

Postmodern Challenges to Organisation Development

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If we listen carefully, we can hear the voices of organisations around the world crying out: make up your mind, what do you want us to be? Hierarchies are out, networks are in. Structure is out, values are in. Pay for performance is out, pay for knowledge is in. Bosses are out, customers are in. Total quality is in, now it is out, re-engineering is in. While you may not agree with my list of what's in and what's out, I think you will agree that our theories and models of what constitutes and contributes to organisational effectiveness are in flux.

Organisational identity is at the cross roads. The what, why and how of the business enterprise, the educational system, the healthcare system and even religious organisations, are in the midst of transformation. Corporations that were created and operated for hundreds of years in order to produce wealth for their stakeholders through the production and distribution of goods and services, are now having to address their mission in terms of global well-being, social responsibility and human development. Measures of organisation success have been explicitly financial until recently when the figure—ground relationship shifted and this new set of success measures came to the foreground.

Executives, managers, consultants and scholars of organisation theory, can all describe roads leading to this crisis of identity. Advances in both transportation and communication technologies have created a global business context. Most actions performed in local settings can now be known about and/or experienced by people previously considered outsiders with no potential for direct contact. Today we can travel anywhere in the world for business within days if not hours. We can fax anywhere in the world while simultaneously meeting via conference call technology.

We can conduct video conferences with people living and working around the globe. Just a few days ago I was part of a video conference between North and South America, Europe and Asia. Executives from seven countries met in two locations in Tokyo and California, to review business plans and to chart a global course of action for the next year. Few industries, no matter how small or localised, are escaping the global consequences of modern technology.

This ease of transportation and communication, has created both a blurring of some boundaries and an insistence of others. While the lines between impersonal roles and functions are being erased; the lines between personal differences in terms of diversity issues are being drawn more boldly. Women are in the workforce to stay. Relationships at work and at home have changed to adapt to two career families, single working parents and the expectations of women to be treated justly and respectfully in the work setting.

Knowledge and its by product, information, have come into prominence as pivotal resources in the equation for effecting patterns of organisational life. Technologies that foster ease of knowing and information flow are now prized above those that were acclaimed in the past for easing the burden of physical labour. Emergent businesses are information centered, often providing information or access to information as their product. While information has in the past been regarded as a means to achieving business ends; in many cases, it is now the *raison d'être* of the business. It too has gone from background to foreground.

The changing nature of organisation is evident; as are the limitations of current organisation theory and practice in guiding organisation renewal and success into the 21st century. Difficulties in the practice of organisation development today come from ever changing stories of what constitutes organisational effectiveness. Perhaps it is not the stories themselves that create the challenges we face, but rather, our inability to hold the line on one approach long enough to see effects being manifested. When it comes to organisational theory and practice it seems that we are "just shopping", trying on one approach after another. We are not committing to the long view or to what it takes to create sustainable enterprise in the century.

Few executives, managers, consultants or scholars are as yet able to envision the paths leading away from, and beyond our current understandings of organisation. Even fewer are able to envision the organisation at the end of the path. Still fewer are able to create tools to aid the journey along the path. What clues we have, I believe, are to be found in understanding organisations as postmodern enterprises.

The purpose of writing this chapter, is to briefly outline four key aspects of the postmodern condition, and to discuss their implications for organisations and specifically for the practice of organisation development into the 21st century. I offer this not as another approach to be tried on, until the weather changes or something better comes along, nor as an organisational panacea that will once and for all alleviate all problems. I offer it more as an Ayurvedic treatment which may, if practiced consistently overtime, restore natural order—balance among the personal,

the social and the natural. In so doing, I hope to contribute to the life affirming potential of organisations around the globe.

WHAT IS POST MODERN?

Postmodern may be described as an era in time, much like the Middle Ages or the Renaissance. As such, it is merely the time following the Modern Era. As with any era in time, it is known and defined by prevailing attitudes and actions that are noticeably different from those of other times. The shift from one era to another is a shift in world views—beliefs, attitudes and actions. Each era in time is marked as a discourse—a way of talking about the world and what is meaningful— which both creates and maintains the predominant world view. To describe the postmodern condition, I will describe attitudes and actions that are emerging into prominence; and I will contrast them with the modern period of organisational life.

