

The same job. For one great fun. For the other a disaster.

Stephen and Andrew

Stephen worked as an operations director running a factory for an international insulation manufacturing company. He loved the work. He was energised by solving new problems. He ran a very efficiently organised factory but there were always unanticipated happenings; problems in the supply chain, break-downs, variations in demand. It was solving these problems - urgent, against deadlines, very seat of the pants stuff - that energised him.

Stephen did well and was eventually promoted to an international role where he spends much of his time flying round Europe and the world sourcing new supplies of raw materials. More problems, more energy - he loves it.

When Stephen was promoted, his job as factory manager was taken on by Andrew. Andrew had been an IT director in the company for many years. He wanted experience of operational management and was also determined to show that he could do the job. What he hadn't bargained for was that what had energised him in his IT roles, i.e. planning, order, systematisation, although present in his new role were not at its core. Not long into the job he had what was loosely called a nervous breakdown.

This is a straightforward story about the importance of us each understanding what energises us and how we need to make sure that this aligns with what we take on.

March Monthly Meeting: 14 March 2007

The next monthly meeting is on Wednesday 14 March at the Harewood Arms, Nr Leeds. Details are on the web site.

This month we'll talk about the types of issues we face in going through the journey that is Personal Job Alignment. How can we change how we work? Can our bosses really help here?

Seeing Our Organisation

This month's newsletter is the first of two that focus on Seeing Our Organisation and its culture.

The third stage in working towards Personal Job Alignment is to see our organisation—its culture—and how that affects how we get energy from our work. As with the previous stages I believe that we can all benefit from seeing the culture more clearly.

There are three steps in this stage. This month's exercise covers the first step—**seeing the organisation's culture as you experience it.**

Try the exercise on the following pages.

Also read the first part of Jane's story about the culture of one civil service department.

"Almost a quarter of employees rarely or never look forward to going to work and almost a half are leaving or trying to"

This quote is from a CIPD survey itself quoted in the Observer (28/01/07). "The findings suggest many managers aren't doing enough to keep their staff interested," said CIPD's Mike Emmott.

Yes there are problems with relationships between managers and their staff (66% of staff don't trust senior managers according to the CIPD.) And it's true that managers have huge responsibilities for engaging with and engaging their staff.

But isn't it just possible that we as individuals have some responsibility here?

Shouldn't we pursue our own alignment for ourselves instead of laying off the responsibility to management?

An exercise to help us SEE OUR ORGANISATION

Remember: The important story is that each of us has our own work to do to make sense of our lives at work and that stress free work can be the outcome.

To recap. We have discovered what it is that is important to us in our lives at work, where we get our energy from, what I have called our energisers, in *Seeing Ourselves at Work*. We have also seen how we can approach more if not all of our work in a way that gives us that energy, in *Seeing our Role at Work*.

There is a third essential aspect to our lives at work. That is the context in which we work, the culture of the organisation.

What do I mean by culture here? A useful way to think about it is as 'the way we do things around here'. This can be about anything that goes on in the organisation. You particularly hear about it when you're new to an organisation. For example, people will tell you about the way decisions are made [Nothing gets decided here unless Joe agree to it] or what behaviours are accepted [We simply do not tolerate sexist jokes here] or how customers are to be treated [The customer is king here and you'd better believe it].

You do not need to give a penetrating analysis of the culture to work towards Personal Job Alignment. You need to understand the culture sufficiently to see the extent and the manner in which it affects your being able to change the way you work so that you can get Personal Job Alignment.

Remember that we are trying to see three things as clearly as we can. The aim is to increase our awareness about how things are.

