

THE FRACTURED WORKPLACE
AND ITS REMEDIES

An Open Essay

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Preface

This is an essay about the crisis of our modern workplaces and about ways to repair them.

Everyone knows that our modern workplaces are in crisis. They are often run under unethical rules and practices which would not be accepted anywhere else in our society. They routinely give rise to appalling behaviour, such as workplace bullying, which is somehow regarded as legitimate--in fact essential--in the modern business environment. "Nothing personal, just business" is the justification. This is wholly immoral and inhumane.

These attitudes and negative values infect every part of modern people management, such as performance metrics and performance management, compensation and rewards, hierarchies, position descriptions, contracts, teams, decision-making--in fact everything to do with the core business of the organisation, which is inseparable from its people. As a consequence, widespread, numbing damage is inflicted on both people and organisations. Given that we spend a considerable part of our waking lives in these places, the effects of lost human potential are dramatic, both for individuals and the society as a whole.

This essay examines these issues, with the aim of developing the remedies to them. In fact the remedies are not too far away. In many years of working with organisations, both for profit and non-profit, with boards, CEO's, managers, employees, consultants, suppliers, customers, clients--the communities of organisations--I have come to see that given an opportunity the remedies are there in people themselves. I have been amazed and inspired by what I've seen people doing at all levels of organisations to repair toxic workplaces, to make them healthy, mature, collaborative and creative places to work. This is what the Greeks have called 'practical wisdom'. It is the basis of common

morality and of all approaches that support and foster the progress of people in the workplace, and enhance their organisational achievements.

I wrote this as an open essay because I want to get these ideas out quickly, and because I enjoy and value collaboration. My experience over the last couple of decades is that people recognise these principles and welcome them with relief and excitement--to be allowed to think this way is deeply confirming and validating--so I want to open it up as widely as possible. I am deeply convinced that the most powerful and valuable work is collaborative. I have included important material from contributors, placed in shaded boxes, like this:

Rob Silva raises a pertinent question on the origins of coercion: “I am challenged to evaluate how we run our own business and use job descriptions . . .

The original comments can be found at: <http://www.geoffwells.com/open-book-blog-the-fractured-workplace-and-its-remedies/> . If you have comments or feedback you would like to send me, you can do that on the website and I can look at incorporating your ideas in future editions. An open essay is never closed.

This is not intended to be a scholarly essay (although it is, I hope, built on sound scholarship and research). It is much more about my experience, working with people in many parts of the world. However, where there is a reference to other people's written work I have cited it—that is only polite. These citations are placed in the text and linked to the Reference List at the end of the text.

I would like to thank all the people who made comments on the chapter drafts and shared their views and experience. The essay has been made richer by them. I would particularly like to thank Ceinwen McMillan for her incisive editing of the consolidated draft.

1. The fractured workplace and its remedies: the argument

PEOPLE IN ORGANISATIONS: THE MANAGEMENT COLLAPSE

Organisations are many things: buildings, equipment, bank accounts, knowledge, systems, images, achievements. Before anything else, however, organisations are people. It is said, “Our people are our greatest resource” but all too often it’s a rhetorical gesture, unmatched by action. Yet it happens to be true. An organisation is its people. The achievement of its mission and purposes is the achievement of its people: no one else does it. Nothing is more important to any organisation than the way in which its people work, separately and together. Yet nothing in modern organisational practice is handled less effectively. Nothing therefore offers more potential for radical improvement in an organisation’s outcomes.

That people in organisations should be handled so badly is, on the face of it, puzzling. From birth most of us is taught, directly by parents, family, teachers and friends, or indirectly by the results of our actions, how to be most effective with the people around us—how to relate to them, to interact with them, to cooperate, to give and take—first with family, then more widely. If this is ‘practical wisdom’, as Aristotle termed it in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, then it is not unreasonable to expect that by the time we enter the workforce we should have it in abundance. With that kind of knowledge distributed throughout the organisation the people dimension should be the least problematic. Practical wisdom should be the bedrock that supports the development of the more complex capabilities and processes on which organisational outcomes depend. In practice, as everyone knows and as research confirms, the reverse is nearly always the case: people problems are endemic in organisations and routinely cripple them.

Of course, one can defend current organisational practice, as many do, by claiming that people are imperfect beings and problems between people are found everywhere, including the workplace. That may be true; but it doesn't account for the established fact that workplaces are often so much worse, from a human point of view, than other social arenas. Unacceptable behaviour arises in families, for example, or in community settings; but it is usually recognised as being unacceptable, and a range of measures, formal and informal, are mounted in the attempt to confront it. Yet in workplaces such behaviour is tacitly not only permitted but is the norm; not only legitimate, but required. Outside the workplace one set of principles governs behaviour; cross the workplace threshold and you face another set of principles, often opposed to the first set. How this damaging situation—damaging to organisations and to the individual people who work in them—has come about, and how it can be reversed, is what this essay is about.

AN EXAMPLE: WORKPLACE BULLYING

It may be thought that this is overstating the case, that workplaces may not be ideal but they are not as bad as that. There is clear evidence to the contrary, in this case from surveys of workplace bullying (Cartwright and Cooper 2007, Harthill 2010, Kieseker and Marchant 1999). You might object that bullying is the exception, that bullies are the few bad apples, but you would be wrong. UK evidence from 2002-2003 surveys found that about one in three employees reported having been bullied in the workplace. One in eight had been bullied in the previous five years, one in ten in the previous six months: half had witnessed bullying during the previous five years. More than two thirds of victims had been bullied for more than a year. Similar percentages have been found in US workplaces. In Australia, it is estimated that close to half a million employees are systematically bullied in workplaces.

Let's be clear on what these surveys are talking about. Workplace bullying has been described as psychological assault. It has been compared to domestic violence, "an intentional, systematic campaign launched by one or more people against a target" (Cartwright and Cooper 2007, p. 285). It is said to include degradation, humiliation,

intimidation and unfavourable treatment. It is linked to power: bullies think they have the power to continue their aggressive behaviour; victims accept that those who bully them have that power.

Crucially for the workplace, it is through the work itself that the aggression is directed. Common types of workplace bullying behaviour are (see how many of these you recognise): setting unreasonable or impossible targets or deadlines; constant criticism; removing responsibilities and replacing them with trivial tasks; persistently picking on people; withholding information; blocking promotions; and, simply, shouting and verbal abuse. Sexual harassment is bullying at its worst, with the power differential exploited doubly along a gender dimension. Although in some circumstances it is illegal, it remains endemic: Australian surveys have established that one in five women (and one in twenty men) have been sexually harassed at some time in the workplace (for details of this evidence, see the Australian Government's account at www.hreoc.gov.au/sexualharassment/index.htm). Positional power is a key factor in harassment, as all too frequent press stories depressingly remind us.

The impacts of workplace bullying are sobering. The organisation loses in many ways: in lost working days—for the UK estimated at 18 million lost days each year—but also in incalculable reductions in productivity and creativity throughout organisations. But it is at the individual level that the impacts hit home. A review of studies of workplace bullying found both psychological and physical effects, including the following:

“ . . . feelings of helplessness and isolation, withdrawal, fear of being labelled as a troublemaker, fear of dismissal or loss of job promotion opportunities, fear of being transferred to dead-end or mundane jobs, anxiety, feelings of self-blame, suicide, stress, nervous breakdown, depression, loss of appetite, eating disorders, reliance on medication, increased drinking, smoking, insomnia, fatigue, lack of concentration, headaches, nausea, backaches, stomach aches, infections and other illnesses, ill health or early retirement due to stress related illness, low morale, low self-esteem, poor job performance, absenteeism, physical violence to others, and

additional impacts on victims' family life and relationships.” (Kieseker & Marchant 1999, p. 67)

To these can be added, in the worst cases, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, cardiovascular problems, adverse neurological changes, immunological impairment and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (Harthill 2010, p. 5).

It is difficult to understand how bullying, which has such serious and widespread consequences, should be allowed to continue. Clearly it is embedded in a deeper social fabric, which, in the absence of a better term, we call workplace culture. A culture has to do with the values, beliefs and attitudes that underlie behaviour. A workplace is more ephemeral than a community or a society, but it too has its own culture. Moreover, even though workplace cultures differ from each other, they share some common attitudes, beliefs and values. The uncompromising evidence cited above points to the unpalatable conclusion that an acceptance, at least implicit, of workplace bullying is one of those beliefs. It has become a part of modern workplace culture.

REVERSING COERCIVE MANAGEMENT

The evidence on bullying provides an entry into a broader discussion about the way we work with people. Bullying is not an outlier in the spectrum of work behaviour, something unsavoury but on the margins: the surveys tell us that it sits somewhere around the centre, not rare but common. And if that is true of bullying, which is entirely unacceptable by ordinary standards, the question that arises is: what other kinds of dysfunction—less damaging, perhaps, but damaging enough—sit alongside it? The pervasiveness of bullying is a blunt indicator of something much more deeply rooted and deeply worrying in the way our modern workplaces have developed and now impose themselves on people's well-being.

My view, based on decades of experience and research, is that the fundamental character of the modern management of people is, to put it bluntly, coercive. That is, there is a

basic assumption in modern management theory and practice that left to themselves people won't do what they are supposed to do, in the organisation's terms. Therefore they have to be coerced into that desired behaviour by a range of institutional strategies, including, as we will see, the standard elements of human resources management, including performance management, compensation, hierarchies, and so on. Is it any wonder, then, that workplace bullying is endemic? In terms of the values and attitudes that reach into behaviour, it is a short step from coercive management to bullying.

Rob Silva raises a pertinent question on the origins of coercion: "I am challenged to evaluate how we run our own business and use job descriptions, performance management, remuneration, etc and reconcile it with the implication that these things are necessarily contributors to the fractured workplace. This raises the question in my mind of what "coercion" means in this context? Is performance management an inherently coercive mechanism or is it just one of many tools misused by a coercive individual?" (online contribution July 23, 2012)

GW: One response might be that both elements are present, but that the first is of greater concern, as it derives from organisational cultures and embedded attitudes and values.

I will argue that coercion is a profoundly wrong management principle—a profoundly wrong principle, in fact, in any human context, and no less wrong in the workplace. It is, first and foremost, unethical: the use of power to coerce individuals is opposed by all the major international statements of human rights. It is simply wrong. Second, it is damaging to groups and to the sense of community in an organisation. It dismantles collaboration and cooperation. It undermines creativity and accountability. It is ineffective even in producing and sustaining the desired organisational behaviours; rather, it places limits on the achievements of organisations. Beyond that again, it not only damages lives, it sells lives short. The opportunity cost, in life terms, of

undeveloped potential is, for individuals, communities and societies, almost beyond imagining, certainly beyond anything we are likely to estimate. The impact of underdevelopment in other organisational drivers, such as technology or information or knowledge, is insignificant beside it.

I will argue that the whole apparatus of the management of people in organisations is infected by these debilitating values, beliefs and attitudes. That is, organisational elements which are now standard, such as performance management, rewards and compensation structures, incentives, threats of penalties, the intangible demands of workplace culture, contractual relationships, and so on, enact coercive values and strengthen them. An entire language has grown around them, to give them some kind of spurious legitimacy: “It’s not personal, just business,” you hear—a tawdry, unthinking, immoral justification of bad behaviour, if ever there was one. In public discourse the most common adjective applied in approval of leaders is “tough”: she (particularly she, in proving herself an honorary man) doesn’t back away from tough decisions, is as tough as they make them, toughs it out, and so on. What happened, we might ask, to insight, judgement, or even wisdom?

I will argue that these values and attitudes are fundamentally lazy and dishonest. They allow people with power in organisations to avoid the real, complex human questions with which they are confronted—questions which may require listening, negotiation, exchange and empathy, under a commitment to ethical outcomes. They allow managers to resort to organisational practices which throw the responsibility back onto employee; which are, in a word, coercive. Those employees who comply, who allow themselves to be coerced, stay on; those who don’t comply, leave, or are sacked for a potentially more compliant replacement. There are plenty more candidates out there, and no need to put up with non-compliance. The fallout for supervisors or leaders is minimised: if a hiring didn’t work out, the fault is not theirs— unless it be that they were not tough enough, not sufficiently coercive.

If this view is right, as I believe the evidence shows it is—and as most of us have

experienced in our own work lives that it is—then as a society we should feel ashamed. How has it come about that the places where most of us spend upwards of a third of our lives should have become so damaged, and so damaging? Why is behaviour that would be excoriated in any other social context not only permitted, but encouraged, legitimised and rewarded? How have we come to believe that this kind of human interaction is required for economic progress? And even assuming that were true (which emphatically it is not) have we become so fearful of economic consequences as to place them above what we know to be ethical behaviour? I believe we have. I, for one, am ashamed of that kind of collective cowardice, in which we have all become complicit.

Rob Silva makes an important management distinction: “I’ve seen many examples of the fractured workplace. I suppose I could divide it into two broad categories: A failure to control and control failure. In the first case, I refer to systems and cultures that fail to moderate the negative behaviours of individuals (this is not necessarily to ascribe blame for those behaviours to those individuals but in the context of the enterprise they exhibit behaviours which are negative), indeed in many cases such negative behaviours are (unwittingly) rewarded and reinforced. In mechanical terms this is perhaps analogous to neglecting the maintenance of a machine and becoming increasingly perplexed at declining quality. Bullying is perhaps a classic case – in my view bullying is a profound sign of insecurity exhibited by someone who lacks the skills and confidence to demonstrate their value. This is vastly different to someone who has clear objectives, sets clear expectations and works positively to ensure that those expectations are met – yet somehow the two get confused.” (online contribution July 23, 2012)

GW: The weight in this comment seems to me to be on how ‘works positively’ is understood and carried out. Much of this essay is devoted to describing what that might mean. (current response)

A BASIS IN COMMON WISDOM

I will argue that the remedies to the fractured workplace are not difficult to find. We all know, more or less, what works in relationships between people; it is, as I have said, knowledge that has grown with us to adulthood. Again and again, in my work with groups of employees, managers and leaders, once the attitudes of the workplace culture have been explicitly put aside I have seen a remarkable degree of convergence in views of what is important in work as a human place. That knowledge is personally constructed, and personally held. For example, if you ask people to list the characteristics of a leader to whom they themselves would want to be responsible, there is almost complete agreement on a simple group of characteristics –willingness to listen, willingness to give trust, respect and ownership, a commitment to fairness, and so on—which reflects what everyone knows about people and the way they work best together. Modern leadership theory and practice don't begin to approach common wisdom in simplicity, practicality and power; in fact, as we will see, they act in opposite directions, to dismantle respect and trust. Practical wisdom, of which the above is an example, is just that: practical, and wise. Organisations that actively respect it, promote it, and live by it are healthy, creative places to work, and achieve organisational outcomes of real excellence.

Practical wisdom is built on ethical behaviour. Ethical theories are responses to the old question, “How should one live?” Modern management theory and practice give some attention to ethics, but it is not a central concern: the business case for action, rather than the ethical case, still holds sway. The view is that first we must be profitable, by all lawful means, and only then we can think about softer issues, such as ethics. By contrast truly ethical behaviour is not negotiable: it comes first. This is generally well understood in families and communities: a steady commitment to ethical behaviour, without exceptions and backsliding, is the ground on which trust and respect is built.

There are many traditional ethical theories, and many new theories under construction. Amidst the complexity there are some important key principles to navigate by. One is

Kant's 'respect for persons' principle: 'always treat humanity in a person as an end, never as a means'. All ethical theories are underpinned by the framework of common morality, the widely understood moral and ethical norms of the community. Their legitimacy is practical: it derives from their proven success, sometimes over centuries, in promoting individual and social well-being. This doesn't exempt people in organisations from the hard work of thinking things through when ethical issues arise. But it does mean that there is firm ground to stand on, a shared position in which everyone, as a member of the community, naturally participates and shares (Kagan 1998, Beauchamp, Bowie and Arnold 2009).

WORKPLACE COMMUNITIES

I will argue that a truly human workplace is something far more than the absence of bullying or other kinds of damaging behaviour. People come to their work as whole people, with all their aspirations and ambitions. A healthy workplace provides for growth and development of all its people, as individuals. It allows them to pursue avenues of work they find challenging and personally fulfilling. It provides opportunities for them to be inventive and creative, to try things out. In my work with organisations I have often been struck by a simple fact: if you want to know how to do something better, ask the people who are doing it—they will already have worked out a better way, even if they have not been allowed to put it into practice. Given a chance, most people want to grow and to find new ways in their work. I will argue, therefore, that the purpose of an organisation is always twofold: fulfilment of its mission; and the fulfilment of its people. Although these are goals that can be stated separately, they are inseparable. In a well-founded, healthy workplace, actions to meet organisational and individual purposes depend on each other, and strengthen each other.

