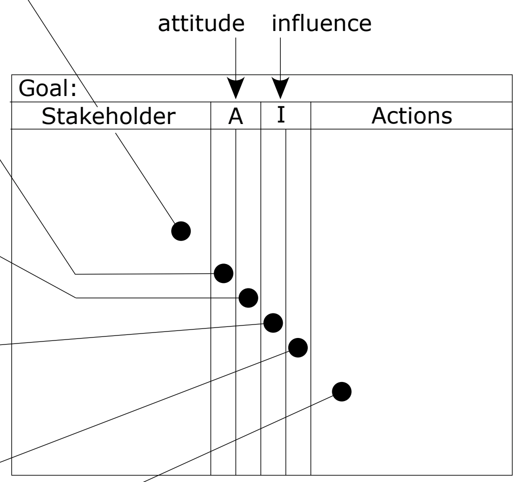
3 For each stakeholder assess their likely influence. In the first "I" column, record:

H high — power of veto
M medium influence
L low influence or none

In the second "I" column — how confident are you of the first "I" column estimate?

\+ confident
? some doubt
?? considerable doubt
??? wild guess

4 Record here the actions you intend to take, either to check your estimate, or to consult the person, or both



If any column has two or three question marks, the appropriate action is usually to collect more information about the stakeholder. Otherwise, the action is usually about how to invite them to be involved in the activity.

In the next resource

a team can use visioning to clarify its purpose

A visioning activity in which a team clarifies its purpose

It is difficult or impossible for a workteam to be able to improve its performance and satisfaction unless it understands its *purpose*. Search [38] is a visioning activity to help a workteam or project team to do so. It can be used by the team alone, though there can be advantages in inviting other relevant stakeholders to take part also.

The following process may be used:

Set up small groups if necessary

- If there are more than about 10 participants, set up small groups. Aim for groups small enough for easy discussion and few enough that reporting back is not tedious. (I aim for the same number of participants per group as there are groups — for instance, for 25 participants I set up 5 groups of 5.)

  Participants self-select. However it is important that each small group is a microcosm of the whole group. Issues can then be resolved in the small groups, where it's easier, rather than in the larger whole group.

Develop the vision

- Participants work individually, without discussion. Each participant lists the specific outcomes that will indicate that the team (or whatever it is) has successfully achieved its goals and purpose.
- With multiple small groups, the information is collected in the small groups. In turn, each participant contributes the most important *one* item not already on the group list. The group then ranks their list in order of importance.
- The process of the previous step is repeated in the whole group. If there is one group, the items are collected from individuals. If there are multiple groups, the items are collected from each small group. The whole group then agrees overall priorities of the items, for example using a multi-voting technique. (Multi-voting: each person is given multiple votes to distribute over list items.)

Action the vision

- The team plans how to action their vision. This may be done by facilitated decision making. Alternatively, *Role negotiation* or *Work redesign* or similar can be used. See the following resources.

The next activity,

role clarification, focusses specifically on work relationships

Role clarification — clarifying work team relationships

This activity is role clarification.[39] It helps team members to be clearer about their own and each others' work roles — that is, about their *interdependencies*. It often precedes the next activity, role negotiation, which works well only if team members are already clear about their roles and responsibilities.

In role clarification, each team member in turn describes the key aspects of their role as they understand it. They refine their description in response to questions and comments from their team colleagues. The following process can be used:

Individual preparation

Focussing on *interdependencies* and working individually, each person ...

- recalls in detail a typical day (or week, or month, depending on the nature of their work). They include
  - *physical* activities, if any
  - *informational* and communication activities
  - *relationship* and *support* activities (it is usually a mistake to omit these).
- From their list they identify the *20 per cent of activities* that contribute most to the team and organisational outcomes.
- They list the chosen activities in order of importance on butcher paper.

Information sharing

In turn, each person ...

- very briefly explains each activity on their list
- responds to questions (*for clarification only*) from team members
- if necessary, adjusts and records any activities revised as a result of questions and discussion.

Action

- Follow up with further whole-team discussion about changes in team roles; or follow the role clarification with other relevant activities. The next two resources describe two activities, either of which could be used for follow-up.

Role clarification can usefully be revisited whenever team membership changes.

The next resource, role negotiation, complements role clarification

Role negotiation — renegotiating work team relationships

Role negotiation [40] is a process for renegotiating work relationships and roles within a team. The purpose is to improve the *management of interdependencies within the team* while also improving individual performance and satisfaction. It can be preceded by role clarification so that team members fully understand the team roles before seeking to improve them. The following process can be used:

- *The whole team* ***selects pairs*** *to renegotiate*. The team decides which within-team interdependencies are most important for team performance and satisfaction. It determines which pairs will negotiate initially, and in which order.
- *Within each pair, each* ***individual prepares*** and notes down three lists:
  - *appreciations* — one or two actions the person wants the other to continue;
  - *opportunities* — one or two suggested actions for the other person to cease, or change, or add;
  - *empathy list* — the person's best guess about what is on the other's lists.
- *Exchange* ***appreciations***. In turn, the two people (**A**, **B**) exchange appreciations:
  - **A** describes, without blame or criticism or demand, one *action* by **B** that is beneficial for **A**, and the good *outcomes* it produces, while **B**:
    - *listens*, striving to understand what it is like for **A**;
    - if (s)he is unclear, asks *questions for clarification*;
    - *restates*, in **B**'s own words, **B's** understanding of **A**'s situation;
  - **B** responds to **A**'s statement without blame, criticism or demand. **A**:
    - listens, striving to understand what it is like for **B**;
    - if (s)he is unclear, asks questions for clarification;
    - restates, in **A**'s own words, **A**'s understanding of **B**'s situation ...

    continuing this exchange until both fully understand each other's position.