We now need to See Our Organisation. There are three steps in the process:

- To see our organisation and our workplace as it actually is, and
- To see the way in which we present ourselves at work
- To see how our colleagues are at work

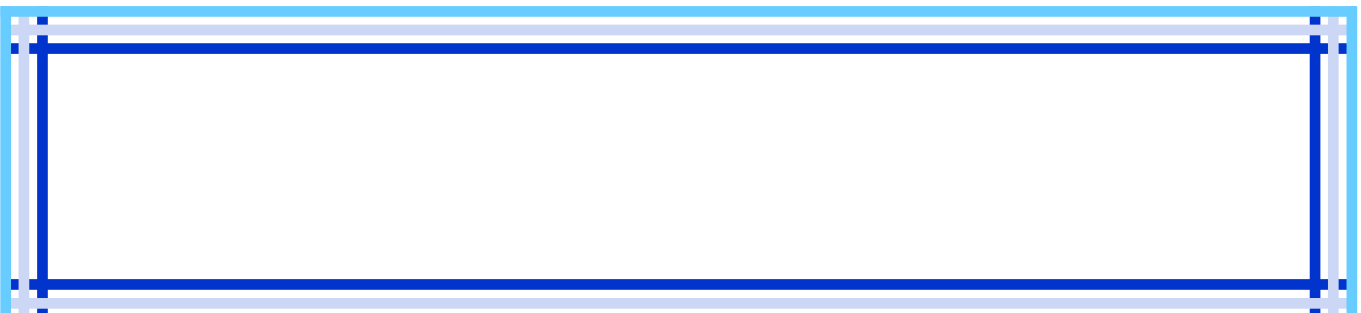
Sometimes, as on other occasions in this journey, we find that we have just assumed things or just not thought about it. We need to see how things are to see what the possibilities are for each of us.

Many possibilities may arise as you work through this chapter. The important thing is to focus on the issues that resonate with you. If it's not connecting – move on. Don't try to deal with all issues at once. Dealing with each issue as you go along will give you extra insight into what you have already discovered.

Remember, this is a journey and not a test!

Step One: Seeing the culture as you experience it

As a first step in understanding your organisation's culture write down the top five things that you would tell a new recruit about how to get things done and succeed in the organisation.



For an example see the answers given by Jane at the end of this chapter.

These short statements should tell you a great deal about your organisation as you and others experience it.

Now, let's see what the organisation expects of you personally.

Discuss with a trusted colleague what the expectations are about the way you work, the way you get things done. Write down the top ones – up to five maximum.



*If you have not been able to tick the boxes in the **previous chapter** because the organisation or your boss will not let you work in a different way, do you see anything in the above list that might explain it?*

Next, for each of the ten statements put a tick next to those that facilitate your achieving Personal Job Alignment, a cross next to those that hinder your Personal Job Alignment and a circle next to those that do not seem relevant.

How does this feel for you? Does it connect? Does the overall situation provide the context in which you can be energised in your work? Are there ways in which you can think about working differently so that you can increase your Personal Job Alignment?

Write your thoughts here



It may be that what is stopping you working in the way that could give you alignment between you and your work, between what energises you and the way in which you fulfil your work responsibilities is not yet listed. Of so, write it down here:



Jane's story of the civil service culture

Different people reach different conclusions about the same situation. What's right for you may not be right for others. Jane's story about the culture in one civil service department reflects this.

Her top five things to tell a new recruit were:

1. Have a 'can do' mentality: never say no, it can't be done or I can't do it
2. Put in the hours and spend as long as it takes to get it done
3. Speaking at meetings is more important than what you say
4. There's no sense of team – you're on your own
5. Don't expect any management

The top three expectations of her were:

1. There are ways of doing things. Don't do it another way.
2. Respond to being consulted, even when it's not really relevant
3. Consult widely and know whom to consult about what

Talking about what really energised Jan in her work she said:

that she was energised when she could see the effect of what she'd done on the parliamentary process. What she found draining energy from her was the inertia and weight of the organisation as well as the lack of teamwork. It was as if the lack of management felt to her like working in a quagmire.

Finally, the long hours proved too much. She recognised, however—and this is important from our perspective—that many others found the whole process energising and were happy to put in the long hours. "In the end, it was the long hours that did it. But, funnily, enough, if I hadn't found the lack of teamwork and management so draining, the long hours wouldn't have been a problem." [See also long hours and stress](#)

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