



The impact of forces of cause and effect on organisations

The planet earth and life as we know it are undergoing unprecedented, dramatic changes. These changes include new and modified products, concepts, and ways of living and doing things. Many of these have been initiated by people driven by a combination of their immediate survival needs, personal priorities, political agendas and sometime sheer human greed. In many instances, changes have been made in total isolation and lack of understanding of the total picture of the cause and effect of life.

We often try to ignore the cause and effect universe and pretend that our actions are insignificant and do not contribute to anything major. In spite of the fact that we know very little about the mysteries and the overall meaning of the universe, we know for a fact that all objects within the physical universe are somewhat connected and impacting upon one another causing changes all around us. These changes, once set in motion, gain their own momentum and embark on their own journey of cause and effect. The media headlines are constant reminders that ramification of simple or often innocent causes can result in catastrophe or rude awakenings for mankind.

Some see these changes as exciting and futuristic and others fear the pace and the shape of things to come. One thing is for sure that both the future optimist and pessimist alike admit that no one is in control or even understands the extent or ramifications of what may result from these forces once they are unleashed and when they reach their full maturity.

Even people who are pioneering some of these changes or working at the hub of the revolutionary wheel cannot predict their future impact or provide appropriate means for measuring their outcomes.

Where does this leave our future civilisation, industries and communities?

How can commercial organisations survive or even thrive in such a complex and unpredictable world?

Where should they go and what kind of advice should they seek?

Does anybody know the answers?

Can new technology show us the way?

The process of innovation and adoption of relevant technologies (e.g. e-commerce) has certainly been the key focus of many organisations in the last decade. But, do these provide real solutions to our needs and take us all the way to where we want to go?

Adoption of appropriate technology and process solutions will most definitely appear, at least on the surface, to help organisations to move forward towards their quests. But these measures by themselves are not enough to allow organisations to get to their final destinations. In fact they can even provide a false sense of security for management to think that as long as they use the latest technologies, they must be moving in the right direction. Such misunderstandings are often further endorsed and encouraged by vendors and consultants anxiously promoting their products. Such a make believe environment could easily distract management's attention from the real game and sometimes place organisations in a more disadvantaged position than ever before.

The successful organisations of the future are those who take serious notice of their staff in the same way as they would for their shareholders, customers and the available technology enablers.



Health of the organisation

Organisations are very similar to living organisms. They consume resources in order to generate sufficient energy to firstly sustain themselves (i.e. stay healthy) and secondly to acquire and store more resources for either their future consumption or potential bartering with others as and when the need arises.

As organisations consume resources they also generate waste products. In a new successful organisation, similar to a healthy person, there is a healthy ratio between intake and the generated waste products.

However, as an organisation grows, its internal composition, rules and management structures will also be developed subject to its shareholders and executives wishes and belief systems. Such belief systems in themselves are based on the decision maker's experiences and understanding of the environment and forces within and outside their organisations at a given time.

These belief systems serve the organisations well in their early stages. However, as they mature, they often lose contact initially with their internal environment, and over a short period – with their outside environment as well and they continue to embrace the world as it used to be. As a result the rules governing such organisations become yesterday's rules. The subsequent result of this is that organisations bulge and the ratio of intake to waste increases substantially. There are two options open to the employer and management; either to implode/explode (die) or to fundamentally re-organise the organisation into a new entity and start the journey again with a different identity.

The success of organisations primarily depends on their ability to measure and understand their internal and external influences and to be able to do this on a real time basis. This will happen when an organisation is committed and prepared to change its rules and belief systems on a continuous basis for better.

People force

The most single powerful force – “people” – within organisations are often forgotten or partially left out of the equation. The reason for this may be due to the organisation's lack of ability and know-how to realistically measure the worth of its employees and appreciate their destructive and constructive powers within the organisation.

The cause and effect model of internal and external forces governing any organisation clearly reveals that people can make or break organisations. Staff belief systems are often different to those of employers. This misalignment causes loss in productivity due to absenteeism, stress sufferers, sabotage, lack of motivation, low morale and the list goes on.

Over the years, I have witnessed various organisations going through major shake-ups and restructuring exercises. Many use the latest process innovation methodologies, the most up-to-date technologies available and matching budget to secure and guarantee their success. Apart from some short-term gains, I have never known any of these initiatives to deliver real long-term solutions, healthy returns on investment or reach their optimum objectives. Even though right technology enablers were adopted, the results are usually less than impressive. Why?

One major reason for this is due to disparities and misalignments between the organisation's beliefs and the individual employee's wishes and beliefs.



Successful organisations of the future

The successful organisations of the future will have little choice, but to firstly understand the true cause and effect forces of all constituents around them – including people. Secondly, to be able to measure the rate and importance of each influence correctly, and thirdly, based on the dynamics of the market-place, to respond in a timely and effective manner to the most relevant and urgent causes effecting the organisation health.

Having such abilities within the control centre of an organisation, will allow it to constantly stay in charge and control of its destiny, environment and subsequently minimise those undesirable surprises we sometimes refer to as “problems we had to have” or “there was no way of avoiding it”!

It is the matter of utmost urgency for organisations intending to survive in a long term to:

- Firstly, develop necessary courage to fundamentally examine themselves in view of the bigger picture within and without their traditional domains;
- Secondly, develop new paradigms of thinking and action which may vastly differ from their past and current models.

To fundamentally examine, remodel and reposition organisations for the future challenges, one should not rely purely on the latest process and technology enablers.

We need to understand the total picture and the operating forces within organisations prior to adopting any technological solutions. Up to now, most organisations examine their needs in a narrow and fragmented manner and usually adopt hardware and software product solutions such as those commonly sold in the market-place.

The problem is not the technologies that are used, but the lack of analysis and understanding of what is really at stake within the total picture: what are the right measures to be applied, and exactly where should they be applied?

What actions should organisations undertake?

Finally, there are several important actions organisations will need to undertake prior to embarking on any major future initiatives. These include:

- Develop a comprehensive cause and effect model of the external and internal dynamic influences around them;
- Understand and measure the company’s current position within the total mix of these influences;
- Analyse and develop the shareholders’ and executives’ points of view in what is perceived to be relevant to the success of the organisation given the impacting power of these influences;
- Understand the organisation’s operating culture, employees’ perspectives, fundamental belief systems and their abilities in regard to the organisation’s current and future direction;
- Analyse the disparities between the employer’s and the employees’ beliefs;
- Align and bridge the gaps between the employees’ and employer’s belief systems;
- Deploy technological, process and human solutions in line with the big picture.

