

Reconsidering and re-evaluating your role

Where your personal Why-How chart relates to your personal life is a matter between you and it. It is not the remit of this book to explore any further in that direction, except inasmuch as it clarifies or affects your understanding of your role within your organisation.

Where your personal Why-How chart relates to your business life, you have hopefully developed new insights into your management role.

It is likely that one of four things have transpired in exploring your role as it relates to work.

- You have merely mapped out the status quo, and have gained no new insights into your role, or
- you have concluded that your work life is incompatible with your personal aspirations, and you need to reconsider your vocation, or
- you have recognised that it is the detail of the job¹ that particularly inspires you, and that managing it is an unwelcome overhead, or
- you have reinforced your view that your role lies in leveraging the potential of your organisation, and have seen new possibilities in how you might do that.

In the case of option one; you are clearly of a fairly fixed mind, and are unlikely to gain anything more from reading this book, but you are to be commended with persevering with it thus far.

In the case of option two; it is well to recognise when we are in the wrong place.

¹ For example, technical aspects, or dealing with people, or solving puzzles.



No one can do inspired work without genuine interest in his subject and understanding of its characteristics.

Andreas Feininger
Photographer

Chapter 18

“Wow, I’ve never seen tulips that colour!” Susan bent low over Helen’s desk to get a closer look at the vermilion and green marking on the flowers that virtually obscured Helen completely. “So, what’s this then, a secret admirer? You’re a dark horse Helen!” she said looking up, and across the flowers, to a slightly reddened face.

“Yes, thank you Sherlock!” Helen replied in a mock tart tone.

“Who are they from then?” asked Susan, and then more quietly, “or aren’t I to ask?”

Helen moved her head toward Susan’s conspiratorially, and covertly jabbed her finger toward Richard’s open office door, her eyes opening wide as if to say: “You’ll never believe it!”

Susan mimicked Helen’s expression, and then tilted her head as if to say: “Well, what do you know!” straightened up and winked.

“Perhaps he’s got some for me too!” she said quietly as she turned towards Richard’s office for their recently called meeting.

“Susan, thanks for making the time!” said Richard, coming round his desk and ushering her towards the meeting table.

“That’s okay. I wanted to talk to you about a few things anyway and it’s practically impossible to get hold of you these days.” She paused momentarily as she sat down, and then said: “And by the way, where’s my flowers?”

Richard smiled at her joke, and she continued in mock indignation: “No. I’m serious, Richard. I want to know where my flowers are!”

Richard leapt at the first response to let him off the hook. “I thought John bought you your flowers!” he said.

“Oh they’re those sort of flowers are they?” Susan retorted with narrowed eyes and a knowing nod of the head.

Our background and environment can lead us unquestioningly into places where we can never feel at home, and while you feel this way you will be unlikely to achieve your potential. It might be good to start talking with people who can help you think about your next steps.¹ If you stay doing what you are doing, you will struggle to find the energy to implement what you have read in these pages.

In the case of option three; sometimes people get drawn into management because they are good at what they were doing, and they appreciate the recognition, status, money and power conferred by the promotion. But they never really get inspired by thoughts of organisation design, and redeveloping things to deliver lasting improvement. They are inspired by the short term and the detail, not by the long term and the big picture overview. As a result they tend to manage by making detail decisions to keep the show on the road. Perhaps this book might inspire them to see management in a new light, and might provide them with tools and methods to make it more appealing. But if not, then they would be better to be honest with themselves about their motivation, and reconsider whether they are doing the job under false pretences. Fortunately for them, very few of them are inclined to pick up a book like this in the first place, so we can relatively safely assume that you are probably not in this category.

In the case of option four; your personal Why-How chart probably reflects (at least in part) your role in achieving lasting performance through others, rather than through yourself. It was for you that this book was written, and you will be the most likely group to understand why so much



Most people perform essentially meaningless work. When they retire that truth is borne in on them.

Brendan Francis
American Writer

¹ One place you might start is with your manager, or alternatively you could look at www.whatevertfd.co.uk

Richard looked shocked. “No, they’re not!” he said, and sat back in his chair.

Susan laughed, to show she was only joking, and then said, smiling: “You be careful! That’s how rumours start!” and then quickly continued with: “Now, I need to talk you through some rapidly approaching capital and contract purchase decisions,” and started to draw some sheets from her file.

