Mapping the Organizational DNA:
A System Approach to MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS - PART II

This chapter focuses on the four cornerstones of the Organizaitonal DNA. Mapping of the kind can increase the clarity of purpose and the ways to achieve it tremendously.

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CORNERSTONES OF THE PYRAMID

The Leadership cornerstone

Leadership gives direction, clarifies purpose, helps chart the course, inspires commitment and has the capacity to hold the line as well as the intuition to know when to push the limits. Leadership assumes the responsibility for the performance of the whole and is accountable for the production and effectiveness of whole. It helps set the milestones and vision in a way that is attainable. There is tension between asking for the sky and understanding the limits of the earth you walk on. Leadership is about accomplishing the most with what you've got. It can be about envisioning the future and inspiring people to share it and execute on it. It is about the clarity of a vision and the commitment to making it happen. It is about working with existing structures, culture and strategy to provide appropriate mentoring, guidance and clear direction to get the job done.

The Strategy Cornerstone

Strategy is part of the organization's road map to accomplishment of the vision. It is the overarching plan for realizing the vision. The strategy will eventually contain the goals, objectives, and tactics necessary for success. As we will see below, strategy is intimately connected to structure, leadership, and culture for its operational form. When properly aligned with organizational culture, the organization gains will power and ability to persist in the face of difficult economy, or tough market. When proper Structure is combined with strategy, decision-making becomes clear and effortless in the organization. Leadership provides the direction and their meaningful link leads to clear and shared vision in the organization.

The Strategy cornerstone influences the other three through its purpose –- accomplishment. When Leadership proposes a vision, Strategy responds with its concepts about how the vision might actually come into being. That response can be wildly supportive or pessimistically withdrawn. When the strategy looks for capacity to enable its plans it has Structure and Culture as partners. Structure assists by bringing tactical resources to the table. It can either contribute these when the "mood" is right, or withhold them when the plan conflicts with Structure's perceptions. Culture, on the other hand, brings meaning, value, ethics, enthusiasm, and myriad other gifts to the engine of accomplishment. If Strategy is in harmony with these elements –"all is well"; if not, the potential for success fades.

The Structure Cornerstone

Structure is the explicit container that sets the boundaries for relationships between various members of the organizational ecosystem (customer, employee, supplier, community and competitors). It includes organization charts, accounting procedures etc. The relationships and levels of responsibility in the process of production or providing service are determined by the structures, hierarchy and systems that are established. Structure is a tangible, anatomical equivalent of the body of the organization. Structure determines the types of energy and processing connections (like circulating blood flow) that exist. It creates the communication mechanisms (like the nervous system). Structure determines who is located by whom, interacts with whom, reports to whom, responsible for what, etc.

Governance, motivation, and decision-making are influenced by the organizational structure in

relationship with the other cornerstones. Functional relationship with leadership leads to effective governance and so on. Communication between strategy and structure leads to effective decision-making. Aligning the tacit dimensions of culture, the explicit tangible structure increases motivation and morale within the organization.

Structure is often considered inanimate; and, therefore, is a reflection of action rather than an active force. Although the structure can be represented on an organization chart, ledger, or facilities diagram, it still comes down to people. People can be ""handled" or considered," ""managed" or led," or ""included" or co-opted."

The Culture Cornerstone

As one moves from the generic model to actual application, perceptions of the Core Incompetence can carry a negative connotation that is misleading. The incompetence arises as a result of a failure to adapt to demands of other parts of the system, i.e. demands of leadership, strategy, structure, or culture. This does not mean that the element assigned to the Core Incompetence position within the pyramid is itself incompetent; rather that the its perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors run counter to those necessary for accomplishing the system's stated purpose. It is, therefore, the system's Core Incompetence.

Culture is the invisible glue that transmits the meaning of what is present in the organizational field. The culture of a company gives it a character and uniqueness that could be closest to biological DNA. Culture refers to the collection of values, beliefs, behaviors, and attitudes that characterize an organization, which are contained in the stories, symbols, beliefs, assumptions, and values that members share. Culture can be inferred from what people say, do, feel and think within in an organizational setting that is largely tacit and not explicitly defined by rules and structures. It is structurally complex because it consists of large sets of implicit assumptions that cover how employees view their relationships with various environments (customers, suppliers, community, leadership, and each other). In other words, the personality of an organization is represented by organizational culture, and it influences how people interpret information and behave within the organizational system.

