
A Culture of Freedom

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

The Culture Collective
www.theculturecollective.com

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Preface

Introduction

This guide has been specifically written to accompany the video titled *A Culture of Freedom* and as such The Culture Collective strongly recommends first viewing the video.

Jeremy Aitken gives a brief overview of *A Culture of Freedom*, explains the motivation for making it, and the basic premises the video explores. The complete video script has been included for reference.

The bulk of the guide is dedicated to a diverse range of critical views and analyses of the Prisoners' Dilemma and how it is applied in the video. Jeremy Aitken concludes with a dynamic discussion about the operating practices of *A Culture of Freedom*.

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Comments and Questions

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- Rick Farquharson for the cover designs to this guide and the accompanying video.
- The cast and crew who worked on the video

We also like to thank all those people who so generously contributed their time and energy into bringing this project to fruition.

- Louie Jahjah
- Kaye Gartner
- Tracy Miles

An Overview of *A Culture of Freedom*

A Culture of Freedom is the result of five years research and development activity aimed at providing people everywhere with a technology of Teamwork, Interdependency and Cultural Change.

A Culture of Freedom is about the individual and the organisations that individuals belong to. It explores the nature of this belonging – both the group as ‘belonging’ to the individual, and the individual as ‘belonging’ to the group.

It is also about how individual self-interests may be best served in a collective situation, and it shows how each individual is better off in such collective situations – under certain special circumstances. *A Culture of Freedom* inverts the paradigm of how the individual must be subsumed to the group. It shows how the group structure can serve the individual, instead of the individual giving up his/her self-interest and committing to the group.

A Culture of Freedom begins and ends with a dramatized version of a philosophical metaphor called The Prisoners’ Dilemma. As a metaphor it is totally relevant to the formation of corporate culture, to business, to the negotiation table, to the environment, to relationships – to name just a few applications.

In fact, in just about any walk of life where we must choose between cooperating with, or competing with others, to meet our self-interest, life really does imitate a Prisoners’ Dilemma situation.

A Culture of Freedom is a synthesis of philosophy and corporate thinking that came out of our work as training consultants. The challenge was (and still is) to fashion a technology of culture – a ‘how to’ guide for the creation of an organization that is innovative, creative, dynamic, customer focussed - and most importantly, a great place to go to work. It is about business – and a lot more as well!

The Prisoners’ Dilemma really does show how the individual may meet self-interest far more powerfully through building trust and choosing to cooperate with others. If this is the case, then the critical issue for people in business is to craft relationships to take the maximum advantage of this dynamic – the dynamic of interdependent relationships.

The Motivation for *A Culture of Freedom*

To facilitate change!

Mostly, to create positive change – call it evolution if you like, in community culture. Within this context, *A Culture of Freedom* is designed to facilitate an evolution in the culture of business, and especially the relationships within which the business transaction is brokered.

As we see it, within any group, organisation or society, there is the potential for something truly magnificent. Yet this potential is rarely actualised, except under exceptional circumstances. Unfortunately, all too often these exceptional circumstances involve emergencies such as natural or man made disasters.

What could life be like if this individual talent and courage became available to a community – as a matter of course under ‘normal’ day to day circumstances?

A Culture of Freedom was created to facilitate ‘the exceptional’ under normal corporate and business daily circumstances – to enable this potential to be fulfilled. Because, barring very unusual circumstances that may call out our heroic nature, most of life is lived in the more mundane circumstances of domesticity and the work routine.

It is in this space that a quiet evolution can take place. We developed, scripted and created *A Culture of Freedom* as a simple technology to support that quiet evolution.

We are committed to extending the Culture of Freedom philosophy to any individual or group, no matter their physical location. It seems that no matter where you travel these days, you are never far from a VHS player. Video allows us to package our message consistently, and present it wherever a VHS player may be found.

Because video has become such a universal medium, it has allowed us to take our Culture of Freedom concepts and ideas and offer them to any interested audience in the public domain.

Through *A Culture of Freedom* we offer an alternative ethic. This alternative ethic can guide human actions in the business of politics, the business of society, and the business of the environment.

The same ethic that may be called upon to guide the business of business.

A Culture of Freedom has given us a rare opportunity. An opportunity to affirm goodwill, honesty, trust and cooperation – not just as ideals, but as the actual nuts and bolts of this ethic in action. *A Culture of Freedom* takes the kinds of values that are normally preserved and enshrined in national constitutions and corporate mission statements and gives them life under the ordinary circumstances of our lives.

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The Basic Premises of *A Culture of Freedom*

(Some of these basic premises were clear to us at the time we started writing the script. Others only became clear to us as work progressed).

- Unless equality of dependency is valorised and practised, any organisation will default back to hierarchical relationships between people.
- Change the structure of an organisation and the result is an organisation with a formally changed structure. For real change, attitudes have to evolve – attitudes towards shared self-interest and equal dependency.
- Hierarchies are re-created and maintained on a moment to moment basis of each and every interaction. This is where any real and lasting change must take place.
- What limits the full expression of relationships based on shared self-interest and equal dependency in organisations is primarily the existence of power relations based on hierarchical positions.
- Power relations will always give rise to relationships of dependency rather than interdependency. Dependency relationships are those that affirm each person's position relative to the other. Interdependent relationships affirm a mutual need that can be satisfied by cooperation – equal dependency.
- The key issue of the Prisoners' Dilemma is to look for the win/win position and act accordingly. The key challenge is to resist buying into suspicion and mistrust.
- A hierarchy is a relationship structure that formally recognises the notion of inequality between people.
- People are not the same – in any community they adopt different roles and responsibilities. It is essential that they do, or the benefits of specialisation would not be available.
- Specialisation is a form of shared self-interest that requires people to affirm each other's different skill and at the same time affirm each other's equal dependency.
- Many of yesterday's truths have become today's superstitions. Many of today's truths will become tomorrow's superstitions. The problem is that we do not know in advance which ones!
- Life is mostly a Prisoners' Dilemma situation.

