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Chapter 1

Enabling – ‘empowerment plus’

‘There go my people. I must find out where they are going so that I can lead them’

Alexandre Ledru-Rollin (1807-1874)

The 1990s and beyond – a world that needs enabling managers

Few people who have spent any significant period of time in business – especially in the roles of managers and leaders – need reminding that their world is moving faster and is becoming more complex, less certain, and increasingly demanding.

The evidence of what really amounts to a major revolution, in the world of business – and the challenges which are the consequence of that dramatic transformation – confront us daily. More than ever before, the need to re-establish and retain competitive advantage, by adding value, moving faster, demonstrably using current ‘best practice’ and generally operating more professionally, has emerged as a key imperative and pressure facing managements today.

The universal shift from ‘industrial age’ thinking and practices to a vastly different IT-driven ‘Information Society’, has seen the understanding, management and intelligent use of data and information evolve as crucial competences, among people at all levels and across all functions, within businesses. The information age is with us – and here to stay.

In much of Western Europe and the US, there has been a significant move away from manufacturing towards strongly service-based economies, with enormous growth in manufacturing strength, within and around the Pacific Rim. The last decade, particularly, has also seen the extensive globalisation of business, with attendant aspirations – and standards – reflecting ‘world class’ operations and the consequent proliferation of strategic alliances and interdependent, often international, partnerships.

One manifestation of the revolution has been the emergence of leaner, ‘flatter’ organisation structures, which serve as both cause and effect in the evolution of more adaptive, egalitarian leadership and management styles, necessarily increased cross-function working and what

are substantially different career patterns, where the emphasis, logically enough, is upon lateral *progression*, rather than traditional vertical *promotion*.

Along with greater uncertainty, less security and predictability, organisations are having to make sense of increasing paradox in so many aspects of business.

For example, on the one hand, specialisation and hence specialist contributive competence are seen as essential to success in professional career progression. However, so too are generalist skills and the ability to mediate successfully across different functions, as a manager or specialist.

The classical ‘centralise vs de-centralise’ argument still creates problems in so many businesses, as people struggle to create unity of purpose and evolve compatible role behaviours from this apparent organisational paradox. The economies of scale may be crucial to the long-term growth of a business, but so, too, are small, self-determining and accountable units, whose initiative and flexibility allow them to generate creative and profitable outcomes that mere size and financial strength could not hope to produce.

Hand-in-hand with the unforeseeable, the lack of security and so many apparent contradictory imperatives, come seemingly limitless opportunity and challenge – which is really where ‘enabling’, as a way of managing and leading people, comes into the picture.

Enabling and empowering – some key differences

Defined variously, in dictionaries, as:

To give (person etc) the means or authority to do

To invest, endow, arm, render strong

To authorise

To make possible

To make something happen

To furnish a person with powers

– ‘enabling’ consists of a series of *related* managerial processes which, when used effectively and in concert, help others to do what they need to do. It is, too, essentially a combination of arts and, because of this, there is no one unique, ‘right’ formula, or prescription. There are thus no limits to individuality in the practice and development of enabling as a managerial art.

There are, too, both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ components in successful enabling – the ‘hard’ including facts, figures, profit-based decisions, commercially determined strategies and, on occasions,

direct instructions. The softer components involve networking, gatekeeping, ‘politicking’, encouragement, persuasion – even manipulation.

For practical purposes, these may be represented as shown in figure 1, as:

1. Largely **interpersonal** interventions ie:

- *Mentoring*
- *Coaching*

2. Broadly **organisational** activities ie:

- *Empowering*
- *Sponsoring*

Enabling: the key bases – organisational and inter-personal

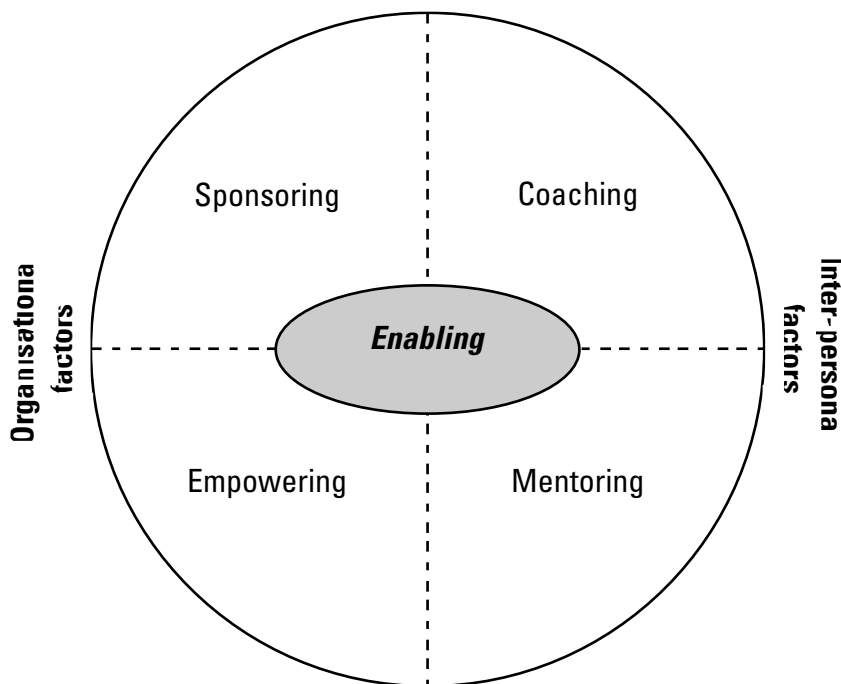


Figure 1

As can readily be seen from figure 1, empowerment is really just one (albeit a crucial one) of four fundamental and related bases to the process of enabling.