Richard placed a hand on her file to stop her, and said: “Hold on, before we get lost in the detail, tell me about your progress on the QFD.”

Susan stopped in her stride, and said: “Sorry. I assumed this was to go through the purchase approvals, I haven’t brought my QFD papers with me.”

“That’s okay. Just give me a general overview, an update on where you’ve got too. I spend so much time in the detail, I rarely get a chance to speak to the team about the strategic things.”

Susan looked aghast. “Richard! It seems that the only time I get with you, these days, is all on the strategic things. Meeting after meeting. But, when I need to get your input on critical operational decisions, you’re like the Scarlet Pimpernel. I can never get hold of you!”

Richard looked abashed, and the office went silent while he looked at the gaping hole in his new strategy, and Susan thought of what to say next.

Susan was right of course. The only times he had seen her recently was at QFD meetings, and at a recent Cylek worldwide conference on site utilisation.

“Sorry, Richard,” said Susan, taking in Richard’s obvious confusion, and reading it as due to her outburst. “I was out of order!”

“It’s okay,” said Richard, hastily. “You’ve made a very good point, and I think I would get a lot out of it if we could talk it through together. I promise I’ll ensure the detail is addressed before you leave. Is that okay?” Susan nodded.

is freely given away within it. You understand what it means to add value.

You understand that success lies in investing your time in your people and systems so that they can achieve, and continue to achieve, great things. But this almost certainly presents you with a dilemma - a 'Catch 22' situation. You need time to develop your people and systems, but your current working practices tie you up in numerous activities that preclude you from doing this. Developing your people and systems will free off your time, but at the moment they are not sufficiently developed and you don't therefore have time to develop them.

If this is your dilemma, then the challenge is to find mechanisms and tools that can help you to develop your people through the activities that you are already doing. This chapter illustrates four mechanisms to help you do that:

- Top-box
- Managing the monkey
- Developing your people's vision
- Drawing out the systematic.

Top-box

The top-box tool is a simple mechanism for identifying opportunities to delegate some of your current activities and involvement to your people, and for planning out how you will do it.

Take, for example, a review meeting with a customer. Perhaps one at which one of your team is already in attendance, but at least one where a member of your team may be invited.

The top-box acronym (see diagram over the page) helps you to think through your role, and how you can develop your team member to take it over.



You are only as good as the people you train.

Lonear Heard
President, James T. Heard Mgt Corp
in Black Enterprise, September 1987

Susan expected Richard to go back to the QFD, but he did not. Instead he asked: “These capital and contract purchase approvals, what does my working through them with you add to the process?”

Susan replied quickly “Well, your advice and insight mainly!”

“Really?” queried Richard. “Is that really so?”

Susan paused this time, and thought more carefully before replying. “Well, you do have advance knowledge of Cylek initiatives, and of other budgetary commitments. Your review of purchase proposals does help to ensure that the things I don’t have foresight of are taken into account.”

Richard thought for a moment. “So, actually, all you need from me is an understanding of whether these commitments will create any budgetary conflicts?”

“Yes,” replied Susan. “Basically, that’s it!”

“But each time I’ve done this before with Abs, we’ve waded through all of the contract details to ensure that we weren’t going to get caught out.”

Susan waited silently.

Richard continued: “Do I not need to do that?”

“David Comber told me it was part of the process. He said you always check through the terms.”

“Yes,” said Richard, “I do. But does it add any value?”

Susan shrugged. “I don’t know. Have you ever changed anything in the terms of the contract?”

“Gosh no! David’s much better than me at that. He’s fully qualified and I only skim through for obvious errors. I thought that all contracts over £25k had to be approved by the MD?” Richard left it hanging as a question.

“They do,” replied Susan. “That’s Cylek policy. But surely you’re approving the sum, not the details of the contract. We’ve got paralegals like David to do things like that.”

The following is an example of how it works in practice:

- T:** You might discover that your involvement is because you are particularly skilled at handling the customer
- O:** You might conclude that your Sales Manager should also have those skills
- P:** By chairing the meeting you can keep an eye on what is happening, and provide support to your Sales Manager through the process of the meeting, and some coaching
- B:** As your Sales Manager becomes more adept, you can pass over more of the role of the chair to him or her, and perhaps make guest appearances for specific items
- O:** You could then take the opportunity to review the purpose of the meeting, and to establish your Sales Manager's role in leading it
- X:** You can schedule a separate meeting with the customer to check that things are progressing to his or her satisfaction.