A truly human workplace is more like a community than a collection of contractual obligations. A successful organisation is a group of people working together for common ends. In a healthy workplace community people take strength, stimulation and pleasure from working together. Principles of respect and care are intrinsic to such a workplace,

taken for granted, just as they are in healthy families and communities anywhere. Here both purposes, organisational and individual, are transcendently well realised. And this is not a counsel of perfection: it is the normal kind of work life that most people expect, and value.

CHANGE

This ideal workplace is far removed from a workplace culture where bullying is endemic, the rule, not the exception; so far, in fact, that it may seem impossible to get from one to the other. What kind of change program could achieve such a transformation? If what I will be arguing is true it is not nearly as difficult as it appears.

First, the desire for change, and the ability to achieve it, are already there, in the experience and knowledge of the people of the workplace themselves: it simply has to be allowed to give shape to the workplace. Second, as each building block of a healthy workplace is put in place, the toxic workplace is at the same time, step by step, dismantled. Third, the principles that drive this change, and the behaviours that embody it, are immediately seen as true: in the hundreds of groups I've worked with, without exception, these ideas have been recognised and welcomed—you could say, welcomed back—with relief.

There is no motivating to be done, there are no champions of change to be developed nor complex organisational gymnastics to be endured. These are things about people that everyone knows, as deeply as they know anything, to be true. That people really are allowed to shape the workplace according to the basic truths they know, that the old ways, the damaging ways of behaving, are really that, damaging, and don't have to be accepted, is the only step needed. Once taken, it is seen not to have been hard step, or a hard path, at all. Nothing, it turns out, could be more normal.

However, as normal as it may be, in modern management practice we start from a position of considerable abnormality. It's necessary therefore to work this argument

through, step by step. We need to understand how such unacceptable practices could have developed at all, let alone become accepted as best management practice, and strangest of all, morally justified. I will trace the history of this pathology. Then I will dismantle one by one the main supports of modern people management theory and practice—hierarchies, leadership, job descriptions, performance management, compensation, motivation, and so on—and reconstruct them on the principles outlined above. At the end of the essay we will have arrived at a clear view of what has gone so wrong in our workplaces and how it can be put right. Throughout I will be drawing on the many brilliant, funny, brave, hopeful, creative, decent people I have been fortunate to work with: to all of them I offer my grateful acknowledgements and respect. I hope you will find the journey as stimulating and as inspiring as I have.

Sarah Mott offers an instructive experience which demonstrate that seniority offers little security : “People ought to behave in a civilised and humane manner in the workplace. So why don’t they? And why is this behaviour rewarded? I find myself in the position of having had a pretty fine career. I met my goal of becoming a clinical professor some years ago and now work at a lesser level, by choice, hopefully contributing to the next generation of managers/leaders. At the age of 59, I have a youthful outlook, tonnes of energy and the capability to continue in the workforce, full-time, for some more years. Due to unpleasant behaviour by people higher up in the work food chain, it is more likely that I will retire at the end of this year and take my expertise with me. What I do not understand is that, as a strong, forthright, assertive woman, I feel completely disempowered by the behaviour of my senior colleagues?” (online contribution August 1, 2012).

2. The standard model of work: a clinical diagnosis

TAYLORISM IN MODERN GUISE

The way in which work itself is understood and organised determines, for better or worse, the human character of the workplace. In this chapter I will argue that the model of work that dominates modern workplaces is a vestigial oddity, now over a century old, that is incapable of meeting the demands of modern life, is wasteful of human capabilities, and is damaging to human well-being. That it maintains its prominence and is still accepted so widely and with so little questioning is one of the stranger facts of modern society; but so it is. By understanding its pathology we can look to its cure.

This model of work is associated with the American Frederick Winslow Taylor and his followers. His name is not now widely known, but his ideas have been—and, I would argue, remain—extraordinarily influential in modern workplace management, even if their source is forgotten. In 1911 Taylor wrote a book, *The Principles of Scientific Management*, which had an influence far beyond its immediate objectives. It was written to re-organise the work of industrial workshops, but it has defined, and continues to define, how modern organisations think about work and about the people who do it. Its damaging effects have been, and remain, incalculable, as we shall see.

Taylor wanted to make a clean break with the “craft” tradition of work that had developed in Europe over centuries. The craft tradition had been centred on the artisan model, in which knowledge and skills in a particular field, such as building or textiles, were developed in a series of well-defined ranks, from apprentice to journeyman to master craftsman. The industrial revolution dismantled this system through its requirement for large numbers of people to be employed in factories (or outsourced) to produce large volumes of goods (Thompson 1963). Taylorism, as the system became known, was designed to complete this historical upheaval by bringing work and the

workforce into full industrial production.

Taylor's big idea was to break down work into its constituent tasks, small enough to be standardised. This was done in a 'scientific' way (hence 'scientific management'): a number of workers experienced in the task were asked to perform it, their performance was measured, usually by a time and motion study, and a standard for that task was developed. Everything about the task was specified in the standard, "not only what is to be done, but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it." This was, Taylor noted, "a science for each element of a man's work, which replaces the old rule-of-thumb." As Harry Braverman (1974) has observed, this effectively dissociated the labour process from the skills of the workers.

Then followed some critical elements. First, because the skills associated with each task had been reduced, focused and standardised, it became much simpler, indeed necessary, for the firm to "scientifically select and then train, teach, and develop the workman" to carry out these tasks efficiently.

Second, conformity to the task standards was critical: it became essential "to insure (sic) all of the work being done in accordance with the principles of the science which has been developed." This is, Braverman points out, a monopoly over knowledge which is used "to control each step of the labour process and its mode of execution."

Third, management emerges as a new and overriding element in the work structure: "The management take over all the work for which they are better fitted than the workman." All of what Taylor described as "brain work" was to be removed from the shop floor and retired to the planning department—to quote Braverman again, "the separation of conception from execution."

IMPACT OF TAYLOR'S ASSUMPTIONS TODAY

The impact of Taylor's methods was immediate in the workshops of the twentieth century. The development of the production line is an obvious example, from the auto

manufacturing of peacetime to the munitions manufacturing of wartime. “Operations” became one of the four pillars of management (the others are finance and accounting, marketing, and human resources—with ICT as the modern candidate for a fifth pillar).

It may be objected that Taylor’s industrial workplaces are hardly recognisable in those of today: handling pig iron by hand, the arena of his early work, seems to have little to do with computerised robotics. This can be readily countered. Firstly, if you look at modern manufacturing workplaces, such as auto manufacturers, you will find many people still doing standardised, repetitive, monotonous tasks along Taylorist principles; and the robust existence of sweatshops in regimes of low wages and lower work safeguards still damage the working lives of millions of people—even after the Nike sweatshop disclosures, high profile UK companies, including Gap, Next and Marks & Spencer have been reported as continuing these practices in India—with pay rates as low as 25 cents per hour; and questions about the ethics of Apple’s operations in China remain.

But secondly, I argue that the imprint of Taylorist principles remains unmistakably dominant in assumptions about modern work and in the patterns of its organisation. They may not be there in precisely the same form, but their intent and force is intact. This is not difficult to see if you take the Taylorist principles and look for them in current work practice.

JOBS AND THEIR DESCRIPTIONS

To begin with, there is no doubt that, although time and motion studies may not be involved, modern work is certainly segmented. This is evident from the simple idea of a “job”. Work is organised around the jobs or “positions” that are seen as necessary to carry it out. People are not in general hired as people, because of their broad personal base of knowledge and skills but in order to do a particular job. Knowledge, capabilities and skills are relevant not in themselves but in their application to a particular, well-defined piece of the total work. This is not very far removed from the Taylorist idea of a task: multiple tasks may be inherent in a job, but they are highly constrained, and together form one job in the array of jobs that make up the work.

Think of the “position description”. Typically it will first lay out the duties and responsibilities of the position. In modern human resources management, the process of developing this description has clear analogues to Taylor’s time and motion studies: it may involve interviewing workers or supervisors, observation, group interviews, technical conferences, critical incident analysis, questionnaires, checklists and so on. The goal is to develop a set of discrete tasks and responsibilities which define “the job” as precisely as possible.

This description then generates a list of skills and capabilities that are required to carry out these tasks and responsibilities. These become the criteria which drive the selection process, which is supposed to look for as close a fit as possible between the job tasks and responsibilities on the one hand and the candidate’s skills and capabilities on the other. The candidate who is deemed to meet these criteria best will get the job (Newell 2009).

(We may note in passing the ludicrous nature of most position descriptions. Not only are the tasks and responsibilities listed usually far more than the actual work requires but the skills, capabilities and experience listed are laughably excessive. Who, I have often asked, are they trying to hire? Superman? Wonder Woman? Moreover, my experience suggests that selection panels usually make their decisions on other grounds entirely: they may tick the boxes if they are required to, but in the end their decision is more likely to be based on a gut feeling as to whether the candidate in question is “one of us.” But more on that later.)

Moreover, the definition of work contained in the position description occurs within the context of the organisation’s work as a whole. The idea is that these are the units of which the work of the organisation is comprised. If they are carried out properly, according to the precise specification, in the right relationship to each other, the work as a whole will run smoothly and the organisational objectives will be achieved. All we need are people who are trained to carry out the units of work and will do it as they are told to. This precisely the spirit of Taylorism.

THE WORK AND JOB DESIGNERS

We can go further. Who, it may be asked, designed this job? It must be someone who sits above it, in some way; in fact, someone who sits above the work as a whole, because all the jobs that constitute it have to fit with each other to produce the right outcome, so the designer can't be embedded in any one level or part of it. The answer, it becomes apparent, must be Taylor's: this is the "brain work", the design work, which is the particular role of management, and for which they are held to be uniquely qualified.

Yet everyone knows that work designed in this way, from above, is often, even usually, woefully inadequate. It is invariably the case that the people actually doing the work best know how to do it. Here is a little story to that effect. Recently one of the four big Australian banks became concerned about one of its units: the outcomes of the unit's work were seen as strong, but there was concern among management about whether the unit was controlling risks by following the work manuals (manuals are the modern tool of standardising work; Taylor used cards). The management of the bank brought in a consulting firm to audit the unit. The consultants spent three months in the unit's workplace, interviewing employees, reviewing documentation, observing work practice, and so on. At the end of the time they reported to management that 90% of the work being done by the unit was *not* in the manuals. Yet the outcomes were excellent.

What had happened, of course, was that people in the unit had simply taken control of their own work: where they saw a way to do it better, they did it. Those new practices were shared verbally. When new workers came in they were briefed by those around them. No one bothered much about the manuals. They just did the work themselves, together, and did it far better than the design developed by someone else and embedded in the manuals.

There is more to say about the lessons of this story and others like it, but let's for the moment follow through the logic of work design and of position descriptions. If you have designed work along a trajectory of segments or stages; if you have identified those work segments with jobs; and if you have hired people to do those jobs; you now have to make sure they do those jobs, precisely as they are defined. Taylor recognised this requirement very clearly: each task had to be carried out "in accordance with the

principles of the science which has been developed.” The task is defined in outcomes and measures: you have to make sure they are being met. The belief is that, only if every piece of work meets its required outcomes, will the work as a whole be achieved.

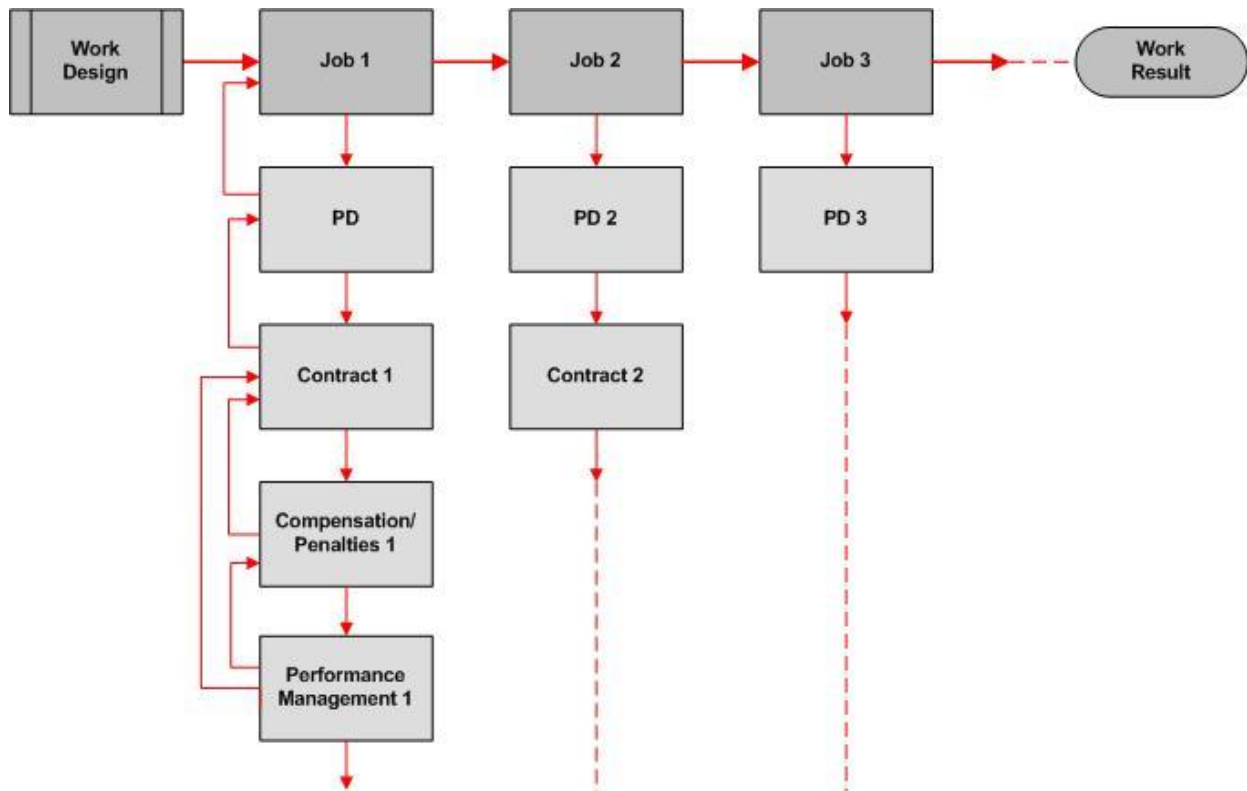
CONTROL & COERCION

Now if you are a manager who subscribes to modern people management principles, how do you ensure that people will do what they are, according to the design, supposed to be doing, at the level that is required by the overarching plan? You institute controls. You assume that there is no way people can be counted on to do the work without them. It wouldn't be possible, for example, to discuss the work with them, come to some agreement about who is going to do what work, and when; first, because you couldn't trust that these are the right decisions, since they operate at a low level of the hierarchy (non-brain work); and second, you couldn't trust people to actually do what they say they are going to do. So you set up controls. Modern management is overwhelmingly about control.

Rob Silva provides an update of modern production management practice: “Certainly I have seen workplaces where the worst sides of Taylorism are practiced. But by contrast, I can look at a modern mass-production facility where typically statistical process control is married with some form of continuous improvement methodology. Perhaps ironically, the former is about standardisation and the latter is about changing or adapting the standards. In the best of these environments the ‘controls’ are of course not controls but measures which a work team are not able to discern for themselves (because they are removed from the relevant measurement point in space or time or there is a practical impediment to performing that measurement). The work team itself is organised and empowered to implement or initiate change in order to produce ‘better’ outcomes according to the measure.” (Online contribution, September 20, 2012)

GW: “The location of the process is, I think, the critical point here—substantially devolved to local ownership. This contrasts with the top-down character of Taylorist models.” (Online response, September 22, 2012)

I argue that the entire machinery of modern people management is designed to implement these controls. It is, to pick up the term of the previous chapter, fundamentally coercive in its intent. Legal coercion is applied through contracts, between the individual worker and the firm. Financial coercion is applied through reward, compensation and penalty structures (you can call these mechanisms ‘incentives’ but the underlying human reality doesn’t change). Performance management ensures conformity of the employee’s actions with the job’s stated tasks and responsibilities. Instruments such as these are the core of modern people management, and in later chapters we will look closely at them. Here I want simply to argue that they are all designed, ultimately, to achieve one primary outcome: that the segments of work will be performed according to specifications of “the plan”, under the assumption that this will produce the desired organisational outcomes. That is Taylorism, in its essential form. Here is one way of drawing it:



Here I've attempted to show the tight linkage between each unit of work, located in its place within the projected work sequence, and defined by the PD, and the specific control mechanisms which are applied to it. I've shown some of these mechanisms—which are, when applied to the person who does the job, coercive—but there are more that are not shown here. Some, such as 360 degree appraisal (boss-colleagues-staff-client-customer evaluations) are formal; others, such as organisational or workplace culture, are informal, but no less powerful. I argue that you can trace the controlling imprint of the standard model through all of them.