Generally, experience suggests that, in practice, *empowerment* alone is not always sufficient an incentive, or stimulus, to produce the requisite level of confidence and contributory competence in people. For example, unless there is adequate commensurate *delegation*, whereby parameters, requisite end results, necessary constraints and criteria are made absolutely clear, ‘empowered’ individuals may either take off, unchecked, in quite inappropriate directions, or they may well flounder around, uncertain as to how much freedom they really have. Empowerment is neither management abdication – nor is it laissez-faire leadership. It is, when planned, organised and managed effectively, a major source of focused motivation, as well as a means of releasing and *using* vital energy commitment and talent. Its cornerstones of autonomy, ownership and responsibility can, in the right environment and with the right leadership, lead to high levels of performance and outstanding results. Given the *structured* support of the other key elements of *enabling* – sponsorship, coaching and mentoring – empowerment comes into its own as managerial best practice, congruent with the spirit of prevailing societal norms and expectations.

So frequently, in the work-a-day world of managing, leading and delivering, activities are not clear-cut and neatly delineated as management theorists would sometimes like them to be. Rather, they come in various shades of grey – often blurred around the edges, so that, for example, the largely interpersonal activities of mentoring and coaching will inevitably have organisational facets to them, such as – available resources, budgets, deadlines, culture-dependent outcomes, work goals, and job pressures.

Likewise, the predominantly organisational processes of empowerment and sponsorship will depend for their success upon many interpersonal factors, such as competence, confidence, personal ‘chemistry’, commitment, credibility and ‘clout’ of the provider and appropriateness of the learning methodology.

Each of the above four, fundamental bases to enabling will be explored in depth and detail, in subsequent chapters of this Briefing.

Enabling, in the context of being central to making things happen and producing requisite results – particularly in the conditions of uncertainty, stress, turbulence and lack of guaranteed security, that characterise organisational change – is so frequently about encouraging risk averse people to move out of their comfort zones. In effect, comfort zones represent illusory permanence, security and safety. They often reflect too a strongly preserved status quo, the known, the accepted and the familiar, but reject, ignore or deny the reality of inevitable change, transformation and the emergence of necessary ‘new order’.

In a world where organisations constantly need to re-new, ‘re-engineer’ and re-build themselves, in the search for greater effectiveness, new opportunities, and fresh market arenas, so their

people need to acquire new awareness, develop different skills and take on unfamiliar roles in order both to take the business forward – and grow with it.

Stepping out of the comfort zone, with its attendant security, and moving into new roles and arenas – which may be largely ‘unmapped’ territory, has been likened to abandoning familiar ‘firm’ ground and walking into a ‘swamp’. The ‘alligators’ – which mirror the ‘here be dragons’ of the terra incognita, of early cartographers – are the multiplicity of *risks* that people identify with fear of failure and threats to career.

Figure 2, which is developed from a model originally evolved by Roger Plant in *Managing Change and Making it Stick* (1) illustrates something of the characteristics typical of the move from the comfort zone towards the many ‘swamps’ that represent necessary progress and growth.

Enabling – moving out of comfort zones into the ‘swamp’