The challenge is to use top-box¹ to reflect on all of your activities, and to find new ways to develop your people through them, by coaching them, and by changing the nature and format of the meeting to make better use of the opportunities.



¹ A form to help you to think through 'top-box' can be downloaded from the associated web-site (see Appendix 7).

Richard thought for a while. "I find it difficult to accept that in signing this off I'm only responsible for the budgetary implications, especially in these days of liability and litigation."

Susan nodded. "True, but you can't be an expert on everything. Surely your responsibility is to ensure that I, as the process manager, employ a competent contracts officer and establish the systems to assure the quality of his work. Perhaps your signature is a sign of your confidence in Cylek UK's systems."

Richard smiled and nodded. He liked that concept. "And do our systems ensure the quality of these contracts?" he posed back at Susan.

Susan thought for a while. "I don't know yet," she said. "I haven't evaluated them fully."

Richard smiled again as he thought of his next step. "Well, until you have, you can do the double checking of the contracts, and I'll sign to say I've got confidence in you."

Susan pursed her lips tightly, and then nodded to affirm the agreement, but her eyes smiled. For her it was the logical solution.

"That was fun," said Richard enthusiastically. "Now, what value can I add to the next item on our agenda?"



Richard had scheduled meetings with three more of his managers that day. Daniel predictably was not among them. The earliest Daniel could deign to see Richard was on Friday, the day after tomorrow.

But the meetings he did have planned for the day went well, and in every case, he not only managed to find ways to move the processes forward, but he also managed to divest responsibility for undertaking some of the less productive aspects of his old role.

In his meeting with Deborah, he managed to resign from the monthly tedium of the *Product Development Stage Gate Review Committee*, in exchange for a regular walkabout through the design department.

Managing the monkey

One of the books in the *One Minute Manager* series is entitled *The One Minute Manager meets the Monkey*.¹

The principle of the book was to avoid taking other people's monkeys (problems) on your back. Your people can come and seek your advice and guidance on how to deal with the monkey, but the monkey stays on their back. In this way you do not tie yourself down with extra work, and you can use the monkey to coach and develop necessary growth in your people.

An example would be when a subordinate comes into your office to tell you that they can't source a vital component and so a critical piece of work will be delayed. The temptation may be to contact other people, and call a meeting to resolve things, but in doing this the monkey becomes your monkey. An alternative approach would be to ask your subordinate: "What do you see as your options for handling this, and what guidance can I provide you in taking it to the next step?"

Avoid the initial temptation, make it clear that when they leave your office they will take the problem with them, and ask what advice or guidance you can give that will help them to deal with the problem.

Developing your people's vision (aligning their goals)

Part of every leader's role is providing the big picture to reconcile troops who are operating from smaller pictures.

Ideally, this is a proactive, visionary drive on the part of the leader that serves to

¹ The *One Minute Manager* books are an excellent easy to read series for anybody seeking to refocus their time on developing their people. *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey*, Blanchard, Onken and Burrows, Fontana, 1989.



Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, and you feed him for life.

Source unknown

And in his meeting with Andrew, he traded an exciting new role of using QFD for strategic competency planning, for the boring old role of chairing the *Salary Review Committee*.

The only meeting that proved anything less than delightful was his meeting with Peter.



Peter looked over the top of his glasses, clearly exasperated, and with exaggerated emphasis, carefully explained: "Richard, Finance is about control. It is about policing other people's decisions. It is about auditing and authority. You cannot simply devolve responsibility for finance to individual process owners without creating anarchy and chaos. The finance process has to be executed within the finance department by trained financial people. Anything else is irresponsible. It simply isn't good stewardship."

Richard was quiet, thinking Peter's points through, and how he would tackle it.

Into the silence, Peter added: "You would be losing money hand over fist!"

Richard tried another tack. "Peter, supposing you ran the R&D process, just for the sake of argument, you wouldn't let it be financially irresponsible. Would you?"

"No! But I don't, and my point is made clear if you just look at how R&D overrun their budgets year after year. They got hold of some spurious theory that a 5% delay is more costly than a 50% overspend, and see it as *carte blanche* to ignore our financial controls".

Richard was momentarily distracted by the red herring "That theory is not spurious. You can do the maths yourself!"

"Yes, yes. But my point is, that individual process owners seem congenitally unable to manage their finances responsibly without us standing behind their shoulder."