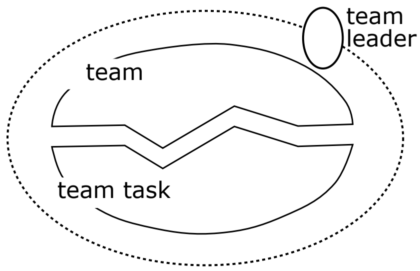
  When they reach full understanding, **A** and **B** agree which individual and collective *actions* will improve *outcomes* for both of them and for the team. *They do not take actions that affect someone else without checking with that person*.

  A and **B** repeat the process, with **B** starting the interaction and **A** responding.
- *Exchange* ***opportunities***. The complete process for exchanging appreciations is now repeated, exchanging information about opportunities.
- *Report to whole team*. **A** and **B** report their planned changes to the whole team.

When the team tasks are more physical than informational ...

a work redesign process may suit the team better

Work redesign involves the whole team in work planning



Work redesign [41] is a process that a team can use to help it move to, or towards, becoming a semi-autonomous team — self-managed within limits. The limits are set by contraints on resource use, and necessary goals to meet organisational purposes.

The team goals and resource constraints are defined. Then, working collaboratively, the team compiles two matrices to analyse their present situation. In each of the two main steps, team members work without discussion to make their individual judgments. As a team they then compare and agree on final judgments.

There are three (or perhaps four) stages to a redesign, as follows:

- ***Diagnose satisfaction***. Working across rows, each team member indicates their satisfaction relative to each criterion using a 10-point scale.

  For *elbow room*, *variety* and *learning*, "5" is optimal. More than "5" is too much. For *mutual support*, *meaning* and *desirable future*, "10" is optimal.

Criteria \ *person:*	Alice	Bill	Carol
Elbow room	4	1	2
Variety	3	1	3
Learning	5	2	3
Mutual support	3	3	3
Meaning	2	1	2
Desirable future	6	1	2

- ***Diagnose multi-skilling***. A team can best function with semi-autonomy if it is fully multi-skilled, each person able to do every team members job. For each job, agree how long it would take for each team member to acquire the skills and experience to do it.

Job \ *person:*	Alice	Bill	Carol
Alice's job	✔	5w	3w
Bill's job	✔	✔	1w
Carol's job	2w	2w	✔

- (*Optionally, map the process*. Flow-chart the work flow to identify unnecessary double-handling, or opportunities for leader tasks to be taken over by the team.)
- ***Collaboratively redesign*** the team tasks and responsibilities — (a) Decide what the team can do *now* to assume responsibilities formerly exercised by the team leader. Give particular attention to low rows and columns in the first matrix. (b) Decide what can be done to move toward full multi-skilling. This may be done, for example, by acting in a position, receiving coaching from a team member, undertaking training and development, etc. (c) Decide when to meet as a whole team to review progress and fine tune procedures and plans.

This process, or role clarification and negotiation, can be enhanced by attention to

ongoing monitoring of team performance

The Snyder process for continuous participative monitoring

RESOURCES
are consumed by
ACTIVITIES
having immediate
EFFECTS
as they pursue
TARGETS
contributing to a
VISION
of a better world

As described below, continuous improvement [41] is the purpose of the Snyder process. A team can use it to set up feedback that team members and teams can use to monitor their ongoing contributions to team and organisational visions. In this form, individuals and teams use it to identify *indicators*, and to set up feedback mechanisms to allow ongoing monitoring. The process is derived from a model of how a team (or person, or organisation) converts resources into outcomes.

The following process can be used — notice the *sequence* of elements:

- Develop a team VISION. In the longer term, what do you wish the team to have achieved? Aim high. Choose a time horizon of 10 years or more. Check that the vision is consistent with the *organisation's* vision.
- By the end of the current planning cycle, what TARGETS does the team wish to have achieved. If you have authority to choose the length of the planning cycle choose shorter times — weeks rather than months. Unlike the vision, this is realistic rather than aspirational. It is specific rather than abstract. Check that the targets are consistent with the vision, and vice versa. Amend accordingly.
- What ACTIVITIES does the team *actually* carry out? How well do they contribute to the targets? Is most time and energe devoted to those that contribute the most? — adjust them accordingly.
- What immediate EFFECTS does each activity achieve as it is carried out? Of these effects, which are the best indicators of progress towards targets and vision? The aim is to develop the best possible *proxy indicators* for progress towards the vision. Set up feedback to provide regular information about the best indicators.
- What RESOURCES does the team consume? To what extent are most resources expended on activities that contribute most to the vision?
- Decide how often the team will meet to consider and (if necessary) modify the indicators, and the feedback mechanisms that provide information about them. How can this be done to generate information for reporting to the organisation? What role, if any, will the team leader play in the overall monitoring process?

We've reached the end of the resources section of the document

The following notes expand and comment on the earlier material. They are intended as an important part of the whole document.

Notes, and further explication

These are more than just "notes". They are intended to be an integral part of the document, and of its models and resources.

As mentioned earlier, the first half of this document is intended as an overview, as simple as possible, of the context and processes of moving to team and organisational improvement. Shared leadership is potentially the eventual goal. The following notes expand on the earlier material. If you are interested in deeper consideration of the issues mentioned earlier, or with to access relevant other resources, *you may wish to read each earlier page in conjunction with the notes (below) that refer to it*.

