

Another great tool from the

... Developing 'fit-for-purpose' organisations in a sea of change'

Before starting to consider how to achieve such an 'ideal state', we have to define the meaning of the expression 'fit-for-purpose organisation'. It contains two dimensions - 'fit for purpose' and 'organisation'. Even the second of these - 'organisation' - needs clarification.

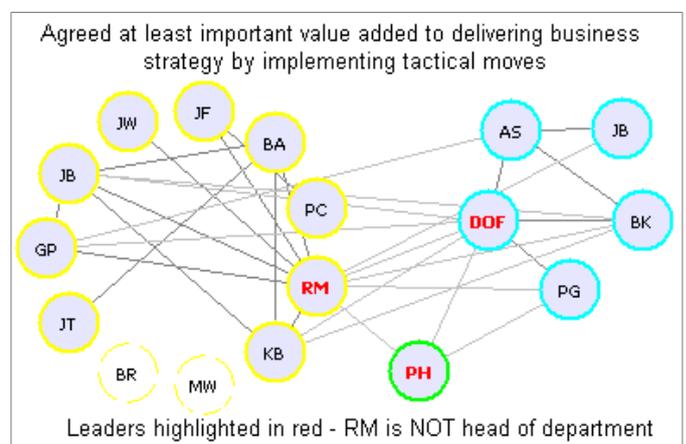
When we refer to 'organisations', we include the formal structures and processes and the knowledge and skills of employees. We also include the working relationships between people in the organisation, plus the relationships between structures and processes, and the people in the organisation. All these relationships are influenced by the implicit messages contained in the design of the formal structures and processes that signal to employees permitted and prohibited behaviour. They are an important driver of employee behaviour and, hence, organisational performance.

Finally, the 'organisation' also includes the working relationships between employees in the organisation and those of other organisations - suppliers, customers, alliance partners, regulatory bodies - etc.

The combination of formal and informal relationships, structures and processes, adds up to a significant degree of complexity. Moreover, the total construct formed of all these dimensions is not fixed - it is constantly changing. It is this amorphous, complex and changing construct that has to deliver the business strategy of the organisation.

If a primary role of the 'organisation' is delivery of the strategy, then a key question for senior management is the degree to which the organisation is currently fit for that purpose. Essentially, there are four dimensions to the 'fit-for-purpose' organisation.

- **The business strategy** - the business strategy itself has to be appropriate to enable a high-performing organisation to achieve its strategic objectives. As important is the need for strategy, and tactical moves to deliver it, to be formed dynamically and informed by the experiences of all employees (emergent strategy). That way, communication of strategic direction becomes frequent and automatic.
- **Organisational performance** - delivery of the strategy needs the organisation to be a high performing organisation. In this context, this is mainly about developing a balanced focus of attention between internal and external performance issues, and between operational results and the achievement of the strategy.
- **Organisational resilience** - this is about the degree to which the organisation is able to process incoming signals for change, either internally or from the world external to the organisation, interpret those signals in a valid way, and translate them into appropriate developmental action.



- **Organisational coherence** - this is about the degree to which there is a valid collective view about strategic direction, business priorities and the short and long term threats to the business. These will drive appropriate, concerted action, with a consequent high degree of knowledge-sharing and knowledge-creation across the organisation.

The organisational assessment challenge

None of this is new or surprising. But the fact is that many organisations do fail to deliver their strategies, even when the strategy itself is valid, understood and accepted throughout the organisation. There is no simple, common explanation for this. If there were, there would surely be a CEO's magic bullet, that could be fired at the organisation to fix this dilemma.

What can be said, however, is that as delivery of the strategy needs a fit-for-purpose organisation, this can only exist if appropriate management action is taken to develop such an entity. This condition is only going to occur if the action is based in an appropriate analysis of the current state of the organisation, and the actions needed to change it.

Commonly, inadequate analysis occurs because of the very nature of the 'organisation' - that complex, amorphous, changing construct referred to earlier - that makes it so difficult to identify what is needed to transform the organisation into one that is 'fit-for-purpose'. Inadequate analysis, combined with a failure to engage enough people in the process of analysis, diagnosis and development, can and does lead directly to strategic failure.

A new escape route

Magus Networker is part of a complete methodology for resolving almost any organisational problem. It handles complex data sets with ease, providing powerful insights into the nature of the problem, and its causes. It does this through graphical reports presented as network maps, that illuminate the complex relationships, formal and informal, that actually drive organisational performance. Moreover, the Magus Networker process enables many people to engage with the process, through open dialogue, focusing directly on the issues, causes and actions illuminated through the network maps.

Conventionally, Magus Networker is custom-configured by the user for each problem resolution / organisational development application. The developers of Magus Networker have now designed an application specifically targeting the issue of whether the organisation is 'fit-for-purpose'. This is in the form of a template that can be adapted to the specific needs of each organisation. The Magus Networker process includes front-end analysis to enable this adaptation. It covers the design of the database and its coverage, and includes the incorporation of the idiom of the specific organisation into the language of the question set.

As with all Magus Networker applications, the process is fast, requiring weeks not months. Developmental action flows automatically from analysis for cause and root cause. Actions include those taken by delegates to the Magus Networker process, and for the people in management roles who sponsored the process. By default, priorities are determined according to the goals agreed at the start of the process.

So, if the issue is one of strategy implementation, the emergent review and updating of strategy, or a combination of both - the Magus Networker application to develop a 'fit-for-purpose' organisation is the way to go. If, for that matter, all that is needed is a significant improvement in organisational performance, to speed up the process of delivery of the strategy, it will help there as well. All it requires is a bit of management commitment to the cause, and the methodology will take care of the rest.