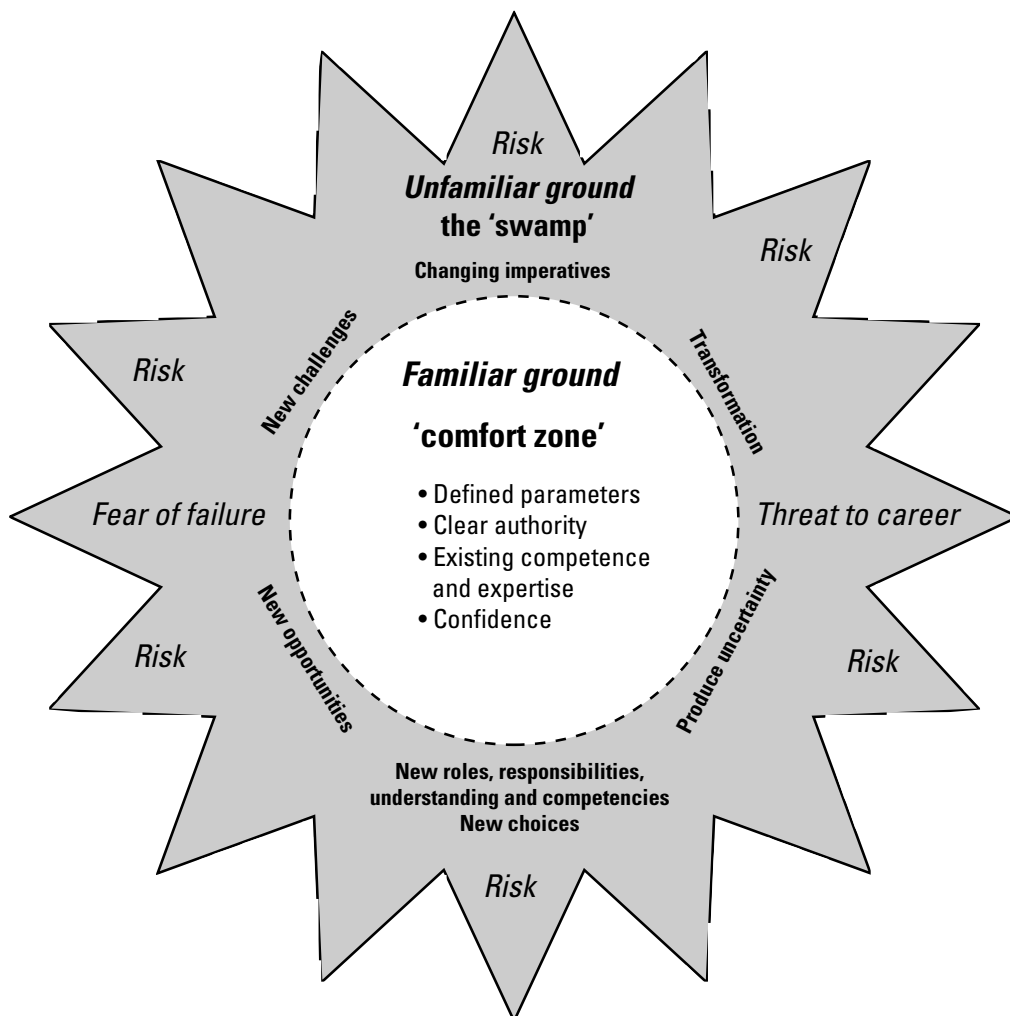


Figure 2

Enabling as a process for focusing and controlling

At the opposite end of the scale are the adventurous, entrepreneurial spirits, whose boldness, opportunism and cavalier approach may run away with them, as they experience freedom and lack of monitoring or control that empowerment – fortuitous, or otherwise – may afford them. Ambition, a need for power, an obsession with success or recognition, or simply sheer greed, may turn the pursuit of outstanding success into a quest for a somewhat unholy grail, rather than a professionally focused and balanced drive for legitimate and appropriate goals. It may be too, that some individuals fail to recognise that they have gone past their level of competence, before they find themselves in situations which are clearly over their heads. If their managers, or superiors, similarly, don't recognise the crucial signals in good time – or choose to ignore them – the absence of effective delegation, monitoring, management and control may result, variously, in confusion, havoc, or in the case of Barings, disastrous consequences.

Enabling, especially as a structured and essentially ‘bespoke’ process, tailored to circumstances and individuals – and effectively conducted – by informed, accountable professionals, provides the necessary ‘freedom within a framework’ (2) that distinguishes intelligent empowering from irresponsible abdication, or indifferent laissez-faire leadership.

There is, at times, a very fine and often indistinct line between smart opportunism on the one hand, and sharp practice, or unethical behaviour, on the other. At one end of the scale there is the essentially well-intentioned, ambitious maverick, or ‘loose cannon’, who cuts corners and takes risks, in order to get things done – and, possibly, satisfy a need for excitement and for recognition of having triumphed, despite the system. Many of to-day's most successful entrepreneurs and businessmen have operated in this way, and openly attribute their success to their readiness to cut through constraints, ‘bend the rules’ – or make up their own, as they go along.

At the other end of the scale, however, there are degrees and shades of dishonesty all of which come into the ‘unacceptable’ category, as far as professional business ethics and the generally accepted societal norms of human decency are concerned.

This extreme of the spectrum represents conduct which may also be outside the law and, therefore, is subject to criminal and/or civil proceedings for those who are caught. Where legality is involved, there is likely to be far less relativity, on the basis that an act or action is either legal or it is illegal – although there is the fundamental qualification – ‘What would the **reasonable** person do in such circumstances?’.

Figure 3, based upon the original work of Tom Cummings, a US Consultant and Director of Leading Ventures Management Consultancy, operating out of Amsterdam, indicates a likely progression of leader/manager ethics in decision making and taking action. The author has added the dimensions of integrity and focus, ie internal or external forces.