TAYLORIST PRACTICE IS DAMAGING

Of course I'm generalising here, in order to bring out what I see as the underlying character of modern views of work. This is not to say that every workplace reflects these views, and some components of it are carried out better in some places than in others. However, in my work I have been surprised to see how widely the standard

model of work and its control is held, often implicit, and unacknowledged, and, when challenged, how strongly it is defended. It appears in many forms in management theory and practice.

I believe this model to be fundamentally misconceived, and damaging both to organisations and to individuals. On the organisational level, in the modern business environment the best firms know this model to be sclerotic and regressive. Companies like Google, for example, sitting at the forefront of unprecedented change, have understood that the work can't be designed from on high, that it has to be handed over to teams in a flattened organisational structure, that no amount of managerial knowledge can effectively direct the work of organisations in complex environments under rapid change, and that the knowledge required rests not with a small coterie of senior managers but with their people. I argue that this principle applies not just to organisations under this kind of pressure, but to all organisations. It is in the creativity and energy of their people, their willingness to undertake discretionary work, their aspirations for themselves and for the organisation, that real organisational achievement rests. The ability of the organisation to respond to a rapidly changing and challenging environment resides in this capacity of their people for creative and innovative solutions. Taylorist controls work against organisational achievement by shutting down these qualities—qualities which, I argue, will naturally emerge given even the briefest opportunity.

On the individual level, as Braverman points out, the dismantling of the “craft” structure of knowledge tends to reduce the satisfaction and fulfilment people have in their work, in moving from a complex of skills and capabilities across different levels of responsibility, to a single level. Wider cognitive or intellectual tasks—Taylor’s “brain work”—is separated out and relocated to upper management, a justification, apparently, for arguably excessive levels of compensation. I recall vividly, on entering a strategy development project for a big manufacturing firm, being visited on the first day by the director of the plant. “I hear you’re doing some strategy,” he said. “Can I help? I think about those things all the time, but I never get a chance to talk about them.”

In the standard model, ownership of work is located somewhere else: this is not my work; it is formulated and designed by someone else. It's difficult to take pride in work you've had little part in designing, for which you've been unable to share your knowledge and insights, work which is essentially developed and owned by someone else. Here the scope of individual work is tightly constrained: the last thing the manager wants is individual creativity and innovation, which loosens control and throws the design into question. The requirement is rather for conformity, for meeting the standards laid out for the job.

Most importantly, this is a model which is built on suspicion and distrust. The basic assumption is that people can't be trusted to do their work properly, that without the array of coercive mechanisms in place the firm will be taken advantage of by their employees for their own personal ends. This is insulting, disrespectful and clearly untrue. The fact is that, as we all know from our own experience, and as research confirms, most people want to do their work well; indeed, given the opportunity most will find ways to do it better. There are exceptions, of course, but mostly this is true. Under coercive mechanisms respect disappears, trust is dismantled, and the springs of creativity, innovation and collaboration, which are the normal attributes of people working together, dry up. Work becomes individualised: the economising principle—that the individual acts according to her evaluation of the costs and benefits to herself—is brought to the fore. Fear becomes a paramount instrument of management: fear of failure, fear of consequences, fear of not meeting standards, fear of thinking differently. The individual becomes alienated from her work, and the potential human value of perhaps one third of her life is diminished. These losses to life are incalculable.

Emma Piers recalls her experience of appraisal: “I remember when I was working within an environment that used some daft form of appraisal system as ‘standard procedure.’...it was bizarre and demoralising having my role ‘appraised’ by someone who didn’t have a clue what the role actually entailed.” (Online contribution August 4 2012)

REVERSING THE TAYLORIST MODEL

Of course there will be those who will object that Taylor developed his system over a hundred years ago, and that it can't possibly be relevant today. Taken literally it's a valid objection; but the underlying framework of Taylorist assumptions is, as I have argued, in robust good health. Referencing the Taylorist model has the value of exposing the underlying assumptions that run so deep in our modern workplaces and their management, and that engender management practices so crude in their view of human thought, feeling and behaviour that it is difficult to take them seriously. Indeed, presented almost anywhere else in society—in a community or social group—they would be unceremoniously dumped. Yet that is the reality we are facing.

It is in considering this pathology of organisation that the seeds of a remedy can be seen. As we will see in later chapters, it is precisely by systematically reversing the Taylorist assumptions that the way out can be constructed. The counter assumptions we will explore rest on such ideas as the integrated nature of work, broadly conceived; the human value good work can bring to lives; the intrinsic desire of people to take their work forward, to develop and expand it; the natural capabilities of people to work together, and to conceive of new ways of doing things; the view of people as mature, intelligent, forward-looking associates in the workplace; the view of people as intrinsically worthy of trust and respect. These ideas shouldn't be shocking. Perhaps it's a mark of how far the pathology of the modern workplace has reached that they are.

3. Purposes of the firm: beyond function to people

'BUILD GOOD SHIPS'

In 1886 the founder of the Chesapeake Dry Dock and Construction Company, Collis P. Huntington, gave what he called a 'motto' to his new venture:

"We shall build good ships here. At a profit—if we can. At a loss—if we must, but always good ships."

To most people this is an immediately attractive statement; and it's worth thinking about why that should be. It is not strictly a vision statement, which typically is a kind of 'foresighting', in which the form of the organisation at some future point—perhaps ten or twenty years—is envisaged. Vision statements are important, in being both formative and enabling, but that's not what this is. It is closer, perhaps, to what modern managers would call a 'mission' or a 'purpose' statement. It has, in fact, elements of all three; but it goes beyond them, too. It speaks to the people who are to work at this place, what kinds of values they hold. The old craft commitment is clearly evident—pride in the quality of the work itself, on its own ground. There is a commitment to the customer, to the quality of the product being offered; and this commitment is expressed as non-negotiable, placed even above financial outcomes (difficult to see any modern manager conceding as much). And that speaks to values, even to character. It is a statement of integrity in its key relationships. Everyone knows, from their own experience of life, the value of integrity.

Of course intention is one thing and implementation another; and it may be that in practice this statement has been honoured in the breach rather than the observance. Still, it is a vigorous statement of purpose; and at least it seems to have contributed to a

successful business, which still thrives as the Newport News Shipbuilding Company, Virginia.

PURPOSES OF FIRMS

One may contrast this statement with the purpose that has overwhelmingly characterised firms, particularly over the past three decades: shareholder value. There are debates about how shareholder value can best be measured in both private and listed firms. But the underlying principle is clear: the primary purpose—indeed, the only purpose of any real significance—of the firm is to increase the financial wealth of its owners.

Few will dispute the right of owners of firms (or providers of capital) to a reasonable return on their investment. The difficulties arise when this is asserted to be the sole purpose of the firm, and the sole criterion of successful management. This is a proposal identified particularly with a famous New York Times Magazine article written in 1970 by Milton Friedman, uncompromisingly entitled “The social responsibility of business is to increase its profits.” Friedman argued that the managers of a company had no business to be thinking about anything else but the business outcomes: that they were neither qualified nor authorised to do so; and that it was only through profitability that the benefits of businesses flowed to society at large. This, it is worth noting, is a proposition that has been implicitly adopted as a law of economic life in the policies of most modern governments, of whatever political persuasion. It is also worth noting that it has been trenchantly criticised over the past several decades from such perspectives as corporate social responsibility (Carroll 2008) and stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984), and more recently of sustainability (Moscardo et al. 2012, Wells 2013).

Stakeholders of firms are held to be owners, managers, employees, suppliers, customers and the community at large. Stakeholder theory holds that firms (and all organisations) must negotiate the allocation of their resources among the claims of the different stakeholders. This is not always an easy task: for example, partiality to the interests of customers may impinge upon the interests of suppliers and distributors (think, for example, of supplier strong-arming by Walmart, or, in Australia, by Coles and

Woolworths); partiality to the interests of shareholders (through dividend levels, for instance) may impinge upon the interests of all other stakeholders. There are no easy answers to these allocation decisions. The principal value of stakeholder theory, however, was in insisting that there are legitimate claims on the firm other than the shareholders. That, in the context of modern assumptions about business, was a challenge of sufficient force to be regarded as radical.

We may, however, go further. Among the list of stakeholders I would argue that employees clearly have a special place and a special claim to consideration. Their lives are bound to the fortunes of the firm. Their work creates the products and services that are of value to other stakeholders. They have committed their working lives and capabilities to the firm as no other stakeholders have. They live one third of their lives in the workplace in which these products and services are developed. I argue, therefore, that along with the purposes of the organisation which are embodied in its services or products are a set of purposes of equal status: the well-being and growth of the organisation's own people, in their own right. These are purposes which cannot be ignored, put aside, or diminished. If the organisation is to flourish in any sense, they must be fully and equally honoured.

This way of thinking arises from a fact which ought to be so obvious as not to need stating at all: employees are, indeed, people, with all their complex and rich dimensions, and particularly the rights that are due to any person. In this I am thinking of the alternative description, in modern management, of people who work in firms and organisations as 'human resources'. This, I would suggest, is an insulting term, deeply repugnant, and ingrained in the antiquated and damaging model of work that I have outlined in chapter 2. It derives from an old concept in economics, the idea of factors of production: such things as machinery, buildings, raw materials, energy—and labour. The factors of production are the inputs that are needed to produce any given output. The economic challenge is one of efficiency, seeking the least waste and the greatest productivity of any combination of production factors. Labour is like any other factor: it plays its part as an input in generating output, and is to be made as efficient as possible.

Among all the factors, or resources, that are brought together to accomplish the firm's work, human elements are like any other factor, a resource; hence 'human resources'. It is precisely this view that is embedded in the Taylorist model of work.

This is clearly nonsense. Human beings are not raw materials, or machines, or even energy: they are fundamentally different from all of these, and any attempt to reduce them to a set of production factors—in particular, to units of labour—will fail. Tony Watson (2009) acerbically remarks:

“Many managers would undoubtedly like to be able directly to ‘manage people’ and thus straightforwardly exploit the ‘resources’ which those people bring to the organisation. It would make life easier for managers if the workforce could be tended like a herd of cattle which, with careful husbandry, produces a regular supply of milk, butter and meat. The human animal, however, is fundamentally different from all others. ‘Managing people’ is an impossibility.”

Watson goes on to discuss the ways in which people are active, rather than passive, in their work; an important topic which we will take up later in the essay.

Sarah Mott remarks: “In my experience, the herd of cattle analogy is spot on, each creature has to go in the same direction and a cattle prod is ready for any that step out of line. Yet, the stray may find the greenest grass, the best route, the cleanest water or something else totally unexpected – all these would be missed if the cattle prod is put to work.” (Online contribution, September 4, 2012)

GW: “Yes, exactly—modern management practice routinely shuts people down and stifles the discretionary creativity that is precisely what organisations need in order to thrive in a changing and challenging environment—all driven by some illusion of control.” (Online posting, September 10, 2012)

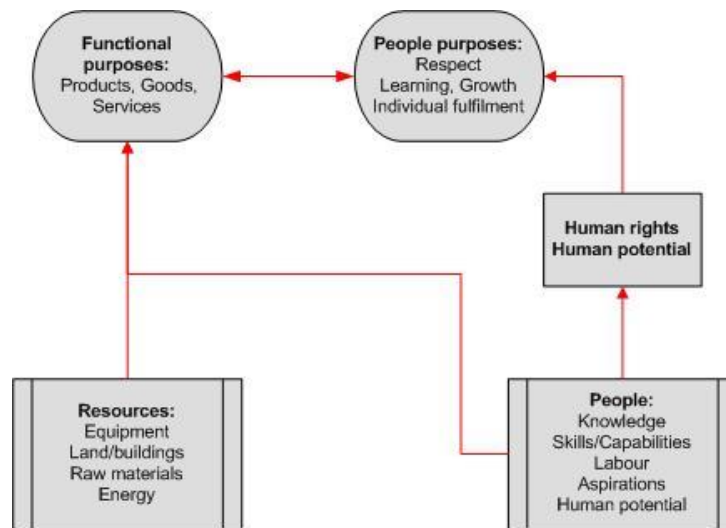
We now focus on what changes in terms of purposes, once one explicitly insists on the

human character of work and the people who do it. A first, and basic, observation is that employees have explicit rights at work. This is given unambiguous expression in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights: “everyone has the right. . .to just and favourable conditions of work”. Employment (as against unemployment), freedom from discrimination, freedom of association in trade unions, and reasonable working hours and paid holidays are all specified rights under the Declaration. And it is important to note that underpinning these specific rights are held to be more general human rights, which derive from the concept of the intrinsic dignity and worth of every human being. Make no mistake, despite the general character of the language, these are powerful statements which carry concrete obligations for governments, in legislating and regulating, and for organisations in structuring and managing work. They emphasise the principle that if you employ people you have real obligations to them which go well beyond the labour units they provide to the organisation. I wonder how many employers even know of the existence of these formally stated human rights, let alone systematically embed them in their organisations and regularly audit their application.

The word ‘dignity’ is the most powerful of all the rights terms. It occurs, in the first sentence of the Preamble of the Declaration, and in the first Article: “All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” Dignity is often associated with Immanuel Kant’s “respect for persons” principle: always treat humanity in a person as an end, never as a means. Applied to work, the implication is direct: people are never only units of labour (means to the organisation’s ends, or purposes) but always an end in themselves.

The purposes of firms and organisations thus always include the dignity and well-being of their people. This purpose—the human purpose—sits alongside the functional purpose represented by the organisation’s products and services. The human purposes of the organisation can never be subordinated to its functional purposes: that is the whole point of human rights—they are non-negotiable. They must be explicitly provided for in any work and in any workplace.

Here is one way of drawing the linkages I’m suggesting:



TREATING YOUR PEOPLE WELL

Rights are defined both negatively (freedom from discrimination) and positively (just and favourable conditions of work). On the positive side we can go further. Here are three important areas of obligation over and above the fundamental human rights which, I would argue, also come with the people a firm or organisation employs:

Ethical behaviour: The firm must act ethically with its own people (and also with its suppliers, customers, and so on). Ronald Francis (2000) proposes four ethical principles of corporate behaviour:

1. Preserve from harm.
2. Respect the dignity of all persons.
3. Be open and honest except in the exceptional cases where privacy and silence are clearly ethically preferable.
4. Act so as to preserve the equitability of relationships.

These are linked to honourable principles such as equitability, honesty, openness, goodwill, and alleviation of suffering. One doesn't need the Declaration of Human Rights to see the sense and rightness of these principles: they are part of everybody's life

experience. All ethical systems are underpinned by common morality. In the end, it's usually not the direction of a particular ethical decision that is the quandary, but rather the decision to act ethically at all. Firms should simply, as Francis suggests, decide always to act ethically, as a basic principle, particularly with their own people. There should be no recourse to 'business is business' or 'nothing personal, just business', which are craven retreats. If you employ people, or work with them in any way, you should act ethically and fairly towards them; no ifs, no buts. If you can't make the business work with a commitment to ethical behaviour, then you're in the wrong business: I would say, make a living by working at something else where you can act decently.

Growth, learning and development: People have a right to growth. That is recognised in the Declaration as rights to education; but it doesn't end with completion of formal education. Lifelong learning is well known to be a cornerstone of a healthy life, and nowhere is there greater opportunity for continuous learning, growth and development than at work. Under the standard model describe in chapter 2 this is anathema: people are hired to do the work attached to a specific job, not to grow out of it. The idea of people developing their capabilities and moving on or up directly threatens the model and is the last thing the manager of modern management theory would want. The exception is where development is called training; which means, the development of skills and capabilities that are of direct relevance to the work—the shaping of an individual peg to fill the job hole. One doesn't want to exclude this kind of learning—it may be that an individual will find it relevant to the things she wants to develop in herself—but relevance to the firm's work is not the only or even the best criterion for continuing training or education. People have all kinds of aspirations for growth and achievement, and it's up to the firm to understand them and support them as far as it can. People should be employed as whole people, growing and developing and aspiring, never as only units of labour, and firms should work with and support them in their learning and growth. It comes with the human territory.

