



## **IAF Latin America and the Caribbean Monograph Series, Number 01** **August 2011**

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### **THE FACILITATION CHALLENGE IN PROCESSES** **OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION**

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All organizations, be they large or small, public or private or not-for-profit, new or old, all complain about the same challenges (Senge,2003):

- There is too much work.
- Workers/employees are not sufficiently productive to complete the work.
- Budgets are more and more limited.
- Every day there are more communication and teamwork problems.
- Real leadership is lacking at almost every level.
- Expected and planned results are rarely achieved.
- Technology is advancing faster than it can be incorporated.
- Frequent external changes make good planning almost impossible.
- There is too much stress and disloyal competition in the workplace.
- Training rarely produces the learning or attitudinal changes desired.
- The vast majority of projects designed to bring about change fail.

Meanwhile, leaders, managers, shareholders and boards are banging their head (and those of others) against the wall seeking explanations (or people to blame) for the phenomena. Many have still not recognized that the problem is the one set out by Mafalda, the little girl in the Argentine comic strip: *“Every time I find the answer, someone changes the question.”*

**POINT TO PONDER:** Are you more in agreement or disagreement with these statements?

- The best way to understand the totality of the organization is through analysis and rigorous measurement of its components.
- The best way to improve an organization is to change the parts of the system that are not working well.
- The best way to analyze a problem is to seek out the root causes.
- The best leader is the one who adequately controls his subordinates.
- The best way to control quality is to reduce variation and increase specialization.
- The most important element in a business process is efficiency.

If you are more in agreement than disagreement with these statements, it is very probable that you are more influenced, to one degree or another, by a Newtonian Mechanical Model of organization. Although the Newtonian model is now considered outdated by leading thinkers, it still predominates in the great majority of mental organizational models.

The Mechanical Model is NOT wrong or bad...it is just that it is most relevant in different contexts than those that exist in today’s organizations and in the early stages of the evolution of a system. In most cases, the complexity and the degree of development of today’s businesses require another model to assist in understanding and transforming them: an Organic Model. This model asserts that the organization is more like a living system, a combination of inter-related elements striving to self-organize. Some points where they differ are:

**MECHANICAL MODEL**

Individual responsibility.  
 The whole is equal to the sum of its parts.

Just a few variables determine results.  
 Management effectiveness is determined by design and power.

Individual and group behavior is predictable and can be controlled.

Causality is linear.  
 Relationships are hierarchical.  
 Efficiency and certainty are measures of value.

Decisions are based on facts and data.  
 The leaders are experts and authorities.

**ORGANIC MODEL**

Responsibility is also systemic  
 The whole can be greater than the sum of its parts

Innumerable variables determine results.  
 Management effectiveness is determined by the participation of many.

Behavior is neither predictable nor controllable.

Causality is circular and multi-factored.  
 Relationships are synergetic.  
 Sensitivity and timely response to the environment are measures of value.

Decisions are based on tensions and patterns.  
 The leaders are facilitators and mentors.

Successful change process depends on top management.

Processes, persons and groups must follow predictable steps.

Structures, goals and plans are predefined.

The success of change is defined in terms of having closed a pre-defined gap with an imagined future.

There is tolerance of change.

Successful change depends on the quantity and quality of the connections between collaborators.

Processes, persons and groups must adapt to uncertainty.

Structures, goals and plans emerge as contexts change.

The success of change is defined in terms of having adapted to the environment.

There is celebration of change.

The Mechanical Model still offers some valuable options when the organization is facing certain challenges:

**THE MECHANICAL MODEL IS USEFUL WHEN THE PROBLEM:**

Is well known

Is well defined

Involves few people who are known.

Has been resolved before successfully.

Has identified and definite variables.

Occurs in a new system.

**THE ORGANIC MODEL IS USEFUL WHEN THE PROBLEM :**

Is new or unknown.

Is not well defined.

Involves many people or people who are not known.

Is new or has not been resolved before.

