

# Organisational Climate

## Employee Participation

Many "old-style" managers see employees as being arms and legs, hands and feet; amongst these people there is no recognition that even for simple hands and feet tasks, the brain is required for control. These same managers frequently understand and espouse the use of computers, and advance the view that computers need to be used frequently to be a cost-effective investment: a \$5,000 computer is considered under-utilised if it is in use only 10% of the time.

There is, in these managers, a failure to recognise that the human brain is a computer - and not just a \$5,000 one, but the most complex and sophisticated computer ever built (or ever likely to be built) - much more capable than the most powerful supercomputer, capable of handling many different tasks at the same time (which no electronic computer can do). It is therefore obvious that, if we are to use such a computer effectively, it should also not be left "idling" through much of its time.

For this reason, employee participation in decision making processes - particularly those which related to work methods and the workplace environment - is not only sensible, but to do otherwise is a massive waste of our most valuable resource. For this reason, and the fact that human beings are a social animal (one that identifies with groups), team oriented workplace activities are almost essential in any drive towards quality improvement.

## Organising For Change

Whenever we carry out an activity - as individuals or in any other capacity - we go through four discrete mental steps, even if we may be unaware of the process. These steps are:

- è **Purpose:** A clarification of the intent of the activity
- è **Values:** Comparison of the activity with values and standards
- è **Resources:** Identification of the skills and materials available to complete the task
- è **Assessment:** A comparison of actual results against the initial purpose

For example, a man may need to have a bookcase for the garage to store workshop manuals etc (this is the purpose); the value that would be relevant would be how much he wanted to pay for it; the relevant resources would be his carpentry ability and the materials on hand; once completed, he would assess the results, and either be satisfied with the bookcase, and use it, or be dissatisfied.

This same process occurs when an organisation wishes to achieve an objective. In this case, we tend to think differently of the process, but the same steps are used. For example, the purpose of an organisation may be to reduce the number of employees by 20%; the values which would be relevant would be the award under which the employee work, the company's policies in regards to redundancy payouts, and the value placed upon job security; the resources would be cash reserves, and management judgement; and the assessment would evaluate whether the employee reduction was completed, was just, and did not cause any undesirable side-effects (eg., strikes action, etc.)

The problem is that the individual uses this process far more loosely than most organisations. Whilst this is inevitable (an organisation by definition has some degree of structure, whereas individuals tend to behave in an unstructured manner), it is essential in achieving and maintaining an organisational climate for change, to

<b>Balancing The Organisational Climate</b>			
<b>Step</b>	<b>Maximum Orderliness</b>	<b>Balanced</b>	<b>Maximum Flexibility</b>
<b>Purpose</b>	Mission, strategy & structure clearly expressed, but overly rigid and not sympathetic to employee needs.	Mission, strategy & structure clearly expressed, but address individual needs; employees involved in their development.	Mission, strategy & structure not clearly established; direction is left to the individual.
<b>Values</b>	Organisational policies established in terms of permitted actions & strictly enforced, but do not consider individual needs.	Policies established in terms of value structures, and implemented in a flexible manner.	policies not formulated: behaviour is individual directed.
<b>Resources</b>	Procedures clearly documented and rigorously enforced, but does not allow for individual initiative.	Procedures prepared & adapted by those who need them in structured manner.	Procedures not documented; individually tasks carried out in many different ways.
<b>Assessment</b>	Performance parameters fixed and quantified, do not allow for subjective criteria	Combination of self-assessment and supervisor assessment; both objective & subjective criteria used; criteria subject to prior agreement from those involved.	Performance assessed <i>ad hoc</i> and only subjectively.

ensure that the organisational change does not occur in a manner with the way an individual can change. It is therefore important to balance the climate somewhere between maximum orderliness, to suit the organisation, or maximum flexibility, for the individual. The table below shows where this balance must be struck.

## Goal Setting

The process of establishing organisational goals is fundamental to the introduction of quality systems. Again, however, problems often exist in the way in which these goals are established, and they are often not shared with the workforce, or are imposed upon them in an autocratic manner. The alternative approach is to develop a shared vision of the

organisations future. The comparison between these two approaches can be seen in the table below.

Developing a shared vision basically involves a process of communication - top to bottom and bottom to top - in which everybody is given the opportunity to express their view of the organisation's preferred future, and to have that view given fair consideration in development of the strategic plans. One possible method for this is as follows:

- è Prepare simple statements of the organisation's current position: financial, market, recent history, etc.; and the state and expectations of the market and linked markets (markets with an affinity to the organisation's market). Prepare a list of the possible

strategies, their benefits, strengths and weaknesses.

è Distribute the material to all staff. Discussion can occur in a number of ways:

ä Distribute to all personnel, allow them time to read and assimilate the information, then bring them together with a facilitator, give them the opportunity to express their views on the proposed strategies or suggest other strategies.

ä Provide for a facilitator to lead small discussion groups through the materials, and obtain comments on the way through.

Both these options have their advantages and disadvantages, and they are not the only possible strategies: they are merely the most simple and direct. The facilitator mentioned may be a specifically nominated facilitator, a member of the personnel office, a supervisor, a nominated member of the department concerned, or even an outside consultant.

<b>Imposed Vision</b>	<b>Shared Vision</b>
Staff feels coerced: they sense they have no real choice, and feel they are perceived as having no value	Staff feel valued
Creates resistance to change, spiteful submission (agreement in the hope of failure), or sabotage	Change is welcomed and actively supported
Destroys team spirit	Enhances team spirit
Creates apathy	Staff committed to objectives, excited and interested
Reinforces perception of management as "giving orders", strengthens "us and them" attitudes	Develops co-operation with management
Creates absenteeism, sloppiness and low productivity	Increases accuracy and productivity
Destroys creativity	Releases individual initiative and creativity