

## Abstract

While advising a global corporation in the establishment and operation of a high-performance learning organization (HPLO) in a manufacturing plant in Madras, India, the authors encountered a major conflict among the US managers brought in to establish the plant, the local managers employed to operate it, and the workers who were hired and trained to produce the products. While they shared common production goals, their mental models and their ideal visions for the organization were different. The framework presented here was developed to help them understand their conflict, to allow them to both agree on a common vision and to chart a transformation path to achieve it. More specific diagnostic insights emerged when this framework was applied four case studies.

## The Story and the Setting

A global corporation hired one of the authors as a consultant to help with the design, building and operation of a plant in Madras, India. The plant design was based on the latest concepts of high performance organizations with self-directed work teams and learning organization. The launch team was an international group from the USA, Great Britain, and Germany, all of whom had spent significant time in the US. The human resources manager was a local person who understood HPLO organizations and knew how to train work teams for its operation. The launch team designed the organization and its facilities and proceeded to build the physical and human system consistent with the development process agreed upon with the consultant.

After the operating work teams were hired and trained and the managers began to be repatriated, local managers were hired to replace them. However, the work teams were very

dissatisfied with these local managers and complained to the leadership team. At this point, the consultant involved a local counterpart, the other author, to help understand and resolve the conflicts. The conflict involved three parties.

The expatriate management team, while very supportive of the HPLO concepts, had never actually worked or managed an organization built on these characteristics. They did not understand why the workers were dissatisfied with the local managers; in fact the behavior of the local managers was very similar to the behavior of the executives of their parent organization in the US.

The production teams functioned as small businesses. They were oriented toward customer satisfaction in addition to pleasing their management. They set their own production and quality objectives within the goals and objectives framework of the plant. Each team member had a special function within the team such as personnel, safety, quality, finance, etc.. They met to learn, to plan and to solve problems; in short they managed themselves as a HPLO.

In contrast, with the exception of the human resources manager, the local Indian managers experience had been in classic bureaucratic organizations with strict hierarchies, top down management, the theory X belief that workers could not be trusted, and that only the managers were responsible to set objectives, plan, organize and control the workers. They had been working in companies within a controlled economy where competition was minimal.

Our challenge was how to help these three constituencies see themselves and the others in some kind of framework, which would allow them to understand themselves and each other and to develop coherent and complementary behaviors in support

## Forum

# A Framework for Describing Organizational Models and A Path of Transformation<sup>1</sup>

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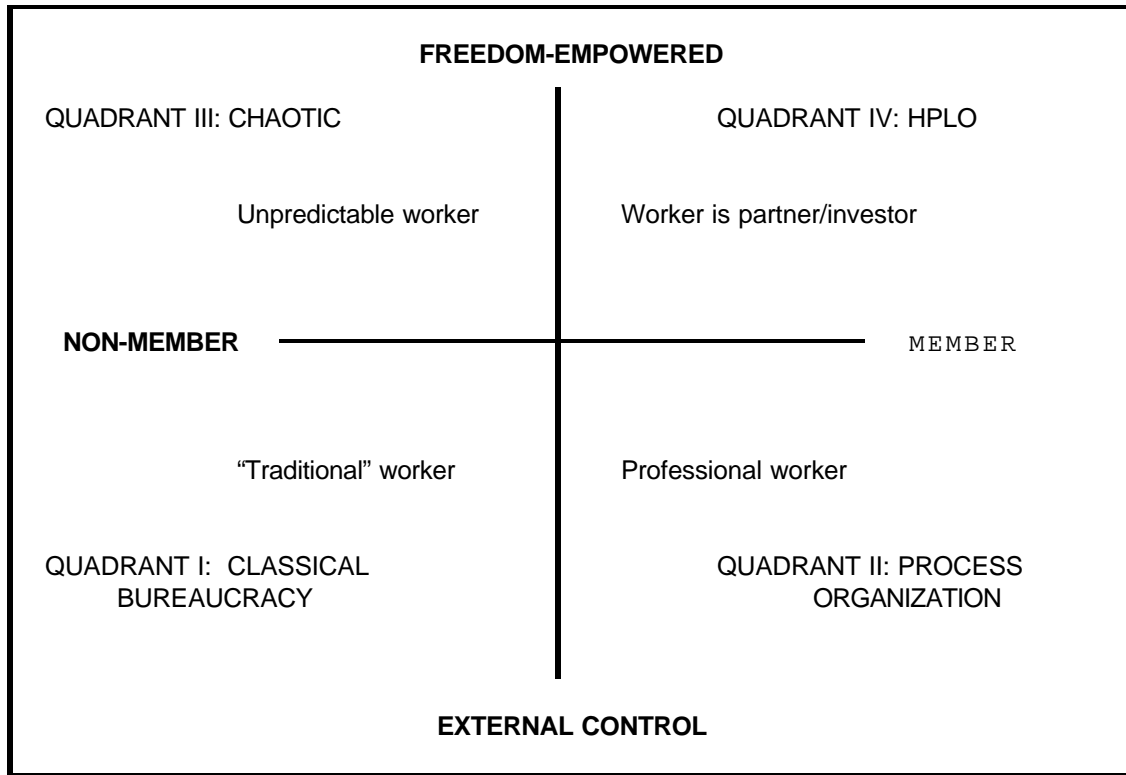
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of their vision as a HPLO. The local consultant developed a conceptual model, which allowed the parties to the conflict to recognize what was happening, to understand the sources of their conflict, and to chart a path to its resolution.