A hierarchy of leader ethics

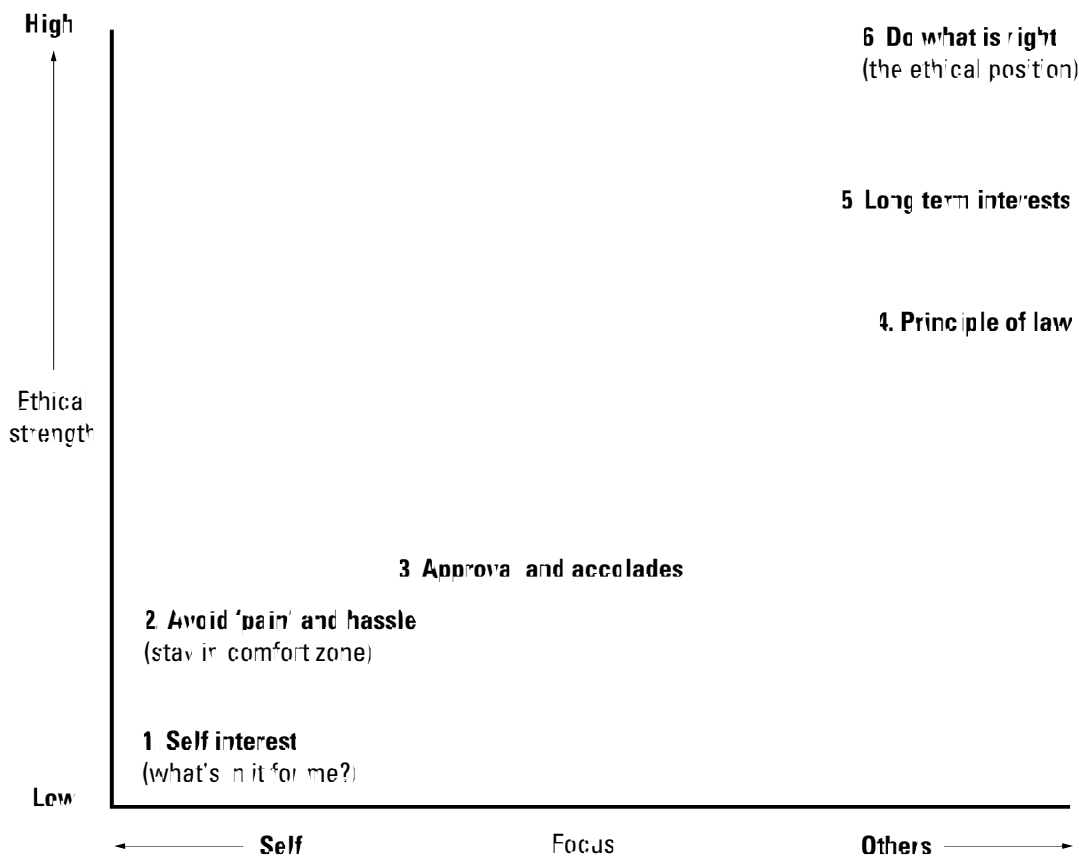


Figure 3

Both ethics and legality, as issues, emphasise the fundamental differences between *enabling* and *empowering*. There are ‘parental’ overtones in the process of empowerment, as well as a more immediate and overt morality implicit in the giving, taking and particularly the using of power. By contrast, enabling is a more ‘adult’ and morally neutral process when considered as a ‘complete’ or synthesised managerial process. Empowering suggests the *giving of permission*, whereas enabling processes fit in the broader context of providing necessary wherewithal, by coaching, mentoring and sponsoring. While the processes that make up the quality of enabling, expected of professional management, are not a universal panacea, or

infallible managerial prophylactic, effectively implemented and conducted, they do *reduce the risk* of both irresponsible and dishonest behaviour turning into disasters, organisationally, morally, or legally.

Saul Gellerman (3) makes the point in *Why ‘Good’ Managers Make Bad Ethical Choices*, that, most likely, four major rationalised beliefs result in much of what is unethical behaviour in business, ie:

1. The belief that the activity lies within reasonable ethical and legal limits
2. The belief that the activity is in the best interests of the individual and/or the business
3. The belief that the activity is ‘safe’ – that is, it will never be found out, or published
4. The belief that because the activity, or action, helps the business, the organisation will condone it and go so far as to protect the person who perpetrates it.

In assessing the morality and, often, ‘legality’ of actions – both in advance and retrospectively, much of the rationalisation is a matter of individual values, perceptions and interpretation. Some of the pressures, motives, or influences that may precipitate ‘borderline’ or even immoral and illegal activity, within businesses, include:

- The organisation’s culture and norms
- Pressure for results from superiors
- Unclear instructions and vague standards
- Idleness and/or a wish for ‘less hassle’
- The need to prove oneself or live up to a particular image
- Personal drives, such as recognition, greed, ambition and success.

In the absence of clear cut guidelines, or rules, explicit values, or declared codes of practice, to the contrary, the more opportunistic, exploitive and expedient will tend to regard such omissions as a leadership vacuum, or a legal and moral colander. The lack of both clear criteria, or ground rules, together with an absence of effective managerial presence, inevitably leaves the way open for post-rationalisations, such as – ‘I thought I was doing what was needed’, or ‘In the circumstances, it seemed the best thing to do’ – and the like.

One problem is that the absolute authority of the conscience is not a consensual moral force. Despite some consistent common moral standards – particularly within a distinct and discrete culture – the conscience, ultimately remains an individual and personal source of imperative, so that what one person may see as morally defensible, another may not. Both, however, might honestly believe that their interpretation was ‘right’ in the circumstances.

As Gellerman (4) says – ‘How far is *too far*?’ (author’s italics). ‘Exactly what is the line between... sharp and shady? Between profit maximisation and illegal conduct?’ However, the process of enabling – effectively conducted – provides opportunities for debate, diagnosis, evaluation and prescription, and offers a powerful practical managerial framework which is likely to be strong in legal, financial and utilitarian criteria, if not quite of the level of Hume, Kant and Spinoza, when it comes to moral dialectic. This is especially more likely to be the case, where there is corporate and managerial integrity, based upon sound values *compatible with* wider societal norms, and where people recognise that they will, ultimately, be judged, by their actions – not their mission statements. Just as the ‘felt fair’ criterion is a powerful and reasonable arbiter in the allocation of rewards so, too, in the ethics of decisions and actions.

It was, in fact, Alexander Hume the Scottish philosopher who stated – ‘Morality is more properly felt of than judg’d’. On a more pragmatic and earthy note, Ralph Waldo Emerson with his shrewd perception and understanding of humankind wrote – ‘The louder he talked of his honor, the faster we counted our spoons’.

‘Machiavellian’ Index

Reality is that the data and information produced by behavioural profiles and psychometric instruments is neither *absolute*, nor *definitive*, but rather *relative* and *indicative*.

Such data is relative, in that normative instruments – given construct validity – should provide us with a *comparative* picture of an individual, in identified areas of behaviour, based upon established norms. So called ipsative psychometrics – ie non-normative, given accuracy and reliability – ought to produce descriptions which other sources of evaluation will confirm.

Within this context, the ‘**Machiavellian Index**’ is offered, principally for the reader’s self assessment and personal interest. It should not be used as a selection tool nor as a profile for formal evaluation. Rather, it is included, at the end of Chapter 1, as an instrument which can yield relevant information for personal reflection.

It should be answered as honestly and accurately as possible, on the basis that only such responses are likely to be valid, practical and useful as a means of taking stock of an important aspect of one’s values, outlook and professional ‘style’, in behaving towards others.

The ‘**Machiavellian Index**’ may also be used, with care, in terms, or work groups, to help to identify and give sharper definition to the prevailing ‘climate’, culture and collective ethos that characterise the group, in its day-to-day activities, team working and inter-group relationships.