Culture determines, to a large extent, what employees see, hear, and feel, and how they respond to each other and the outside word. That is why it is critical to understand and map the Culture when attempting to create success in a newly merged/acquired company. Some aspects of culture can impede or prevent successful change. This impedance is often mani fest a set of behaviors / attitudes that were successful in the past, or perceived to be so, but is now a roadblock to change. It represents the status quo. Many aspects of culture are often invisible to us unless we focus our attention on its influence on the organization. Even then, it can be difficult to see clearly without real work.

Culture is a richly nuanced arena that is ever present in any community. Looking out from the Culture cornerstone one can see Strategy, Structure, and Leadership. Along the will power / sustainability relationship Strategy is informed of Culture's needs for fulfillment in order to engage in the partnership of production. Culture relies on Structure for a meaningful and functional work environment. Finally, Culture needs Leadership to exhibit an executive style that is properly nourishing and respectful of Cultural norms etc.

In this particular application, Culture might be considered a core incompetence. This is not to imply that the culture is incompetent; rather, it considers that the culture carries within it, the capacity, and intention, to take action independent of its leadership. An organization's culture is complex. A proposed change might be seen by the culture as a benefit in one area, but perceived as a threat in another. Maintaining the status quo would be an example of culture acting against leadership's attempts to change. Acting to maintain the status quo may not actually be in the best interest of the system, but might be seen as the right thing by the culture at this time. It is the "heart"of the organization in our model.

Fig: 5

Edges / Relationships

Edges connect the cornerstones. (See Figure 5.) They also serve as edges for each of the faces of the model. In the model, these edges represent the relationships between the cornerstones. The specific labels for those relationships emerge as one considers how the two cornerstones interact.

Identifying and scrutinizing the relationships results in increased understanding of the function they provide in the model. Once that understanding reaches a point where it contributes to one's decisions and actions, it approaches what Kaipa refers to it as a competence. "Competence is not a skill or knowledge; rather it combines skills, knowledge and a feeling of confidence in an integrated way to get the job done. Once people feel competent and the culture is conducive to risk taking, they may be willing to put their energies into what they do (Kaipa 2000)."

Each of the six edges in this model will be discussed below. Each cornerstone is directly connected to three edges. We will begin with the three edges connected directly to Leadership i.e. vision, executive style, and governance. Then we will consider the Culture cornerstone where two of its edges have yet to be discussed –- motivation and will power. Finally, the remaining edge i.e. discrimination, which connects Strategy and Structure will be examined. We will begin with the vision edge.

Vision - the edge between Leadership and Strategy

Leadership can provide vision for the organization, or at least the seed for precipitating the vision. Having the vision, however, is only part of the story when it comes to realizing the vision. Potential strategies for accomplishing the vision have a direct influence on how the vision is framed. Many of our ideas are generated within a framework of knowledge and experience. This framework's very existence contributes to some degree to how the actual vision end-product. This is not to say that

visions are not generated that have no conceivable mechanisms for achievement. But, it does seem fair to say that the larger the chasm between vision and strategy, the longer the time it will take for the vision to become reality.

Some visions are very futuristic and not intended to become real in the sense of being a product or service in the foreseeable future. Rather, they serve as energizing lights on the horizon to which we aspire, all the while accomplishing smaller more concrete visions along the way. The point here is that what becomes a vision with true potential for actualization will have been tempered by both leadership and strategy.

Leadership might take an aggressive view of future market share; it might seek a safe secure path to maintaining the status quo or protecting market share against erosion; or it might take a 360-degree view of the marketplace, a consideration of basic maintenance needs coupled with some risk associated with growth.

On the darker side of leadership, some leaders might choose to push for accomplishing something that would put the company at great risk or that might call for action that would injure the industry as this single company ""succeeded"." Others might cause such a decrease in motivation to act that nothing happens. The individual or group can become paralyzed by a focus on issues of security and protection of the status quo in the presence of information indicating that other actions might be advisable. If leadership has a lack of focus where there doesn't seem to be a handle to grasp, the vision can suffer from a lack of energy to set it in motion.