## Framework for Understanding Different Organization Models

The conceptual model needed to be able to hold, contrast and compare the different mental models of organizations held by the various parties to the conflict. As diagrammed in Figure 1, it consisted of a conceptual space with four Quadrants defined by two dimensions. The horizontal dimension defined the relationship of the worker to the organization. This dimension extends from one pole, the **NON-MEMBER**, which is what a worker means when s/he reports "I just a work here". Workers at this pole are not extended and do not have any feeling of membership, ownership or identity with the organization. At the other end of this dimension was a **MEMBER** relationship in which the individual feels a sense of

**Figure 1**  
**Four Organization Types**



psychological ownership, considers him/herself as a member, and is willing to offer a deep and abiding commitment to the organization. The employee willing lends hand, mind and heart to the organization.

The second axis defines the type of control used in the system. At the bottom end lays the hierarchical authoritarian control and compliance mode, designated as **EXTERNAL CONTROL**. At the top end of this dimension is **FREEDOM-EMPOWERMENT** and refers to the workers feeling free to perform and continuously redesign their roles and processes to achieve mission and vision of the organization. Self-control is the means of control at this end of the axis. Selected characteristics of the organizations in each Quadrant are listed in Appendix A to provide more a detailed picture of each. The

list of behaviors for executives, managers and workers in each Quadrant is provided in Appendix B.

Alternative Paths to Transform a Classical Bureaucracy to a High Performance Learning Organization.