What follows is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather one way of thinking about the shifts in social thought and action that are occurring throughout the world as we embrace new technologies. Decades ago, Margaret Mead wrote that, culture change follows from technological change. This is certainly the situation as we live it around the world today. New technology engenders new possibilities for social action, and at the same time may render the old, impossible, irrelevant or irreverent. Four trends stand out as signals that a new era is emerging: from the impersonal to the relational; from the objective to the plural; from seeing is believing to saying is creating; and from limitlessness to sustainability.

Impersonal....to....Relational

The modern era was a time of impersonalisation. The modern corporation was a place for working, not for making friends or getting personal needs met. Management's job was to get results from people working together; not necessarily liking one another, or even knowing one another. A common expression was, "I don't have to like him to work with him. We have a job to do and we'll do it." In the western world personal relationships at work were prohibited and a source of scandal even among single consenting adults. The division of labour among men and women supposedly allowed men to go to work with their hands, minds and time free to do nothing but work. People became identified with their jobs and their functional specialties. Work was performed by the nameless, feelingless, unknowable people in roles—the engineer, the plumber, the foreman or the professor. In the modern organisation, the individual was a tool for the good of the enterprise. The welfare of the organisation came before and often at the expense of its individual workers.

The post modern condition is known by its attention to the relational quality of life. In the past 15 years, as a consultant to organisations around the world I have contributed to and experienced the emergence of a relational perspective in organisational theory and practice. The story I remember about the creation of NTL—The National Training Laboratory as it was named at birth—is that a group of

management consultants believed that managers would be more effective if only they were aware of their feelings and how they related to others. To further this belief they created the T-Group, an experiential learning opportunity for organisation leaders to get in touch with their feelings and relationship patterns. Of course, all of this work, as it was called, was done to enable managers to better meet the needs of the organisation. No matter how it was explained at the time, it was none the less an opening of Pandora's Box.

Carried further, we now see organisations abandoning the individual as the unit of performance and focusing on team performance. We see the boundaries between work and non-work life dissolving with the advent of on-site day care centers, work and family programs and family outings sponsored by the organisation. We see union management relationships moving from conflict to collaboration, and we see participation in decision making as a means for producing business results, while at the same time enhancing worker satisfaction. Over and over again the notion of us against them is being transformed to a spirit of relatedness that brings with it an imperative for a new concept of relational responsibility. Customers are no longer people whom you charge as much as you can for providing as little as you can. They are now people whose relationships with the organisation are valued and whose needs and wants are to be met. They are to be delighted. Workers are no longer people to be used, to be fit into the organisational mould or to be seen and not heard. They are a valued resource to be enhanced, listened to and liberated from the oppression of hierarchy.

The figure ground has shifted. In the modern era, the somewhat stoical individual was the hero, the vehicle for organisation success. Leadership was described as qualities or traits possessed by an individual. Relationships were background. They were tools used by modern heroes to achieve their goals. In the emerging post modern era relationships—among people, with the environment, across functions, among nations and cultures and across genders—are central. Heroes are people who demonstrate a respect for relationships as a precondition of doing business. Leadership is a quality of relationship. Leaders cannot exist without a community of people, whose stories and interactions privilege their positions as leaders. The impersonal and the individual are background in post modern organisation performance.

Objectivity....to....Pluralism

Objectivity was the cornerstone of the modern perspective. The belief that the world can be observed, studied and known separate from the observer served as the foundation for modern science. Social and behavioral sciences were modelled after the physical sciences leading to a conceptual separation and alienation of people one from another. The belief in objectivity created a context which privileged tools and rules. One modern myth went something like, "We can understand the workings of the world and make it what we want it to be, if only we have the right tools and follow the right procedures."

Man's place in the world was to harness nature and the way to do it was through science. This included the harnessing of human nature. Rationality was far superior to emotionality; and reason the means of influence. Rhetoric was considered to border on the unethical in that it represented ideas adapted to the situation, rather than the right or true ideal. Belief in objectivity seemed to carry with it a dual edged sword. On the one side is the blade of morality useful for slicing ideas into pieces based on what is right and what is wrong. The other side is the blade of power useful for maintaining the privilege of what is right and the aura that it was objectively established.

Many voices were quietened by the sword of objectivity. Efficiency was prized as both a principle of design and a way of working. To be modern was to be uncluttered, straightforward, and linear in thinking and acting. All that was premodern—the tribal, the spiritual, the beat or hip and even the creative and was considered somewhat uncivilised and to be overcome for the advancement of society.