From the Leadership cornerstone, the Vision DNA strand connects with Strategy. This offers leaders the opportunity to see the vision become reality. Strategy, or the lack thereof, can also apply a dose of reality to the more grandiose vision.

In the case of aggressive plans of action for taking on new territory, Strategies might call for radical maneuvers in order to realize the vision. If this moves into the shadow zone, the vision could well exceed the limits of the system. In a more protective strategic process, the vision can be influenced to be much more risk resistant with reliance on plans for maintenance rather than growth. One downside to this influence is the possible failure to see the vision of opportunity as a result of restrictive blinders.

From a more balanced perspective, the Strategy would suggest a vision with as much risk as Strategies could reasonably be designed to accomplish while assuring that a fall-back plan can be also created that will allow for acceptable loss control.

Executive style - the edge between Leadership and Culture

Leadership uses an executive style in its attempt to accomplish its vision. When viewed from a top-down perspective, it appears that leadership sits in the driver's seat when it comes to selecting how execution of the vision will proceed. Those organization members below the leadership ranks are often seen as recipients of executive action. From a bottom-up perspective, the culture also has significant influence on executive style. The culture determines what seems fair, how it will respond to executive action, how effectively the vision will be accomplished relative to the leadership's'intentions.

The reality is a melding of the two views resulting in a reflexive relationship. Organizations that increase their understanding of this relationship move it into the realm of a competency; it becomes a tool or skill with the capacity for action rather than merely a description from two anchoring positions at opposite ends of a polarity.

One type of executive style might make decisions unilaterally in the attempt to streamline the process. Although this can be effective to a degree, if the leader has an agenda that is expected to win the day, regardless of others' opinions, Argyris argues that this model I behavior will not create maximum results. Taken a bit further, leadership might emerge as very controlling - fearful that deviation could lead to failure - rather than having an eye on growth. Adopting a laissez faire attitude, on the other hand, letting things happen as they might as long as things don't get "out of hand"can create its own

share of problems.

Again ideally, the balanced executive style might strive for involvement of many opinions prior to real decision-making; it would also offer latitude in personal style in an effort to sustain internal commitment, potential for corporate growth through innovation, and reduced stress from the pressure induced by rigid rule-based behavior.

An action-oriented Culture could provide fast responses to Leadership suggestions or updates, critical assessment of directives looking for flaws that would impede success. It could result in an "all-out effort" to cooperate as evidence the Culture's confidence in Leadership. In the shadow zone the "all-out effort"might take place without adequate assessment adding tremendous risk to the venture. A more cautious Culture could exhibit performance based on perceptions of survival. It might demonstrate a lack of response, or resistance, to any executive style that asks for more than the basic level of performance. The balanced position would have the Culture in a dialogic relationship with Leadership –- considering alternatives, suspending judgment, reflecting on the past and generating alternatives for a future that addresses internal and external factions.

Governance - the edge between Leadership and Structure

Leadership can be visionary with effective executive style and still struggle to succeed for lack of a working relationship with the structure of the organization. This leads us to another critical strand of DNA: governance. Governance has a number of things in common with executive style and vision in that all three very directly to the acts of accomplishment and achieving the goal; they all attach directly to leadership.

Governance addresses lines of communication, chains of command, policies and procedures, etc. They are put into place to create reliable and effective vehicles for activity within the organization. Governance differs from executive style in that it does not address the "style"of execution; rather, it provides the pathway and boundaries, or the container, for execution.

Anchored by leadership and structure, governance must react to and be accountable to both. Certain structures will not be amenable to some types of governance introduced by the leadership. On the other hand, leadership might resist certain types of governance suggested, or demanded, by the structure.

Where the vision energizes strategies and executive style calls the culture into action, governance empowers the structure. Empowered structure can participate with its anchor, strategy, in decision-making while at the same time generating motivation within the culture. When governance is effective, the structure provide its proper share to motivation within the culture to participate in the system. When motivation within the culture is at an effective level, the culture's response to executive style is enhanced.

Leadership can push the system to reach for high production in an effort to dominate market share. On the other hand, leadership might endorse, or mandate, risky, cutting edge accounting practices or create organizational charts demonstrating high personal decision-making power and low accountability. The leadership might require significant redundancy within the Structure to ensure reliability. Or, it might create regulations that become very rigid, aimed at tightly controlling people's time and behavior.