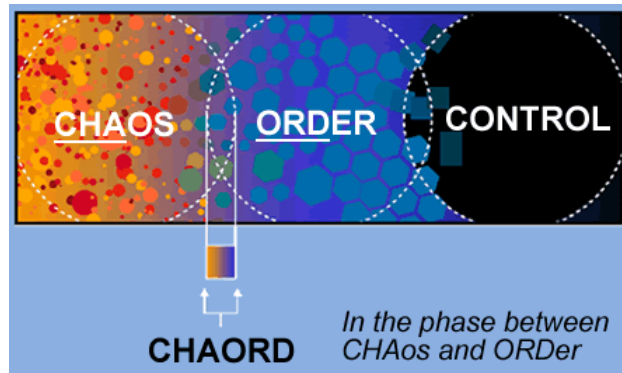
Has unidentified variables.

Occurs in an old system.

**CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION:**

- “Change” is replacing or modifying one **element** of the system...a mechanical process; “transformation” is modifying the **relationship between elements**...an organic process.
- Change can be achieved using a strategy of command and control; transformation requires collaborative and synergetic processes.
- Change can come about through strategies designed to produce predictable results; transformation requires the acceptance of uncertainty.
- Change can be achieved through goals, plans and very detailed and clear indicators; transformation can only be achieved when the goals, structures and plans emerge from the system and can be modified depending on new realities.
- Change can be achieved through the alignment of thought and consensus; transformation can only occur with the existence, recognition, evaluation and use of differences within the consensus.
- When change succeeds one is able to analyze and close a gap; in order for transformation to be successful, the system must be compatible and ‘in sync’ with its environment.

One of the pioneers in the application of this concept to organization was Dee Hock, Founder and President of Visa, International until 1984, when he left to develop his theories of ‘Chaordic’ Systems. Hock’s precept asserts that transformation has to occur in that intersection between order and chaos:



Subsequently, the gurus of the New Sciences (Wheatley, Maturana, Capra, Senge, Sallénave, Eoyang, Scharmer, Bennis, Schein, Zhang, Jaworski and others) developed different models, all on the basis of the self-organizing processes of transformation.

Let us examine the three conditions necessary for the transformation of a Complex Adaptive System (Eoyang and Olson, 2005):

- **SYNERGETIC PROCESSES:** Are the connections that exist between the elements of the system that transform the interchange of information, money, energy or other resources. They can occur in meetings, mail, transactions, alliances, dialogues, consensuses, etc.
- **DELIMITED SPACES:** Are a kind of process ‘container’ where new patterns and relationships can emerge. They establish semi-permeable limits in the system which may be physical, (geographical, offices, etc.), organizational (teams, departments, function, etc.), behavioral (identity, culture, etc.) and conceptual (mission, norms, etc.).
- **DIVERSIFIED CONTENT:** Synergy requires diversity. The more diversity, the greater the potential for synergy (and the greater the difficulty of achieving it). Differences can include levels of power, academic level, experiences, gender, ethnicity, age, etc.

ELEMENTS	CHAOTIC SYSTEM	CHAORDIC SYSTEM (SELF-ORGANIZED)	ORDERED OR CONTROLLED SYSTEM
Synergetic Processes	Few and trivial	The processes necessary for Synergy	Many, Vertical and Rigid
Delimited Spaces	Weak and Large	Delimited, Permeable Boundaries	Rigid and Small
Diversified Content	Many Valued Differences	Identified and Synergized Differences	Hidden or Unrecognized Differences

## QUESTIONS TO STIMULATE TRANSFORMATION:

### 1) DELIMITED SPACES:

- Set out the minimum specifications: *“What are the minimum specifications necessary for us to achieve the results we want?”*
- Distribute or spread out control: *“How can I help? What do you need?”*
- Generate the anticipation of success: *“What do we need to achieve delivery date?”*
- Stretch or tighten boundaries: *“What is missing? What can we eliminate?”*
- Define the business: *“Why are we here? What makes us different?”*