Respect: Respect is one of those overarching principles of living which when you think

about it includes almost everything we know about the right and best way to behave with other people. Respect and dignity go together in the Declaration: to respect someone is to act so as to uphold their human dignity. Note the word 'human'. There are other grounds for respect: you can respect someone for specific knowledge or a specific capability or skill. Typically, though, that kind of respect doesn't survive outside the specific context in which it arises. But respect in terms of human dignity is something altogether different. Respect here is something that every person as a human being deserves from everyone, and is asked to give to everyone as human beings, regardless of what they know or what they can do. Respect covers a lot of ground. It means respecting basic human rights. It means acting ethically. It means not discriminating. It means treating people as mature, intelligent, creative individuals. It means assuming that people want to work with you, not that they are waiting to take advantage of you. It means listening and understanding. It means supporting and legitimising difference. Respect is the ground of all living relationships, no more clearly than in the workplace.

My argument, then, is that the purposes of every organisation, including firms, include value-rich purposes that sit alongside, and are equal to, their functional purposes. The value-rich purposes arise just because the organisation is made of its people, who are not simply units of labour or resources but whole people who must be treated as such. That treatment rests on fundamental human rights, and extends beyond them, to the ground of common morality, consideration and decency that characterises all relationships at their best. These are not optional actions; they are not costs that have to be managed down; they are not impediments to, or distractions from, the organisational tasks. They are in themselves legitimate and important outcomes sought by the organisation's work. The organisation is a primary arena of human life: the life purposes of its people therefore become part of its own purposes.

Stacey Bradley notes: "Time and time again employees are seen purely as resources and the human element is lacking. It seems to be so illogical, yet this notion permeates modern workplaces everywhere." (Online contribution, September 10, 2012)

GW: “It’s interesting that you should use the word ‘illogical’, Stacey—I think you are entirely right. Even from the business case side (putting aside ethics for a moment) it doesn’t make sense—not if you know anything about how people work. Yet you would expect every manager, as a reasonably experienced human being, to know something more about how people work. Just the fact that this artificial and unreasonable paradigm of management prevails, as you say, so uniformly, is testament to the power of the Taylorist assumptions about what work is and how it is to be accomplished—it seems to be so strong that even the common experience of everyday life, that everyone knows to be true of people, is put aside. Perhaps this is also driven by fear of losing control; or perhaps just managerial laziness, it being much simpler just to resort to carrots and sticks and put the responsibility back on employees—with the implicit threat that if they don’t want to accept those responsibilities there are others who will.” (Online response, September 10, 2012)

I am not claiming that the justification for treating employees in this way is that they will be more productive or better able to deliver organisational outcomes as a result. My position is that employees should be treated with respect because that is the right way to treat people, at any time or in any place. At the same time, it is clearly true that if people are treated properly they are likely to contribute to better organisational outcomes, to approach their jobs creatively and with greater energy and application. The standard model measures the value of an individual's work by the job unit: just that work is demanded, no more, no less. Where the fundamentals of relationships are routinely damaged—by breaching human rights, by unethical behaviour, by quashing aspiration, or by lack of respect, and the like, all driven by the standard model—the natural response of an employee will be, work to rule, at the minimum level possible. Organisations don’t thrive on such repression; they thrive when people’s capabilities are freed by respect and decency.

These are not arcane arguments but practical wisdom, the truths that life experience brings to us all. It is natural to make them also the truths of our workplaces once the artificial rigidities of modern people management have been, as they should be, abandoned for good.

4. Participation and consultation--token and real

CULTURE AND CONSULTATION

For all their rhetoric, firms are rarely participative or consultative: the dominant practice of modern management is unambiguously directive, from the top down. That is true at every scale of the organisation, from CEO to executive, from the executive group to other employees, from business unit heads to business unit employees, from supervisors to the supervised. There are cultural differences in this: in my experience Anglo-American managers and employees take top-down, directive management for granted; so do Asian firms; European firms are more inclined to consultation (but often token); and Australian managers, while attempting to implement the American model, may well have to come to terms with a more intransigent workforce. The prevailing paradigm of modern management is, however, overwhelmingly directive. As we saw in chapter 2, it is built into the Taylorist model of work that underpins the modern workplace model: managers develop a master plan of the work elements and their arrangements, and take ownership of the 'brain' work, the high-level work which is supposed to be commensurate with their (significantly) greater salary packages. The market certainly believes in top-down leadership: the best market strategy for a public company in trouble is to change its CEO, which will usually see its share price bounce on the touching faith that the new man (usually a man) will transform overnight the performance of the entire company.

EUROPEAN PRACTICE ON EMPLOYEE CONSULTATION

Increasingly, however, this model is being challenged. In the European Union, for example, employee participation and ownership has a strong basis in the Community's Charter of Fundamental Social Rights for Workers, and its adoption by the Heads of Government of the then eleven member states at Strasbourg in 1989. The Charter was

remarkable in its grasp of the importance of the workplace to the quality of people's lives, and the range of issues associated with it. It proposed principles on which the European labour law model was to be based; and, more generally, the role of work in society. A list of its key Articles is in itself an impressive commitment to social values in the workplace:

- Freedom of movement
- Employment and remuneration
- Improvement of living and working conditions
- Social protection
- Freedom of association and collective bargaining
- Vocational training
- Equal treatment for men and women
- Information, consultation and participation of workers
- Health protection and safety in the workplace
- Protection of children and adolescents
- The rights of elderly persons
- The rights of disabled persons

An example of the scope intended to apply to the employment relationship by the Charter is the Directive 'establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community', adopted by the European Parliament in March 2002 (available at the EU website, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu>). The Directive implements Article 27 of the Charter, which establishes 'workers' rights to information and consultation within the undertaking'; that is, within the enterprise. It requires all businesses with at least 50 employees, or establishments (discrete locations) with at least 20 employees (the choice is left to the member states) to inform and consult with employees on a wide range of matters. These include, as might be expected, the

‘situation, structure and probable development of employment’ in the business, particularly where there is a threat to employment; and ‘decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation’. But the Directive goes further: it requires information and consultation on ‘the recent and probable development of the undertaking’s or the establishment’s activities and economic situation’. In other words, employee representatives may seek dialogue on changes to senior management, new strategies and vision statements, sales results, demand, new products, overtime, and training and development; everything, in fact, that, in countries such as the UK, has been until now the more or less exclusive province of the executive group.

Many European national labour laws, notably those of Germany and France, have long incorporated the notion of stakeholder voice, as opposed to solely shareholder voice, into the processes of governance and control within companies. Thus in Germany representatives of employees and in some cases other stakeholders, such as local government and environmental interests, are required by law to sit on the boards of public companies. Here company law and labour law are closely linked. The German and French systems are examples of what have been termed ‘insider systems’, which “essentially see the business enterprise as having an organisational dimension which rests on the contributions made by a number of stakeholder groups, and not simply a financial dimension which describes the contribution of the shareholders (Barnard and Deakin 2002, p.133).

Moreover, the concept of information and consultation embedded in the Directive, once it is drawn into the practical realities of the work environment, points to a more sophisticated notion of representation, in which democracy in the EU is considered “less in terms of representative democracy and more in terms of participation and deliberation. . .[it] places the emphasis on obtaining a shared sense of meaning and common will. . .on arguing, reason giving and learning, leading to the transformation, rather than simply the aggregation, of preferences.” (Barnard and Deakin 2002, p.144)

This is a strong statement of principle, a commitment to a particular view of work life, and a transformed employment relationship in the direction of what is increasingly being

termed a ‘partnership’ model. It is not a theoretical aspiration: the Directive is a reality. It has been binding on all businesses of EU member states since 2005, although predictably it was resisted by Boards and management (Overall 2005).

THE IAP2 CONSULTATION FRAMEWORK

However, it is worth considering what the right to information and consultation might mean in practice. Like many policies, the devil is in the detail, in this case the detail of how the management of the firm chooses to interpret that right. A useful framework for considering this question is the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum (available at <http://www.iap2.org.au/resources/iap2s-public-participation-spectrum>). Although it was designed for use in public contexts, the IAP2 Spectrum is directly relevant to organisations. It sets out a continuum of possible relationships between central agencies (in this case, management) and stakeholders (in this case, employees), as follows:

INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
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It is evident that these categories, read left to right, move from least to greatest participation. The Spectrum then lays out for each category *the nature of the participation goal* which characterises each of these categories (here the term ‘employees’ has been substituted for the original ‘public’):

To provide the employees with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives,	To obtain the employees’ feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the employees throughout the process to ensure that employees’ concerns and aspirations are	To partner with the employees in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred	To place final decision-making in the hands of the employees.
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opportunities
and/or solutions.

consistently
understood and
considered.
solution.

The *management undertakings* which are linked to each of these goals are then identified:

We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and provide feedback on how employees' input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how employees' input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for direct advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
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TOKEN PARTICIPATION AND CONSULTATION

These categories seem to capture well the different stances that management in modern firms adopt with respect to participation and consultation ('management' here, rather than 'managers', because the stance is nearly always one of the firm's policy, reinforced by cultural norms). Clearly the first three of these categories (working from the left) are associated with top-down management. The first category is blunt and unpromising, from the employee point of view: "we will keep you informed." The second two categories seem at least to embody degrees of interchange, an acknowledgement of the two-way character of anything that resembles participation. However, I would be prepared to bet that many people reading the first three columns in this table, and reflecting on their own workplace experience, would be sceptical of the commitments

articulated here, even at the most basic level. All too often management curtails information, avoids action on feedback, and fails to follow up consultation. This is tokenism, pure and simple; it is designed to meet regulatory requirements (such as those in Europe) and to divert the demands of employees for participation into harmless channels (that is, channels that are peripheral to centralised decision-making), while providing a ground for presenting the company as progressive to the community and the market. In my experience, tokenism is far more often the rule than the exception in modern workplaces.

The irony is that, while designed to shore up the Taylorist structures which dominate modern management, tokenism seriously damages the organisational fabric. Nothing undermines trust between management and employees so quickly or so thoroughly. Once dismantled, trust is very difficult to restore. A firm embarking on this path would be better advised not to undertake such measures at all: at least uncompromising, unambiguous control-and-command management has an element of honesty about it. It is the dishonesty of token participation and consultation that employees find difficult to forgive. A withdrawal of discretionary work and a retreat to work-to-rule is the almost inevitable result.

But a second reason employees react in this way to token consultation is that their expectations have been disappointed; and that is worth examining. These are expectations of ownership. The opportunity to play an active part in the decisions and implementation of their work is greatly valued by most people. The value of ownership for an employee rests first in the satisfaction of seeing one's own decisions and actions worked through into useful outcomes, in products and services and the contributions they make. Even more important, perhaps, is that the ownership embedded in real participation is a mark of respect: an explicit recognition that my ideas, opinions and actions matter, that they are valuable; that I may be employed but not as an object, a factor of production, like plant or equipment; that I am trusted to take on responsibility for important outcomes; that I matter, as a person, with all the creativity and intelligence that human beings bring. All healthy relationships are founded on mutual respect, as we

have seen. That is why participation and consultation promises so much, and why the betrayal (it is not too much to use the word, in my experience) of that promise in token participation is so damaging.

CEO VISION AND ITS MYTHS

Is it possible, then, for firms and organisations really to implement the third and fourth categories in the IAP2 Spectrum, ‘Collaborate’ and ‘Empower’? The European Directive seems to suggest that it is, since the right to information and consultation, as we have seen, is interpreted there as “obtaining a shared sense of meaning and common will. . . on arguing, reason giving and learning, leading to the transformation, rather than simply the aggregation, of preferences.” This represents truly engaged, shared consultation where there is learning on both sides and the outcome can actually be changed by the process--hallmarks of the Collaborate/Empower modes.

Increasingly, too, there is a recognition among many leading firms that in the modern business environment these participation modes are not only possible but required. That is, the business case for them is becoming strong.

Firstly, there is an absurd hubris in the idea that one person, the CEO, is somehow the fount of all the knowledge that the success of the business requires. As noted, the market seems to hold tenaciously to this view, and far too many CEOs fall into the trap of believing that it’s true. But it beggars belief that in a globally-connected world of immense complexity, with interacting systems of extreme volatility and unpredictability, any one person could plot a coherent business course. The best CEOs know this is rubbish: they may present themselves as charismatic messiahs to the market, but they know better than to manage like that. Jack Welch, for example, the well-known (and somewhat notorious) CEO of General Electric, presented a public persona of absolute managerial control; but he is said to have collaborated closely with his senior people and was one of the first managers of modern times to understand that the employees of the company were an immense creative resource--he sent his managers onto the shop floors to seek out critiques and ideas, and installed computer terminals to make direct

communication with him simple. Michael Chaney, the former CEO of Wesfarmers, is said to be another example: in creating one of the most successful conglomerates in Australian business history, he assembled an outstanding group of business developers and worked closely and collaboratively with them. Modern companies like Google, operating at the forefront of the Internet space, live and breathe this reality. In a sector that is evolving at breathtaking speed, significant managerial power has devolved to semi-autonomous teams in order to allow for maximum creativity and flexibility in new product development.

Sam Wells comments on the task of giving responsibility for the vision to the employees: “Such clear seeing, so compelling and liberating when it’s actually expressed like this, is very difficult for most managers, who see the organisation through the lens of the mental models and assumptions that shape the corporate world’s view of itself. The cognitive dissonance that managers experience as they confront the clash of personal values and organisational expectations is soothed away by a raft of corporate ‘truths’ – e.g. “business is business” – that legitimise those behaviours that diminish employees, and which you have described so well.

In regard to real engagement, especially in the expression of a genuinely shared – that is, co-created – vision of “what we really want”, how we want to experience the organisation, there is one fear that seems to hold back well-intentioned CEOs and senior managers, and eventually sucks them into the tokenism you describe. Often they are passionate about their organisations and have thought deeply about what the future could and should hold. The question that unnerves them, as they contemplate surrendering responsibility for the vision to all the employees, is “What if they get it wrong?”. Of course, there is no guarantee that the vision will unfold seamlessly into a triumphant future, but that is undoubtedly true of the CEO’s ‘vision’ also. There will, or should, always be a process of trying things and learning as we go – what Buckminster Fuller termed “trial and error, error, error”. But, fundamentally,

the employees, acting collaboratively, don't get it wrong – the wisdom of the whole system is unerring and at the level of heart-felt values – what's most important to us – most people want the same things. So this fear is groundless, but it often undermines genuine engagement, and leads to withholding what has been called *the right to take responsibility*.” (Online contribution, October 7 2012)

Second, it is now well understood that people bring with them all kinds of knowledge. Certainly employees can be hired for specific knowledge (note, specific--that is, tied to a particular job description and element in the work process, as required in the Taylorist model). However, people know a great deal about many things that lie outside their job description, and often possess a great deal of knowledge that is relevant to other people's jobs. The firm's intellectual capital can include all this knowledge, if it is opened to employees. All too often it is not: the fear of losing control is ever-present and, in true Taylorist mode, makes the real devolution of power anathema to modern managers. Yet, it seems reasonable to ask, in an environment of accelerating and violently fluctuating change, where are the new ideas--the ideas necessary to meet this change and flourish in it--going to come from? Clearly a wise firm will look first to its own people for that critical knowledge; and that requires establishing structures whereby people can participate directly in decision-making.

THE ETHICAL CASE FOR COLLABORATION AND EMPOWERMENT

But beyond the business case for collaboration and empowerment, as I argued in chapter 3, is the ethical and human case; and in my view it is primary. I've noted the crucial

importance of ownership. But I want to argue further for the fundamentally ethical commitment that underpins ownership. It derives from Kant's 'respect for persons' principle, which is, you will remember, 'always treat humanity in a person as an end, never as a means'. It is simply not enough, from an ethical point of view, that people have a defined role in the production process, along Taylorist lines. It must be a role that they themselves value, as they go about their lives and look towards fulfilling their own potential; and that means that it must be work over which they themselves have significant control. We can expect--and indeed research confirms--that ownership is associated with greater creativity, commitment, motivation and productivity, but that is not, in the end, why it should be a part of the working environment. It is rather an inseparable part of the commitment which comes with employment, to treat people with respect, to ensure that their work is not alienated from them, that it plays its part in a fully human life. The commitment to ethical practice business--in this case, to real ownership--is not primarily driven by the profit motive but by a commitment to humanity: as Norman Bowie has it, it comes 'with no ifs and buts' (Bowie 2002).