The average score is 25. Scores of 22 or less suggest:

- The individual is very ethical and generally operates with a high level of personal and professional integrity
- The respondent is more tender-minded than tough-minded and, therefore, is likely to be somewhat protective of themselves and others, by avoiding harsh, unpopular, or tough decisions
- The individual may be somewhat unworldly and/or naive, compared with the generally accepted, current competitive and commercial ethic of the business world
- He or she is trying to do a personal ‘whitewash’ job and that it is time to start counting the spoons!

By contrast, scores of 29 or over, are indicative of people who typically:

- Are considered to be ‘tough’, ‘hard nosed’, and/or practical, utilitarian and expedient
- Are very task – and results – orientated, and who are inclined to spend little time on social niceties, chit chat, or small talk
- Are realistic, inclined to scepticism, cynical, usually taking a ‘no-nonsense’ view of their fellow human beings. They are not given to suffering fools gladly.

However, for optimum practical accuracy, reliability and validity, the ‘**Machiavellian Index**’ should be used, wherever possible, in conjunction with a battery of profiles, to help to provide contextual and more consistent evaluation and feedback.

Consistency with track record, consensual perceptions and other psychometric data, usually provides the most reliable assessments and, hence, feedback.

The challenges and opportunities of ‘flatter organisations’

As we can see already, the shape, form and operating style of companies is changing dramatically, and the way businesses function, around the turn of the millennium, is significantly different from their ways of working of only a decade ago. The successful 21st century organisation, compared with its recent predecessors, will be:

- Flatter in structure, less ‘hierarchical’, less bureaucratic and more openly cross-functional in its working
- Using empowerment more intelligently and universally for both individuals and work groups
- IT – based to a greater degree

- Much more focused on customers and stake-holders generally, including customers’ customers
- More concerned with adding value, wherever practicable, as a major means of maintaining competitive advantage
- Entrepreneurial and innovative, relying heavily upon the intelligent, well-informed adaptive competences of especially the key players
- Directed by vision, shared values and, necessarily, bolder pathfinding than hitherto.

Both managers and teams will, because of ever-changing structures, operate more and more in transient and concurrent roles, rather than as semi-permanent ‘fixtures’ or organisation charts. More close-quarter managing will involve people increasingly in:

- De-centralising and devolving authority and power
- Much closer, more intense interdependence, than hitherto
- Leadership which is more readily and frequently distributed, based upon perceived contributory competence
- More informal networking and multi-disciplinary project teams
- Transient alliances with key stakeholders – both inside and outside the organisation
- More professional and demanding performance standards which are clear cut and less ambiguous than previously (though the environment will become more uncertain and increasingly governed by paradox)
- More need – and readiness – to cut through or remove unnecessary boundaries and bureaucratic constraints.

Figure 4 shows something of the changing nature – and context – of organisations and, therefore, the differing demands they will place upon change agents and those subject to change.

‘New paradigm’ business thinking recognises that much of the change we are experiencing today is irrevocable and represents a major departure from what has gone before. Transformation, so often represents discontinuity and complete breaks from past thinking and practice – hence the very significant changes to organisation structure and the ways in which organisations – and their effective development – are currently perceived.

In the quest for added value, greater efficiency and sustained competitive advantage, flatter organisations acknowledge the essential value of cross-functional working. No longer is the ‘silo’ mentality, parochialism and ‘turf warfare’ of *differentiated* functions acceptable. Counter-productive territorialism and limiting partisan thinking are unlikely to create the

necessary climate and, therefore, opportunities, alliances and ‘ad hoc’racy’, that lead to the effective multi-disciplinary working essential to today’s successful businesses.

It is destructive parochialism ‘segmentalism’ and chauvinism that largely create the organisational problem identified by Henry Mintzberg in figure 4.