1 Joe Raelin uses action learning teams (he calls his approach "work-based learning") to generate shared purpose and action. He describes how in his book *Creating leaderful organizations* (Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, 2003). He also provides a fieldbook, *The leaderful fieldbook* (Nicholas Brealey, London, 2010) that describes how to do so, in detail.

2 The quote is from Argyris's book *Organizational traps* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, 2010) page 11. This book also provides a good overview, from late in his career, of his groundbreaking work.

The fullest description of his work is in the book *Action science* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2010), which he co-authored with Bob Putnam and Diana McLain Smith. Although it is unfortunately out of print, a web search will sometimes discover electronic copies.

3 Weber, Max, "Bureaucracy", in *Rationalism and modern society* (transl. T. Waters & D. Waters, Palgrave-Macmillan, 2015).

4 The managerial functions are those identified by Henri Fayol (1841-1925). They are still to be found recommended in occasional textbooks on management, and are widely available on the web. This illustrates how pervasive bureaucratic concepts are, and the extent to which they shape our thinking and perceptions.

5 In this section I draw on a number of sources, listed below. Collectively they demonstrate that the evolutionary outcomes of an earlier hunter-gatherer existence are still part of who we are. Though often overlaid or disguised by bureaucratic habits they can be reactivated.

Robert Plomin, in *Blueprint: how DNA makes us who we are* (Allen Lane, London, 2018) has capitalised on recent genetic research techniques to show that our DNA does influence our behaviour, substantially.

Felix Warneken has written "How children solve the two challenges of cooperation" in the *Annual Review of Psychology*, 2018, volume 69, 205-229. He reviewed and summarised the literature on caring and sharing in early childhood.

Selfish behaviour can undermine shared common resources such as fishing and forests, as Hardin argued in "The tragedy of the commons". (*Science*, 162(3859), 1243-1248). However, Elinor Ostrom and her colleagues have documented many instances of successful collaborative management of commons. For instance see Ostrom's "Crowding out citizenship" in *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 2000, 23(1), 3-16.

Christopher Boehm reviewed evidence on hunter-gatherer tribes, past and present. See his book *Moral origins* (Basic Books, New York, 2012).

6 Each group of the social primates, including homo sapiens, has a maximum size. If a tribe exceeds that size it becomes unstable and begins to fragment.

Robin Dunbar, in a 1993 article "Neocortex size as a constraint on group size in primates" reported 150 as the approximate maximum size of human clans or villages in hunter-gatherer societies (*Behavior and Brain Sciences*, 16(4), 681-735). Hence, 150 became known as the "Dunbar number".

7 See note 6 above.

8 Tristan da Cunha is a small isolated island in the middle of the Atlantic ocean. It's interesting because it's not a *surviving* hunter-gatherer tribe. It was settled only within the past couple of centuries.

Peter Munch was a Norwegian sociologist. He visited Tristan da Cunha as part of a Norwegian Scientific Expedition to the island. He reported his findings in "Anarchy and anomie in an atomistic community" in the journal *Man*, 9(2), 243-261. Tristan da Cunha is an anarchic and egalitarian community, by choice. Munch recounted how the Tristanese withdrew their relationships from two Tristanese who tried to exercise power over other Tristanese. One of the transgressors lived as a hermit from that point forward. The other suicided.

The Tristanese were evacuated to Britain in 1961 when the volcano that was their island erupted. Almost all of them agitated to return to Tristan, which most did in 1963. On returning to Tristan they again reverted to their egalitarian way of life.

9 In addition, when threats are ambiguous or uncertain our automatic threat management system is biased toward reaction. Neuberg, Kenrick and Douglas explain some of the mechanisms in their article "Human threat management systems: self-protection and disease avoidance" (*Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2011, 35(4), 1042–1051).

For those who would like details of what the neuroscience may be, Woody and Szechtman are relevant. They draw widely on multiple sources to posit some of the neural mechanisms in their paper "Adaptation to potential threat" (*Neuroscience and Biobehavioral Reviews*, 2011, 35(4), 1019-1033).

10 Dan Kahneman describes the two different decision making systems in his 2011 book *Thinking, fast and slow* (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, New York).

11 An informative abstract of Jenny Rudolph's PhD is available on the web at http://escholarship.bc.edu/dissertations/AAI3103269.

12 Gary Klein is one of the key researchers on decision making by experts under conditions of urgency. He calls the approach "naturalistic decision making". His 2006 paper "Making sense of sensemaking 1: alternative perspectives" (*IEEE Intelligent Systems*, 21(4), 70-73) is an easy introduction coauthored with Brian Moon and Robert Hoffman.

For a recent and practical account by Klein see his 2017 book *Seeing what others don't: the remarkable ways we gain insights* (Nicholas Brealey, London).

You may also be interested in a 2009 paper by Kahneman and Klein that compares decision making by novices and experts: "Conditions for intuitive expertise: a failure to disagree" (*American Psychologist*, 64, 515-526.)

13 Action research features a mindset of participation and responsive flexibility. People affected by a decision are involved as equals in the collaborative decision making. The decision making proceeds by trial and error, sensitive to the situation and the evidence. The mindset is actioned by involving those affected in the plan ⟶ act and observe ⟶ reflect cycle.

Ernie Stringer has written several very readable books on action research. He describes the action research cycle as "look ⟶ think ⟶ act". You'll find a clear and practical introduction to action research in any edition of his book *Action research*. The fourth edition was published in 2013 by Sage. It includes many pointers to other action research resources in print or on the web.

My website, http://www.aral.com.au/, includes many action research (and related) resources.