The modern corporation was a civilised place. Workers left their families, traditions and “roots” at home and came to work where they were expected to fit into the mold of what was right in the eyes of their employers. Organisation meant conformity in speech, appearance, actions and even thinking. Time and motion studies determined the right actions to achieve the organisation's goals. Uniforms were uncluttered and impersonal signs of conformity. An effective worker was one who fit it, and who didn't rock the boat. Ineffective workers were whistle blowers, trouble makers or those who simply talked, looked, acted or thought differently.

The postmodern perspective, places value on pluralism and hence on social relativity. From this perspective the social world is created through discourse among people who each bring multiple relational contexts—past, present and imagined—to any given situation. Employees no longer go to work with the expectation that they leave family concerns, or other personal interests behind. They come to work as “whole persons” with multiple needs and wants that must be met on a daily basis. They expect to receive more than financial payback for the time and effort they contribute at work. Corporate initiatives such as cafeteria benefits and work and family programs are efforts to recognise and accommodate employees' multiple and differing needs.

The focus has shifted from the organisation's needs, to employee and customer needs. Postmodern organisations exist to meet the multiple needs of multiple and diverse stakeholders. The balance is precarious and the precipice great. Perhaps one of the most challenging questions of the time is: How do we meet the needs of employees and the needs of the enterprise? Where the modern organisation's resolve was either/or; the postmodern is both/and. The agenda for the business enterprise in the 21st century includes profit and employee well-being, and employee development and customer satisfaction and environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

Diversity—the recognition and legitimisation of multiple voices expressed by people of differing races, genders, age and ethnic groups—is a postmodern business issue. Businesses around the globe, face the postmodern scenario in which the multiple realities expressed by various so called minority groups must be listened to and taken

into account, in the process of organising. The corporation can no longer endure being organised around a singular voice—the white male perspective. Postmodern organisations are held together through dialogue among diverse stakeholders. Communication, not adherence to rules, is what co-ordinates action.

The pluralism of the postmodern way, puts an emphasis on propriety rather than morality. Propriety being regarded as action appropriate to the time and situation. With this comes a sense of social relativity in which action is said to be appropriate if it meets the local needs of people within the global context of life. Right and wrong does not elicit credibility or following among groups of diverse people. Nor do common values or work processes create the sense of organisation. Another question central to the postmodern organisation is: How do we organise while at the same time honouring and maintaining Essential differences among people and cultures?

Movement toward postmodern models of organisation can be seen in the multitude of structures emergent in the past decade. Matrix organisations require people to perform their work, within the context of two or more reporting relationships. The success of matrix organisations requires attention to relationships and to communication. Network organisations are a step further in the postmodern direction. They require employees to manage multiple relationships within and outside of the traditional organisation's boundaries. For example, for the past year I, who live in New Mexico, have consulted with a client in Pennsylvania, our word processing and graphics needs have been met by a contractor in Michigan. In my role as consultant to this organisation I have on occasion been asked to serve as the project leader and to supervise the work of the word processing professional, company employees and other consultants. Sandy, the word processing professional and I worked closely together for several weeks via conference calls, faxes and Federal Express services. I guided her work, listened to stories about her family, gave her ideas for business development and have not yet met Sandy in person. We operate as a network able to reconfigure as needed to best serve the organisation. Our ability to serve the client is directly related to our relationship and our ability to communicate, using a multitude of media.

Modern organisational performance was a measure of machine efficiency and human conformance. Diversity was noise in the cybernetic system, to be eliminated or at least regarded as irrelevant. Postmodern organisational performance is a drama, an unfolding of differences, oppositions, compliments and possibilities in the context of global interconnectedness.

Seeing is Believing.....to.....Saying is Creating

The modern world was an empirical world. What could be observed and measured was real and believable. The unseen didn't exist. Even if granted existence it wasn't granted importance. Matters mystical, spiritual and intuitive were considered primitive. They were rendered without value or importance by the tools of science. It was the unknown that science sought to know, the mysteries of life that science sought to solve, the unexplainable that science sought to explain.

The physical world was constructed, built to be visible evidence of man's capacity to harness nature and to overcome her limits. Modern structures were designed to be viewed and to afford views to those who inhabited them. The higher you went, the better the view and the more important the person dwelling within. Sleek buildings of glass and metal, artifacts of the modern era, tower above town houses and city parks, asserting their dominion.

