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Organizational Diagnosis: Six Places To Look for Trouble with or Without a Theory

MARVIN R. WEISBORD

This article presents a practice theory for diagnosing organizations—that is, a combination of many ideas in a relatively simple framework that can be applied in various settings. It brings together organization/environment, sociotechnical, and formal/informal systems concepts, and proposes six broad categories for looking at an organization: purposes; structure; relationships; rewards; leadership; and helpful mechanisms. The author illustrates how these six factors influence each other and provides clues about what to diagnose in each category, considering the infinite number of possibilities. He also suggests that what are called “process” issues show up as blocked work that can be freed by understanding and intervening in one or more of the six boxes.

No single model or conceptual scheme embraces the whole breadth and complexity of reality, even though each in turn may be useful in particular instances. This is why management remains an art, for the practitioner must go beyond the limits of theoretical knowledge if he is to be effective. (Tilles, 1963, pp. 73-81)

For several years I have been experimenting with “cognitive maps” of organizations. These are labels that would help me better describe what I saw and heard and understand the relationships among various bits of data. I started this endeavor when I realized that though I knew many organization theories, most were either (1) too narrow to

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include everything I wished to understand or (2) too broadly abstract to give much guidance about what to do.

This article represents a progress report on my efforts to combine bits of data, theories, research, and hunches into a working tool that anyone can use. It is one example of a process I believe goes on among practitioners that is neither well documented nor well understood (Weisbord, 1974a). The process does not take place in a mode consistent with the protocols of social science research. It is not tied to any particular theory, nor is it subject to easy translation into research instruments. It is not intended to prove or disprove hypotheses. Rather, it represents what Vaill (1975; Friedlander & Brown, 1974) calls a "practice theory"—a synthesis of knowledge and experience into a concept that bears "some relation to public, objective theories about organizational situations, but in no sense (is) identical to them."

I think this accurately describes what I have been calling, for want of a more elegant name, the "Six-Box Model." This model (Figure 1) has helped me rapidly expand my diagnostic framework from interpersonal and group issues to the more complicated contexts in which organizations are managed. It provides six labels, under which can be sorted much of the activity, formal and informal, that takes place in organizations. The labels allow consultants to apply whatever theories they know when doing a diagnosis and to discover new connections between apparently unrelated events.

We can visualize Figure 1 as a radar screen. Just as air controllers use radar to chart the course of aircraft—height, speed, distance apart, and weather—those seeking to improve an organization must observe relationships among the boxes and not focus on any particular blip.

Organizational "process" issues, for example, will show up as blips in one or more boxes, signaling the blockage of work on important organizational tasks. (Process issues relate to *how* and *whether* work gets done, rather than *what* is to be done.)

Unfortunately, such issues too often are seen as the result of someone's personality. For example, the failure of a group to confront its differences may be diagnosed as the inability of one or two people to assert themselves. Yet, if the consultant were to look closely, he might find that no one in the organization confronts, independent of the assertion skills they may have. Those who do confront may be considered deviant and may be tolerated only to the extent that they have power.

From a management standpoint, it is probably more useful to think of process issues as systemic, that is, as part of the organization's management culture. This culture can be described as:

1. "Fit" between *organization* and *environment*—the extent to which purposes and structure support high performance and ability to change with conditions; and/or