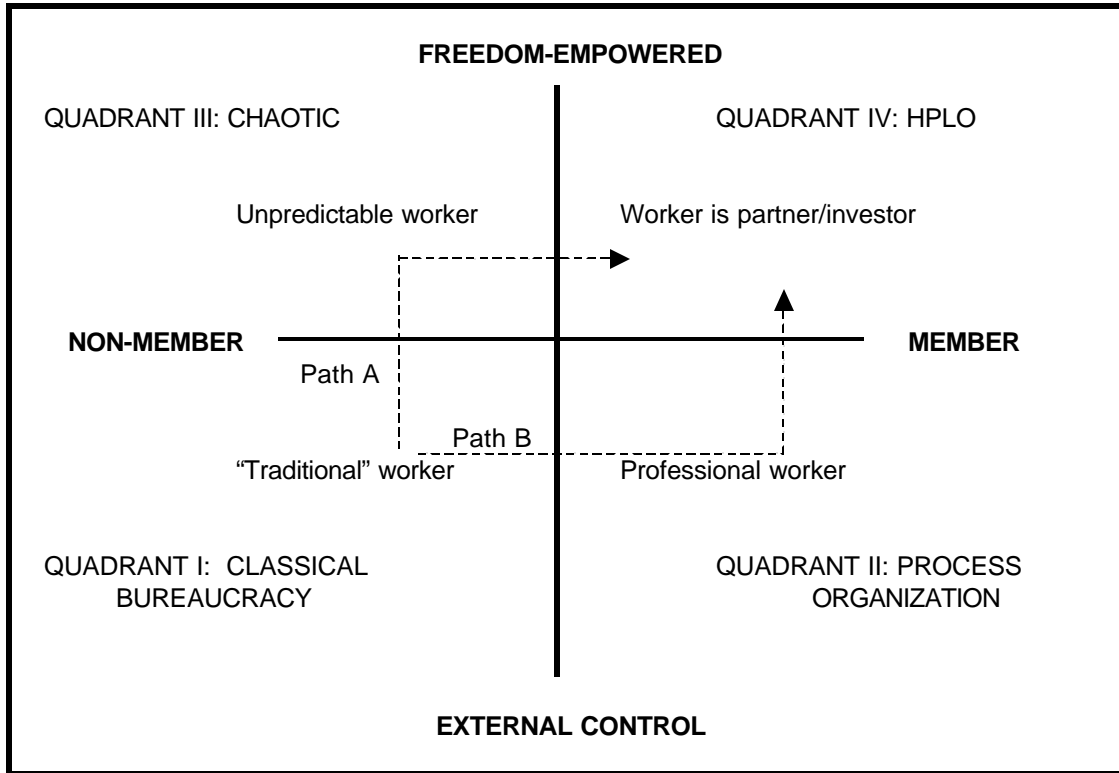
We can now describe the conflict in Madras using these four types of organization. The workers in the plant were recruited and trained by the local human resource manager and the consultant to function effectively in a Quadrant IV, the High Performance Learning Organization. The international crew had been raised in Quadrant I, Classic Bureaucracies, but their organizations had been in transition to Quadrant II, Process Organizations. However, the culture and processes of this type of organization were implemented predominantly at the operating levels

of their organizations, not in the executive and management ranks. They had interpreted a HPLO as a Quadrant III organization and had a hands-off attitude toward the conflict. The locally hired manager's experience, as describe earlier, was in Quadrant I, Classic Bureaucracies.

Once this understanding was in place, the leaders had to decide how to move the local managers and the expatriates to Quadrant IV. The local consultant defined two paths from Quadrant I to Quadrant IV. One was through Quadrant III; the other was through Quadrant II. Figure 2 shows these two paths as A and B.

Path A turns the managers free to do what they prefer to do. But it also makes it clear to them that they are merely employees, that they have no long-term permanent status in the

**Figure 2**  
**Transformational Paths from Quadrant I to IV**



organization. They are oriented only to their own role and are not given the information which would allow them to make decisions in that role that are in the interests of the whole organization. If they demonstrate by their behavior that they are truly worthy to become members, they then are granted membership and move into Quadrant IV. The downside of this strategy is that the managers could use the freedom granted to take advantage of the organization to serve themselves.

The other path, B, grants the local managers membership in the organization, and requires them to learn and demonstrate their ability to work first in a process organization. As they demonstrate their ability to do so, they gradually are given more information about the whole organization and the freedom to make

decisions within the constraints of its mission and vision. The plant leadership decided on the path B strategy and successfully implemented it, but how they effectuated this transition is not within the purview of this paper.

Using the same analytical framework, several other situations were made more understandable, two cases are from India and two are from the US.

### Case Studies

#### 1. A Family owned Firm in India attempts to Transform itself:

The firm is a large organization with many divisions (SBU's) and a diverse portfolio of products. Confronted with the change from a controlled to a free enterprise economy in India, the organization attempted to

transform itself. However, it has a long history of conservative approach to business. The management control is in the hands of a family with a long tradition in banking. Many of the SBU's were started by buying know how from abroad and having an extended period of collaboration where the organizations were managed by expatriates. As long as the era of protection was in place, business was moving along at a comfortable pace. When the changes in the Indian economy were being anticipated, the boat got rocked. With a sudden sense of urgency, spates of consultants (some of the big six) were invited. Ideas like "High performance teams," 3+1+3 (strategy and goal setting), Balanced Scorecard, and etc., were introduced at the top levels.