PRINCIPLES OF PARTICIPATION AND COLLABORATION

Finally, I want to argue that at least part of the reason participative decision-making is so rare in business is that managers don't know how to put it into practice. This is surprising, as we work collaboratively together in all kinds of social contexts outside business; but we have noted that strange misalignment from the beginning of this essay. Here are some general principles, drawn largely from my own experience, for participative, collaborative thinking:

1. In general terms a group is usually more intelligent, even wiser, than a single individual. One can easily think up exceptions--the matter is very technical and someone has the required technical skills; or the group is beset by personality problems--but the general principle still holds.
2. Collaboration tends to bring out the best in people. Not only is it in itself a central part of work fulfilment--most people enjoy working together--but the interpersonal

commitments that emerge in a group predispose people to give their best.

3. Successful collaboration is based on attentive, intelligent listening, rather than talking. All too often individuals in groups are thinking about what they want to say next, rather than attending to what is being said. The first commitment of members in collaboration is to listen and understand, before speaking.
4. Anything can be put forward by anyone: the whole point of collaboration is to expand the range of ideas, to enhance creative thinking. Whatever is put forward is to be listened to with respect. It can be the subject of disagreement, but that too must be respectful, at the individual level. Personal disparagement or even abuse is absolutely unacceptable, and is agreed by everyone in advance to be unacceptable.
5. Disagreement or different positions in a group is fine: often it indicates that there is a deeper level of understanding to be reached, which can accommodate the different positions, and which is therefore more powerful.
6. As a general rule transparency and openness are better than keeping information back. The default position should be: all information is freely available to everyone, unless it involves matters of personal privacy or commercial in confidence. Not only does transparency allow creative thinking but it enhances trust; refusing to release information, dismantles trust and generates suspicion. Information in organisations is power: holding back information is a means of control and initiates power relations; and once they come into play the coherence of the collaboration is lost.
7. For a manager, accepting the principle of ownership of decision-making by a collaborating group means accepting that it may well make mistakes--and supporting them when that happens, rather than walking away. It also means celebrating successes collectively, rather than taking credit for them. It means becoming part of the group, participating fully in it as one of its members, fully invested in it, not standing apart in isolated managerial splendour.

Sarah Mott points out that participative approaches are in practice quite complex: “ I am really interested in your comments about the general

principles for participative, collaborative thinking. I have participated in more teams, groups and working parties than I can poke a stick at; I have taught building and managing teams for many years. What never fails to surprise me is the idea that if a manager puts a random group of people together and tells them to solve this or fix that, the chance of success is pretty low. Even in these more enlightened times, despite an abundance of research findings, managers continue to lack the skills of team building and development. When calling for volunteers to assist with a project, one finds that there will be some who are keen and have the appropriate skills. Others comprise those who have been told to take one step forward and, therefore, bristle with hostility; others will consider this a good way to avoid work responsibilities and look forward to an easy ride; and those who lack the insight to realise that they do not have the expertise to offer very much at all. Is it any wonder, then, that groups so often fail because the work to develop the team is absent or minimal, at best? I wonder if the development part of group work is seen by managers as an unnecessary time wasting effort? If that is the case, it is very much false economy as if one costed the expense associated with failed groups, poor outcomes and lost work time, surely this would run into millions of dollars.”
(Online contribution, November 20, 2012)

GW: “This really provides a fine-grained analysis of the process of developing participation, with all of its human complexities and nuances. And of course it rings true with anyone who has tried to put this kind of process into effect. I suppose the obvious question for you (and for all of us) now is: what makes for the most effective participative process? For example, what do you do about people who would like to make a contribution but are too diffident or too convinced of their own inadequacies (or who have been told too often that they are inadequate) and who would therefore not be likely to put themselves forward? Or about people with special agendas? Part of the answer to the second, in my experience, is the importance of developing together the terms of reference and ground rules of the work at the beginning of the project; and

then instituting a process by which you audit yourselves against them, or modify them as needed (a second loop approach). But the first is the important and most difficult kind of question: how do you get the right people in the first place? Or do you simply accept that some people will want to be in many groups, some people in a selected few, and some people in none; and that you simply may not end up with the right group and have to accept it? Again, I think it's possible to have the group evaluate its own membership as it proceeds, and make changes together. In other words, I suppose I'm responding to the questions raised by your perceptive comments in a processual (terrible word, but the only one around), adaptive and emergent way, with the whole process of adaptive management being run by the group itself. I have seen that work. But it's not an easy solution, and there needs to be real commitment of the group to process as much as to outcomes—not a strength of modern management theory.” (Online response, December 6, 2012)

Respect, trust, openness, honesty, fairness, generosity and consideration: these are the elements of good participation and collaboration. But that should hardly come as a surprise, to anyone. If you've grown up as a member of the human race and haven't worked these things out, you haven't been paying attention.

5. Working for life

What are people looking for in their work? A natural response is ‘money’ and clearly that’s true. But given that work occupies such a significant part of one’s life, both during the working years and over the course of a lifetime, money doesn’t seem to be enough. It’s not uncommon, in the more boring and trivial jobs in workplaces, to come across a culture of ‘working for the weekend’, as if whatever makes up life is relegated to two days a week, paid for by the other five days. Most people, however, are looking for more from their work. Even those who work for the weekend are likely to wish their work offered more satisfactions.

Here are some of the leading reasons people have for choosing or staying in a job--or for moving, if these aspirations aren’t being met. These are drawn largely from my own experience, although they are supported by the research. There may be debates about their ranking, and there would be other candidates for the list. But I think most people will recognise these in their own experience.

VARIETY AND CHALLENGE

Boredom is the most common complaint of workers at every level, far more than workplace bullying (Eastwood et al. 2012; also www.guardian.co.uk/lifeandstyle/2012/oct/14/boredom-is-bad-for-health). That this should be so is interesting in itself: it demonstrates that people interpret their work experience personally. It further implies, firstly, that there seems to be an inbuilt need in most people to grow in knowledge, capability and skills; secondly, that this kind of development can come about through engaging with problems that need solutions; and thirdly, that engagement in a number of different areas, requiring different kinds of capabilities, different ways of thinking and doing, is seen as valuable to the process of growth, and is attractive and important as a life pursuit.

Note that this demand squarely opposes the Taylorist model, not just in its narrow industrial application but in the wider sense we have been looking at. It is precisely the delimitation of work in narrowly defined processes and jobs that is at the heart of Taylorist efficiencies; and it is precisely that delimitation which the demand for variety and challenge at work resists. We discuss these implications further below.

WORKING WITH OTHERS

Most people enjoy working together, if they have the opportunity. That's not to rule out working on one's own, and collaborations aren't always happy affairs. But where collaboration is available, and works, it is highly valued.

At its best collaboration is an exchange between peers, bringing together ideas and approaches that enrich each other and create something new; an emergent process that is as creative as it is task-focused. Note the word 'peers': even if there are different roles in collaborations, including leadership roles, it is only where there is mutual respect for each other's ideas and contributions--the essence of the peer relation--that real collaboration, with all its benefits, emerges. Obviously, too, there is the social dimension: social interactions are valued in their own right.

As we've noted in Chapter 4, working together harmoniously and productively is not necessarily an innate capability. It's a complex skill which is learned over time: you get better at it. Unquestionably it can throw up frustrations and disagreements; but acquiring the skill of collaboration consists precisely of learning to negotiate and use barriers of this kind in a dynamic of advancement. That requires a steady foundation of trust and respect--the two qualities (really two sides of the same coin) of healthy workplaces that we find ourselves coming back to. That foundation too is not a given: it is put in place

and cemented over time, through negotiating successive challenges in carrying out the work itself. At all events, with all its demands and pitfalls, we enjoy working together, and unambiguously prefer it to being isolated in an office somewhere for long stretches of time.

Again, creative collaboration of this kind runs directly counter to the Taylorist model. All work, even cooperative work, is in that model tightly constrained: the unpredictability of creative collaboration would be a serious threat. Such collaboration may be useful to the planners of the work, who are separated from it, but it is strongly discouraged at the level of work implementation. Healthy workplaces thrive on collaboration, at every level: toxic workplaces systematically suppress it.

OWNERSHIP

This ranks about third in the list, which is itself interesting: given the discussion of the preceding chapter one might have expected it to rank higher, perhaps even at the top. After all, where the natural connection between the worker and her work--its conception, implementation and results--is largely removed the worker herself, would things like variety, challenge and collaboration matter at all? The answer seems to be that even where the worker is alienated from her work, the actual work processes can still deliver some satisfaction in its own right. But ownership, as we have discussed at length in chapter 4, is still fundamental to work aspirations. Its absence seems seriously to damage work satisfaction and make an exit more likely.

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Having negotiated a few decades in which free market economics has dominated notions of work, both academic and popular, we seem to be returning slowly to more responsible and humane ideas. The 'greed is good' ethos, originating in the 1980s and culminating in the 2008 Global Financial Crisis, is being replaced by the idea of 'making a difference'. Other things being equal, people prefer to work where they can feel that the results of

their work in products or services contribute to society; or at least don't work against or dismantle it. That is not always the case, of course; I am always tempted to ask (but don't because if you talk to them they only call you again) the fake call centre which tries to convince me to release personal computing details, "How do you feel about working for a criminal organisation? What do you tell your children or your parents that you do when you go off to work in the morning?"

In the post-GFC work environment (to the extent that it is 'post') I see a slow increase in acceptance of the view that work should do something good, or at least something reasonably defensible. I wouldn't want to make too much of this--the converse is probably still dominant--but evident in those just coming into the workplace is a greater degree of discrimination and an intolerance of the impact of organisations that are damaging; surely a hope for the future.

The point is made on the negative side in companies whose products are unambiguously harmful; the tobacco companies come inevitably to mind. Here is an interesting fact about the executives of tobacco companies, who for reasons of psychological viability have to persuade themselves during their working lives of the positive value of their products (there are such arguments, believe it or not--stress relief, cultural custom, freedom of choice, and so on). The life expectancy of such executives on retirement tends to be shorter relative to those from other kinds of companies. Whether this is due to tobacco consumption or to belated attacks of conscience isn't clear; the latter is suspected. Who wants to face the fact that they have spent their life's work harming people? To paraphrase Lincoln, you can fool yourself some of the time, even much of the time, but not, in the end, all the time.

The fact is that people want to be able to take pride in their work, not only in the intrinsic qualities of products ("we will make good ships here") but in their contribution to the welfare of society. Even if that contribution is small, it's something--'a difference'. By some margin things are better than they would have been had you not done in your work what you have done. Is this an observable trend, the onset of a new civic

engagement? I doubt it; it's been around for a long time. But increasingly it's part of what people expect from their work and from the organisations they work for.

DEVELOPMENT

Although the idea of a career is rapidly disappearing, it is being replaced by a trajectory of growth in capability and experience. Increasingly it is being realised that work experience is far more than simply time spent on the job: it is education and development of the most valuable kind. Modern employers interviewing candidates are likely to ask "what have you done?" and "what do you know" before they ask "what qualifications do you have?"

There is an important story here. The question is, how do you become qualified for business? There was a time, perhaps 40 or 50 years ago, when education for business meant, at most, an undergraduate degree in business and then starting work. Then came the MBA, invented, it has been claimed, by Harvard University. Business emerged as an academic discipline. At Harvard it was built around the case-study method, designed to give it a real-world context ('to lend', wrote W.S. Gilbert, 'verisimilitude to an otherwise bald and unconvincing narrative'). It was only in the late 1990s that anyone thought to look at how well it was doing, in practice. A simple study was undertaken, which compared students' results in the Harvard MBA and how well they were doing in their employment five years after graduating. The results were startling: there was a very good correlation, but it was *inverse*. That is, the better you did in the MBA course, the worse you did in the real world of business; and, importantly, vice versa--the worse you did in the academic work the better you did in business.

No doubt, for the Dean of the Harvard Business School, this was an unwelcome finding; but it was one that was replicated around the world. It forced a re-evaluation of business education, the conclusion of which was that business expertise is built not only on technical knowledge, but also on knowledge developed in the workplace. The workplace is itself a key environment of learning and development. Hence the proliferation of

internships and other so-called 'placement' activities.

In support of this finding, I have had CEOs say to me that they won't hire MBAs on principle. When I ask why, they say, "Because they think they know everything, they won't learn." When I ask what they *do* want in an employee, they tell me, "I want them to have the core disciplines, such as accounting, finance, marketing, operations, but above that I want them to be smart, quick, positive, problem-solvers, able to collaborate, able to take initiative. Give me those people and *I'll* teach them business!" It's well understood that learning and development goes on--indeed, in an effective and healthy organisation (the two things go together) it must go on--throughout the working life of every employee, and that the organisation has a crucial role in allowing for it and promoting it.

So for modern employees the opportunity to grow and develop is now central. That may mean, for example, opportunities to move around in the organisation, to take on different projects; to take on different roles, including management or supervisory roles; to plan their growth of knowledge and experience, in collaboration with the organisation and through its work; to participate in organised learning, through workshops or conferences or courses.

Included is also the opportunity to move on, if a relevant opening presents itself.

Organisations must now accept that development is a responsibility that is part of the total compensation package for people who work for them, regardless of whether they stay or not. Lifetime commitments to particular firms, even lifetime careers, are in the past. This is not an investment in the future but in the present.

In fact it's not actually an investment at all: it is part of what you make available to your people because they are entitled to it, as a matter of ethical behaviour. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights holds education to be a basic right that all people have, and defines it as "the full development of the human personality." Organisations and firms have their part to play in it.

RESPECT AND TRUST

Respect and trust have been discussed a number of times in previous chapters, and I have mentioned these above in a number of the elements which people want from their work; but I also want to treat them separately, in their own right in the context of what people want from their work. There is a great deal to be said about them, and I make no apology for speaking about them again: by the end of the essay we may have some sort of coverage of them. In a sense all of these elements--variety and challenge, collaboration, ownership, making a difference, and development--come within the arc of respect and trust; or, if I were to choose just one of these, it would be respect, as trust is generated in large part by respect. I don't mean respect for particular skills or capabilities, although that's important and practical: I mean the respect that is due to people as people.

I've heard it said, "they treat me like a person", as the highest mark of appreciation and as an incentive for fully committed work, for work beyond the position description, the discretionary work that holds organisations together and takes them forward. Conversely, not being treated "as a person" is seen as the lowest of the low. In the workplace, this is explicitly a statement against being treated as an object, as a factor of production, of profitability, as a means to an end. This is the real exploitation that most people rise up against: not so much economic exploitation (although that can certainly be a part of it) but being used as an instrument. It denies dignity and worth, and nothing is more offensive. You hear it in such management phrases as 'taking the costs out', which means sacking a lot of people (people are costs) or, as I've said, in 'human resources' (people are significant only in terms of the firm's purposes). It exists in the assumptions behind workplace bullying and the aggressive, demeaning behaviour of managers that is so common, and so widely tolerated, in our workplaces. Denial of respect is denial of humanity. In my mind nothing can excuse it. And yet you would think that treating a worker 'as a person' would be as natural in the workplace as it is held to be outside it.

HUMAN POTENTIAL AND THE JOYS OF LIFE

One of the striking things about these elements is that they are, in my experience, all but universal. If you ask the question of groups of workers, at all levels--on the factory floor, in offices, in research laboratories, in executive groups--what they want from their work, they will almost to a person say these things. In fact these elements are largely held to be so obvious they hardly need to be said; of course everyone knows, everyone wants, everyone values them. So you have to ask the question: why isn't work structured so as to provide for them?

In fact, as we've seen, work isn't seen that way in modern management, either in theory or in practice. It would be regarded as the height of managerial irresponsibility to organise work according to these demands as it would involve deviation from defined work processes and products, and require the allocation of resources to areas other than the productive process. Management theory touches on them in passing, but doesn't see them as central; even human resources theory hardly deals with them, developed as it is largely from the standpoint of the firm's requirements. More depressingly, although nearly everybody readily identifies them, just as readily they are seen as unlikely ever to be central to modern workplaces. It is as though there is an alternate reality, 'the business', which will always take precedence, in which these things will never be allowed or embraced. Yet these aspirations and hopes stubbornly remain, and people continue, outside monetary rewards, to rate their workplaces by them.

The result of this misalignment is an absurd and shameful waste of human potential. Here is a very significant part of most people's lives, in which, with a little thought, workers could grow and develop as people, even as they produce the goods and services which society needs. After all, what is unreasonable, complicated or unknown about these things? Hugh Stretton (2000), one of our most distinguished social theorists and commentators, expressed some of these aspirations with characteristic simplicity and humanity:

- Interesting, challenging or otherwise pleasing tasks.

- Tasks with some wholeness or independence, so that workers can enjoy some pride of craft.
- Sociable roles in small working groups or teams; or in congenial relations with customers.
- A real concern to develop latent talent. . .
- A shared concern for excellence, both as a means . . .and as an end; as one of the joys of life.