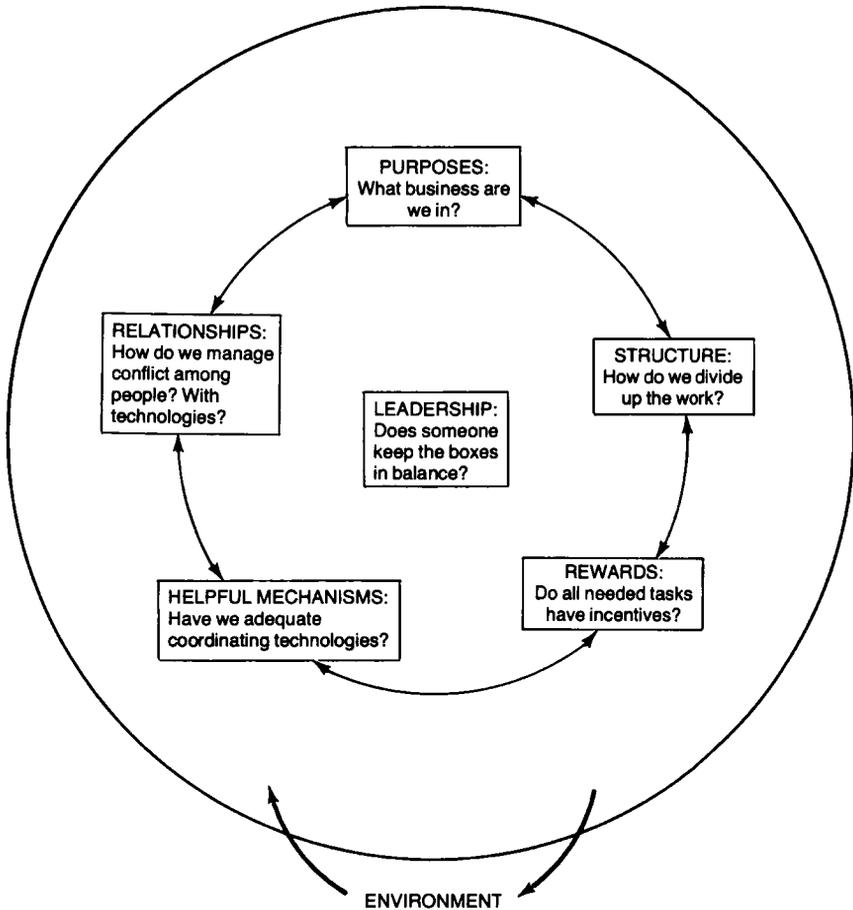


Figure 1. The Six-Box Organizational Model

2. “Fit” between *individual* and *organization*—the extent to which people support or subvert formal mechanisms intended to carry out an organization’s purposes.

The relationship between individual and organization is the basis for many important books in the organizational literature. McGregor (1960) argued that a better fit might be attained under Theory Y assumptions (people like to work, achieve, and be responsible) than Theory X assumptions (people are passive, dependent, and need to be controlled). Blake and Mouton (1964) devised elaborate change strategies (variations of “Grid” theory) based on the notion that productivity and human satisfaction need not be mutually exclusive.

Maslow (1971) struggled in his last years to reconcile employee self-actualization—personal growth and creativity—with an organization's needs for structure, order, and predictability. Argyris has written extensively on the potential incompatibilities of individuals and organizations and the threat that bureaucratic structures pose to self-esteem (Argyris, 1957).

In the last ten years, both managers and consultants have become much more conscious of organizations as open systems in which structure and behavior are heavily influenced by environment. Lawrence and Lorsch (1967) compared high- and low-performance businesses in terms of structural requirements—based largely on rate of change in business technology and environment—and came up with a contingency theory: the way subunits of an organization are structured depends not only on their functions but on environmental factors, which results in different policies and procedures for different organizations.

Sociotechnical theorists such as Trist (1969) have tried to reconcile structured technologies and work systems with people's individual and social needs, theorizing that high performance equals an optimum balance between technology ("task") and people ("process").

Each of the possible frameworks highlights important organizational issues; each has been the basis for useful interventions in the organization development repertoire. Yet, none is an adequate tool for the management of an entire organization without an expansion of concepts.

Management needs a view simple enough, and complete enough, to improve the quality of its decisions. What follows is a description of how the Six-Box Organizational Model can be used to put into perspective *whatever* theories and concepts a consultant already knows along with *whatever* problems present themselves in diagnosing an organization's problems.

The circle in Figure 1 describes the boundaries of an organization to be diagnosed. *Environment* means forces difficult to control from inside that demand a response—customers, government, unions, students, families, friends, etc. It is not always clear where the boundaries are or should be. Although such a system can be characterized accurately as "open," its rationality depends on partially closing off infinite choices. Deciding where the boundary lies is an act of reason wed to values, for there are no absolutes (Vickers, 1965).