In the modern era people didn't construct the ways of the social world. They studied, analysed and reported them as they saw them. The differences between information—the facts and data—and persuasion were clear. Persuasion, the tool of politicians, comprised of opinions and appeals to the pathos of the people. Information, the goal of “good” science was the tool of managers. In business there was no need for personal opinions when accurate information could be had. The modern myth that effective decisions would be based on complete information became the downfall of many management teams. Business opportunities passed them by as they charted trends, analysed percentages and waited for all the information to be gathered. Analysis was their activity of choice. Research and practice were separate and often presented as conflicting domains of activity.

The postmodern perspective does not deny the value of empirical data. In the spirit of pluralism, it doesn't deny the value of any perspective. Instead it seeks to generate possibilities and to open pathways for the expression of multiple voices. A basic tenet of postmodern is that social reality is constructed in the process of communication. Not only do we construct our physical reality, we also construct our social reality. From this perspective we cannot not create. Social construction is built upon three assumptions. One, it implies the construction or creation of what we believe to be real and meaningful. Each expression—words and behaviors—occurs within a relational context that is both created by and creator of the expression and what it means. What we say, how we say it, with whom we say it and perhaps when we say it are all part of the grand performance of social construction. The performance is our current reality as well as the seeds for future realities.

Two, it creates an imperative for a constructive, positive or appreciative orientation. If we are creating our social reality and organisational life through our interactions with one another then we might as well make them positive. This is a call for an appreciative model of living and working. The appreciative model suggests that a positive focus creates a greater sense of well being and greater opportunities for social good than does a negative focus in communication and interaction. It does not deny the dualism of life–yin/yang, light/dark, life/death, positive/negative—rather it supposes that if we focus on the positive we create positive and the negative will play itself out as background. If, on the other hand, we focus on negative we will maintain the negative and allow the positive space only to be background.

And three, it implies a mutuality of influence among people in relation to one another—the process of co-creation. By recognising our ongoing participation in the creation of social life and organisational realities we place ourselves in a space of

longer the causal or descriptive force in a situation. The qualities of relating become central determinants of organisational life. The relational context that we both create and operate within is what defines one organisation as different from another.

Let me illustrate this concept of relational context and co-creation with a set of examples from my client organisations. I have for many years worked with an international Fortune 500 healthcare company in which people know the president and call him by first name. The executive team is a group of people who are known throughout the organisation and who are respected. Most work having major organisation wide impact involves this executive team either as initiators or supporters from the outset. Successful initiatives in this organisation are seen as connected to the vision and leadership of this executive team. When the executive team is uncertain, unfocused or undergoing change the organisation becomes uncertain and unfocused. This is not a tall hierarchy, it is a relationally oriented organisation. The hierarchy exists but does not prescribe who talks to whom, the needs of the people and their work does.

Another client is a Fortune 500 oil company in which the president is often referred to by his last name. The executive team is known throughout the company and recognised as not being able to adapt to change. They are described as the barrier to change more often than the source or initiators of change. This is a hierarchical, position based organisation. The hierarchy prescribes who talks to whom.

In these two organisations I consulted on very similar projects. In the first organisation I met the executive team immediately and worked to support their direction for the company. The project team on which I was a member had frequent interaction with the executives, of both an informal and a formal scheduled nature. My relationship with them brought with it both credibility for me and for the project. They were viewed as caring about the future of the organisation and its people. When the project was completed the executives were viewed as having been apart of its success. Numerous other people received recognition for the effort. In the second company, I worked for about nine months until I met the executive team. Only the project team leader had access to the executives and it was generally on a formal scheduled basis. By the time the project got their attention they were infact a drag on its forward movement. They were viewed as not committed to change in the organisation, nor understanding the needs of the people. After extensive coaching with them, at their request, they became champions of the effort and supported its success. In the end they were described as the project owners.

In these two very different organisations, the relational context is quite different as is the experience of relational responsibility. While the way of working was different, the end result in both cases was a successful contribution to the organisation. I could not work in the second organisation the way I worked in the first, nor visa versa. Each organisation's relational context influenced the relationships that I was able to establish and the nature of the relationships enacted. At the same time the organisation's relational context created a demand on my relational repertoire, my relational practices created a demand on the organisation's relational context.

Postmodern management recognises influence and learning as only and always mutual.