14 The term "boundary rider", and the job redesign process I describe later, both come from Fred and Merrelyn Emery and their colleagues. The process is described in *Participative design: work and community life*, a monograph by Fred and Merrilyn Emery (Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University, Canberra, 1975).

Based on the work of the Emerys, Robert Rehm has drawn together processes and concepts for participative work redesign in a 1999 book *People in charge* (Hawthorn Press, Glasgow).

15 I suspect the early signs were evident more than half a century ago. It was half a century ago that multiple strands of evidence appeared in the literature. Three studies from the 1960s demonstrate that the speed of change in an organisation's or unit's environment is correlated with the structure.

In 1961, Tom Burns and G.M. Stalker reported that industries such as plastics and electronics that needed more innovation to compete were more "organic", to use their term. Their book *The management of innovation* (Tavistock, London) reported their findings. Industries less in need of innovation could be more "mechanistic".

In 1965, the economist Joan Woodward found that, in English manufacturing, mass production methods allow more bureaucratic structures than bespoke methods that require more flexibility. She reported it in her book *Industrial organisation: theory and practice* (Oxford University Press).

In 1967, Paul Lawrence and Jay Lorsch reported similar effects *within* an organisation in their book *Organization and environment: managing differentiation and integration* (Boston: Harvard University Press). Functions (such as manufacturing or marketing, for example) that had acted to stabilise their environment were more bureaucratic than those that couldn't or didn't.

16 One turning point in armed forces command seems to have occurred as a result of the battles in the Franco-Prussian war in 1806. The well trained and obedient Prussians were unexpected defeated by the less experienced French. The Prussians analysed their defeat, and realised they had to become much more flexible and responsive. Carl von Clausewitz, who was part of the analysis team, included the results in his book *Vom Krieg* (*On war*).

I haven't read Clausewitz. I depend for my understanding of his theories on Chapter 3 of Stephen Bungay's book *The art of action* (Nicholas Brealey, London, 2010). This is also the source of my account of the Franco-Prussian battles.

17 Gary Hamel has written about two organisations that encourage freedom in negotiating interdependencies, with minimal hierarchy ...

Morning Star is a tomato packing and processing company in which each "colleague" (as organisational members are called), on joining Morning Star, negotiates a relationship with others that are interdependent. See "First let's fire all the managers" in the *Harvard Business Review*, 2011, volume 89, 48-60.

W.L. Gore is now a large organisation globally distributed. The number of "associates" (as members are called) in individual facilities is kept below 200 so that every can know everyone, and the effects of hierarchy are minimised. One of Gary Hamel's reports on W.L. Gore can be found on *Management Exchange*, 23 September 2010.

Morning Star and W.L. Gore are both driven by purpose and values. Individuals are given autonomy to negotiate how the purpose and values will be achieved in practice.

18 The "Agile Manifesto" (http://agilemanifesto.org) illustrates an approach to software development driven by values and purpose. It was compiled in 2001

by 17 software developers and consists of four values and 12 principles. The values read as follows:

> "We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it. Through this work we have come to value:
>
> - Individuals and interactions over processes and tools
> - Working software over comprehensive documentation
> - Customer collaboration over contract negotiation
> - Responding to change over following a plan
>
> That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more."

You could think of "Agile" as a philosophy of management that allows teams to function as genuine teams even within conventional hierarchies. The Manifesto is clearly intended to apply to software development. However, it is not difficult to translate it to fit other settings.

"Scrum" is a particular version of Agile, described in some detail in 2014 by Jeff Sutherland in his book of the same name (Random House, London).

19 If you are team leader you are very probably *initiating* the change. I assume your intention is to encourage team members to assume as much autonomy, within boundaries, as they are willing. I also assume that you will be very clear to team members about this intention, and very consultative in how you approach it. They will then experience your actions as consistent with your goals. Otherwise, your initiation of the process as team leader would be seen as inconsistent with your goal of sharing leadership.

As this is such an important part of setting the scene, I would make the interaction more of a conversation than a speech. I would make some effort to check that team members understood and accepted what I was saying. I would do more listening than speaking.

In situations like this I find it helpful to keep in mind Marshall McLuhan's dictum that "the medium is the message". People read more into *how* we deliver a message than into what we say. McLuhan wrote about this in his 1964 book *Understanding media: the extensions of man* (New York: McGraw-Hill).

20 It's not unusual for some people to favour keeping relationships more formal than personal. They believe that "professional" relationships are appropriate at work — perhaps most appropriate. In their view, personal relationships are for elsewhere.

Professional relationships do have some strong points. One is that they allow differences of opinion to be managed with less effort. Each of the people involved stays within role boundaries and behaves "professionally" — formally and politely. That can be more pleasant than open conflict, for example.

That said, I strongly favour personal relationships. People relate to each other person to person rather than role to role. This also has its strong points. In my mind the advantages become more important as accelerating change requires us to become more flexible and bring more of ourselves to work.

In a person to person relationship with other team members, people don't have to leave so much of themselves outside work. They can bring more of who they are to what they do. This gives their team and their organisation access to more of their talent and creativity.

Also, personal relationships can build higher levels of positivity, trust and openness. This aids innovation and experimentation, which are virtues when a team faces increasing and accelerating change.

21 Is your organisation "siloed" — that is, with a conventional hierarchical structure with few cross-linkages between functions? If so, there may be what Geary Rummler calls "white space" on the organisation chart. (Rummler and Brache, *Improving performance*, 3rd ed. Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2013). In such organisations, most communication is vertical. Yet many workflows are horizontal. Those parts of the workflow in the white spaces may warrant attention. Reaching across the white space to teams within other organisational functions may help you to improve your performance and theirs.

