

The Three Ways of  
**Getting Things Done**

by Gerard Fairtlough

"You have a past; you have experiences and core competencies. Know them, use them and don't forget them. [But] don't be bound by your past. Feel free to reinvent yourself and your [organization] for an uncertain future."

**James Ogilvy,**  
idea of HETERARCHY

## What organizations need in order to function effectively

to achieve many things, human beings have to **coordinate their actions in order to...**

- supply goods and services
- make money
- educate the young
- fight battles
- gain power
- change the world

# Coordination of ends and means

Requires four features:

1. SYSTEM
2. CULTURE
3. LEADERSHIP
4. POWER

## 1. SYSTEM

- ⦿ Routines and standard operating procedures
- ⦿ Well established system provides feeling of security, prevents wasteful re-invention, sloppy practices, and avoids serious mistakes.
- ⦿ COERCIVE vs. ENABLING SYSTEMS

## COERCIVE SYSTEM

- ⦿ cumbersome or stifling bureaucracy
- ⦿ obligations that are not clear why they are required or how they might be used; no feedback
- ⦿ intention on catching one out
- ⦿ elite gathering information for its exclusive use

## ENABLING SYSTEM

- systems and rules to make life easier
- prevents careless mistakes
- provides useful information
- structures communication

Once in place, it appears natural and not burdensome, feels light and strong.

## 2. CULTURE

- Shared culture = good communication and less likely to be misunderstood; members have similar mental models of how things work
- Learned by just being part of it. Also, deliberate learning through ritual and ceremony, speeches and celebration.
- Can be COERCIVE or ENABLING or mixture of both

## COERCIVE CULTURE

Extreme characteristics:

- ambiance of fear
- favoritism
- malicious gossip
- dishonesty

# ENABLING CULTURE

Extreme characteristics:

- ◉ frankness
- ◉ mutual respect
- ◉ shared commitment to goals
- ◉ loyalty
- ◉ fun

## 3. LEADERSHIP

why need it?

- ◉ to define an organization's purposes
- ◉ to make sure these purposes are understood and agreed by people in organization
- ◉ to propose and negotiate changes
- ◉ to define organization's aims
- ◉ to make people understand tasks properly and become committed to carry them out

## What is a Leader?

- ◉ A leader is someone who:
  - can make sense of what is happening in and around the organization
  - helps others do the same
  - has the vision to see what should be done
  - can persuade others to follow
  - has an ethos of service to organization and stakeholders
- ◉ Best leaders combine personal humility with professional will.

## 4. POWER

- ◉ necessary to mobilize action
- ◉ dynamic
- ◉ arises from complex interactions
- ◉ in hierarchies, depends on threats and inducements
- ◉ in heterarchies, depends on persuasion and mutual benefits or obligations

## Effective Organizations

- ◉ have SYSTEMS that are enabling not coercive
- ◉ have CULTURE that is trustful not toxic
- ◉ have LEADERSHIP serving the whole organization, not just interests of leaders
- ◉ have POWER that is accountable rather than domineering or manipulative
- ◉ have EXIT and VOICE to achieve the above

## The Three Ways of Getting Things Done

- 1) HIERARCHY
- 2) HETERARCHY
- 3) RESPONSIBLE AUTONOMY

# Hegemony of Hierarchy

- happens when nearly everybody finds hegemony to be normal and inevitable part of organization
- “taken for granted and never questioned”
- a familiar and comfortable habit, the default option

# Hierarchy

- easier than alternatives that demand an adult, independent stance
- depends on fear of powerful figures and comfort with familiar patterns of relationships
- may work but only if its hegemony stops

# Advantages of a HIERARCHY

- Familiar and reassuring
- claimed that hierarchy prevents chaos
- claimed that hierarchy produces discipline and order
- claimed that leadership is available through hierarchy
- belief that those at top only ones who knew how to get things done; provides motivation
- clarity or certainty of who makes decisions

## Advantages of HETERARCHY

- reduces the danger of tyranny
- helps cooperation and commitment to common goals
- fosters co-evolution, teamwork, learning and innovation
- is pluralistic
- uses diversity

## Advantages of RESPONSIBLE AUTONOMY

- Removal of the delays and distortions (ie when large organization tries to control from center)
- Innovation and constantly improved performance can result (as long as the criteria are well-chosen)

## Moving Towards Heterarchy

- Ideas (provides new mental models; presentation of ideas vs ideas themselves)
- Skills (acquire new skills or develop old, latent skills; different skills than in hierarchy)
- Participation (structured decision-making)
- Trust (aim for high degree of mutual trust)
- Plasticity (ease in shifting relations to fit circumstances)

# Skills

- ◉ conceptual thinking (sort out important concepts)
- ◉ interpersonal process (dialogue vs debate)
- ◉ teamwork (typically 6-8 people; can up to 12)
- ◉ openness/transparency WITHIN organization
- ◉ mutual respect (culture of high value of this)

# Participation

everybody able to get involved

- ◉ in heterarchy, participation brings power AND responsibility
- ◉ phrases of structured decision making:
  1. **Agenda** (subjects to tackle; what decisions to be made and when)
  2. **Small groups** (experts or reps to make detailed studies)
  3. **Presentation** to organization for final decision

# Participation

continued

- ◉ Ringi system (from Japanese organizations)
  - key decisions must have approval of all senior staff by collecting signatures (collective responsibility)
- ◉ Forums
  - up to 25 people, but half is more effective
  - discuss key issues; can be used to approve key decisions
  - discussion open, constructive, free from domination by powerful factions or interests
  - facilitated by member of group or specialist facilitator

## Trust

- ◉ must aim for high degree of mutual trust between members if want effective heterarchy
- ◉ promotes cooperation
- ◉ promotes innovation
- ◉ enables people to take considered risks
- ◉ reduces stress
- ◉ promotes commitment to organization's goals

## Plasticity

- ◉ provides opportunity to innovate in how production, administration or warfare is conducted
- ◉ allows for variations in getting things done
- ◉ increased by:
  - less distinction between those who manage and those who do work
  - softening of roles and hierarchies in society as whole

## How to Change

- ◉ "Worthwhile change only emerges from reflective practice and has to be fully embraced by all concerned."
- ◉ "Imposed change, ignoring the need for learning and overrides personal values, cannot work for long."
- ◉ "The shift towards heterarchy can be triggered by an external event and enabled by a culture of trust."

## Why Change Now?

- “knowledge economy” (Deaf consciousness or Deafhood journey creates knowledgeable Deaf people--not submit to hierarchial ways)
- computer power and cheaper communications (vlogs/blogs/web) = more dense interconnections replacing coordinating roles
- increase in external critique from media and better “evaluation systems” prevents bad practices by exposure.
- increased number of women involved

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