Modern management attempted to base decisions on objective information and analytical procedures. Attempts were made to separate out the human factor in order to ensure non biased decision making. Managers were expected to make the right decision, unbiased by their personal opinions, feelings or relationships. Employee communication followed management decision making as the process of telling employees about decisions and the basis upon which they were decided. Information was hierarchically valued and shared. Information employees might have had about the business or opinions as to how to enhance effectiveness were of little interest to managers. Everyone looked up the hierarchy for information and decisions. This pattern of communication and decision making reinforced the notion of organisation through the conformance to a singular, unified set of rules and goals. Postmodern management does not begin as a set of behavioral traits for individuals called managers. Postmodern management calls attention to the ways in which relationships among differing groups - customers, engineers, sales, marketing, employees, executives, unions, suppliers etc. are carried out and co-ordinated in order to create and to accomplish the organisation's agenda.

Limitlessness....to....Sustainability

The modern world was a limitless world in story and in action. The grand narrative of the modern era was the myth of progress. Belief in the assumption of never ending natural resources led to the depletion of natural resources such as forests, mineral deposits and open land. Belief that man's conquest of nature in the name of development, AKA progress, was more important than the continuity of species led to the extinction or near extinction of plants, animals and indigenous tribes worldwide. Belief that nature could and would absorb any and all man-made waste led to patterns of production and consumption which created pollution and waste in quantities beyond the earth's capacity to transform naturally. Belief that actions taken locally would have no ramifications beyond what was seen and experienced locally led to reoccurring oversight of contaminants of global proportion.

The modern agenda of growth, development, expansion and progress became the agenda for business. An effective corporation was able to grow and expand while maintaining a consistent return on investment quarter after quarter, year after year. Whether the intention was or was not to destroy or deplete resources or to contribute to the eradication of local cultures is irrelevant. The net result is that the modern world view allowed a great deal of life to be diminished in the name of progress and civilisation.

It seems somewhat of a modern paradox that humans could privilege themselves among all other living beings and at the same time diminish themselves in relation to machines. The modern persona embodied a sense of arrogant insecurity - narcissism which swung with the pendulum from self-doubt to self-aggrandizement. Modern man placed himself at the center of the world, separate from and superior to the rest of life.

The postmodern perspective recognises the limitation of natural resources and depriving humans in relation to all other living beings. The notion of sustainability which is central to the postmodern view emerges from the discourse of ecology which has us consider the protection of endangered species, the balance between man and nature, recycling and the preservation of open land. Sustainability carries with it an imperative for preservation of biodiversity as it recognises the inter-relationship of all life.

Sustainability as a postmodern agenda holds the corporate world accountable for the depletion of resources globally. It suggests, therefore, that the means to establish a sustainable socio-economic future lies in the hands of industries around the globe. Businesses must go beyond recycling and commit to production processes which produce only usable by products. The state of nature is no longer a personal agenda or even a political agenda. It has become a foreground issue for business and industry into the 21st century.

CHALLENGES TO HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The postmodern organisation faces challenges in terms of human resource management that are very different from those of its predecessor, the modern corporation. What follows is a brief outline of human resource management issues discussed from a postmodern perspective.

Selection

The postmodern organisation is a relationship of diverse people able to satisfy their respective and differing needs and desires in relation to one another. Selection, therefore, becomes the process for identifying people who can bring into the relationship network the skill, information or support needed by others in the network or by the organisation as a whole. The capacity to attract and employ contractors and temporary staff becomes an important organisation ability. In this way the flexibility needed to meet evolving needs of the marketplace as well as the varied needs of employees, even if they are contractors or temporary staff, can be maintained. Selection within the organisation becomes as crucial as selection from outside, partially because the line separating inside from out is less clear than in the past. More importantly, because people with varying interests and abilities expect opportunities to express themselves and their multiple voices. It will not be uncommon for people to not only change jobs but to also change areas of work in significant ways.

Success criteria must include a relational orientation that embodies an understanding of relational responsibility and the capacity to co-create, i.e. achieve results relationally. In addition, the capacity to orient to a sense of relational harmony rather than hierarchy is essential, as is an appreciative orientation to life and work.

Selection will become more and more of a team effort to ensure the relational capability of new employees and the harmonious reconfiguration of the organisational unit with new members.

Orientation and Assimilation

The processes of employee orientation and assimilation will shift from processes focused on learning the rules and procedures for working in the organisation. They will emphasise relationship building and getting plugged into the network, personally and electronically. It will be as important for existing members to get to know new members and what they may potentially contribute, as it is for new members to learn the ropes - how things have always been done in the organisation.