The consultant may find it necessary to set boundaries arbitrarily so that a diagnosis can proceed. I do this by picking a unit name (i.e., XYZ Company, ABC Department, QUR Team) and listing groups or individuals inside the boundary by virtue of dollar commitments, contract, or formal membership. Within the boundaries, the boxes interact to create what is sometimes called an input-output system, whose

function is to transform resources into goods or services. Figure 2 illustrates the Six-Box organization/environment using input-output terms. Given that organizations function or do not function depending on what is going on in and between each of the six boxes, a consultant has a basis for doing an organizational diagnosis.

Formal and Informal Systems

Within each box are two potential trouble sources—the formal system that exists on paper and the informal system—or what people actually do. Neither system is necessarily better, but both exist. In doing a diagnosis, it helps to identify blips in each system and to attempt to define the relationships among them.

Diagnosing the formal system requires some informed guessing, based on knowledge of what the organization *says*—in its statements, reports, charts, and speeches—about how it is organized. The guessing comes after comparing its rhetoric with its environment and making a judgment about whether everything fits—whether society will value and underwrite an organization with such a purpose and such a means of organizing itself. Much expert consultation is aimed at bringing organizational rhetoric into better harmony with the outside world.

However, in every organization there is another level of behavior—what people actually do. Diagnosing these informal systems is sometimes called “normative” diagnosis (Clapp, 1974). It focuses on the frequency with which people take certain actions in relation to how important these actions are for organizational performance. Normative behavior usually determines whether otherwise technically excellent systems succeed or fail, because normative behavior indicates the degree to which the system as designed meets the needs of the people who have to operate it. Sometimes norms cannot be changed informally, so there is a need to study relationships *between* the two levels of

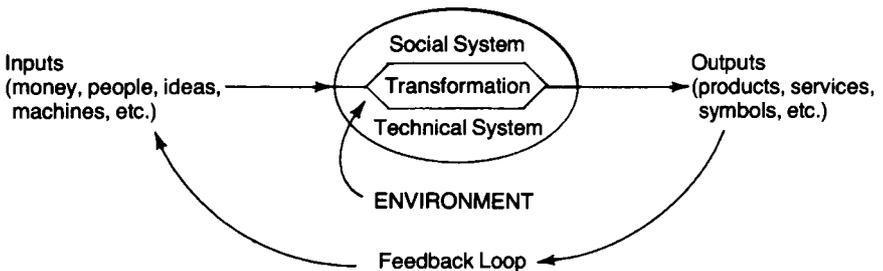


Figure 2. The Six-Box Organizational Model Using Input-Output Terms

analysis. By persisting in such an inquiry, a consultant discovers some of the reasons why the input-transformation-output stream is not flowing as smoothly as it could.

How To Collect Data

Collecting data on which to base a diagnosis can be as simple as brainstorming or as complex as a “grand design” research methodology involving hypotheses, instruments, and computer analysis. Complexity aside, there are four ways to collect data:

1. *Observation.* Watch what people do in meetings, on the job, on the phone, etc.

2. *Reading.* Follow the written record—speeches, reports, charts, graphs, etc.

3. *Interviews.* Question everyone involved with a particular project.

4. *Survey.* Use standard questionnaires or design your own. Surveys are most useful when they ask for information not readily obtainable in any other way, such as attitudes, perceptions, opinions, preferences, beliefs, etc.

All four methods of data collection can be used to isolate the two major kinds of discrepancy—between what people say (formal) and what they do (informal) and between what is (organization as it exists) and what ought to be (appropriate environmental fit). The trick is not to use any particular methods, but to sort the evidence of one’s senses into some categories that encourage sensible decisions.

Where To Start

There are two main reasons why one might want to diagnose an organization: to find out systematically what its strengths and weaknesses are or to uncover reasons why either the producers or consumers of a particular output are dissatisfied. Because the latter reason is most often the trigger for corrective actions, I suggest starting a diagnosis by considering one major output. Tracing its relationship to the whole system will result in an understanding of the gaps in the organization between “what is” and “what ought to be.”