Sufficient attention was not paid to change the culture, and educating the

supervisory and junior management levels. As a consequence, the organization tried hard to become process oriented and professional, only to lurch back to being hierarchical the moment top management pressure was removed. When the heady ideas of "high performance teams" and "process orientation" are talked about, a context of freedom is created in the organization. A few individuals take initiative, others play a waiting game. In pockets where the senior managers internalise the changes and actively support the progressive policies, changes happen. In other areas, cosmetic changes take place and people who took initiative and expected a more open culture become disappointed and leave the organization.

### **Applying the frame work**

If we apply our map to this organization, it becomes clear that the organization is really anchored in the Quadrant I. Parts of the top management try to push it to the IV Quadrant through enforced systemic changes. It resulted in the rest of the organization moving into Quadrant III, becoming unstable and pulling back to Quadrant I. The SBU's where the organization invested continuously in working at the individual level in areas of attitude and skills followed by team building were able to make a shift from Quadrant I to Quadrant II. As a result, a professional approach was established. Through a step-by-step change in systems of appraisal and goal setting, supported by quality initiatives, these SBU's have grown in responsiveness and flexibility. Business growth of these SBU's has been significant.

### **2. A Multinational Corporation with a long History in India**

Let us contrast this with the example of a Multinational corporation with a fairly successful operation in India. During the more controlled era of Indian

business, the parent organization had a *very laissez faire* attitude to its subsidiary and as a result, the organization was a very "club like" entity, friendly, fat and complacent. There were brief periods where strong individuals were brought in to head the organization and the organization was "put into shape". The easy attitudes gave way to compliance. However, discipline was not internalised and soon after one CEO left the organization, things started to slide. The organization continued to be cash rich (though its finances were badly managed) and a market leader in its product by default. The organization has strengths that helped it go through a fair degree of abuse: antagonisms between functional heads, parallel centres of control, covert influence from know how holding functions, lack of systems and standards, and slackness in financial management.

When the economy opened up, there were rapid and drastic changes in the way the parent company responded. A small minority stockholder quickly acquired more than 50 percent holding (and soon after that into an almost monopoly holding). Controls and demands from the parent company increased dramatically. The centre of power clearly shifted to the parent company. The Indian operation was to be revamped by two expatriates who held functional positions and reported to an Indian CEO. The organization reeled under these shocks.

### **Applying the frame work**

From being a Quadrant III company enjoying freedom and tolerating a lack of strong management, it went into a Quadrant I organization, complaint, submissive and obedient. However, after weathering the initial downsizing and other changes, a more professional management took over the operation. Under the twin

pressures of strong systemic control from the parent company and persistent change initiatives taken by the Indian Company, the organization stabilised itself and recovered its market position. The primary factor that enabled this transformation was its dominant market position. Though the company did go through a lean patch, it was able to pull through. Also, many of its senior management personnel were changed and fresh blood was brought in. A series of behavioral and educational inputs were given in a sustained manner over a few years. The organization today is clearly a Quadrant II Company, thoroughly professional and systematic. It is yet to embark upon the path of becoming a High Performance Learning Organization.

### **3. A US Manufacturing Plant becomes Empowered**

A set of product divisions which were suppliers to and were wholly owned by a large Fortune 100 Company, were spun off from the Company into a subsidiary which then was sold off as a separate public corporation. These divisions had favored positions with their major customer, the parent company, but their prices were higher than their competitors in the market. The feeling of membership in the Company had been materially enhanced by a profit sharing program, which had provided substantial payments to everyone, including the hourly workers. The hourly and salaried workers had been proud of being employees of the parent Company. However, they felt that their status was diminished by the separation. The hourly worker's major allegiance had always been to their union. They felt strongly that they belonged to the union; they only "worked for" the company. What little feeling of inclusion in the company they had was diminished by the formation of the subsidiary and the worry that the new entity might not share profits.