‘One of the joys of life’: now there’s a concept you won’t find in many management theory books, or, in my experience, around the boardroom table. Yet everyone knows what it means. The legitimacy of business as a human enterprise rests on its ability to provide for just such purposes. Evidently we have a way to go.

7. Performing seals

WORKING UP AGAINST THE WALL

Nothing is more emblematic of modern management theory and practice than the term 'performance'. It has a ring about it: it seems to promise that there exists a methodical approach to managing work which carries a guarantee of success. Furthermore, it tightens the focus of the management of people to a small, well-defined arena: if we can only get people to perform what they are obligated to perform the business will achieve all its goals at the highest level: shareholders will receive a good level of return on their investments, managers will be well-compensated, society will benefit appropriately and all will be well.

We have, of course, seen this kind of thing before: this is Taylorism, pure and simple. Because what is to be performed is simply your job: the segment of work that has been defined by the job description and which you have been hired to do. "Do" is the operative term: the segmentation of work that Taylorism effects is a segmentation by actions. Ultimately what is of concern to the notional Taylorist planner, this mythical figure or function defining the work segments and their sequence, is the conclusion of each segment, the output; because this is the input to the next segment, and if there is a breakdown in the chain, if even one output of one segment falls short of its designed requirements, the assembly of the work (which doesn't have to be linear) is broken and the outcome of all the segments is impaired. You only have to think of a breakdown in a production line: the principle is much the same.

Of course we have not claimed in our analysis (chapter 2) that modern work is literally a production line, but we are claiming that the idea and the organisation of modern work runs parallel to Taylorism, and draws many of its implicit assumptions about work and

about people at work from Taylorism; and that these assumptions are at best unthinking, and at worst highly damaging both to organisations and to their people. Let's see now where performance and performance management fit into this.

Sam Wells comments on the Newtonian roots of performance: “As you say, Geoff, nothing better reflects the assumptions at the heart of our toxic workplaces than their notions of ‘performance’ and ‘performance management’. Even beyond Taylor, I would suggest that we see at work three centuries of immersion in the mechanistic, ‘Newtonian’ paradigm, with its emphasis on certainty, linear causation, control and, perhaps most tellingly, reductionist principles. The whole is just the sum of the parts, so in ‘performance management’, the organisational performance is just the sum of individual performances. It follows that if the organisation is not performing as desired, it’s because one or more individuals have ‘let the side down’ and need to be ‘performance managed’. And there follows the whole process of blame, threat and the diminishing of the person that you describe. It was not on a whim that W. Edwards Deming included performance appraisals among his Seven Deadly Sins, to be expunged from the face of the earth. He saw that the damage they do to people and to work is not because they are done badly, but because there is no way to do them well – they are fundamentally flawed in so many ways. I recommend Scholtes, P (1987) *An elaboration of Deming's teaching on performance appraisal*, Joiner Associates, Madison, WI.

PERFORMANCE MYTHS AND ILLUSIONS

Performance management has been defined as a polyglot concept which includes “programme structures, performance measurement, target-setting, competency frameworks, 360 degree appraisal, personal development plans, performance-related pay” and so on (Fisher and Sempik, 2009). These authors remark acerbically, “These activities wax and wane in popularity.” Common to these elements are the tasks of

defining the work segment, of measuring its actual output against the expected output, and of incentivising or penalising the worker so as to close any gap; collectively, we would say, managing for performance, or managing in order to secure performance.

Performance management is thus not so much a part of a discipline as “a body of lore and recipes, some based on good research and theory, some based on symbolic resonance and workplace myths.” This is an interesting description as it challenges the aura that performance management has built about itself of rigour, discipline and objectivity. Not so, it is asserted here: like most management fashions it is an eclectic mixture. There sits around a legitimate core a cornucopia of popular and subjective conceptions and misconceptions. Far from bringing the management of human beings into the quantitative sphere of operations management it produces the reverse: operations have to contend with all the vagaries of the things that influence human beings.

Welcome to people.

PERFORMING UNDER THREAT

There is a clear demonstration in performance management of one of the key elements of Taylorism: the subordination of the worker to the work. In this model the worker is simply a unit of labour: her only significance to the organisation is whether or not she carries out the segment of work assigned to her, according to the standards that are laid out in the master plan. Of the significance of the work to her, as an individual, nothing is said. Performance is a one-way affair: workers perform the work that is required of them; work doesn't have to meet the demands workers might require of it.

Performance has an unmistakable air of menace about it. It carries an implicit threat: “Perform or else.” That is, carry out the actions that are required of you, and for which we have hired you, or you will be sacked, or otherwise penalised. That is the real meaning that is implicit in the now standard notion of ‘accountability’. In order to make this crystal clear the requirements are embedded in measures: the famous (which should be infamous) Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Measurement emerged from the

dominant management paradigms of the 1990s: Total Quality Management, and Continuous Improvement. These are the modern versions of Taylorism, in which all work is reduced to measured elements, held to specific standards. This is justified in the well-sounding aphorism, “What doesn’t get measured doesn’t get done”--an admission of management failure if ever there was one. KPIs in fact become coercive mechanisms. They are set by higher levels of management and imposed on lower levels. Moreover, management is able to throw all the weight of implementation on subordinates: the simple message is, “Here is what you have to achieve; we don’t mind how you achieve them; just get them done or there will be consequences.”

Now clearly there is a place in the organisation of work for planning, orderly implementation, measures, and standards. Peter Drucker--the foremost, and perhaps the only, writer to have identified the central principles that drive business success--states with admirable brevity: “Work, to yield results, has to be thought through and done with direction, method, and purpose.” (Drucker 1986). Drucker speaks of performance, but only in the context of ‘economic performance’. He is certainly in favour of ‘a unified, company-wide plan for the work to be done’, as he is for goals and targets, and work assignment and responsibilities. There can be no arguing with these principles: this is how work gets done.

But the issue is *who* decides the work plan, and *how* it is developed and implemented. As we’ve seen, ownership is critical to healthy workplaces. There is no reason why a company-wide plan for the work to be done can’t be collectively developed by everyone working in the business. Indeed, wise management will want to gather all the intelligence and creativity of everyone, and involve them in the process (as we have argued in previous chapters). Setting goals and targets can be done collaboratively. Work assignments and responsibilities can be jointly accepted rather than imposed. It’s not the existence of a work plan or the KPIs associated with it that is the problem: it is rather who sets them up, and how they are used. If they are set predominantly by the people who do the work, and used by them in completing the work they have accepted as theirs, all the benefits of healthy workplaces discussed in previous chapters will be there.

If they are imposed and used as implicit threats, toxic workplaces develop and organisational achievement shuts down.

Yet performance management has become very widely adopted by both profit and for-profit organisations as the primary means of managing work and managing people. Let me give you two examples which show the absurd lengths to which this has gone.

Case 1: The Orchestra

Recently I was asked to look at developing a strategic plan for a city orchestra. They had done some work already and I asked to see it. Among the documents was a strategic plan that had been developed by a major US consulting company for a neighbouring city orchestra. It was, to say the least of it, an unimpressive piece of work. It showed little understanding of the music world within which a city orchestra sits and on which it depends. This deepened to absurdity when the performers themselves--the musicians in the orchestra--were considered. The main recommendation was: the musicians should be performance managed. A more ludicrous proposal it would be difficult to imagine. What counts as performance for a musician? How are you going to measure it: by the number of bow strokes per second? The result of such an ill-advised initiative would be the prompt resignation of the members of the orchestra: what musician, working with all the delicacy and creativity of her highly professional craft, would submit to such crude oversight? And how is it supposed to improve performance (real performance in this case): what is supposed to be getting better? It's almost amusing to contemplate (almost, but for the impact on people's lives). Yet it shows two things very clearly: one, that performance management is almost entirely negative in its effect on work and workers; and two, if modern managers are prepared to resort to such idiocies, they must be bankrupt of the knowledge of how to work with their people.

Case 2: The University

Here is a second example. Universities depend for their very existence and legitimacy on their researchers. Research is a demanding and complex kind of work: it requires

very high levels of analytic skill combined with insight and creativity. It is often non-linear: it moves in unpredictable ways, backtracks, hits blocks, finds serendipitous ways to advance. It depends crucially on the fostering of new ideas, which may not fit established paradigms. Yet as universities, like performing arts organisations, are seduced into adopting what they understand to be modern management techniques, researchers too have become performance managed. They are required to publish a certain number of articles in rated journals, to accumulate a number of points in rated research activities. This works strongly against innovative research--it is, in fact, intensely conservative--and frustrates the most creative researchers.

A recent study of university researchers in the UK uncovered the interesting fact that among the most influential researchers across the disciplines few had published much in their first 10 years; their significant publications came later--presumably because they had been engaged upon big, difficult research projects. It's worth observing that those researchers would not have survived more than a few years of their early careers under modern regimes of academic performance management.

Proponents of performance management may want to respond that these two examples deal with rather specialised work, in music and research, and that for the average run of work and workers PM is appropriate. All I can give you is the anecdotal view that many others have voiced similar concerns. Senior front-line police officers have expressed to me their frustration in having to divert resources to meet KPIs that have prevented them from attending to more urgent needs--needs that in the long run are far more important to the quality of community life. Farmers have told me of their anger at being held to KPIs in agricultural grant projects which they know, from their local knowledge, aren't appropriate. You can hear the same stories on manufacturing plant floors and in service organisations.

The simple fact is that performance management doesn't deliver even its own goals. It is ironic that an approach which is so closely tied to measurement is not supported by the research on it. A well-designed, substantial study compared the commitment to performance of 500 leading private companies consistently profitable over five years,

with 750 private companies selected at random, and 538 public sector organisations. They reported: “The most important conclusion is that organisational performance is not associated with the pursuit of formal performance management programmes.” (IPM 1992)

ASSUMPTIONS AND INSULTS

An even more universal finding of the research on performance management is that people intensely dislike being formally appraised under performance management schemes. And their reaction is not because they are not doing the job well. Rather it is because performance management is aggressive and, in the end, insulting. It carries the assumption that unless you are held to these measures you will work below the level needed for the work and will not achieve the requisite standards; that unless we define precisely what we want of you and hold you to it, you will not do it.

That is a *default* position. It’s not based on evidence or experience of a particular individual in the job, but is built into the structure of management. It amounts to saying: ‘We know that, if we don’t keep an eye on you, you will rip the company off; it’s our job to stop you, and performance management is our mechanism of choice to keep you honest’. The negative impact of this kind of thinking on the trust and respect that underpin healthy workplaces is obvious. Ironically a likely outcome of employing it is that people will work to rule or work slow: ‘If that’s what you think of me, that’s what you’ll get’. This is the precise definition of a dysfunctional, fractured workplace.

FEAR AND CONTROL

We’ve seen in earlier chapters that the principle of control is central to the Taylorist assumptions that underpin modern workplace practice. All its methodologies are directed towards one end: that the work should be done to specification. Measurement is a reverse methodology: rather than measure what the outcome of work is, measurement is used to coerce work into the shape it’s supposed to be. People are simply presented with the required standards, and that, from a management point of view, is deemed

enough. It's then up to the employee to meet the requirements; to be, as the jargon has it, 'accountable'. This is lazy management and it is bad management. Good management practice, as we have been arguing, puts the manager and the subordinate into the work task together; with different roles, but unmistakably together. If there are goals or targets or standards to be met, they are met by working together, with mutual support; not by the manager dropping KPIs on the subordinate, putting a tacit threat in place should they not be met, and walking away.

Performance management keeps the employee in her assigned place within the work programmes. A researcher has noted:

Programme structures are often at the core of performance management structures. . The hierarchical nature of programme structures. . .gives them a mythical value to organisational management. It locates employees to a particular place and status in a great chain of organisational being and so reduces the threat that any individuality might pose to organisational good order. (IPM 1992)

Managers always retreat from the spectre of losing control. As we've noted in previous chapters, this is driven by fear and distrust, in equal measure. Performance management is a central tool for keeping control. It attempts to make people's work predictable, to the limits of measurability. In the process it loses the creative, lateral contributions that drive organisational success and dismantles the trust that underpins it. Good managers trust their people: they don't seek to control them, or put them in their place. Only on trust and respect is continuous and lasting achievement built.

The term 'accountable' captures many of these attitudes and assumptions. It's a term you hear every day, in all kinds of contexts. It's intimately linked to the idea of 'performance'. Your work is held to be your own affair; its outcomes, for better or worse, rest with you alone; if you fall short or fail you have no-one to blame but yourself. Indeed, if there is a failure of work there is by definition a failure of accountability: it's not my fault, it's yours, you were the one who created the failure, you have not been accountable. Accountability has even taken on a shade of personal

morality: if you don't meet the performance specifications this is not only a failure of competency but in some way a failure of moral integrity; the implication being that you could have achieved the required level had you worked hard enough, or cleverly enough, as you can do, but clearly decided not to. It is not difficult to see in this attitude, so contemptuous of people and of their rights in the workplace, an attempt to justify on moral grounds a set of unethical and dishonest assumptions and behaviours.

APPRAISAL AND COMMUNICATION FAILURE

Finally, let me deal with the view put forward even by critics of performance management that there is something fundamentally positive about aspects of it, by virtue of the exchange it promotes, notably in performance appraisals:

There is no objective evidence that performance management improves an organisation's performance but there is evidence that people can find it helpful in interpreting and evaluating their organisational roles. (Fisher and Sempik, p.222)

This emerges from the 'processual' view of human resources management: the idea that the best outcomes are negotiated through mutual exchange. We can grant that such an exchange could occur during performance appraisals. Why, however, is a personal appraisal event required in order for such an exchange to take place? Isn't this just one of the exchanges that happen routinely and often of healthy workplaces? To justify personal appraisals by this logic is like endorsing boxing as a method of interpersonal communication because it involves intimate contact. And if it is necessary to construct an event of this kind in order to provide for communication of this kind, then the basic fabric of communication which supports healthy and productive work is by definition not in place.

Sam Wells considers performance appraisal from the perspective of the manager, underlining the need for real engagement:

"The question remains, "Whose performance should we be considering?"

Rather than the mean-spirited, oppressive focus on whether individuals are meeting their KPIs and on “Who is letting the side down?”, healing, wholesome performance management requires the manager to ask a very different question: “Have I done everything I could possibly do to set this person up for success?” Have I understood and managed the systems or processes within which the work is performed – which often contributes the bulk of the outcome and over which the individual often has little control? Have I ensured that the individual’s fundamental behavioural capability enables him to excel in this role – is he a good fit? Does the work provide one outlet for the individual’s passion – does it make his heart sing? Does this person have all the necessary technical skills – have I provided the required training?

It turns out that the manager has a direct influence on many things that have an impact on the individual’s ‘performance’. Rather than turning the spotlight (or the blowtorch) on the individual, the narrative at the heart of healthy performance management should start with the manager looking in the mirror – Have I done everything to set this person up for success?

Very early in my corporate career, as a raw Human Resources cadet, I told the Group Managing Director that we should implement a performance appraisal program. He asked me why. “Well,” I said, “it would mean that all our people would get to talk with their manager at least once a year about how things are going”. He looked puzzled – “Are you telling me that there are people who wouldn’t, otherwise, get to talk with their managers about how things are going?”

“Well...yes” I was feeling that my position was strong...until he turned it on its head – “We don’t need your performance appraisal thing. We need to give some serious thought to how we select our managers!” It took me another 15 years to appreciate the wisdom in that simple insight. (Online contribution , January 8, 2013)

Performance management doesn't improve the performance of organisations. It is a major contributor to the negativity of toxic workplaces. It licenses lazy leadership, and damages trust. It has no place in a healthy workplace. Period.

Healthy workplaces are productive workplaces. They start with healthy people, acting towards and with each other in ways that we all know are healthy. There is no mystery about this. Since birth we have been interacting with each other, through all the types and shades of relationship, in family, and extended family, and circles of friends; even with people we don't get on with. We know more about the construction of healthy places than all the management theorists put together. Recognising what we know and applying it fearlessly is the key to healthy workplaces.

Nicholas Procter provides an illuminating insight into healthy workplace interaction through the value of narrative as a healing modality in mental health practice:

“My thinking around what you are advocating for in some respects is a narrative approach that invites dialogue, information exchange and the needs of the employer and employee as a joint enterprise, client rather than the needs of the manager. At a deeper level narrative at work is a means of storytelling about feeling valued in the workplace.