Let us look at one output—say a single product or service—and determine how satisfied the *consumers* are and how satisfied the *producers* are. The central assumption behind this activity is that consumer acceptance, more than any other factor, determines whether an organization prospers or fades. Satisfied consumers generally indicate a good fit with the environment at one major contact point. Without satisfied consumers, producer satisfaction is likely to be unstable. If

neither group is satisfied, an organization is in serious trouble. If one group is happy and the other is not, trouble is forthcoming. Either way, the situation can be diagnosed by tracing the dissatisfactions through each box, looking for a likely intervention point.

PURPOSES

People have all sorts of feelings (mainly anxiety) about work, which cannot be addressed rationally if an organization's goals remain obscure. Thus, the two critical factors in this box are goal clarity and goal agreement (Steers et al., 1974). They must both be present.

In part the environment (what will society support?) and in part managers and members, who succeed to the extent that they read the environment right in relation to themselves, decide an organization's purposes. Purposes can be seen as a sort of psychological negotiation between "what we have to do" (for survival) and "what we want to do" (for growth, self-expression, idealism, etc.). The outcome of this negotiation is called "priorities." Effective organizations translate priorities into programs, projects, and products aimed at particular consumers.

Ill-defined or overly broad purposes may increase anxiety and strain relations among producers and consumers alike. Considerable conflict exists when purposes are unclear or when people disagree on what the priorities should be, although such conflict may serve certain people. In universities, medical centers, and some industrial staff groups, for example, competition is so high, interdependence is so low, and goals are so diffuse, that the only way individuals keep control, and thus maintain self-esteem, is by resisting efforts to focus organizational resources. Without concentration, organizations cannot be made to perform, according to Drucker (1974a).

Hence a diagnosis first should examine *goal "fit."* (Are this organization's purposes ones that society values and will pay for?) It should also consider *goal clarity.* (How well articulated are these goals in the formal system, both for producers and consumers?) Finally, the informal (process) issue is *goal agreement.* (To what extent do people understand and support the organization's purposes?) Some organizations have inherent low goal clarity because their concerns are so global or all encompassing that each member defines them in his own personal way. Certain policy institutes, foundations, and universities, for instance, have such a spectrum of possibilities that priorities are unclear; commitment, therefore, is spotty.

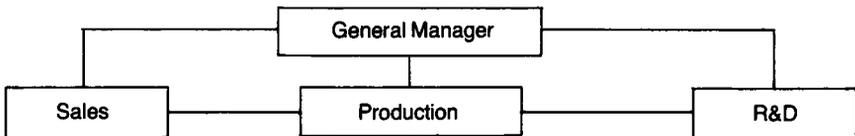
STRUCTURE

In organizations, as in architecture, form follows function. Every structure is good for something, no one is good for everything. There are three main ways to organize:

1. By function—specialists work together;
2. By product, program, or project—multiskilled teams work together;
3. A mixture of both—two homes for everyone. (Gulick, 1937)

None of these structures is trouble free, but each does result in different problems. In the *functional* organization (see diagram), for instance, division of labor, budgets, promotions, and rewards are all based on special competence. Functional bosses have the most influence on decisions and they seek to maximize their own goals—not the organization's as a whole. The drawbacks are that intergroup conflict is more predictable; big decisions pile up at the top; few members have the overall picture; and it is difficult to shift directions rapidly.

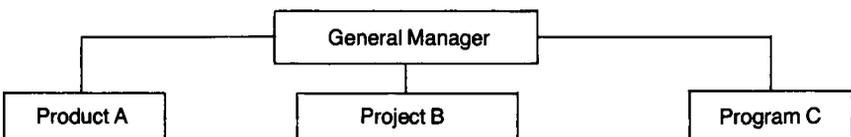
FUNCTIONAL ORGANIZATION



On the good side are support for in-depth competence; people at each level who speak the same language; freedom to specialize while others worry about coordination; and a chance for people to maximize whatever they do well. Functional organizations are stable and work best where environment and technologies change slowly, where quick response is not essential, and where in-depth competence is necessary. They resist rapid change. Functionalism and bureaucracy make fine marriage partners.