22 The issue is the management of organisational interdependencies: how to coordinate effort and expertise towards common purpose and goals. The logic is simple enough, or so it seems to me. Coordination of effort and expertise allows an organisation to function. If interdependent people and teams can coordinate easily within the existing organisational structure then all is well. If they can't, then perhaps a different structure is warranted. Or, if that is too difficult, a coordinating mechanism can be "grafted on" to the current structure. I imagine that's how many of the complex hybrid structures evolve.

Physical proximity assists in the easy management of interdependencies. Where interdependent people are physically separated, formal systems for reviewing interdependencies and sharing feedback can be valuable.

Note also that one-way interdependencies breed dissatisfaction downstream. *Mutual* interdependencies are usually more satisfying and more easily managed. Improve one-way interdependencies by setting up regular and formal feedback from the downstream node to the upstream node.

It makes sense to match the duration of structural mechanisms to the interdependencies. If the interdependencies are ongoing, an more permanent structure is indicated — or at least a less temporary one. Temporary interdependencies can be managed by temporary partnerships, temporary project teams, or similar.

For relevant literature, I think Jay Galbraith writes with more understanding than most. He also integrates theory and practice well. I still find his early work informative — for instance his 1973 book *Designing complex organisations* (Addison-Wesley, Reading, MA) is still worth reading.

For something more recent see his article "The future of organization design" in the *Journal of Organization Design*, 2012, 1(1), 3-6. He recommends top-down design at the top of the organisation and bottom-up design nearer to the workface.

23 There is scattered evidence, some of it compelling, that moving to team-based functioning can have good outcomes for the team and the organisation. As one of many examples, see the 2016 evaluation by David Holman and Carolyn Axtell of job redesign in a call centre, "Can job redesign interventions influence a broad range of employee outcomes by changing multiple job characteristics?" (*Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*, 21(3), 284-295).

As Gervase Bushe states, the difficulty is in maintaining the new structure — "Creating collaborative organizations that can persist: the partnership principle" (*OD Practitioner*, 2017, 49(3), 24-29).

The hindrances are many. New senior managers may wish to leave their mark on an organisation without understanding what already exists. Turnover within the team may undermine the team's commitment. Initial enthusiams may wane. The organisation may have trouble coping with the increased productivity or the different culture. Without attention to ongoing maintenance the innovation may be swept aside even if its advantages have been well demonstrated.

Bushe's main response is to create partnerships with important players. I agree. To that, I would add that it is beneficial also to make *ongoing monitoring and continuous improvement* a core part of a team's responsibilities.

24 From time to time I've worked as a coach or mentor for technical or professional people recently promoted to leadership positions. A recurring issue is their relationship with their subordinates. Central to this has been a lack of clarity about how to monitor progress, and what reports are desirable. I have found this often to be true even for leaders with much more leadership experience.

25 The five characteristics I list are consistent, I believe, with those in *Managing the unexpected*, by Karl Weick and Kathleen Sutcliffe (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass). The descriptions are in my words rather than theirs. I have tried to describe the characteristics in ways that help to make evident the relevance to organisations where risks are less serious and less ever-present.

Weick and Sutcliffe identified the characteristics of high reliability organisations from their own research and the research of others.

For the notion of "normal accidents" I've been influenced by the book with that title (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1999) by Charles Perrow.

26 I've borrowed the term "mutual learning" from Roger Schwarz. Some other colleagues and followers of Chris Argyris also use it. In helping teams to pursue learning I draw directly on Argyris's work, and also on Schwarz's.

In particular, Schwarz has applied Argyris's concepts and processes to facilitation. His book *The skilled facilitator* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 2016) is in its third revision. There is also a 2005 fieldbook *The skilled facilitator fieldbook* by the same publisher, written by Schwarz and colleagues.

Roger Schwarz has also applied the same approach to leadership and teamwork in a 2013 book *Smart leaders, smarter teams*, also published by Jossey-Bass. It is particularly relevant to our topic of *Rethinking leadership*. He offers several ways of functioning within a team that helps the team to move from "unilateral control" (his term) to mutual learning.

This section of the present ebook is particularly influenced by Argyris, especially in his 1974 and 1996 books with Don Schön, and by Schwarz's *Smart leaders, smarter teams*.

27 The assumption behind this list of suggestions, supported by social psychological research, is as follows.

The relationship between assumptions and attitudes on the one hand and behaviour on the other is mutual. Changing either of them can affect the other — if not immediately, then in time. As stated before, we can be mistaken about the assumptions that (we think) guide and explain our behaviour.

However, it is easier to change and monitor behaviour than it is to change and monitor assumptions. Creating an environment that makes some actions natural or easy may lead in time to a belief that those actions are also most appropriate.

28 Most categorisations do an injustice to the complexity of reality. That's true here too. There are many relevant skills. In practice they overlap and morph into one another. I owe the details of this categorisation to many sources, and to decades of using them.

Those who know of Argyris and Schön will recognise their strong influence. From when I first read it, their 1974 book *Theory in practice* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA) had a profound effect on my thinking and practice. The assertion literature also guided me. The book *Responsible assertive behavior* (Research Press, Champaign, IL, 1976) by Lange and Jakubowski was important. Using experiential methods to help people learn communication skills, at university and elsewhere, further developed my thinking and practice.

29 It's revealing, I think, that "adversarial" and "consensual" are terms in common use while "dialectic" is not. However, the process (if not the word) has a presence in the literature. To me, the Delphi method and most good conflict management processes are dialectic exemplars.