Perhaps ideally, the leadership can engage in co-designing flexibility in the structure, encouraging dialogue among the organization's members, and a clear endorsement of integrity and internalized personal values within the organization. The darker side of this scenario might be a lack of leadership influence in the how the structure is designed and run, leaving it to flounder while alternatives abound.

From a Structure perspective, working groups might be designed to mount an aggressive expansion of market share as an example. Lone wolves might be supported if they continue to bring in the

goods – and no questions asked. Left unchecked, however, one might find the bottom line becoming the driver for how things are done; lone wolves rule at the expense of others. Structure might influence governance by creating a context that strives for a safe secure path to maintaining the status quo or protecting market share against erosion by focusing attention on customer satisfaction and retention rather than acquisition. Loss of overall perspective, however, could see a failure to respond to vital market opportunities.

The Structure might influence governance to expect teams to create a 360-degree view of the marketplace, a consideration of basic maintenance needs coupled with some risk associated with growth. Reports include data from an array of sources that satisfies the Leadership's desire for the "best" picture of achieving success. Here again, data collection and analysis as well as consideration of the ""what if"" scenarios could log-jam the system if the system is not balanced.

Motivation - the edge between Culture and Structure

Culture and structure provide the anchors for the motivation DNA strand. Motivation is an enthusiasm for participation; it is the potential for action. But it is also more: it is enthusiasm for action. Culture is motivated when the structure provides the container for effective and rewarding work. Likewise, the structure is "motivated" by the culture's response to the container that has been created. Although the structure is something relatively codified, it is represented and maintained by people who have the capacity to respond to perceived success and, therefore, can respond through motivation. When the structure takes on a form that satisfies the culture, motivation is created. If not, motivation diminishes and the structure feels pressure to change. If, on the other hand, the culture's behavior is synergistic with the structure, motivation is created within the structure; if not, the culture might feel pressure to modify its behavior.

The Motivation DNA strand connects Structure with Culture. Keep in mind that Leadership and Strategy both connect with and influence Structure as well. These multiple influences increase the chance that Structure and Culture might be conflicted in places. Our assumption is that when Structure and Culture are aligned, motivation is generated.

Motivation could take the form of offering incentives for enlarging market share, creating new markets, and doing what needs to be done to get ahead. Or, its incentive process might lead to externalizing rewards for work to the point where the internal commitment dies. Motivation, on the other hand, could be bolstered when reward and security are obtained through maintaining the status quo, not losing ground, building deep relationships with clients to insure long term stability. The darker side here occurs when moving from the status quo will not be considered out of motivation to maintain safety.

Motivation can be generated by gems that have been distributed in a wide variety of locations: some rewards will be attached to more aggressive approaches to new business but with a caveat that relationships cannot be sacrificed for the short-term gain; while other rewards might come from relationship-building with existing clients.

Looking at Motivation from the Culture perspective could take the form of defining heroes and icons by their "attack" on the marketplace and their ""take no prisoners"" perspective on the competition. On the shadow side, these people do what needs to be done — whatever the cost. A different Culture scene finds those most admired as the ones who ""really" know people" and have a capacity to satisfy the clients'needs time and time again. The value of dependable client relationships is evident. Language within the culture is framed around the concept of ""maintain it and they will stay"" rather than ""build it and they will come"." Gambling on the future is not in the vocabulary.

The Culture might consider the ""build it and they will come" perspective. But this attitude will be attenuated by recognizing the value of what already is in place. In this case, heroes are those who can transform themselves to meet the challenge of standing their ground or accept opportunity of a new adventure. A weakness here may emerge as the inability to discriminate which heroes are to be emulated at which times.

Will power - the edge between Culture and Strategy

Now we come to the real engine of the model: will power. This strand is anchored by culture and strategy. While motivation can provide the enthusiasm for work and executive style provides the manner of work, will power does the work. As the culture feels the enthusiasm of motivation supporting it from one side and the satisfaction of executive style supporting it from another side, its will power increases relative to the perceived potential of the strategy for realizing the vision.