By contrast, the *product-line* or program or project-team organization works better in fast-changing environments. In product-line organizations, people do multiple tasks and integrate skills around one output. (See diagram.) In this structure, coordination with other teams is minimal, cutting down intergroup conflict. Rewards, promotions, and influence go to those who can integrate resources to innovate, produce, and deliver a product or service quickly.

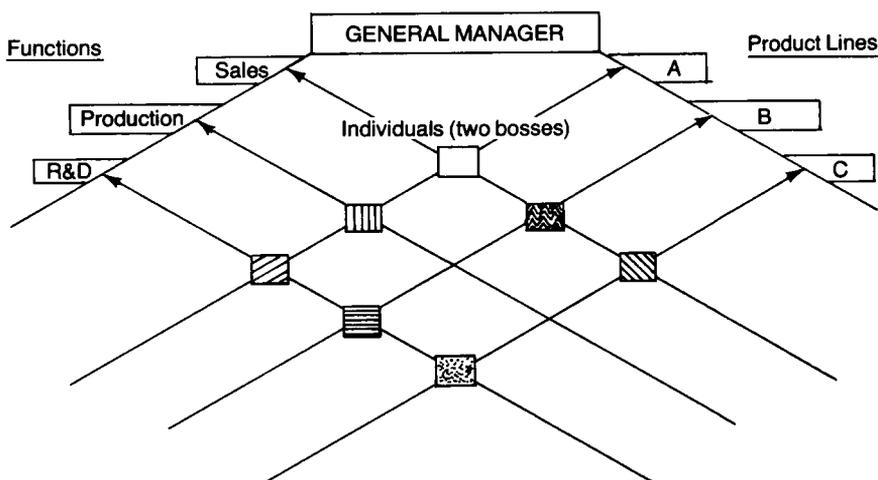
PRODUCT ORGANIZATION



On the other hand, in-depth competence erodes rapidly in each specialty, for generalists cannot keep up with everything, and specialists become harder to attract. Innovation is restricted to existing areas. Groups may compete for pooled resources such as computers or for staff functions such as purchasing. Internal task conflicts may emerge, making division of labor on each team a salient issue.

When organizations decentralize, they often change from functional to product structure, improving the informal system at an eventual cost to formal needs.

Therefore, some organizations try to have it both ways. This gives rise to the *matrix* or mixed model (see diagram), which grew up in the aerospace industry, where projects required both diverse state-of-the-art expertise and focused effort on each project. In the matrix model, people have two or more formal locations on the chart.



No organization could neatly arrange itself this way from top to bottom. It might better be called a *mixed model*, in which some units of a company, university, or medical center may be functional and some programmatic; some people may wear two hats and some only one—based on the various environments surrounding each subunit (Weisbord, 1974b).

A mixed model provides maximum flexibility, for it can shrink or expand with need. It provides multiple career paths, rewarding both special and integrative skills. However, these plusses are offset by serious drawbacks that might be summarized as “human limitation.” Ambiguity is high. Conflict management requires considerable time and effort, for conflict is rife and built-in.

To be wholly effective, practically and psychologically, a mixed organization needs two budget lines, contracts with two bosses, dual reward systems, and so on. Such mechanisms are expensive. Moreover, they are not well understood. None of us has had much experience, in school or at work, to prepare us for such a set of relationships.

People who try mixed models find that they must invent or discover new procedures and norms to support their goals. This is very hard to do and seems justified only when the stakes are high (saving lives, landing on the moon). It is hardly worth the energy if simpler forms will serve, for it greatly complicates relationships (Kingdon, 1973).

In diagnosing structure, a consultant must look for the fit between the goal (output) and the structure producing it (formal system), then attend to how the work is *actually* divided up and performed and how people use or subvert the organization chart.

RELATIONSHIPS

Three types of work relationship are the most important:

1. Between people—peers or boss-subordinate;
2. Between units doing different tasks;
3. Between people and their technologies (i.e., systems or equipment).