While still under the parent company the divisions had initiated many programs to increase employee involvement, to develop a participative management style, to improve quality through process disciplines, and to build a collaborative relationship with the union. Under the new subsidiary, these practices were continued and enhanced with an attempt to implement their version of the Toyota production system. However, the development projects were fragmented, every function wanted to have their latest initiative included. It became the proverbial camel, a horse built by a committee. Meanwhile, the pressure increased from the major customer, the ex-parent company, to decrease costs and improve quality. The subsidiary had to become competitive both because their customer needed products at a competitive price and because if the subsidiary was ever going to survive and prosper in the jungle of the market, it would need to be lean and mean. It was neither.

All these problems existed in spades in the largest and oldest manufacturing plant within the subsidiary. They were dragging the financial and quality performance down in an amount commensurate with their large size. The attempt was made to install self-directed work teams in a top-down manner but it resulted in very little improvement. Plant managers came and went frequently as though through a revolving door. Finally in a fit of desperation at not being able to improve efficiency or quality, the plant leadership team decided to free all the production teams to be truly self-directed and trust them to co-operate to achieve the market imperatives.

The teams began to make decisions, which were in the interests of their members, such as deciding to work overtime because the team members could use the money. Costs went up, quality deteriorated. Three plant

managers were rotated in and out in one year to try to staunch the flow of red ink. Nothing seemed to work.

### **Applying the Framework.**

With the formation of the subsidiary, the plant workers, who had always felt more members of the union than the plant began to feel threatened. They had made substantial progress in moving from the traditional, "kick ass and take names" Quadrant I, to Quadrant II. However, the attitudes and behaviors typical of Quadrant I were memorialized in myth and story and workers felt that managers, given a reason, could revert at any moment. This began to happen when the pressure came to become more competitive. Some managers pressed for short-term gains in efficiency and let quality go by using a traditional Quadrant I style.

When the moment of desperation arrived, the management, by empowering the production teams to manage themselves, to make decisions about overtime and job assignments, turned them loose without making them members of the organization. They were not trained to manage their operations within the constraints of the total business. Consequently, their commitment was to themselves and to each other, not to the company as a whole. They could now make decisions to benefit themselves or to repay old grievances. They were the proverbial kids in the candy store without the parents and the shopkeeper. They were in Quadrant III, empowered non-members.

The development strategy question is now what to do to regain what was lost by the decision made in the moment of desperation. Can they get back directly to Quadrant II or does the management have to return to Quadrant I and reassert their authority? Or can they go from Quadrant III to Quadrant IV.

Until the issue of membership is confronted, and the management has ways to incorporate the workers and give them a sense of membership and belonging, they and their teams will continue make decisions in their own interest. Until they know and experience at a visceral level that they belong, the non-competitive condition of the plant and the position of the strategic business unit in the market, and the vulnerability of the new Company, they will never be able to move to Quadrant IV.

### **4. A Public Utility tries to become Competitive**

A large public utility in the United States, a classic bureaucratic organization, under the deadline of state legislation permitting consumers to select their own source of electrical energy, began a campaign to become competitive. They invested considerable effort in communicating with employees at all levels to inform them of the regulatory requirements and to enlist their support in the effort.

The top leadership became impatient with the snails pace of the change and, goaded by pressure from stockholders to reverse a decline in the Company stock price, brought in a chief executive officer with a reputation as a cost cutter. They tied his bonus to the stock price and gave him considerable latitude to work his magic. With little hesitation he began dramatic layoffs of staff under the banner of "re-engineering. The compensation costs of the laid off workers went immediately to the bottom line and the stock price began to recover. He continued slashing people until the internal reaction was so great that he was paid to leave with a handsome severance payment and his bonus. He left the organization in turmoil. The unions were in an uproar and became more and more militant. Staffs were demoralized. Safety and operating efficiencies hit dangerously new

lows. Government regulators began to de-certify power plants.