Recently I have been working on the topic of engaging with people in suicidal crisis. From these interviews and my reading around the topic (particularly the work of Konrad Michel and David Jobes, in *Building a Therapeutic Alliance with the Suicidal Patient* – ISBN 13: 978-1-4338-0907-1) I have come to appreciate the importance of storytelling. The authors are working in the field of suicidology and have deep knowledge and interest in the forming of alliances with a person in suicidal crisis as a co-collaborator in the therapeutic process. So in the section below will adapt their frame of thinking (raw and

preliminary) as insights to the area of work/ employment.

Michel and Jobes argue that storytelling is a profoundly human capacity told to a listener. Meaning is accomplished interactionally, between the teller and the listener. A listener enters into the world of narrator – constructs and helps in the telling; thus work narratives are jointly accomplished, according to shared knowledge and interaction. And the discourse surrounding stories told and lives revealed becomes a joint action by itself.

The counterpoint to a narrative approach at work is application of a structured or mechanistic style of employee-employer engagement. The approach is largely monologic and monocultural. In a workplace dialogue situation (for example) the employee becomes interviewee: subjected to a list of questions. Responses are mechanical, and issues are expressed by case study – or some similar framework defined primarily by the employer. Within this interaction personhood is lost. Employees in this situation feel subjected to being impersonally processed, dealt with and managed with little or no opportunity to contribute any perspective on what actually lies behind their situation, experience, need or aspiration to live and work as a healthy and socially engaged employee.

So your new thinking makes a lot of sense when we think of the narrative approach. This is because a narrative approach in the context of the employee and employer engagement must be seen as something that has special meaning for those involved. It signals a change in the context of workplace learning and thinking by promoting alternate points of view and the lived experience of being at work.” (Online contribution, January 4, 2013)

GW: It’s interesting that your points come out of the field of health. I suppose what I’m trying to do here are two things: (1) attack the foundations and practices of the conventional approach to people taken by modern

management, which seem to me to be intellectually negligible and ethically scandalous; and (2) start with the idea of health, rather than of work outcomes, and build up an understanding of the healthy workplace from there. That is where the link to your observations becomes directly relevant. I want to argue that healthy workplaces come first, in their own right, as a basic ethical commitment; with the side benefit that they will be the most productive and creative workplaces. This involves a discussion of health and healthy workplaces; and there I'm arguing that the things we know about how people work best outside the workplace must be the guiding principles—that things don't suddenly change to an alternate reality when you cross the work threshold to the standard unhealthy and unethical one driven by 'it's just business' mentality. The role of narrative and storytelling, as you describe it, may indeed be a new perspective on the healthy workplace—I don't know of anyone who has looked at this way. (Online response, January 5, 2013)

Sam Wells comments on storytelling and complexity: "I love your notion of storytelling, Nicholas. I think it goes to the heart of the matter. The mechanistic view of performance management focuses on the parts and, of course, deprives itself of the very element that makes the whole whole – that is, the relationship between the parts. Organisations are complex, 'living' systems. They stand in stark contrast to the Newtonian view of things – they are characterised by uncertainty, unpredictability, non-linear causation and emergent behaviour. Management that does not appreciate and learn how to engage with this complexity will, ultimately, fail. The great traditions of knowledge in human history have been sustained and transmitted, in part, through storytelling. I am certain that one reason for that is that stories inherently do justice to complexity – without even trying, they encompass the countless connections, across space, time, and different levels of being, that constitute our experience of life. Storytelling honours those connections, without having to unravel them." (Online contribution, January 8, 2013)

Sam Wells considers the relationship between manager and employee from the perspective of health: “Taking a lead from your focus on health, Geoff, it’s worth noting that the Old German and Old English origins of our ‘heal’ and ‘whole’ don’t distinguish between those words. To heal is to make whole. To be healthy is to be whole. Healthy performance management is about enabling individuals to become everything they are, in the service of the organisation. And when systems, role fit, passion, skills have all been addressed and still something seems wrong, the manager gets to ask another question, this time of the individual concerned: “Is everything OK?” The chances are that everything is not OK. Perhaps the person has money worries; perhaps he is physically unwell or depressed; perhaps he is caring for someone at home. Certainly there is a limit to how much healing an organisation can provide, but a great deal can be done...if we know there’s a problem. And providing this support for wholeness is also part of setting the person up for success. (Of course, this contrasts with the fragmented, mechanistic approach: “We don’t bring our home worries to work – park them at the gate!” – the ultimate expression of controlling, depersonalising unconnectedness!)” (Online contribution, January 8, 2013)

Stacey Bradley considers the question of people as whole people: “Geoff, I especially liked how you picked up on the impact of work on people’s lives and the impact of people’s lives on their work. As you’ve noted, these cannot be separated from ‘the worker’, so all of these need to be addressed as a package. It’s already been noted above, there is a limit to support that can be provided by the organisation, but if performance management were abandoned in lieu of a more ongoing supportive exchange, I expect it would not cost organisations any more but result in long term savings and other additional benefits. Whilst it seems to be such an obvious, logical notion, it is often not put into practice! (Online contribution, February 1, 2013)

7. Leading in healthy organisations

LEADERSHIP MYTHS, FADS AND FASHIONS

Leadership, as a sub-discipline, is probably beset by more fads and fashions than any other academic arena of management. Over decades it has thrown up numerous schools, each with their own theory and research. Little of it is convincing. As a result it is literally true that in my decades of consulting in businesses and organisations I have *never*--not even once--heard any of it referred to or seen it actively used. Aspiring managers are sent on leadership courses, which purvey this kind of material, and then come back to manage on instinct.

If we are to believe the financial markets this lack of robust insight into leadership must be a disaster, for companies and for the economy as a whole. For nothing is more deeply etched in the common wisdom of the markets than the myth of CEO omnipotence. If a company thrives the CEO is lionised and excessively rewarded. If the company declines, for long enough, he (usually he) is sacked and a new CEO installed. The financial markets love new CEOs: they bring with them all the promise of irresistible prosperity, particularly to shareholders. This time, the market insists, they have got it right. This CEO will remake the company and its business, do everything that is needed to turn it around. This CEO knows everything that is needed for that to happen; he is possessed of extraordinary talents; he is tough (the markets love 'tough'). Above all, he has the market's interests at heart and will deliver value to them. That all leaders at some point are replaced, that these grossly unreasonable expectations are almost never met, doesn't seem to dampen the market's ardour for CEOs. It is an irrational, and apparently unchanging, bewitchment.

The simple fact is that this model of the all-knowing, all-seeing, all-powerful CEO who directs all aspects of the company with precision and flair is a mirage, a caricature. All good leaders know they are only as good as their people; that their success or failure

depends on their people, not on themselves. Leaders who forget this, who buy into the notion of their own exceptionalism and infallibility, do so at their own risk; and they risk the well-being of not only their own people but of all their stakeholders.

L-TYPE PEOPLE AND NON-L-TYPE PEOPLE

At the root of the problem is the deeply ingrained idea that somehow leaders are a type of person; that leaders are born, not made. That is, there are 'L-type' people moving around with that character, as if the letter had spontaneously emerged on their foreheads. It is assumed that they have innate qualities which predispose them to leadership; that wherever they go, whatever they do, they will display these qualities. Thus in organisations people are often identified as having 'leadership potential': they are L-type people.

As it happens the somewhat chaotic landscape of leadership research agrees at least on this: that there is no set of personality characteristics which predicts leadership capability. This is the longest-running research program in the discipline, directed by this old, tenacious model of leadership. It set out to prove that there was indeed such a set; because if there is a set then you can select people for these attributes and culture them for high office. It conspicuously failed.

This is in any case a highly offensive direction, from a human rights perspective. Because if there are L-type people then by definition there are non-L-type people (who must, of course, be the followers, otherwise the L-type people would have no-one to lead). Not a pleasant fate to be a non-L-type person, condemned always to the lower echelons, to the most boring work (as we have seen under Taylorist assumptions the planners, the brain-workers are the leaders, the L-type people). One only needs to make the link from personality to genetics and we are into dangerous territory. This has indeed been the claim of a recent study which looked at 4000 individuals to correlate leadership with genetic constitution (<http://www.theage.com.au/technology/sci-tech/leadership-is-in-the-gene-say-scientists-20130116-2cs7c.html>). Their finding claimed to 'explain'

25% of leadership behaviour on genetic grounds. However the definition of leadership behaviour in this study was trivially defined by a position in workplace supervision--as much, in my experience, a measure of organisational conformity as of leadership behaviour. Largely because of its naive treatment of leadership behaviour, the study does nothing to buttress the discredited L-type model.

A CLASSICAL CHINESE VIEW: “WE DID IT OURSELVES”

Here is a completely different--effectively opposite--view of leadership, from the classical Chinese teacher of the 6th Century, Lao Tzu (this is one of many translations; I'm told among the more authentic of them, available at <http://www.theleadershiphub.com/blogs/wisdom-lao-tzu>):

Of the best rulers, the people only know that they exist;
The next best they love and praise;
The next they fear;
And the next they revile, when they do not command the people's faith,
Some will lose faith in them,
And then they resort to oaths!
But of the best when their task is accomplished, their work done,
The people all remark, "We have done it ourselves."

In my experience this facilitative model of leadership resonates much more strongly with ordinary people in the workplace than the L-type, charismatic model. Let us see why.

THE LEADER-FOLLOWER RELATIONSHIP

Our approach will be to think through the idea of leadership--by deconstructing it and then rebuilding it. Self-evidently, despite the attempt to identify and define L-type people, leaders can't exist on their own, as isolated individuals. If you are to called a leader there must be people whom you lead. Otherwise what are you, exactly--a leader

temporarily between engagements? A leader in waiting? This is patently absurd. A leader becomes a leader when he or she has followers (a term we will discuss later).

It follows that it is to the relationship between leader and follower that we need to look. What is the nature of the relationship? What elements comprise it, how is it constituted? What is a strong relationship as against a weak one, a healthy one as against an unhealthy one, a durable one as against a temporary one? How do dimensions such as these affect organisational outcomes? These are the central questions of leadership.

To begin with let's remind ourselves that we all know something about relationships, and about what strengthens or weakens them. Certainly the leader-follower relationship is a relationship of a particular kind, built around work. But the human elements of the relationship can't be separated from the professional elements, so we all have something useful to say about the leader-follower relationship. If you ask people to write down the characteristics of the person they would most like to be led by they will list such things as: ability to listen; empathy; trust; respect; support; taking responsibility; collaboration; and so on. In my experience there is little dispute about these. When you look at the list you see that they seem to be fairly ordinary human qualities. We expect our leaders to be decent human beings first and foremost, people who treat us well and with respect, and we respond to them best when they are.

Unremarkable as this conclusion is, it is also, strangely, quite controversial. In academic management leadership is arcane, complex and difficult. Here we are asserting the opposite: that leaders and followers work best together if they follow the guidelines of normal human experience; and in this case that is the antithesis of the coercive behaviour we have discussed in earlier chapters. It works in both directions: followers, or subordinates, are equally responsible for the strength and quality of the relationship and for the decency of their own behaviour. Relationships are always two-way affairs, in business as in life.

Of course there are areas of the leader-follower relationship which have a legitimate focus on the work. Leaders and followers work together to achieve the objectives of the organisation. In that work they each take a different part, which can best be described as a role. Leadership and followership are different roles in the work plan taken on for the purpose of the work. They are not personality sets: no one is a leader or a follower for life, and every one is a leader and a follower at some time in their lives. The primacy of the underlying human level remains, upheld by human rights, ethical principles, and the best social norms. On that basis leaders and followers play their particular roles in the interests both of themselves and of the work outcome. And these roles are not set in stone: they are flexible and likely to change as circumstances change. Good teams know that in one particular task one person may be best qualified to take a leadership role, and in another task someone else may be. In my experience Australian workers often spontaneously self-organise in this way. Roles change with tasks, as seems eminently sensible.

LEADING QUIETLY

This view is supported by evidence. In his remarkable book, *Leading Quietly*, Joseph Badaracco (2002), a Harvard researcher, reports a detailed study conducted on some 400 businesses and organisations in the US. Badaracco asked a simple question: where is leadership found in the organisation? The natural answer is 'at the top'; but intriguingly Badaracco left it open to the evidence: he and his co-workers spent many months observing, interviewing and documenting the day-to-day life of these organisations, looking for the answer to that research question.

What emerged from the study was striking and strongly counter-intuitive. Firstly, it became clear that leadership was occurring as a matter of course, every day, at every level of the organisation. That is, people everywhere in the business were generating and guiding initiatives, gathering the resources needed, garnering the support of peers, managing upwards, and so on, until a successful conclusion was reached. Just as predicted above, it wasn't always the same people who acted as leaders: leadership

activity moved around the organisation and people could be at different times both leaders and followers, depending on the issue or the task. Badaracco pointed out that people seemed to be acting as leaders not because they were predisposed to it but out of a desire to accomplish within the organisation something they cared about. Whether they had a title or designated responsibility or power was largely irrelevant: they took charge and, with luck, got it done.

Secondly, and even more dramatically, Badaracco concluded that the cumulative impact of these leadership micro-initiatives far outweighed the impact of programs initiated by senior management, the nominal leaders of the organisations. This is difficult to credit, but the evidence was clear. The direct challenge it presents to the model of the archetypal American CEO-king is easy to see.

How could this possibly be true? Isn't it the case that, in accord with good Taylorist principles, it is senior management that is largely responsible for strategic and tactical planning, which is then cascaded through the organisation directed by supervisors and implemented by employees? Isn't that what they are being paid (often excessively) to do? What then does it mean to say that leadership is occurring, and occurring on such a scale, throughout the organisation?

PROCESSUAL INSIGHTS

Here the processual approach we introduced earlier in the essay provides some valuable insights. A fundamental principle of the processual view (not so much a principle as a basic fact of human life) is that people are always centres of creativity, decisions, initiatives and actions. That is true in life generally and no less in organisations. Even if presented with a strategic plan, operation plan, work plan and the like, all carefully engineered at the top, people will take charge of them wherever they are in the organisational hierarchy. They will alter the plan, introduce new elements into it, change priorities, even oppose or replace it, according to their views of what is needed, from where they are. Often this can be done without attracting notice, under the radar, as it

were; but often, if the issue is big enough, a coordinated approach is needed within the organisation and visible to it. That requires real leadership, of a sophisticated kind, but it is common, not rare: you only have to reflect on your own work experience to recognise it. That is, it would seem that, what Badaracco's researchers came across as they drilled down into their hundreds of organisations. It is a striking result, and it demonstrates how resilient and responsible people in workplaces can be, even in the face of fractured approaches to leadership.

SOME MORE PRINCIPLES OF LEADERSHIP

In support, then, of our project of restructuring leadership ideas, here are four more guiding principles of leadership, drawn from my experience and from the wider organisational and leadership literature:

1. Vision and strategy. Leadership is often associated with the big picture, with a whole of business view, with the ability to see patterns in complex environments and develop trajectories for the organisation to achieve success. Traditionally this is associated with the CEO, who autocratically stamps her vision on the company and drives it from there. As we have noted, there is real reason, however, to doubt the efficacy of this model. In the modern environment it is almost impossible for any one person to have the detailed knowledge of all areas of the external environment that is needed for a successful outcome: that environment is simply too large, too complex, too volatile, too interactive. The development of an organisational vision and the strategic directions that derive from it is necessarily collaborative, and all the best leaders in my experience work that way. There is also the principle of ownership: an organisational vision that is imparted from on high will be resisted, or at best received with detachment; it is only by participating in the creation of a vision that people take on a real commitment to it. The leadership role in the creation of an organisational vision is thus to facilitate the process of vision and strategy development, including all its stakeholders, and being open to the outcome of this collective, collaborative process. Opening up vision and strategy creation in this way can lead to surprising and innovative outcomes.

2. Partnership. The development of an organisation is always a collaborative exercise. In essence an organisation is a community of people working for a common end. A wise leader understands this deeply and acts accordingly. I have argued that the entry point for a leader is that her subordinates are responsible, mature, forward-looking associates who deserve trust and respect. Leadership, as we have said, is a role, just as the other positions in the organisations are roles: the value of people in those roles is equally maintained across the organisation. The organisational task is to develop ways of working together, in different configurations and under different processes, to achieve the outcomes of the organisation. This requires leaders, in particular, to facilitate and support an environment of openness and transparency, of straightforward and honest communication, which includes the ability to listen as much as to speak or propose. It requires the abandonment of positions of power: if a leader has to resort to power than her role has been irreparably compromised. It requires an ability to let go of ego and of entrenched personal commitments, to recognise that expertise of various kinds is not concentrated at the top but distributed throughout the organisation, to move with the majority view where the case has been made. An organisation is made by the people in it, together, and the leader's role is to make the collaborative enterprise work.