Richard sat back for a moment silently cursing himself for allowing himself to lose the initiative over the theory of new product funding. He

guide all actions thenceforth, but that is rarely the case in practice, particularly where the troops fall back to focusing on their bit of the picture.

The more parochial and narrow the picture that the troops have, the more time that the leader must spend using his or her understanding of the big picture to make adjustments, to provide detail, to resolve conflict, and to build links between the small pictures. For some leaders this can take up a vast amount of their time.

But if the troops have a picture of their role which is not parochial, which embraces the big picture and establishes visionary links to their colleagues' roles, then the call on the leader's arbitration skills is far less. The more your people can grasp a proactive vision for their role, the less they will depend on you to guide them.

Clearly QFD provides a good foundation for doing exactly that, and yet there are many cases where process owners focus on control rather than influence.

The challenge for the leader is to take every issue that needs his input to resolve, and to use it as a learning point to help stretch his or her people's visions, and through that, their grasp of responsibility.

Drawing out the systematic

By developing your people's vision you begin to draw them out into considering the systematic impact they can have on the business, and the people around them.

Another means of doing this concerns how you approach problems that come for your attention. If you have a very busy workload, you could be forgiven for simply ensuring that the problem is resolved, but that misses a tremendous opportunity to



Questions to inspire vision in service processes

- What activities do you currently undertake?
- What could others do as part of their work that would reduce this load or improve its quality?
- How would taking on this work provide them with new opportunities or other benefits?
- What would they need to do the work efficiently and to the best of their ability?
- How could you service them in this?

paused, reflected on what he was trying to achieve here, and then started again.

“Okay, supposing you did run the R&D process. What would you do differently that would ensure responsible financial stewardship?”

Peter thought for a moment. “Well, there are a number of things. I’d certainly ensure that project managers reviewed expenditure as an essential part of each project review. I would tighten up their financial forecasting. And I would include a budgetary review at the start of each monthly meeting so that we were absolutely clear on what our current financial position was.”

“So why do you think they don’t do that?” interjected Richard.

“Well, for a start they just don’t seem to appreciate the importance of it. They don’t realise the implications on the rest of the business. And secondly, I don’t think the project managers actually know how to manage their project costs. At least they have never shown any indication of the ability.”

Richard interjected again “But if they did, that would make your job easier, right?”

“Oh, like you wouldn’t believe it!” said Peter.

“Okay,” said Richard, “but what about other areas of the business? Should they adopt a similar approach too?”

“What, you mean HR, MIS, Production etcetera?” asked Peter.

Richard nodded, so Peter continued: “Undoubtedly!”

Richard then postulated. “But we would want some consistency in the approaches they took to doing this wouldn’t we? So that we had confidence in their approach, and could easily improve it, if necessary?”

He looked at Peter who nodded, and said: “Yes, absolutely”.

“So we couldn’t leave each process a totally free hand to develop their own?” challenged Richard.

“No-o-o,” agreed Peter hesitantly. He was beginning to have an inkling of where this was going to end up.

identify how the processes can be improved to provide a lasting solution. The Check Sheet¹ (below) helps explore an issue to draw out the systematic learning that is possible. It is very useful in ensuring that 'monkeys' are handled effectively, and that the conclusions your people reach make a systematic and lasting difference, not only to the organisation, but also to calls on your time.

The specifics:	Looking at the system:	Looking at prevention:
What happened?	How could you categorise this with similar incidents?	How can we prevent these incidents?
When did it occur?	How frequently do they arise? What is the trend?	What should we do to monitor and manage this?
Who was affected?	Who are those most vulnerable to such incidents?	How should we bring our customers on board?
How were they affected?	What is the total impact of these incidents on our business?	How can we minimise the impact in future?
Why did the incident occur?	What are the most likely causes of these incidents?	What can we do to further reduce the risks?
Where did it start?	In what locations, conditions, etc. do they mostly occur?	How can this learning be used elsewhere?

¹ The check sheet can be downloaded from the associated web-site (see Appendix 7).

Richard continued: “So, we really need one group which can develop an efficient and effective approach, and then sell it to those who need to use it. You know; really get their buy-in and commitment to it!”

Peter just sat there looking at Richard, with a wry smile on his face. “And I suppose the best home for such work would be within the finance process?”

“You know,” said Richard, tongue firmly in cheek, “I’d never really thought of that. But yes, you’re right, I suppose that would be the best home. Thank you, Peter!”