### Applying the framework

Obtaining a position at the public utility was considered having a job for life and those who were so lucky were envied. People felt secure and, once successfully passing the probationary period they became genuine members of the organization. They worked hard and did what they thought was best for the company. They were in Quadrant II. The management structure was a fairly traditional Quadrant I type formally, but people knew their jobs and worked as professionals without close supervision. They were in fact in Quadrant II. The initial response to the requirement to transform the organization to become more competitive was to involve the employees in both understanding the pressures in the external environment and enlisting them in finding ways to improve efficiencies, the leaders were using the crisis to move the organization into Quadrant IV.

With the hiring of the cost cutting executive, however, his slash and burn tactics catapulted the organization backward into Quadrant I. The union became militant; workers began to cling to the contract for protection; managers and supervisors, without this protection, became demoralized and entered a period of malicious obedience.

The "chainsaw" executive, was operating out of Quadrant III. He felt no psychological membership in the organization, he was a "hired gun." He used his empowered position to maximize his own personal benefit. He did not have the interest of the whole organization in mind although he probably thought he was doing so. His major motivation was his own self-interest. With his departure, the officers, some new and some wiser, tried to return the organization to

Quadrant II by rebuilding their relationship with the unions and implementing quality disciplines to improve processes and performance. However, the trust lost in this episode made these efforts very difficult. People were suspicious and progress toward Quadrant IV has been made much more difficult than it was before the trauma.

### Conclusion

Helping individuals make the change from playing more compliant roles into those that demand autonomy and assertion is a very difficult process. This is often sidestepped by organizations in attempting to change. They make system changes and implement ideas that belong to Quadrant IV, only to be confronted with an unpredictable set of reactions. If the organization culture moves into Quadrant III, individuals experience more space and freedom than what they are used to. The reactions and stresses they feel while confined to context of control and compliance can be expressed in ways that are disruptive to the organization. This expectation is paradoxical since the only way an organization can become a Quadrant IV HPLC is when every member of the organization actively makes the individual change required and sustains the collective effort. To do this the organization has to take steps to include people as members and give them the information, which will allow them to decide and take actions which permit it to survive and thrive.

It is clear that different levels of the organization can behave in ways that characterise different Quadrants as they undergo these transitions from one Quadrant to another. Executives may behave consistent with Quadrant III, managers behave in Quadrant II, and people at the operating level may hold on to what they know and are used to doing, Quadrant I. We believe that these transitions can be made

more quickly when leaders of the transition recognise what models they are using to design the future organization. Being explicit has enormous value. We also believe that the leaders of an organization that is currently in Quadrant I who recognise the need to move to Quadrant IV would be wise to transition through Quadrant II rather than through III. To make a successful transition, the leaders need to begin to behave in ways, which are consistent with the next Quadrant i.e., from Quadrant I to Quadrant II before leading the way to Quadrant IV.

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<sup>1</sup> The movement of an organization from one model to another we define as an organizational transformation. Increasing the capacity to perform within one of the models we denote as organizational development.

## Appendix A

### Characteristics of Organizations in the four Quadrants.

#### Quadrant I "Classic Bureaucracy:"

1. Boss orientation, workers are expected to do what they are told to do; managers think and workers do.
2. Job bound, very circumscribed definition of role, anything outside these prescription are "not my job."
3. External control and discipline of workers is exercised by supervisors and managers.
4. Individuals are responsible to get the job done as dictated by their supervisors.
5. Workers, particularly if not represented by a union, say what manager wants to hear.
6. Workers perceived change with great suspicion and they tend to resist it.
7. The climate is one characterized by fear and workers seek protection in a union contract.
8. Both workers and management are restrained by rigid adherence to the labor contract.
9. The organization authority structure is hierarchical with a rigid chain of command and it is governed by bureaucratic rules and regulations.
10. Workers feel a sense of responsibility only to themselves and to trusted peers.
11. Workers are empowered only to obey and conform to rules and regulations.
12. Workers have no sense of membership in or ownership of the organization; although they do feel a sense of ownership of their job, they work for someone else, "I just work here."
13. When there is a discrepancy between the organization and the needs of its stakeholders, no redesign is deemed necessary.