In the formal system, the consultant should diagnose such relationships in terms of how much interdependence is required to get the work done. There are two possible dysfunctions:

1. People need to work together and do not do it well;
2. People do not need to work together, but try to force collaboration (i.e., in the name of “good human relations” or because they “should”).

A second level of relationship diagnosis relates to the degree of built-in conflict. Some units (sales and production, for example) may fight with each other as willingly as they eat. Such conflict is legitimate, because each unit needs to see things differently to do good work. This conflict is potentially useful and ought to be managed rather than suppressed (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967). Quality of relations between units (or people) matters more to an organization’s performance the more the units must work together to achieve results.

How conflict is managed is an issue for normative diagnosis. Some people fight openly for what they want. Others manipulate, deceive, pull strings, or do everything but burn down the building to gain their objective, thus helping themselves and probably hurting the organization. Here is a simple classification of conflict management norms:

1. Forcing. Allow more powerful people to have their way.

2. Smoothing. Reduce differences by pretending there are none. Organize all units the same way whether it helps them do a good job or not.
3. Avoiding or Suppressing. Make it disloyal to raise disagreements openly.
4. Bargaining. Negotiate differences, hold some cards in the hole, narrow the issues, and play for maximum advantage.
5. Confronting. Open all issues and data to inspection by both parties. Create mechanisms to surface all aspects of disagreement and initiate problem solving.

A consultant needs to diagnose first for required interdependence, then for *quality of relations*, and finally for modes of conflict management (Lawrence et al., 1973).

REWARDS

Having a reward system (formal) in no way guarantees that people will feel and act as if they are rewarded (informal). Maslow (1954) explained the problem in terms of a "hierarchy of needs," which, once satisfied, become essential. Herzberg et al. (1959) showed that meeting basic needs ("hygiene factors") was necessary for morale, but not sufficient for the motivation to carry out creatively the tasks an organization needs to have done. Figure 3 shows the relationship between Maslow's theory and Herzberg's research findings.

Both reinforce the point that the fit between person and organization improves when there is a chance for growth, responsibility, and achievement. A reward system that pays off in fringe benefits and salary alone is inadequate unless people also value their work and see in it a chance to grow.

The trick is translating reward theory into organizational practice. Some managers still believe salary and fringe benefits motivate, although there is considerable evidence to support the idea that once a need is satisfied it no longer motivates. Thus, salary and benefits stimulate performance only when given as symbols of worthy work that is needed and valued by the organization (recognition).

A second important issue is "equity" or fairness among members of an organization. Informal feelings or beliefs determine whether or not people *act* as if rewarded, independent of how much they actually receive. Herbert Meyer has made a convincing argument that merit pay may undermine self-esteem and reduce commitment to the work itself, because most of us feel we *always* are worth more than our supervisors judge, especially in comparison to others (Meyer, 1975).

Moreover, especially in industrial systems where incentive pay is based on individual production, the informal norm of peer approval frequently outweighs the economic benefits of rate breaking. This

MASLOW'S NEEDS HIERARCHY	HERZBERG'S FACTORS	
Personal Growth	Motivators	Work Itself (Achievement) Advancement (Recognition)
Esteem		
Belongingness	Hygiene Factors	Interpersonal and Supervisory Relationships
Safety		Technical Supervision Working Conditions Company Policy and Administration
Physiological		Salary

Figure 3. The Relation Between Maslow's Need Hierarchy and Herzberg's Research

This integration was called to my attention by Dr. Robert Maddox of RCA Staff, who used it in a 1965 Professional Personal Programs notebook on motivation.

functions to hold down production to a level below what people are capable of doing (Whyte & Miller, 1957).

In white collar work, the problem is even more complex. For example, finding rewards for teaching that are as psychologically potent as the rewards for research is a critical dilemma in universities.

Thus, before making the diagnosis, the consultant should take into account questions such as the following:

1. What does the organization need to do (fit)?
2. What does it pay off for, both actually and psychologically (formal system)?
3. What do people *feel* rewarded or punished for doing (informal system)?