The literature I've identified in the previous note is relevant. Studying and using the Delphi process increased my understanding. I found the book by Andre Delbecq et al., *Group techniques for program planning* (Scott Foresman, Glenview, IL) informative. More recently, so is Linstone & Turoff's 2011 paper, "Delphi" in *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 78(9), 1712-1719.

I probably should mention a savage critique of Delphi by Harold Sackman. Sackman's book was influential enough that use of Delphi was discouraged for some decades. Some of the criticisms were fair, though I think mostly of the way Delphi was sometimes implemented. More importantly, to my mind Sackman treats Delphi as a research process. Regard it instead as a dialectic decision making process, and many of his criticisms lose their point.

The conflict management literature has also been helpful, especially *Everyone can win* (Simon & Schuster, Brookvale, NSW, 1989) by Helena Cornelius and

Shoshana Faire. A much revised second edition appeared in 2006. Both editions are immensely practical and usable. So is much of the material on their website at http://www.crnhq.org

30 Consent decision making is a process within the sociocratic approach to structuring organisations. See *We the people* (Sociocracy.info, Washington DC, 2017), by John Buck and Sharon Villines.

(In the USA sociocracy is sometimes called "dynamic governance", to avoid any label beginning with "socio-".)

Sociocratic structures *are* hierarchical, allowing sociocratic structures to be scaled to apply to large organisations. Such structures however are not *control* hierarchies. They avoid many of the disadvantages by operating both bottom-up and top-down.

At each intermediate level of the hierarchy there is "double linking". Intermediate teams consist half of people appointed down by the level above, and half of people elected up by the level below. This structure, combined with consent decision making, assures that everyone at *every* level has an equal say in decisions affecting them. A reasoned objection from a team at the workface is communicated by the double linking structure to all levels involved, including the Board.

With sociocracy, the overall decision making process is structured. So is each phase within that structure, usually using "rounds". A round, where everyone contributes or responds to a topic in turn, is similar to nominal group technique as described by Delbecq et al. in *Group techniques for program planning* (Greenbriar, Middleton, 1986).

31 Option 1½ is my own process, invented on the run to resolve a very polarised conflict between two groups of people who asked me for assistance. The process owes much to the literatures in the previous three endnotes. My intention was to design a dialectic process that would engage people with different opinions to work collaboratively and develop a mutually-satisfying alternative to their present views.

32 I based this six-element guide on the work of Stanley Coopersmith. In his book *The antecedents of self-esteem* he sought to explain adult levels of self-esteem in relation to parenting practices the adults had experienced in earlier life. The combination of the six elements correlated with self-esteem scores.

Note that the six elements form three pairs. There may be a temptation to regard each pair as offering a choice of one or the other element. In practice, the best results occur when a best-of-both-worlds alternative is developed for each pair.

Coopersmith offers (p 236) three conditions for high self-esteem — "total or nearly total acceptance of the children by their parents, clearly defined and enforced limits, and the respect and latitude for individual action that exist within the defined limits" and (later in the same paragraph) "exert greater demands for academic performance and excellence".

I believe this can be applied beyond parenting to many relationships, to equalise effective power and influence. It has guided the relationships I negotiated as a university academic with the people enrolled in the courses I facilitated. I use it in leadership coaching, both for my relationship with the client and in helping them analyse the dynamics of some of their work relationships. I also used it guide my negotiations with people I reported to, to help them lead me in ways that improved my productivity and satisfaction.

33 Barbara Fredricksen, in her paper "Updated thinking on positivity ratios" (*American Psychologist*, 2013, 68(9), 814-822) updates present thinking and responds to critiques of the concept of positivity. A body of research, by Fredricksen and by others, now supports the conclusions she has reached.

Her findings are also consistent with a massive body of research on marital relationships by John Gottman and his colleagues. For example, a high proportion of positive interactions is an important predictor of marriage duration. And some conflict, even if damaging in the short term, can be constructive in the long term. See "Marital interaction and satisfaction", by Gottman and Krokoff (*Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 57(1), 47-52).

34 The label "wicked" was popularised by Horst Rittel and Melvin Webber in their paper "Dilemmas in a general theory of planning" (*Policy Sciences*, 1973, 4(2), 155-169.)

Of the substantial literature on complexity, I use David Snowden's material. It's a sensemaking framework. That is, it's about how to make sense of the situations we face. I prefer it because I find it easier to translate into practice than much of the other complexity literature I've read. For me, it provides valuable guidance on how to deal with the complex issues that seem likely to increase if they world continues to move in its current directions. As folk say on the web, your mileage may vary.

Snowden continues to refine the framework and its applications. Earlier and simpler versions of the framework will serve our purpose here. It assumes that situations often contain components that belong in different domains. Until dissected, they are regarded as "disordered". To engage in problem solving, their components are identified and located in one of four domains: ▪ obvious; ▪ complicated; ▪ complex; ▪ chaotic. Different strategies are appropriate in each domain.

A simple and usable account can be found in a paper in the *IBM Systems Journal*, 43(3), by Cynthia Kurtz and David Snowden, "The new dynamics of strategy: sense-making in a complex and complicated world", pages 462-483. In that paper, what is now named the "obvious" domain was then named "known", and the "complicated" domain "knowable". The "known" domain is also sometimes called the "simple" domain.

For an account more specifically relevant for leadership strategies see the paper "A leader's framework for decision making", by David Snowden and Mary Boone, in the November 2007 *Harvard Business Review*.