#### Quadrant II "Process Organization:"

1. Workers have a "professional orientation," function as members of a profession, and are oriented to satisfy the customers of their processes.
2. Roles are clearly defined as part of larger work processes.
3. Workers are controlled by product standards, and feedback from both the process and the customer.
4. Workers work in teams organized around processes.
5. Teams meet to communicate about tasks and processes.
6. The teams are involved in changing the processes for which they are responsible.
7. People have a sense of security and confidence, they are patient with the organization, but have a fairly narrow view.
8. There are focused changes in the labor contract, a Modern Operating Agreement.
9. The hierarchical authority structure but with high levels of up-down participation.
10. The team is responsible for achieving production objectives.
11. The individual and the team is empowered to modify roles and processes to enhance customer satisfaction.
12. The individual feels a sense of ownership of his/her role, is a member of the organization, and identifies with the it.
13. When changes are required, the team has representatives on the redesign team.

#### Quadrant III "Chaotic Organization":

1. Self-orientation, the individual is free to use system to benefit themselves since they have no sense of membership or ownership of the organization.
2. Role confusion, when management abdicates their traditional role, the rules have changed, and workers are confused.
3. Having been treated like children, they act out, and the organization can become out of control.
4. Informal groups surface or form around self-interest which do not have a performance orientation.
5. Not trusting that the freedom granted is real, communication is still guarded.
6. Any changes which individual or informal group considers will benefit them, they support.
7. Many experience anxiety and suspicion because they sense that people do not give up power without reason and no control means control by informal power.
8. Contract language which defines management and worker roles is used to resist the change to freedom because the security of roles reduced ambiguity and the new roles associated with the change, self-governance, "is not in the contract."
9. The hierarchy continues to exist but is has nominally stripped itself of power and legitimacy.
10. Freedom is interpreted as having no responsibility.
11. The empowerment is false because those who are "empowered" usually have not been trained to use it and they know that if they make mistakes they will suffer the consequences.
12. From Quadrant I, they feel ownership for their jobs and membership in a union or informal peer group; their identity remains the same when they are given freedom and use system in their own interest.
13. The move to freedom and self-control, from Quadrant I, external control is usually an imposed management redesign.

#### Quadrant IV "High Performance Learning Organization":

1. Direction is provided by an organizational vision, what it is striving to become; and a mission which specifies who is being served with what.
2. Roles within processes are defined but flexible, people are willing to do what is necessary when the situation requires them to.
3. People control themselves, they hold themselves accountable for disciplined performance.
4. Production results are achieved by self-managed teams, supervisors/managers develop the organization, and executives make and plan the implementation of strategy.
5. Communication is open in all directions, there is no fear of speaking up; information is open and shared inside the organization.
6. Everyone is empowered to initiate changes which are consistent with the vision, the mission, and improve efficiency (no waste).
7. People trust and are trustworthy up and down and across the organization.
8. If there is a labor contract, it is a "living contract" which can be changed when it needs to be changed by mutual agreement.
9. There are two organizational structures: one is a structure in which people communicate and participate and the other is a work structure in which people perform.
10. Everyone recognizes the responsibility they have to each other and all stakeholders.
11. People are empowered within their area of responsibility and to suggest and support improvements in the larger organization.
12. People understand the business of the organization; they are its stewards; they feel a sense of psychological ownership and they invest their energies, skills, and ideas in it; they are truly members of the organization.
13. Redesign when required is done with minimal specification at each level.