3. Integrity. Integrity should be so built into the everyday behaviour of a leader that it hardly needs to be mentioned. However, the evidence is that it still needs to be emphasised. Integrity means in the first place personal integrity: in addition to transparency and honesty, it rests on behaviour which is characterised by consistency (trust is difficult to develop in the face of inconsistency); equity and fairness, especially where the choices are personally challenging; and honesty and directness (that is, lack of prevarication). Exemplifying integrity in one's personal conduct is critical for a leader: she can't ask her people to act with integrity if she herself doesn't. Ethical behaviour must be in place and in view, even when it is personally difficult: it must be unfaltering. The leader must be seen to value values: most organisational value statements are given only lip service at best; an effective leader must be seen to draw explicitly on values and act on them--they act as an anchor which people can rely on. And when you make

promises you deliver on them: or you come back and say why it didn't work and what you're going to do about it.

An important part of integrity is being real: that is, not pretending, not trying to cover things over. If something is not working, or didn't go well, you talk about it with your people; you develop with them the habit of learning from these experiences, together, not of concealing them. Only when you know where you are is it possible to work out how to get to where you want to go. That kind of realism is mutually empowering.

On this platform of personal integrity it's possible then to build institutional integrity. That is, the organisation itself can act, and be seen to act, with integrity. That is something of enormous value, to both commercial and non-profit organisations alike, in building its reputation and conducting its business in the market. Internally it attracts and retains good people and externally it builds the collaborative relationships on which lasting success is built.

4. Community. The role of a leader is to build community: a place of productive and positive relationships that organically functions for the benefit of both the organisation and its people. To that end the first law of leadership is: look after your people. As we have noted, the leader recognises that she is not going to do the work: her people are. Her role, as leader, is to support them: for individuals, to facilitate their work, help them break through barriers, where necessary protect them from outside interference, and secure their personal welfare, as much as she can, and for the group, to help it to learn, adapt, manage its processes, share across divisions of the organisation, and remain connected to the collectively-derived organisational goals and values. People are supported as whole people, not just as workers; they bring their lives with them to work, and from time to time the leader will need to support them in different aspects; the traditional requirement to 'leave your problems at home' is ridiculous: of course you can't, and to a degree all organisations will at times need to recognise private needs and support them. As a leader you respect in-confidence communications and maintain privacy where it is asked for: you don't breach that, ever. This approach has been called

servant leadership (Greenleaf 2002), which sounds like a contradiction in terms but which plainly isn't; on the contrary, it's how effective human leadership is done.

Above all you appreciate your people and their achievements. Most people don't need much in the way of appreciation, but they do need something. It's simply not enjoyable to work day after day and not know whether what you're doing is valued, or even noticed. Even a word, sometimes, will do. Group achievements should be celebrated, with vigour: we did this, and we did it together.

8. The sustainable organisation as a working community

Throughout this essay I have been arguing that the organisation, whether for-profit or not-for-profit, is as much about its people as it is about its work or (in the case of firms) about its financial outcomes. There have been two main themes:

First, I've proposed that the simple fact of people being part of the enterprise brings to the organisation a range of crucial obligations, which have to do not with the business itself but with purely human matters. In formal terms this means ethical behaviour and the upholding of human rights. But it also means the consistent practice of the respect, trust, consideration and courtesy that uphold relationships between people everywhere.

Second, I've argued that treating people this way allows for the relationship between people and their work to incorporate naturally the commitment and motivation that brings organisational outcomes, as a by-product of the increasing fulfillment people experience in their work and in the workplace.

In this chapter I want to take the argument one step further. What happens if we take the organisation first as a group of people, working together? What implications does that perspective have for the workplace, for work, and for organisational outcomes?

ORGANISATIONS AS COMMUNITIES

Here I am following a path laid out by an eminent writer on business ethics, Robert C. Solomon (2004). Solomon draws on long-established principles of ethics, notably those of Aristotle's virtue ethics. Broadly speaking virtue ethics is the view that right action is associated with the attitudes we commonly value in practical life, things like honesty and generosity, not just because they are useful, but because they are intrinsically right.

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When these principles are applied to organisations, they emerge in a new concept: the organisation as a community, held together by the values that bind every successful human community.

Solomon begins with a simple, powerful proposal:

Corporations are neither legal fictions nor financial juggernauts but communities, people working together for common goals.

By the term ‘legal fiction’ he is referring to the idea embedded in modern corporate law that the corporation is a legal person in its own right, separate from directors or membership. The implication of this legal fiction is that a firm can act in its own right, in certain business-related areas, much as persons do: for example, to hold property and to enter into contracts (Cassidy 2003, p.42). The problem with this idea is that it is easily extended to notions of moral obligation: the idea, for instance, that managing the firm in such a way as to maximise profitability or to return as much as possible to shareholders is a moral requirement, just as one might have a moral obligation to a person. Such obligations override other moral obligations (to employees, to people in the supply chain, to customers, to the broader community, and so on); hence the idea of a ‘financial juggernaut’.

Instead Solomon is proposing that we start with the idea of the people in the firm as a *community*, which he defines as ‘people working together for common goals.’ In this Solomon is adopting a familiar idea:

Community ties may be structured around links between people with common residence, common interests, common attachments or some other shared experience generating a sense of belonging. (Crow and Allen 1994, p.1)

“A sense of belonging”--just the concept of ownership we have been supporting in this essay. The values that hold people together in communities are well known to everyone.

In the context of the workplace, these values are derived from how people relate to each other and to the work they are doing together. Solomon puts it in these simple terms, which would, I think, be agreed by most people in most workplaces:

What is worth defending in business is the sense of virtue that stresses cooperative joint effort and concern for consumers and colleagues alike.

On this view corporate culture, which is based in the shared knowledge, experience, values, beliefs and attitudes of the community, moves to the centre. These values come into the organisation with its people and are embedded and developed in the normal exchanges and interactions of everyday work. The informal directions of corporate culture are known to be very powerful in determining the outcomes of the workplace: here is the discretionary work which acts as the generator of new ideas, the resilience of the organisation in times of crisis, and the motivator of the collective intention to succeed in delivering the organisation's purposes.

With community and integrity at the centre of the business organisation, Solomon continues, human well-being secured by ethical business practice thus becomes as important an outcome of the firm's activities as its profitability. The purposes of the firm expand well beyond the demands of delivering 'shareholder value' to delivering broader kinds of values to all the stakeholders of the firm, including employees and the community at large:

. . .not only the fulfillment of obligations to stockholders (not all of them 'fiduciary') but the production of quality and the earning of pride in one's products, providing good jobs and well-deserved rewards for employees and the enrichment of the whole community and not just a select group of (possibly short-term) contracted 'owners'.

In this sense the firm is seen as an organisation that has public as well as private purposes: it has responsibilities not only to its own people, but to the people it interacts

with, such as suppliers and customers, and to the wider society. The idea of community thus expands to include the broader goals of the local and even international society, such as the elimination of poverty and the achievement of social justice.

This, in modern terms, defines what has come to be called the *sustainable* organisation. All the principles which are taken as characterising modern sustainable organisations and firms—health, safety and welfare, flexibility in working hours, participation, equity, transparency, diversity, personal development, human rights and so on - have ethical foundations based on the shared norms of the firm, conceived of as a community.

THE HUMANE WORKPLACE

This then brings us to a view of the workplace which is much more recognisable, as well as being more humane and more effective.

It is more recognisable in that the principles governing such a workplace--things like respect, trust, cooperation, community--are very familiar to us from our everyday lives, over decades. We have argued that there doesn't seem to be any reason why principles of human interaction, at any level, on any scale, should be any different in the workplace to those that have proven themselves in our general lives. People are people, wherever they are: they don't become something else when they cross the threshold of a business, as if walking into an alternate universe--one where people can be used as resources, can be abused and coerced, or diminished as individuals. Those kinds of assumptions, that kind of behaviour, are not tolerated in the wider society. We wouldn't run our families or our friendships or our communities with them, because we know that not only would they fail but that quickly the fabric of our social lives would collapse. Why then do we think that the workplace is any different? Courtesy, transparency and consideration--all of which are regarded with suspicion in modern management practice--are the basic elements of well-being in human relationships. We know this as well as we know anything, and it makes simple sense to apply this knowledge in the workplace.

It is more humane because it recognises that there are important obligations which must be accepted by any organisation, for-profit or non-profit, which chooses to employ people. We have noted that it is simply the case that there are unequivocal rights that people have, as human beings, which go beyond the legal OHS&W requirements (although as we've noted these are being strengthened all the time). These are articulated in the human rights international conventions to which Australia is a signatory . As importantly, they are articulated in the ethical beliefs we hold in common as a society--what has been called 'common morality', which we will discuss in some detail below.

Finally, it is obvious that in such a workplace, where people are treated with respect and are allowed to use their creativity and talents to the full, the results of the work will be greatly enhanced. This is the business case for humane workplaces. But the business case is not enough: human action is required because they are ethically right first, and only second because they help the business. As Norman Bowie remarks:

. . .we should view profits as a consequence, or by-product, of ethical business practices, rather than as the sole goal of business, an end to which all means are subjugated (Bowie 2002, pp.70-71)

COMMONSENSE MORALITY

Common morality (or commonsense morality) has been described as the common moral outlook we all share. Shelly Kagan (1998) notes: "People may differ about the details, but at least the broad features are familiar and widely accepted." For example, we all know respect and trust when we see it; on the other side, unfairness or bullying.

In making decisions, Kagan argues--including decisions in the workplace, whether as managers or as employees--we work from this platform of commonsense morality to try to promote what we understand to be "the goodness of outcomes." It may not be the only factor we consider; but in a truly humane workplace it is, I would argue, non-

negotiable. It may not always be simple, either, in that it may be that none of the possible choices lead to particularly good outcomes; but we are committed to making the choice which promises the least bad, or the most good, overall.

Most importantly, Kagan points out, this principle implies that we should include all the results of an action: immediate, short term and long term; side effects and indirect consequences as well as direct; and as wide a range of the people affected by the decision as we can encompass. In a firm that means all the stakeholders, both internal and external, as we have described above. In a truly sustainable firm it also means people who are far away in space (the employees of international suppliers, for example) and in time: future generations. Everyone's well-being counts.

I have mentioned Ronald Francis (2000) as proposing a simple set of four ethical principles to govern corporate behaviour:

1. Preserve from harm.
2. Respect the dignity of all persons.
3. Be open and honest except in the exceptional cases where privacy and silence are clearly ethically preferable.
4. Act so as to preserve the equitability of relationships.

How recognisable these are to us as ordinary people! These are principles most children are taught, because they have proven their worth over centuries in guiding human behaviour and are therefore transmitted generation to generation. Yet as simple as these principles appear to be--and simple principles are often, as we've seen, the most powerful--no one claims they are easy to put into practice. Real-life challenges in workplaces are inherently complex; often a number of these principles will be relevant to a problem and trade-offs will have to be made; often it is not a black-and-white matter but one of shades of grey, of reasonable claims on different sides. Nevertheless, if a workplace were to adopt these four principles and work conscientiously to put them into

practice, it couldn't go far wrong: the humane quality of the workplace, and the well-being of its workers, would be largely secured.

A POSITIVE VISION OF WORK AND WORKPLACES

You'll remember that in the Taylorist model of work (outlined in chapter 2) the distinction is made between the craft tradition of work and the modern, industrial approach. In a sense the Taylorist model was developed to eliminate the craft tradition and to replace it with the modern model--in which task the Taylorist agenda has been remarkably successful. Yet the craft model stubbornly holds on in the background, representing some kind of aspiration in the workplace that is not being currently met. What does this aspiration consist of and how is it to be met?

In chapter 5 I quoted Hugh Stretton's attractive list of requirements for the workplace, which I will repeat here:

- Interesting, challenging or otherwise pleasing tasks.
- Tasks with some wholeness or independence, so that workers can enjoy some pride of craft.
- Sociable roles in small working groups or teams; or in congenial relations with customers.
- A real concern to develop latent talent.
- A shared concern for excellence, both as a means . . .and as an end; as one of the joys of life.

The second, fourth and fifth of these have specifically to do with the craft tradition. In that tradition the development of specialist knowledge was embedded in the craft organisations, so that anyone (any man) coming into that area as an apprentice would advance their knowledge in a systematic way through the ranks of journeyman to the expertise of a master. The acquisition of this knowledge, the exercise of it in practice, and the products created by it were in themselves matters for pride.

It seems clear that most people would like to see the workplace organised in such a way as to allow for this development. But few workplaces provide for it today; mainly because the education of workers has been divorced from the workplace. Training institutions have taken over the role of education, and the workplace has become only a place of work, not of growth or development. Reversing this--allowing for the systematic development of people in their work, in the workplace, supported by educational institutions but not appropriated by them--seems to be the first element that needs to be put in place in a humane and productive workplace. People need to be able to rediscover personal fulfillment in their everyday work, to enjoy the process of carrying it out, to take personal pride in its products and services, to be supported in creating new ways of doing things and new ways of accomplishing goals.

Interestingly, it may be in the most contemporary of the professions--computing and information technology--that the early signs of this re-emergence of a craft tradition are presenting itself. Many of its professionals bypass academic institutions altogether, learning from their peers and from online sources, taking charge of their own training and development, and working in online communities--the early stages, perhaps, of a new craft tradition.

The second characteristic of a humane workplace derives from Stretton's third requirement, which concerns how people relate to each other in their work. Here is the domain we have been exploring in this essay: the domain of people at work. We have argued for a comprehensive restructuring of the principles which govern this domain. We have articulated new (or old, depending on how you look at it) principles which generate a truly humane workplace; and, just because it is humane, a workplace of sustained productivity and excellence. These are principles which relate to the inherent worth and dignity of individuals, with all their rights to well-being and development; to the way in which people interact within the workplace, on the ground of respect, trust and consideration; to the nature of the workplace as a whole, as a community, with a commitment to commonsense moral and ethical principles; in an environment which

encourages and supports collaboration and cooperation, and collective achievement. This kind of achievement is something really worth celebrating: in achieving the goals and purposes of the organisation; in providing fulfillment to people in both process and product; all on the ground of community ownership:

But of the best when their task is accomplished, their work done,
The people all remark, "We have done it ourselves."

CONCLUSION

There will be those, I know, who will disparage the approach taken in this essay as unreasonably idealistic and as disconnected from the demands of the modern competitive environment of global business. Any firm which attempted to operate this way, it will be claimed, would go out of business: securing maximum productivity from one's workforce, within legal limits and at least cost, is seen as a prerequisite for survival, as a simple matter of economics--whatever that may mean for the well-being of one's own people. This view is, I would argue, entirely misconceived, even naive: the everyday costs of treating people like disposable resources, as in the standard model--the multiplying costs in passive resistance, in working to rule, in lost creative opportunities, and so on--vastly exceed any direct costs generated by treating people well and humanely. And that doesn't include the wider costs picked up by the public purse: for example, in health and welfare.

The standard model of people management, I have argued, is undocumented, unthinking, unethical propaganda which somehow has become the common and accepted wisdom of modern management. The historical record of societies stands against it. It lacks any substantial support in the body of management research and even less in the body of management practice. Yet it has been adopted and applied by lazy managers the world over with enormously damaging results. It is shameful that it has continued for so long, and still continues.

I argue the reverse. The evidence is that any firm which thinks it can routinely ignore its ethical and humane obligations to its own people will fail. As it happens, people, as is so often trumpeted, are in fact, in reality, the biggest resource of a company; by far, by many orders of magnitude. People can work miracles, if they are allowed to; and in the modern business environment of rapidly accelerating change, miracles are an everyday requirement. But attention to employees' well-being is a requirement, if you want that kind of business contribution from them.

In the end, however, the business case for looking after your people is not enough, and in many ways even taking such a position is an unethical approach. You look after your people first and always because it's right to do so, just in the same way that it's right to treat your family and your friends, and strangers, well; not because you want them to do things for you and need to manipulate them into it. You create a healthy, humane workplace because that is how mature, intelligent, adult people behave with each other, with consideration and respect, in building a healthy and humane society.

These principles are non-negotiable, even in the interests of business success: if the only way you can succeed in your business is to damage people, you are in the wrong business and should get out. The entire apparatus of Taylorist management, which so infects modern management theory and practice, is unacceptable, in terms of human rights and in terms of common morality, let alone in the waste of human potential it represents to our society.

We are better than this. We have a society of real worth to build, firm by firm, organisation by organisation. We know how to do it, each one of us, if we give ourselves a chance to put into practice what we, as ordinary people, interacting with other people every day of our lives, have known to be right.

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