Changing patterns of organisation

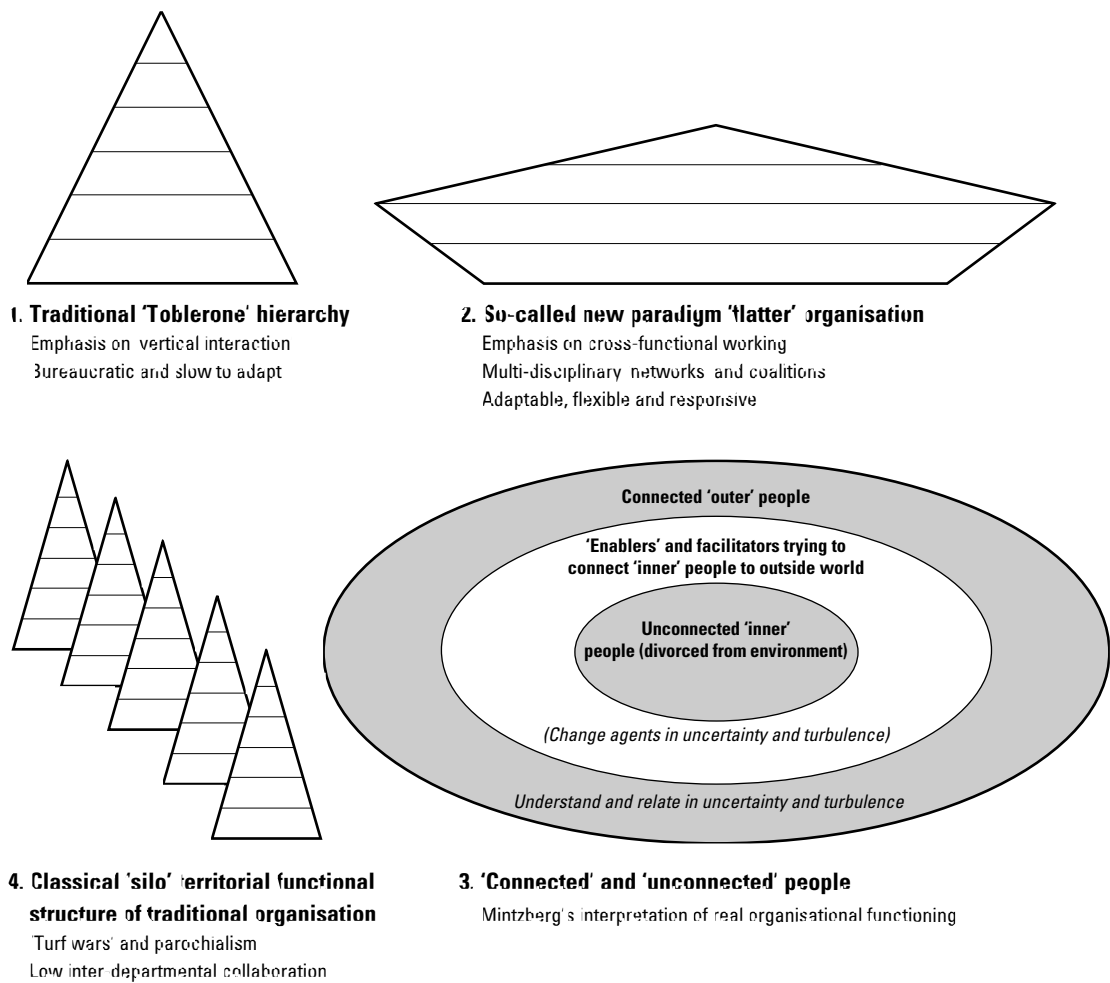


Figure 4

Straightforward observation of so many organisations, in their day-to-day working, confirm his perception that:

1. There are some ‘connected’ and ‘outer’ people who understand the broader operating environment of their organisations and are successfully linked into it, by role, relationships and behaviour – but above all by the recognition that such broad, multi-faceted arenas are the operational and strategic reality of their business
2. There are also – frequently too many – people who are divorced from and not at all connected to the world outside their own function, section or even immediate role set. Frequently, they are the individuals who though working hard, end up engaged principally in ‘*activity*’ – not necessarily the generation of requisite *results*.

In some cases, they turn out to be people who, as a result of their lack of connection to the outer world, are really doing what amounts to *yesterday’s job* – not fulfilling the requirements currently expected of them in what is essentially ‘today’s role’.

3. In between the ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ people, Mintzberg sees a number of key players – frequently in ‘middle management’ level roles, acting as ‘enablers’, ‘facilitators’ or ‘catalysts’. These are essentially functioning as necessary *change agents* – whose task is to connect the inner people to their ‘outer’ orientated colleagues and, hence, to the external operating arenas of the company’s market place and their business.

Tom Peters (5) described a move towards such roles becoming a combination of ‘expediter/barrier-destroyer/facilitator’, ‘on-call expert’ and ‘diffuser of good news’, while Kanter (6) sees the middle level roles becoming more cross-functionally orientated and, therefore, responsible for initiating, catalysing and nurturing project team working.

Undoubtedly, conditions of uncertainty, paradox, and opportunity need the optimal mixes and concentration of different, but focused, contributive competences, in the interests of both successful business, as well as in appropriate organisational transformation and growth.

The opportunities – and need – for effective enabling, therefore, are both enormous in the collective pursuit of excellence, corporate success and organisation development. New competences, new understanding and new ways of working are all essential in the conditions of revolutionary change, that businesses are now, irreversibly, finding themselves having to work in. More than ever, there is a need for people at all levels to avoid becoming hostages to the moment, by responding unnecessarily to the latest whim, ‘urgency’, or fad. Creating time for *shared* reflection, learning and contextual perspective is essential if managements are to ensure that people’s contributive talents and potential are properly focused and developed – not merely squandered in mere ‘busyness’ or ‘activity’ and in the wasteful pursuit of yesterday’s commitment – instead of the real demands of today’s role.

Never before, has there been in business – and in the role of managers and leaders, at whatever level – such a need for enabling processes which help people to understand, identify, crystallise, evaluate, plan and act optimally, as there is in today’s rapidly changing world.

If ever there were an ideal time for effective enabling and enabling leaders, this is it. Less and less is there one infallible fount of wisdom or source of guaranteed omniscience in organisations. Instead, making sense of a fast changing and, at times, quite threatening, world is essentially a matter of facilitating and keeping open continuous, collective and shared learning, both at the coal face and more strategic levels. It is also a matter of *ensuring adequate connection* between learning about scope, context and hence visionary and aspirational issues of the business and the learning associated with the ‘nuts and bolts’ and day-to-day operations of the organisation.

In such arenas and within the context of revolutionary change, enablers and change agents will, themselves, be working in considerable uncertainty, fluidity and ambiguity.

These conditions of high hassle and high vulnerability need enablers who possess at least the following competences and strengths:

1. The ability to recognise, diagnose and help catalyse solutions to often complex, multifaceted problems
2. The ability to ‘map out’ and give realistic definition to situations – and especially the scope, potential and opportunities within the turbulence and change, ie the capacity to identify areas of ‘productive uncertainty’
3. Integrative thinking which can create new unity out of contradiction and paradox – akin to what McCaskey (7) terms – ‘*Janusian thinking*’ which, like the Roman God Janus, possesses the ability to look in two directions at the same time
4. Clear perception and understanding about what is ‘mandatory’ and what is ‘discretionary’ in a situation, task or project, and hence the ability to focus both commitment and the use of initiative in others
5. Skill in recognising when to use loose and tight rein in triggering appropriate response, motivation and thus energy-release in others, hence flexibility of style and interventions
6. Effective interpersonal skills and style which encourage, stimulate and inspire, rather than those which threaten, inhibit and/or switch off
7. High personal credibility, based upon professional track record, competence, integrity and perceived organisational ‘clout’, including the ability to use the power afforded by transforming organisations as fluidity allows opportunities to be seized and exploited.