If you wish to explore more recent material, there's a website:
http://cognitive-edge.com

35 Tim Dalmau and I devised the "Turning points" activity based on an organisational activity, "History trip", that Tim learned from John Sherwood. In a History trip activity, organisational participants recreate a history of significant turning points in the life of an organisation. The underpinning theory is that organisational identify arises from shared history. By sharing their history in a face-to-face activity, organisational members consolidate their sense of collective identity. Sherwood has described the process and some of the reasoning in his book *Leadership* (Management Design Inc., Cincinnati, OH, 1977).

Tim and I reasoned as follows ... When individuals share information about important events and people in their personal history it facilitates bonding. I now regard the process as the most effective brief relationship-building activity in my repertoire.

Turning points consist of significant events and people in someone's life. Each can be conveyed in a story, revealing commonalities even when story lines are very different. Self-disclosure is therefore often deep, creating deep empathy. Because three turning points are typically exchanged, both disclosure and bonding tend to deepen from round to round.

For a meta-analysis of the literature on self disclosure and relationships, see Collins and Miller (1994), "Self-disclosure and liking" (*Psychological Bulletin*, 116(3), 457-475). For a recent account of some of the relevant theoretical explanations of the effects of self disclosure, see the 2016 Masaviru paper "Self-disclosure" (*Journal of Culture, Society and Development*, 18, 43-47.)

36 I found that some teams, especially project teams, were very reluctant to do anything that postponed engaging with their project. My own view is that time spent building relationships is more than repaid by more efficient decision making and problem solving from that point onward. However, there is little point in using relationship building activities when participants are unwilling. I therefore designed the Challenges activity so that its relevance to the team would be evident.

The relationship building activities that seem to work best are story based. They make it legitimate for participants to disclose information that reveals more of themselves as a real person. My intention, therefore, was to develop an activity that would use story for that purpose while clearly being task-relevant.

I also reasoned that there would be benefits in a collaborative activity. It would make it easier for reticent story tellers to be more disclosing. At the same time it would help listeners to engage more fully. The deeper engagement would compensate for the use of only a single round of information exchange per person. Multiple rounds are better, but usually too time-consuming.

37 There are many versions of stakeholder analysis. I use this one because it has functioned well for me. Also, used thoughtfully it can be reasonably time-efficient, and it makes sense to participants.

It is based on a version I learned from my friend and colleague David Napoli. I understand that the version David used was developed by Richard Beckhard, a north American consultant with a reputation for very practical approaches to organisation development.

38 A Search activity is usually conducted off-site, over several days, with participant numbers that are kept few enough to allow deep discussion. Instead, the version of search described here is briefer, can be conducted in normal work settings, and can function with greater numbers of participants.

The inspiration for the activity was a *Search conference* as developed at the Tavistock Institute in the UK and at the Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University. Merrilyn Emery and Ron Purser describe and explain the process in *The search conference* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, 1996). There is also an alternative approach, *Future search*, developed by Marvin Weisbord and Sandra Janoff in a book with the same title (Berrett-Koehler, San Francisco, 1999).

I prefer the full Search conference, which is a properly dialectic process (see earlier). With good facilitation, participants can be encouraged to voice their differences of opinion and resolve them. On occasion, only half a day or less is available. I then reluctantly often use a *consensual* process where the focus is on agreements. So that numbers are less an issue, much of the work is done in small groups. Each is formed to be a microcosm of the whole community or team.

Multi-voting. Within small groups and the whole group, priorities can be agreed using multi-voting. With this technique, each person is given multiple votes to distribute over the list. In the method that I use, participants may allot two votes to list items they (or their small group) did not nominate, but only one vote if their choice is one of their own contributions. This usually has the effect of increasing the numbers of votes on a handful of items, enhancing a sense of collective agreement.

With my alternative brief design of *Search*, usually agreements are sufficiently shared and important that participants are willing to put disagreements aside. However, it is important to check that there are no substantial and unspoken disagreements. If there are, a full search or some alternative dialectic process is urged.

See also the paper by Kai Schafft and Davydd Greenwood, "Promises and dilemmas of participation" (*Journal of the Community Development Society*, 34(1), 18-35) for some further cautions.

39 This activity and the next were developed together to be used in sequence for enhancing team performance and satisfaction. The focus is on improving the way in which interdependencies within the team are managed. The process also helps team members improve their skills at diagnosing and remedying situations where interdependencies are not being well handled.

There are many sources for the ideas and processes in the two activities. In the form described here, the most important source initially was *Task oriented team development*. Developed by Irwin Rubin, Mark Plovnick and Ronald Fry, it analyses and readjusts the task and role relationships within a team.

Although it is not apparent in the form I describe here, the two processes can also be extended to address deeper aspects of relationship. The processes begin much as in the description here. Then, as feelings and assumptions become relevant, these are added to the information identified and exchanged. In this extended form of the processes, Chris Argyris has again been a seminal influence. You can download a brief description of the extended process from my website: http://www.aral.com.au/resources/frameworks.pdf

Also see the next note.

40 Although they can be used separately, role clarification and role negotiation were designed to be used together. See also the previous note.

In addition, the actual information-exchange component (in the earlier description, the text in the box) can be used for many purposes. Examples of useful applications include within-team interdependencies being poorly handled, renegotiating between team interdependencies, resolving conflicts, and the like.

41 This approach to work redesign is based closely on the work of Fred Emery and his colleagues at the Tavistock Institute in Britain, and the Centre for Continuing Education at Australian National University. My description is based loosely on *Participative design: work and community life* (Canberra, ACT: Centre for Continuing Education, Australian National University) by Fred and Merrelyn Emery.