LEADERSHIP

Much leadership theory focuses on interpersonal style—the informal system. Likert (1967) placed behavior on an autocratic-democratic continuum. He found that “System 4” managers (participative) exhibited high support, had high standards, and used group methods. They were also more productive than “System 1” autocrats. Blake and Mouton (1964) hypothesized that the best managers are those who can emphasize production and/or people, as the situation requires.

Both theories suggest development through training. Pseudodemocrats can learn to stop asking others for answers they

already have and be more decisive; autocrats can learn to collect more data before proceeding. Both can learn to solicit and use feedback.

Fiedler (1967) took a different approach. He sorted leaders by task or relationship orientation; he concluded that each style is good in some situations, neither is good in all, and changing one's orientation is difficult to do. Rather than training, Fiedler recommended either (a) fitting leaders to the task or situation or (b) changing the task to fit the leader's style.

Although this notion takes in so many contingencies it is not easy to use, it does highlight an issue that is not very well understood, especially in nonindustrial organizations: the growing evidence that interpersonal skills are most functional in unstructured, ambiguous, and/or high-anxiety situations. Although a leader can use such skills to smooth ruffled feathers, the skills contribute little to organizational performance in the absence of goal clarity and goal agreement.

No one can be sure what is required for good leadership in every situation. The best a manager can do is try to understand his organization and its requirements and then judge how much his leadership norms contribute to or block progress and how easily new skills can be learned if needed.

One formal dimension of leadership may make the difference between an organization that "works" and one that does not. Selznick (1957) names four leadership *tasks*, which, if not done, seriously undermine organizations:

1. Defining purposes;
2. Embodying purposes in programs;
3. Defending institutional integrity;
4. Ordering internal conflict.

Much turmoil in organizations—especially among administrative employees—results from a failure of leadership to define, embody, and defend purposes and to manage internal conflict. A unique task of leadership, then, independent of task and relationship skills, might be to take responsibility for scanning the six-box radar screen, looking for blips both formal and informal, and doing something about them. This task can be shared, but it cannot be delegated. This is especially true in functional organizations, in which, if specialists look out for their *own* tasks, they cannot be expected to be responsible for the total organization.

I do not believe that leaders should know and do everything, but they should know where the trouble spots are and how these affect the whole organization. This requires them to systematically monitor and initiate corrective action (interventions) whenever the radar reveals a blip that threatens performance.

The main leadership dilemma is persuading others to share the risk. They will not be willing if they think a leader has defective vision,

for normative behavior tends to be reinforced from the top down. Few people get out ahead of the boss.

Leadership requires, in addition to behavioral skill, an understanding of the environment and a will to focus purposes, especially if there is a problem in one of the six boxes. A leader's precise understanding of his role and the extent to which this understanding results in his using mechanisms designed to keep formal and informal systems in balance are the main components of a successful leadership style. No one can achieve exactly the proper balance; to the extent that it is not achieved, a formal organization may, in practice, be (informally) leaderless.

HELPFUL MECHANISMS

Mechanisms have proven to be a useful way to think about the cement that binds an organization together to make it more than a collection of individuals with separate needs. Helpful mechanisms are related to the contents of all the other boxes. Mechanisms are the procedures, policies, meetings, systems, committees, bulletin boards, memos, reports, meeting rooms, space, information, and so on that facilitate concerted efforts. Problems with such mechanisms are most easily understood by observing the flow of work on all sides and the points at which it seems clogged.

An effective organization continually revises its mechanisms, eliminating some or adding others, as the need arises. If a gap between "what is" and "what ought to be" is identified, it is often found that no mechanism exists for closing it, which often leads to much informal discussion over coffee and little movement toward a solution. The deliberate creation of new mechanisms is essential for the identification and closing of gaps.

All good managers and effective consultants provide structured procedures, meetings, and ground rules for diagnosis and action and know how to create problem-solving vehicles that did not previously exist.

In addition, there are four other processes that require helpful mechanisms,¹ which every organization must attend to in some fashion. Each has the potential for helpful (formal intent) or unhelpful (informal result) outcomes. The processes are planning, budgeting, control, and measurement (information). Without helpful mechanisms in each of these areas, organizations will act more like rudderless ships than

¹These processes are covered in many standard management texts. For a source that integrates them in a behavioral context, see Kast & Rosenzweig (1970).

purposeful men-of-war. Thus, the first diagnostic question for a consultant is whether an organization does have some formal helpful mechanisms.