### 2) DIVERSIFIED CONTENT:

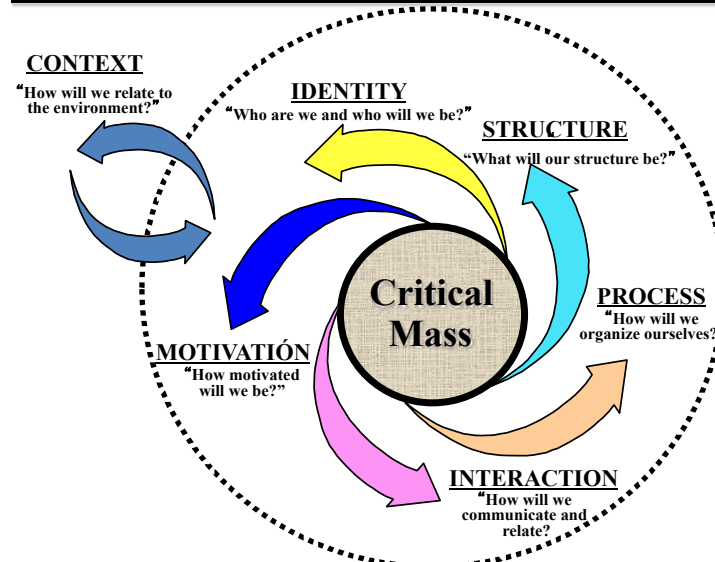
- Explore differences: *“How else can we focus this?”*
- Accept and value conflicts: *“What do you think or feel that you are not telling us?”*
- Ask difficult questions: *“How do you see the different scenarios?”*
- Stimulate diversity of participation: *“Who else should be at the table?”*
- Look for differences in the environment: *“What innovations will create new patterns in this organization?”*

### 3) SYNERGETIC PROCESSES:

- Stimulate feedback: *“How am I doing? How are we doing?”*
- Connect practical communities: *“What professional networks do you use?”*
- Reconfigure the networks: *“How can we improve the flow of information?”*
- Stimulate learning: *“What have you learned from this situation? What questions do you still have? Where can you get the answers you need?”*

Finally, within this process we have identified the six questions that require answers and the six elements that require a transition strategy, using self-organizing processes.

## ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSFORMATION



- **IDENTITY: Who are we and what will we be like?** A mission and an updated future vision must be internalized by a critical mass of collaborators, based on shared corporate values.
- **STRUCTURE: How are we going to build our organization?** All round/comprehensive management within a synergetic structure is required.
- **MOTIVATION: How do we motivate ourselves?** Awareness of the need for change and of the benefits of said change is required in the context of fair and equitable compensation and appropriate recognition.
- **PROCESSES: How do we organize ourselves?** It is necessary to define and implement strategic actions and goals and the relevant competences.
- **INTERACTION: How do we communicate and relate to each other?** Communication must be in the form of dialogue to facilitate team work with aligned participation.
- **ENVIRONMENT: How do we relate to our environment?** Corporate social responsibility as well as responsibility for organizational learning must be accepted.

All of the foregoing implies a radical change in the way we approach and practice organizational development in general and the processes of organizational transformation in particular. It also implies the following precepts:

- It is a process which involves the whole system.
- It is values based.
- It is an inclusive process that requires the participation of a critical mass of collaborators.
- It is based on human and social sciences.
- Its goal is to improve organizational effectiveness (efficiency and efficacy).

Thus we can define the process of organizational transformation as (Beckhard and Vaill, 2003);

*A systemic and systematic process of collaboration, values based, of applying the knowledge derived from human and social sciences to the evolution and optimization of the strategies, structures, processes, people and cultures which facilitate organizational effectiveness.*

This definition includes the following intervention axioms to allow us to ensure that the objectives set out have been achieved:

- ✓ A critical mass of collaborators of the organization must participate in the processes to evaluate the needs, generate alternatives, plan, implement and evaluate the changes, so that they can feel they are the owners of the process of change and not its victims, as happens when the process is imposed by the leaders, or even worse, by outside consultants.
- ✓ The transformation desired in other collaborators, must be observed first in the leadership team.
- ✓ It is not sufficient for the leaders to acquire new competences; they must also be able to create a favorable atmosphere within the business so that other collaborators will want to and be able to develop the same competences.
- ✓ The process must be designed so that it does not appear to be a threat to the informal power structure within the institution.

- ✓ The training received should facilitate learning and not only teach. It must respond to a perceived need and must allow the participants to go out and apply immediately what they have learnt.
- ✓ Decisions related to specific content, methodologies and necessary degrees of commitment, should be the result of a dialogue and joint consensus between the participants, their leadership and the external consultants, and should not be imposed by the latter or the management of the organization.