8. Closely allied to the strengths in item 7 above are necessary ‘political’ acumen and the ability both to forecast and deal with the politics typical of organisations and organisational activity
9. The ability to make sense of and obtain optimum use of the increasingly sophisticated management information systems that underpin the functioning of the business.

To say the least, those in enabling roles today (and which manager, or leader isn’t) are likely to be operating in a highly challenging, complex and problematic environment. However, they are not all-knowing gurus whose role is to supply all the answers, but rather theirs is the task of *helping others to help themselves* by:

- Stimulating understanding of context, scope and potential
- Providing questions for reflection
- Stimulating the generation of viable options and alternative scenarios, pathways and courses of action
- Triggering appropriate diagnosis and evaluation, as well as prescriptive solutions, on the part of others
- Initiating the processes of generating, building and sharing of collective visions, aspirations and ambitions about and for the business
- Helping people to re-focus and re-align their thinking, actions and contributions, where necessary
- Enabling people to move to the action stage and to *commit to appropriate action*, when the talking has eventually become a secondary, supportive process
- Operating, generally, ‘eyes and ears on’ – but largely ‘hands-off’ to provide the necessary *freedom within a framework* that is, perhaps, the penultimate goal of enabling – the ultimate being to generate requisite achievement, development and growth.

In so many organisations the problem is not necessarily the shortage or absence of potential, but rather the lack of people who are properly equipped – and disposed – to confirm, develop and use that talent, which is essentially what the process of enabling is really about.

Summary

That we are in a major business and, therefore, managerial revolution is undeniable.

The pace and nature of change is characterised by increasingly rapid forward movement into the unknown, the uncertain and the untested. For some, such a world is threatening – to others, it is challenging, exciting and full of opportunity.

Less certainty, less security can mean more anxiety, more fear of failure, and greater risk-aversion, with consequently more effort going into preserving the status quo and ‘firm ground’, in the form of personal comfort zones.

Such environments can also mean more scope for learning, more freedom to act, and more potential to be identified and exploited.

Hassle and vulnerability have become something of a way of life in business, so that we can either seek to avoid them, fret about them, or take them in our stride as the realities of the work-a-day world of business and *manage* them intelligently and effectively. Doing the latter frees us to get on with the processes of becoming and remaining successful, learning, developing and growing, both as individuals and, collectively, as teams, groups and organisations.

The future undoubtedly belongs to the learners – not those who simply ‘know’ – and especially to those who are actively *living* change and seeking to capitalise upon, or further enhance transformation, as it changes their work environments and working styles.

In response to the key imperatives of major change, two significant consequences have emerged over recent years – empowered working and ‘flatter’ organisation structures.

Empowerment is essentially about giving people – especially those with talent, commitment and confidence, the requisite freedom to act in the most effective, focused ways, in order to set and achieve appropriate goals. It is also intended to be a process which helps people to enhance their roles and contributions, and to take ownership of both problems and their solutions and so optimise their personal contribution to the business.

Experience, however, shows that empowerment is very much a two-edged weapon, as evidenced in the case of Nick Leeson, of Barings Bank. On the one hand, it can be misused, irresponsibly, arrogantly or cynically, or it may represent the tyranny of freedom for others who only feel safe when working within clear-cut prescribed boundaries and when operating to specific standards and goals.

On the other hand, empowerment represents an opportunity to use intelligence, a sense of responsibility and well channelled drive, in the pursuit of legitimate goals, frequently in new,

‘unmapped’ territory or in unfamiliar roles, where self-determination and initiative may be essential to success. Like power itself, the process of empowerment can be abused – through irresponsibility, ignorance – or as the result of immoral and/or illegal conduct.

At the one end of the scale of abuse, ‘bad’ behaviour may simply take the form of corner cutting, sharp practice, being ‘smart’ and so doing what ‘seemed right at the time’.

At the opposite end of the misuse/abuse spectrum, there may be criminal fraud, misappropriation of large funds and many other illegal activities. Morally, too, there may well be the abuse of the privileges and professional freedom that empowerment can bring. For example misrepresentation in reporting events, overt and destructive disloyalty to the company, suppressing people’s legitimate rights, or knowingly exaggerating the importance or value of something, in order for personal gain – are all acts of varying degrees of immorality.

Enabling, which goes far beyond empowerment, inevitably relies fundamentally on the latter process, but additionally backs up empowerment with **coaching, mentoring and sponsorship**, to create a powerful synthesis of related managerial roles, competences and activities.

Because it goes beyond empowering, enabling also operates on a basis of more context, more perspective and more diagnosis and evaluation. It is essentially a combination of doing, evaluating and learning.

In the cases of power abuse indicated above, enabling has much to offer as a preventative, monitoring and controlling process, as well as an educational and developmental one. It is no cure-all, but it does – by virtue of *continuing dialogue and intervention* – provide the necessary evolving frameworks within which focused, legitimate freedom of action may flourish and produce the results and added value that are managerially, morally and legally possible within businesses.

Perhaps more than in any other environment, or set of conditions, enabling comes into its own within flatter organisation structures, where there is emphasis upon project-team and cross-functional working. Here, the enabler is likely to make his or her greatest sustained contribution, as a change agent in conditions of uncertainty, paradox and opportunity.