When the culture is adequately supported, it provides energy via will power to the strategy. If the strategy is not perceived to be effectively connected to the vision or clear enough to assist in decision-making, will power within the culture may decline. If the energy within the culture is low as a result of executive style and or motivation, the energy directed toward the strategy cornerstone will diminish.

The Culture can use its will power to be massively productive or destructive. A sense of Nationalism in response to an external threat is a great example. It can foster great internal energy while at the same time the shadow side can be running rough-shod over innocents outside the culture. This could provide huge amounts of energy to a plan. The culture may also endorse withdrawal within its borders and then guarding them closely. In another scenario, the culture might be so flush with resources that it squanders them wastefully without an eye on outcome or responsibility. A middle ground seems to find the engaged in dialogue about next steps, assessment of prior plans, considering the underserved, and looking to history for hints about when to move and when to rest.

Strategy must take into account that the Culture must have the capacity to maintain the effort necessary to employ the action proposed. Remember that the Culture's motivation comes from the Structure cornerstone, so that any motivation supplied by the Strategy comes through its direct influence on Structure or its indirect influence on Structure through Leadership. Strategy influences Culture by virtue of its perceived rationality, affordability, accessibility, compatibility with the Culture.

The Strategic cornerstone might provide a plan so logical that the Culture could not resist it. The Culture's will power is sustained by virtue of its inability to create a logical better alternative. Taken too far, the Strategy might co-opt the Culture through an aggressive cognitive structure that seduces the Culture into supporting the plan.

Strategy can promote a plan that is sustainable and enhances will power by virtue of its focus on maintaining the status quo. Or it might contribute to will power by the overall comprehensiveness of the plan. This approach would create excitement by its balanced and extensive scope thereby promoting sustainability of will power as the plan unfolds. If Strategy not balanced, will power might be created by virtue of a grandiose strategy, but it will not come to reality due to its overwhelming complexity.

Decision-making - the edge between Strategy and Structure

The type of Structure in place, or possible, will have significant influence on the Strategies selected. From the other perspective, the types of Strategies required by the external environment will certainly influence decisions made about Structure.

The sixth DNA strand is decision-making, which is anchored by strategy and structure. Accomplishing goals requires choosing between alternatives. Considering the players in this model, strategy brings its understanding of vision and its energy driven by will power to bear on deciding what should happen within the organization. On the other end, structure brings its knowledge of the agreed upon container and the energy provided by motivation into the decision-making equation. Strategy might push for a decision that would allow it to accomplish an objective, while structure might object because the decision threatens the integrity of the structure or its source of motivation.

Once the decision has been made, the results pass through the strategy cornerstone to affect

leadership through the vision and culture through will power. The same results pass through the structure cornerstone to affect leadership through governance and culture through motivation.

Looking to the Strategy cornerstone from the Structure perspective, Decision-making can push for individuals, work groups, teams, and departments to consider winning, growth, and accomplishment as the course of action. If this moves into the shadow zone, decision-making can become self-serving for the structure, while sacrificing Strategy. The Structure might pressure the system to select Strategies that allow members to sit back and enjoy what they have accomplished, or make decisions in a defensive way.

From a more balanced position, Structure can endorse decisions that support Strategies aimed at meeting internal as well as external demands. Housekeeping is seen as critical to success as working in the field. An analysis of Structural capacity and needs weighed against demands coming from the Strategy cornerstone contributes to effective discrimination as to how any strategy might be forged.

Looking toward Structure cornerstone from the Strategy cornerstone, Decision-making might push for resource allocation with the end in mind. Another approach might see Decision-making that supports resource allocation to "holding down the fort"until the storm passes. Holding this position well beyond the real storm threat, however, can lead to an unnecessary loss of revenue or market share. Conflict can arise here if Leadership's governance of Structure is weak and motivation is high between Culture and Structure. In this case, Structure may pressure Strategy to be more aggressive. It is then Strategy's turn to push back with information from its perspective.

In one last example, Strategy looks for the best action or combination of actions and inaction. It will attempt to balance the information coming in from multiple sources. It will consider leadership relative to Vision, energy levels coming from Culture via will power, and resources available from Structure weighing them against internal and external demands. Returning to the forge, ""striking while the iron is hot" becomes a reasoned decision rather than a mandate to be employed at any cost.