The second set of questions (informal) is how these systems actually are used; to what extent quantitative data are fed back to employees so that they can make better course corrections; to what extent relevant others are involved in planning and budgeting; and to what extent control is used as a safety and alert system to educate rather than to punish.

A consultant must watch for two situations in particular when diagnosing helpful mechanisms. One is the lack of any rational planning, budgeting, control, or measurement systems. In this case, no amount of interpersonal or group process work will "improve" an organization. Second, and worse, is the organization that has budgeting and controls, but no goals that the people doing the work agree are *organizationally* relevant (for them). The latter describes some universities and medical centers, for example, in which financial control systems provide an illusion of rationality that, like beauty, is only skin deep (Drucker, 1974b).

OD in such situations is not an *organization* development process at all. The best that a consultant can do is help members make more rational decisions about their own careers, thereby contributing to their personal growth. Certainly there is no interdependency to be negotiated in the absence of agreement about the ends toward which the organization is being managed (Weisbord, 1976).

The Six-Box Organization Model is a useful "early-warning system" for a consultant who is trying to decide where and whether to take corrective action. There are three levels of diagnosis that provide clues to appropriate interventions:

1. Does the organization fit its environment? If not, it cannot be developed until the fit can be rationalized and supported.
2. Is the organization structured to carry out its purposes? If not, work on structure is required before an examination of interpersonal and group processes can take on meaning other than personal growth.
3. Are the organization's norms out of phase with its intent? How much discrepancy exists between formal and informal systems? If this is the main problem (as it often is in otherwise successful businesses) most of the management and organization development interventions will apply.

Any diagnostic questions a consultant asks about any of the boxes will yield useful data. Figure 4 summarizes the important questions about both formal and informal systems. There are as many ways to use these ideas as there are managers. I have offered this practice theory as the basis for starting new teams, task forces, and committees or for helping existing teams decide what they need to do next. Others have

	Formal System (work to be done)	Informal System (process of working)
1. PURPOSES	Goal Clarity	Goal Agreement
2. STRUCTURE	Functional, Program, or Matrix?	How work is actually done or not done.
3. RELATIONSHIPS	Who should deal with whom on what? Which technologies should be used?	How well do they do it? Quality of relations? Modes of conflict management?
4. REWARDS (Incentives)	Explicit System What is it?	Implicit, psychic rewards. What do people <i>feel</i> about payoffs?
5. LEADERSHIP	What do top people manage? What systems in use?	How? Normative "style" of administration?
6. HELPFUL MECHANISMS	Budget System Management Information (measures?) Planning Control	What are they actually used for? How function in practice? How are systems subverted?

Diagnostic questions may be asked on two levels:

1. How big a gap is there between formal and informal systems? (This speaks to the fit between individual and organization.)
2. How much discrepancy is there between "what is" and "what ought to be"? (This highlights the fit between organization and environment.)

Figure 4. Matrix for Survey Design or Data Analysis

adapted the Six-Box Model to screen prospective employers, evaluate the management literature in terms of which issues it illuminates, write job descriptions, and organize research findings. It is also a useful teaching tool in comparing various types of organizations.

Finally, the Six-Box Organization Model provides an easy way of testing the extent to which an intervention seems right. I have used it both to explain and to anticipate my failures and have found that more anticipating means less explaining. In my experience, all interventions that "fail" eventually do so for one of three reasons (Bowers et al., 1975):

1. The intervention is inappropriate to the problem or organization. (A T-group may improve relationships without surfacing serious deficiencies of purpose, structure, or technology.)
2. The intervention deals with the wrong (less salient) blip on the radar screen. (When the pressing problem is ineffective leadership, a new reward system, no matter how desirable, may not make a difference.)

3. The intervention solves the identified problem, thus heightening issues in other boxes it was *not* designed to solve. An organization can be restructured to better fit its environment without changing norms and relationships that require other interventions.

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