In times of stress, confusion and contradiction, enabling managers more than earn their corn by helping people to make sense of their, at times, incomprehensibly changing worlds. As Proust said ‘The art of discovery is not to visit new lands, but to see existing ones with new eyes’. So it is with enabling, when it becomes a means of helping people to:

- See things afresh and differently
- Put changes into context and perspective
- Become stimulated or inspired, to generate new options
- Re-organise and re-align their priorities
- Have access to a ‘sounding board’ off which to ‘bounce’ ideas and suggestions
- Take stock of themselves, their roles and both the main and changing thrusts of their contributions to the business
- Stay connected and continue to operate centrally, in the world that really matters, so ensuring that they grow with the business
- Raise their sights, their standards and their levels of achievement as they gain confidence and progressively develop competence.

In the following chapters, we shall explore and examine the components as well as some of the tools and techniques of the process of enabling. In particular, Chapters 4 - 7 will primarily be devoted to skill development in each of the four fundamental aspects of enabling – coaching, mentoring, sponsoring and empowering.

Activities: theory into action

1. Complete the **Machiavellian Index** contained in Chapter 1 (don't forget to add the 'reverse' scores for your responses to items D, H, I and J, to your answers to questions A, B, C, E, F and G, to give you a *total* score).

Ideally, ask people who know you well – and who are likely to be honest about you – to rate you so that you end up with a typical '360 degree' profile of yourself.

Do the same (360 degree assessments) with others in your team.

Discuss the results. What does this tell you about you, your perceived leadership/management 'style' and the team that you manage?

What action might usefully be taken, to capitalise upon the information generated and/or inferred from the results?

2. Taking the section on the challenge and opportunities of 'flatter' organisations, what does the reduction of organisational hierarchy mean to you, your team and the ways in which you do, or could, operate?

What advantages of flatter organisations could you and your function make greater capital out of?

3. Does Mintzberg's model of 'inner' (disconnected) and 'outer' (connected) people suggest organisational and/or personal development needs that you might explore and meet at a 'bespoke' workshop or 'away day' on the issue?

Machiavellian Index

‘How laudable it is for a prince to keep good faith and live with integrity and not with astuteness, everyone knows. Still, experience shows princes to have done great things who have had little regard for faith and who have been able, by astuteness, to confuse men’s brains and who have ultimately overcome those who have made loyalty their foundation.’

Nicolo Machiavelli (1469-1527) *The Prince*

Measure of your political awareness and ‘style’

‘...Upon this, one has to remark that men ought either to be well treated or crushed, because they can avenge themselves of lighter injuries, of more serious ones they cannot; therefore the injury that is to be done to a man ought to be of such a kind that one does not stand in fear of revenge’.

Machiavelli – *The Prince*

Richard Christie, the psychologist who developed the original profile, states that the way someone responds to the questions is surprisingly accurate in predicting how he or she behaves towards other people – whether becoming emotionally involved, or simply sing them to suit personal ends.

Christie has found that men are generally more Machiavellian than women and that people like doctors and psychiatrists show higher scores than the more ‘passive’ professions like accountants and R & D staff.

One of the things that has interested psychologists about Machiavellianism is that it does not appear to be related to other psychological characteristics. For example, highly intelligent people are no more Machiavellian than the less bright; introverts are no more or less manipulators of people than are extroverts.

Until the ‘sixties and ‘seventies, Machiavellianism had not been studied in depth by psychologists. A recent study in the *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology* suggests that the right mixture of Machiavellianism and intelligence can be very important in ensuring that people get on in life. John Touhey’s study of 120 men whose career progression was compared with that of their fathers’ found that those who had risen usually had high Machiavellian scores and a high IQ. Those who had fallen had high Machiavellian ratings, but a low IQ.

While a high score on the accompanying profile will indicate how politically aware you are and how inclined you are to manipulate others – make sure that you use your Machiavellianism carefully and that you give sufficient thought to the outcomes and consequences of your actions.

How far will you go in life?

A simple self-administered profile with a rating

Please read carefully through each of the statements below, and put a ring round the point on the scale **which most closely represents your attitude.**

	Disagree			Agree	
	A lot	A little	Neutral	A little	A lot
A Generally speaking people won’t work hard unless they’re forced to	1	2	3	4	5
B The best way to influence people is to tell them what they want to hear	1	2	3	4	5
C Most people more readily forget the death of their father than the loss of their property	1	2	3	4	5
D When you ask someone to do something for you, it is best to give the real reasons for wanting it rather than giving reasons which may carry more weight	1	2	3	4	5
E A person who completely trusts others is asking for trouble	1	2	3	4	5
F It is difficult to get ahead without cutting corners here and there	1	2	3	4	5

	Disagree			Agree	
	A lot	A little	Neutral	A little	A lot
G It is best to assume that all people have a vicious streak and that it will come out when they are given the opportunity to use it	1	2	3	4	5
H One should take action only when sure that it is morally right	1	2	3	4	5
I Most people are essentially good natured and kind	1	2	3	4	5
J My sense of fair play gets in the way of effective business decisions	1	2	3	4	5

Scoring

To find your Machiavellian score, add the numbers you have circled for questions A, B, C, E, F, G.

For the other four questions, reverse the numbers you circled – that is, if you circled five, score one, if you circled one, score five, and so on.

The average score (neither high nor low) is 25.

- Further reading: *Studies in Machiavellianism* by R Christie and F L Geiss, Academic Press, New York, 1970.
- Source: J C Touhey in the *British Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology*, 1973 and Professor R Christie.