Up to this point individual elements or dyadic relationships between those elements have been considered. This has allowed for a progressive introduction of the pieces of the model. As with most systems, complexity increases geometrically with the addition of elements. The next section will present a very brief look at the faces or scenarios of this model. Rather than considering the simpler single cornerstone's relationship with another where a change in one affects the other, there will be three cornerstones and three relationships all considered to be influencing one another in a multitude of ways.

Faces/Scenarios

The faces of the model represent scenarios created by the interrelationship of the three cornerstones that define that side, or face, of the tetrahedron. The interrelationship is understood through the consideration of the qualities of the three cornerstones and their three connecting competencies acting together. Each of the faces has strengths and weaknesses which will considered under the specific heading for that face. In this model we assign the concepts of business focus, experimental, breakthrough, and evolution to the faces.

The four faces are:

1. Business-focus

2. Breakthrough

3. Experimental

4. Evolution

Business-focus Face

Business-focus companies are not known for being strategy-focused or for their visionary approaches. The business focus face is defined by the Leadership, Structure, and Culture cornerstones and their relationships: governance, executive style, and motivation. Having a structure in place with effective governance enhances the motivation of the culture. When this is supported with effective executive style the machinery of business is ready for work. The system is completed when the machinery generates strategies for getting the business done.

Breakthrough Face

Breakthrough companies have inappropriate or weak structures compared to the other groups. This lack of structure, however, is just what contributes to the ability to achieve breakthrough by virtue of the decreased amount if resistance by the pre-existing structure. The breakthrough face is defined by the Leadership, Strategy, and Culture cornerstones and their connecting edges: vision, will power, and executive style. This face represents the system unencumbered by pre-existing structure; the structure emerges to support discoveries. Pre-existing structures often hold out sunk costs as impediments to breakthrough discoveries.

Experimental Face

Experimental companies have difficulty making leadership decisions. The interest is not in a achieving a predetermined goal as much as in the more individual nature of unique learning projects. The experimental face is defined by the Structure, Strategy, and Culture cornerstones and their connecting edges: decision-making, will power, and motivation. In this case we have structure, strategy and culture working together without influence of leadership directing the activity. The energy of the system is left to bring all resources to bear on exploration. When leadership, sensitive to these elements, appears with a vision, executive style and proper governance the organization takes on the experimental attitude toward accomplishment.

Breakthrough shares similarities with experimentation in that they are both concerned with a change in the status quo. The difference, however, is significant. Experimentation is concerned with hypothesizing, testing, and learning. It is an ongoing process; discovery is the goal. Once the discovery is made there may be insufficient mechanisms in place to develop or exploit it. Breakthrough, on the other hand, focuses on creation followed by development. The result is a new way of doing things that has broken free of the rules and regulations that previously regulated thinking, being, and doing.

Evolution Face

Evolution companies lack appropriate culture for their business. The process of evolution is continually disrupting the status quo such that "the culture"as such is impeded in its development. The evolution face is defined by the Leadership, Strategy, and Structure cornerstones and their connecting edges: vision, decision-making, and governance. When the organization is dominated by these elements the culture is allowed, or required, to change in response to the environment. The environment determines the challenges to which the culture responds. The moods involved determine the condition of the space in which evolution occurs: positive and nurturing or negative and struggling.

Effective use of the pyramid model

A primer in model use should prove to be very helpful. Using the model offers increasing advantage as one gains experience with it. This is also true when one moves from one model to the next. A certain experience accumulates with each model that is transferable to subsequent ones; and yet, each new model seems to hold one at arm's length initially.

Initial Exeperience

Initial observations of a model are usually confined to the more superficial aspects of the cornerstones, edges / relationships and scenarios. There are a number of insights generated merely by having all the pieces in view without having to remember them or hold a mental image of them. The tangible model keeps all the elements in view and in their ""proper"" places. One can experience a real sense of freedom to think since the model is there as a reference point.

It is as if our abstract thinking about the model is in only 2-dimensions in the beginning. We know how to think about architecture and art in 3-D and there is a language for it (Kaipa 2000) . But, when we begin to talk about abstract concepts we fall into the 2-D linear language and thinking, which often precludes the subtleties that come with the 3-D process and language. There appears to be some type of phenomenological experience with a 3-dimensional model that expands our appreciation for the concepts contained within the model.