Assimilation becomes a team process aimed at providing a forum for relationship building and learning. With each new member or group of member comes the possibility to do things different. Orientation and assimilation processes built upon the idea of mutuality of influence will be designed to optimise learning rather than indoctrination.

Work Assignments

Work is designed and assigned or signed up for in order to satisfy personal needs and desires as well as organisational needs. People might be in one of three classes of work for periods of time based on their needs and capacities. Settlers, people who want to settle into a particular set of activities for an extended period of time—3 to 8 years—will have job assignments central to the ongoing business. Floaters, people who have multiple skills and needs, will participate simultaneously or sequentially in a range of activities that allows the expression of their multiple abilities. Leaders, identified as a result of their relational way of working, will rotate through positions across the organisational network. They will be on call as leaders for a period of time and then provided with down time for learning or simply being team members. Anyone can potentially operate as a settler, a floater, or a leader in the course of time working with a particular organisation.

Motivation and Inspiration

Central to the ideas of motivation and inspiration is an understanding of human life cycles. No longer is life viewed as an ever upward path of progress, but may now be seen as a never ending spiral of germination, growth, fruition and rest. It is essential that organisations of the 21st century understand, honor and accommodate our varying human needs at each of these phases as we spiral through life. An organisation able to recognise differing human needs and create a balanced mix of people operating in differing phases of this renewal cycle would certainly support life and evolution.

Rewards and Pay

The formula for reward and pay will continue to contain both diversity and complexity. Compensation will have at least three components based on some combination of three levels of performance: organisation performance, team performance, and individual performance. Organisation performance measures the results of the enterprise as a whole and will include financial, global social and environmental and human asset results. Team performance measures both the processes and the results of various teams and relational units. Team performance measures will consider local factors such as country or culture pay practices and local costs of living. Individual performance is a measure of learning and capacity to perform. It is a measure of a person's potential to the organisation, rather than a measure of actual performance. If organisations are paying for potential they will likely want to get their money's worth and tend to utilise people to their potential not merely to the organisation's needs.

Each person or relevant group of people will have a pay matrix based on some combination of the three levels of performance. The organisation's technical capacity to manage the process becomes crucial to its capacity to optimise salary administration and pay practices.

Development

As with the other human resource management areas, the area of employee development becomes more complex in a postmodern environment. People will engage in learning for the sake of learning as well as for the good of the organisation as it currently operates. As a result, development must focus in three essential domains: the domain of interest, the domain of organisational necessity and the domain of relational capacity.

Postmodern organisations depend on relationships to operate and satisfy the needs of customers and multiple stakeholders. Continuous relational learning is essential to organisation success and endurance. In addition, the ability to support employees at all phases in the life renewal cycle requires organisational support for learning that flows from interest and curiosity, as well as learning to meet specific short term organisational needs.

OD – A POST MODERN AGENDA

The postmodern challenges to organisation development are as diverse as the multitude of organisational forms now emerging. OD consultants and the people with whom they work will face a potpourri of challenges, some global, some local and some on the edge of both. Because we are on the front end of a newly emerging era much of what will unfold is not yet visible. I can at this point suggest three guiding principles for our evolving work.

- 1) Support the evolution of postmodern organisation-networks of people that value and optimise diversity of expression, are relationally oriented, that recognise the human need for renewal and the limitations of our natural world. In other words, it is our challenge to contribute to global sustainability.
- 2) Live and work from an appreciative orientation that generates positive potential for organisation life. We must whenever possible take a creative stance based on appreciation of ourselves and others. We must help others to live and work appreciatively. It is our challenge to use the tools and methods of the modern era in ways that nurture life rather than diminish it.
- 3) Assume responsibility for what we create through our stories, initiatives and relationships in the organisations with which we work. It is time that we take responsibility for creating the organisational context within which we work and contribute to society. Change is an ever present phenomenon today maybe because we have been studying it and writing about it and claiming to help managers manage it and leaders lead it and everyone else cope with it. Is it possible that we have contributed to the accelerated rate of change that is almost impossible to tolerate today? I believe this is possible. As responsible professionals we must begin a reconstruction of the concept of change and at the same time take care as we fall in with the latest wave of intellectual popular culture - chaos and complexity theory. The more we talk about, study and attempt to understand chaos and complexity, the more we invite it to be the context for our lives and our work. Personally, I'd rather bring simplicity and ease to life. Our challenge is to create organisations in which we can thrive, not merely survive.