## Appendix B

### Specification of Role Behaviors by Organizational Level and Quadrant

#### III. Empowered Freedom with Non-membership:

##### Executive behaviors

- Confused, uncertain
- Inconsistent response to mistakes
- Defensive/aggressive
- Role is ambiguous
- Abdicate and then regress to authoritarian
- Make decisions to further own benefits
- Feel organization is out of control
- Crisis management and fire fighting
- Captured by internal politics

##### Management behaviors:

- Abdicate, withdraw
- Permissive
- Blame, punish
- Inconsistent, yo-yo delegation
- Mixed signals
- Erratic communication

##### Employee behaviors:

- Act from impulse
- Use system to benefit self
- Criticize, disrespect management
- Confront any limits to freedom
- Suspicious, wary, look for plots
- Mistakes defended as freedom to act

#### IV. Empowered Freedom with Membership:

##### Executive behaviors

- Focus on values, strategy and design
- Work with subordinates as board of directors
- Open communication, free information
- Define vision & strategy with input
- Govern by principles and values
- Empower and trust people
- Tend to all stakeholders
- Attend to outward-inward, stable and adaptive dimensions

##### Management behaviors:

- Develop self and employees
- Develop processes & systems
- Benchmarking best practices
- Customer management relations
- Communicate openly all information
- Living contract

##### Employee behaviors:

- Quality, timely, efficient performance
- Contribute creative ideas
- Maintain relationships with customers
- Work in self-managed teams
- Take initiative
- Speak freely, without fear

#### I. Control with Non-membership:

##### Executive behaviors

- Focus on operations
- Maintain status and hierarchical rank
- Emphasis on structure and power
- Internal orientation
- One-on-one management
- Accountable to specific job performance
- Need to know communication
- Inward looking

##### Management behaviors:

- Give orders
- Impose, threaten
- Tell, don't listen, one-way communication
- Arbitrary use of power, favorites
- Treat employees as children
- Withhold information

##### Employee behaviors:

- Need to be watched
- Wait to be told what to do
- Please manager
- Avoid responsibility and accountability
- "Own" their job
- Suspicious of management
- Representatives talk for workers

#### II. Control with Membership:

##### Executive behaviors

- Involve managers in strategic thinking
- Develop managerial skills
- Plan development with development level
- Available and accessible
- Look for smart, competent, emotionally disciplined people
- Clear goals for organization
- Works with stakeholder negotiated purpose

##### Management behaviors:

- Educate, train
- Jointly develop goals, standards, processes
- Teach to avoid mistakes
- Two-way communication w
- Provide support, enable
- Joint evaluation of performance

##### Employee behaviors:

- Take responsibility, accountability
- Learn capable processes
- Identify, serve customers
- Start to work as team member
- Want feedback to improve
- Jointly work with management
- Give management feedback

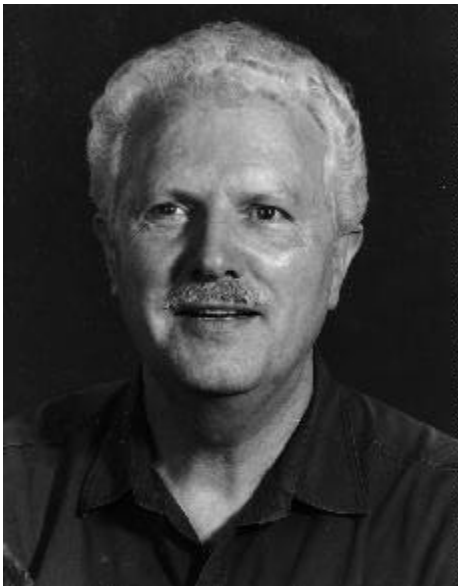
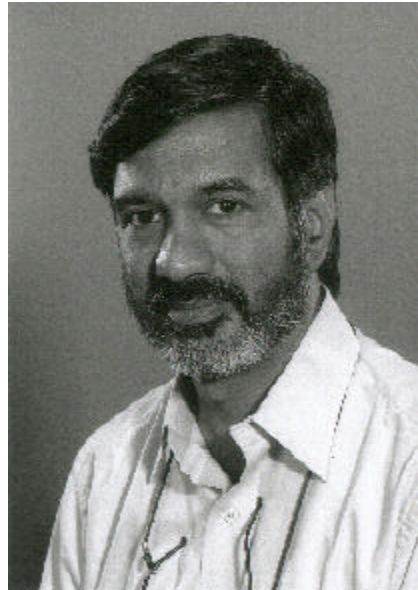


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