Since our language is not 3-dimensional, the transition into the realm that allows for those perceptions about our typical abstract thoughts takes time. In effect, when building a model, one makes a linear, abstract statement about a relationship between two elements. That statement is then '"unpacked" and examined in a way that reveals its more poetic, spiritual, and esthetic parts. In the end one has a set of non-linear features that demonstrate the richness of the apparently simple original statement. At this stage it has become a "competency." Competency is the capacity to act effectively; it becomes an added skill for the system.

Without the richness from the unpacking process, the concept might only be seen in the simple linear way - too simplistic to be of much real value. This poses a problem for those who were not involved with the creation of the model and its inter-relationships. For them, even the simplest descriptions can fail to gain any appreciation. The presentation within this chapter attempts to take the reader on a journey much like 'unpacking.

In the initial exposure to the model, one begins this unpacking, but often begins to feel constrained by the linearity of the 2-D language used much daily life. In the next stage, perceptions may be experienced that are difficult to verbalize in their completeness.

The Transition

As one continues to mani pulate the model (rotating it in space etc.) to achieve a deeper understanding of the parts and relationships, the elements of the model eventually begin to expand beyond the bounds of their assigned location i.e. cornerstone, edge, face. The model takes on a vibrating or swirling character so that some aspects of elements originally assigned to one cornerstone can be seen in one or more of the other cornerstones; and characteristics of one of the competencies can be seen as part of one or more of the others. Soon one begins to see the limits placed on the data by the model's structure. Questions arise as to the real value of the model since the data seems constrained; and, if the data is constrained perhaps the relationships and insights are too superficial to have much meaning. Still, there remains this attraction through an intuitive sense that the model has more to offer than what one has seen so far. Continued investigation stimulates movement to the next stage of experience.

The Quantum Leap

In the next stage it is as if one's perception of the model has taken a quantum leap; and perhaps, in the dimension of thought, it literally has. Once the ""leap"" has taken place one experiences the potential of the model as much greater than even initially perceived. The limits of the structure that had been perceived earlier seem to give way to a new way of ""seeing"." The moving and blending of the cornerstones, edges, and faces adds to the complexity that one perceives rather than adding confusion and doubt as before.

Summary of model use

The unpacking process is complete. It is as if one started with fourteen large boxes, one for each element of the model. The boxes contained things, some of which we were aware. The boxes had relationships to one another, most of which we do not know. We were on an adventure to discover the meaning contained in all the boxes: "Why was each there?" "Why were they all there together?" etc.

Then, one unpacked each box, considered its contents relative to the others, and set each piece of the content somewhere on the ground near its box of origin but keeping in mind its connection to many of the other pieces. Once all the boxes have been unpacked, the ground is covered with their contents. The discrete boundaries of the territories around each of the original boxes have been obliterated.

It is at this stage that one should begin to sense the competency of a "new language"that has been created by the process. The model should become as a rich source for insights and dialogue.

Putting it all together

At this stage of our genetic mapping journey we have a considerable amount of information. We have a 3-dimensional model of the system with the richness of the attitudes associated with the relationships of the cornerstones. Myriad conversations can be pursued and assessments made about how the system works now and might work in the future. Knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the various components can inform future decision-making. Once this process has been applied to each of the organizations under consideration, the potential of a merger or acquisition should be much clearer. This process provides a mechanism for inquiry; the participants provide the answers.

When this process of genetic mapping is applied to each organization considered in a merger or acquisition, a tremendous amount of understanding is created. It is a very dynamic process that considers richness that is often missed using other forms of analysis. We do not propose that our approach replaces all others; rather it is recommended as a unique addition to the toolset for attempting this type of challenge.

Once the genetic map of a company had been created, predictions about problems it might face as well as its strengths should become more reliable. These predictions can assist the company in cloning itself when necessary. Comparing the genetic maps of the companies involved in the merger or acquisition can inform assessment of the culture gap to help the client-company identify the appropriate steps for successful development toward its future.

This approach can be used with companies at the pre-acquisition stage (candidate screening), decision-making stage (due diligence stage to determine which of the potential targets fit well), after the deal is signed stage or during the integration stage. Obviously, the earlier the genetic mapping process begins, the greater the returns the company should realizes from its efforts.

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