I have several reasons for choosing the process. It involves team members collaboratively in diagnosing, planning and implementing their own design. Thus they practice the collaborative functioning that the process is intended to institute into their normal working relationships. It is structured in a logical sequence requiring relative little facilitation expertise. Team may therefore be able to use it subsequently without external facilitation. Because the team plans the implementation, they own the process as well as their planned actions. Further, the skills matrix involves them in looking ahead to further progress. This further cements their ownership.

To my mind, there is also a philosophical reason to approve of the process. Most of our organisations do not offer workers even the poor form of democracy that characterises most Western nation states. Most workers are required to give up their autonomy when they enter the workplace. This process is democratic, in both its planning and its implementation.

You may be unable to obtain a copy of the Emery and Emery paper. If so, an alternative resource is *People in charge* (Hawthorn Press, Glasgow, 1999) by Robert Rehm.

Merrelyn Emery has described some of the theoretical assumptions behind the approach in "The current version of Emery's Open Systems Theory", in *Systemic Practice and Action Research*, 2000, 13(5), 623-643.

42 The continuous improvement process is based on a participatory evaluation process that I learned from Wes Snyder. Wes and I were academics in the Psychology Department at the University of Queensland. I sat in on a

postgraduate class in Evaluation that Wes facilitated, and joined him in helping to evaluate an alternative-to-prison home detention program. Since then I've used the process for both evaluation and for implementing continuous improvement. In the course of that work, I've developed it further. I believe it is still consistent with Wes's concepts and processes.

It contributes towards the *management of interdependencies* within and between teams. It does so by aligning everyone with the organisational vision. Team members identify indicators that can be used to monitor moment-by-moment and day-by-day achievement of organisational and team goals. Each indicator serves as a proxy for progress toward organisational and team visions.

I don't have references for any of Wes's descriptions of the process. He was a practitioner as well as an academic, and used most of his academic writing for other purposes. I've prepared a brief description that is on the web:

http://www.aral.com.au/resources/snyder-b.html

a somewhat more detailed description:

http://www.aral.com.au/resources/snyder.html

and an account of qualitative evaluation using the Snyder process:

http://www.aral.com.au/resources/qualeval.html

Some Agile approaches have a participative approach to continuous improvement directed towards improving performance. As one example,

Jeff Sutherland's book *Scrum* (Random House, London, 2014) describes how teams meet regularly — typically daily — to keep each other informed about progress.

For suggestions for relevant further reading, see overleaf

Suggested further reading

Argyris, C. (2010). *Organizational traps: leadership, culture, organizational design*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Some people object that Argyris's earlier work is difficult. Some find this book, published just a few years before his death, to be clearer and more readable. With a well structured argument that is easy to follow, it describes the skilled but unfortunate ways in which we avoid airing issues that would be valuable if surfaced. It contains specific examples to illustrate many of the key points.

Hamel, G. (2011). First, let's fire all the managers. *Harvard Business Review*, 89(12), 48-60.

This is Gary Hamel's description of Morning Star, a large Californian tomato processing organisation. Without a hierarchy or bosses, it provides colleagues (as organisational members are called) with enormous freedom for self-management. It nevertheless achieves the necessary coordination of effort and expertise. Each colleague negotiates an agreement — a Colleague Letter of Understanding or CLOU — with each person where there are important interdependencies. The CLOU is updated annually to take account of changing conditions and growing skill and expertise. The company has a website at http://www.morningstarco.com

Hock, D. (2005). *One from many: VISA and the rise of chaordic organization*. San Francisco, Ca.: Berrett-Koehler.

Dee Hock illustrates his views of leadership with an extended case study of the development and creation of Visa International. Visa was designed as a cooperative venture, and so were the planning meetings that created it. The book is full of informative and interesting accounts of how Visa developed. Hock also pauses from time to time to reflect on what is happening. The story unfolds against a background assumption

that the world is complex. Such a world requires a "chaordic" organisation — one designed to cope with the complexity.

Marquet, L.D. (2015). *Turn the ship around!: a true story of building leaders by breaking the rules*. London: Penguin.

This is an extended case study of how David Marquet (pronounced mar-KAY) turned the submarine USS *Santa Fe* from worst-performing to best-performing submarine in the fleet, in a short time. It describes many specific and implementable strategies for converting leader-follower relationships into what Marquet calls "leader-leader" relationships. Each strategy is accompanied by the rationale for Marquet's actions, and specific illustrations of how it played out in practice. An unusually high proportion of the Santa Fe's officers earned promotion to more senior positions elsewhere. *Santa Fe*'s high performance continued after Marquet moved on.

Schwarz, R.M. (2016). *The skilled facilitator: a comprehensive resource for consultants, facilitators, managers, trainers, and coaches* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, Ca.: Jossey-Bass.

Schwarz, R.M. (2013). *Smart leaders, smarter teams: how you and your team get unstuck to get results*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Roger Schwarz has taken concepts and processes from Chris Argyris's and Donald Schön's theory-of-action approach and applied them to facilitation, and then to team functioning. The result is a learnable and usable application of some powerful and often difficult ways of managing interactions. Schwarz depends heavily on a set of simple and actionable "groundrules" that facilitators or team members and leaders learn and then implement. Schwarz has also (with others) prepared a workbook to accompany *The skilled facilitator*. All three books are readable and practical (see References.)

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Brief index of key concepts and activities

(underlined numbers are *page* numbers)

(italicised numbers are *endnote* numbers)

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