

Organisational Consciousness

Consciousness refers generally to the state of knowing or awareness an individual has of their external surroundings, their own inner processes, and how to behave in a normal manner. From birth we each pass through developmental stages which are linked to changes in our levels of consciousness.

With each change in consciousness we learned that:

- Life is more complex than we had previously appreciated
- Our current approaches, methods and processes in life are not effective
- New approaches are available to us when we open to their possible existence, and have the courage to pursue them
- Mastery of a new level of consciousness requires time, effort, and a fumbling or settling in period - mistakes are essential to the transition

Frustration is the common state that initiates the transition to a higher developmental stage. *Through frustration we recognise the inadequacies of our current approach, and our inability to manifest our ideas or*

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Abstract

As with individuals, organisations also have consciousness. Frustration is a key to unlocking and establishing new and more effective approaches, as long as we recognise it as an opportunity. A way of making such adjustments is described.

Keywords

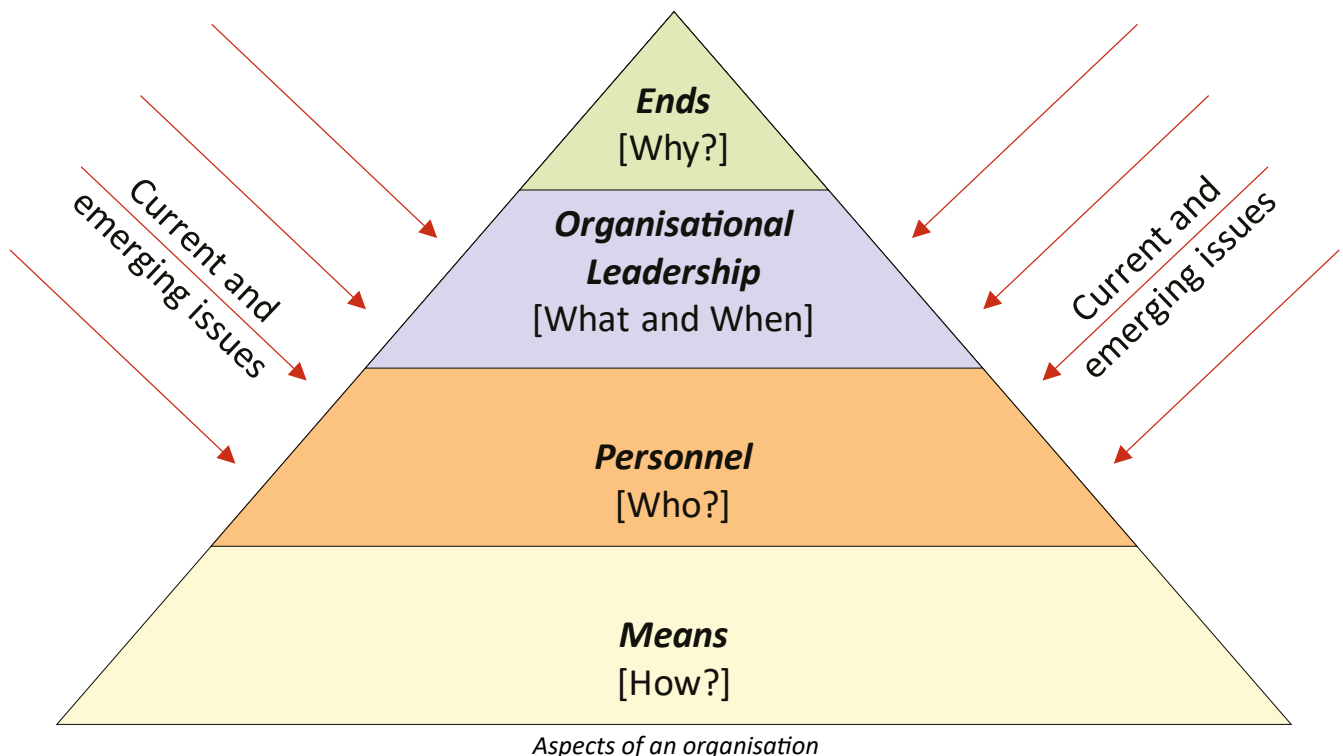
Change, consciousness, ends, frustration, means, organisational change, organisational leadership, personnel, transition

Published

October 2002; Republished 26 July 2017

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desires easily. We encounter many barriers and much resistance that halts or impedes us.

Organisational consciousness parallels that of individuals. The level of consciousness for an organisation is based on the effective functioning and alignment of each of the following four aspects of the organisation, and is the responsibility of the leadership of the organisation. The **Ends** or 'vision and values' of the organisation articulates **WHY** the organisation exists and the legacy it wants to create. Through **Organisational Leadership** specific leadership practices, governance, planning, and communications define **WHAT** will happen **WHEN**. Sound management of **Personnel** enables the **WHO** to act effectively, while the **Means** of the organisation, including facilities, process, systems, policies etc define **HOW** things are accomplished.

I am sure we have all observed organisations thwarted by inadequate or ineffective practices, which gradually (or quickly) overwhelm through the growing number of crises. The typical response is to treat issues in isolation, viewing them as individual and discrete. Fire-fighting mentality takes over with each organisational group responsible for fixing their problems, applying organisational first aid. Frustration is a common feeling throughout such an environment. The organisation must shift its level of consciousness and discover a new way of operating to achieve greater effectiveness. Executive and senior leadership of the organisation must lead this. It starts with the Ends and must move down through the other organisational aspects: organisational leadership, personnel, and means. Vision and courage on the part of management is essential to shift organisational consciousness.

As with an individual, ***an organisation necessarily faces significant confusion and upheaval amid change.***

Change generates tension, fear and resistance. However the uncontrolled change brought on by the panicked reactions of a failing organisation is worse than planned, deliberate and conscious steps taken by an organisation seeking to establish a new vision, philosophy and approach to business. Successfully shifting an organisation to a new level of consciousness requires:

- **Recognising** a need for real and lasting organisational change
- **Engaging** the support and involvement of key stakeholders
- **Crafting** the vision and the strategic and operational plans
- **Implementing** the changes in an effective, deliberate manner
- **Assessing** the results to ensure that desired outcomes have been accomplished, taking corrective action as required

As a result, those who work for, with or belong to the organisation will have a changed awareness of the long-term purpose of the organisation, what their specific function or role is within that purpose, and why and how goals are pursued and success is measured. Organisational consciousness has been raised. New mechanisms and measures for operating exist, and everyone affected is aware of the shift. This is more than just a change project. It is change that engages everyone and necessarily includes culture change.

Shifting organisational consciousness does not merely critique and focus on the methods used to achieve goals. It examines the goals being sought. It changes culture. It enables new ways of operating. It sheds the old and invites the new. It ***is a powerful journey, an awakening, and requires the courage of all involved, but most particularly and especially of those who lead the organisation.***

For more information related to themes in this article, refer to chapter 11 (Purposeful Forward Movement) of: Harrison, S. G. (2012). [*Appreciate the Fog: Embrace Change with Power and Purpose.*](#) Auckland, New Zealand: Xlibris Corporation.

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