The Script of *A Culture of Freedom*

Visuals

Narration

<p>1. A uniformed handcuffed prisoner paces inside sandstone cell.</p> <p>Camera tracks back then pans down corridor to end cell where second handcuffed prisoner is being handcuffed by a nasty-looking guard, and pushed into similar cell. The door is locked.</p>	<p>Imagine you're accused of a serious crime.</p> <p>You know you're one of two prisoners held for interrogation.</p> <p>You can't communicate with the other prisoner, or escape.</p> <p>You each have 2 choices.</p>
<p>2. The Prisoners' Dilemma (PD) matrix.</p> 	<p>Accuse the other prisoner and he says nothing - you'll be released immediately and he'll get 10 years jail.</p> <p>If you say nothing and the other prisoner accuses you, you'll get 10 years and he'll be released.</p> <p>If you accuse each other, you'll each get 9 years.</p> <p>If you both say nothing, you can both walk free in a year.</p> <p>A total of 4 outcomes.</p>

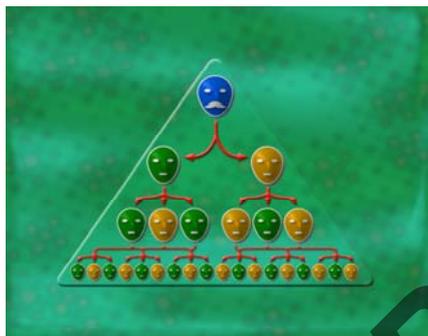
<p>3. Simulated security monitor (B&W) shot of prison corridor - JEREMY AITKEN (presenter) walks into frame. Dissolve to proper (colour) shot of Jeremy.</p>	<p>The choice is yours.</p> <p>A conflict of personal interests - or so it seems.</p> <p>The temptation is to buy into suspicion - point the finger at the other prisoner and walk out immediately.</p> <p>But remember if both prisoners accuse the other it's 9 years for both of them.</p> <p>Each prisoner is in exactly the same position.</p>
<p>4. Graphic: PD matrix.</p>	<p>If one remains silent and the other decides to accuse – 10 years jail for the silent prisoner.</p> <p>The way out is for both prisoners to admit nothing, say nothing.</p>
<p>5. Prisoners pacing in respective cells.</p>	<p>Both have a lot to gain if they can trust the other. Each is dependent on the other to go free – in a year.</p> <p>There is no choice you can make alone that will guarantee a winning position.</p>
<p>6. Central railway station - people passing through turnstiles with tickets.</p> <p>Someone (POV) jumping a turnstile.</p>	<p>A city transport system.....</p> <p>Most people pay.....</p> <p>Some take a free ride</p>

<p>7. Graphic: transport matrix.</p> 	<p>The win/win position - by paying, we help to maintain a service that is useful to us.</p> <p>When someone takes a free ride, they win in the short term. The other users must cover the cost of the free rider.</p> <p>The lose/lose position – everyone evades the fare and the transport system collapses. Nobody wins - we all walk to work.</p> <p>Better to pay – which is what most people continue to do.</p>
<p>8. Stock footage: Cold War - missile silo, rocket launch.</p>	<p>On a larger scale – the cold war.</p>
<p>9. Graphic: Cold War matrix - lose/lose quadrant.</p> <p>Text of MAD appears in lose/lose quadrant.</p> <p>Remaining quadrants + dove of peace symbol in win/win quadrant.</p> 	<p>The <u>lose/lose</u> position – both East and West decide to launch a pre-emptive strike.</p> <p>The consequences are fatal to both sides. Mutually Assured Destruction – MAD.</p> <p>The <u>win/win</u> position – mistrust becomes too costly and dangerous... the end of the Cold War – for now.</p>

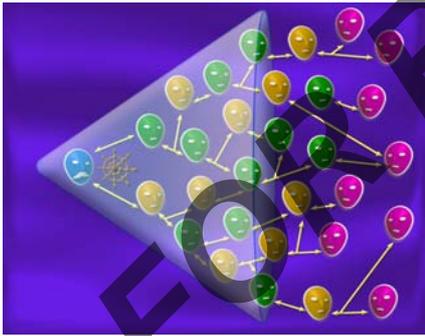
<p>10. Graphic: PD matrix.</p>	<p>It's the Prisoners' Dilemma - to trust or not to trust.</p> <p>Yet whether you 'win' or 'lose' is not a matter for you alone – it depends on both of you.</p> <p>You can control your own choice – but you cannot control the choice of the other prisoner.</p> <p>And vice versa.</p>
<p>11. Stock footage: Circus – two trapeze artists catching each other.</p>	<p>Interdependency or better still - SHARED SELF-INTEREST - is what we are talking about here - situations where two people hold equal power to affect each other's destiny.</p> <p>Shared self-interest sounds like a paradox at first.</p>
<p>12. Stock footage/montage Specialised jobs eg. Surgeons/nurses, teachers/pupils, chef, window cleaners.</p>	<p>We live in a world where no individual knows all there is to know about everything, so knowledge and skills are compartmentalised.</p> <p>Specialisation is a form of shared self-interest.</p>
<p>13. Film crew: behind-the-scenes of director/ camera / sound etc.on set.</p>	<p>If all of us are little pieces of a gigantic jigsaw then each piece is essential for the complete picture.</p>
<p>14. Jeremy on set</p>	<p>I need you and you need me.</p>
<p>15 Stock footage: Two sets of trapeze artists catching each other after dangerous somersaults.</p>	<p>Our survival depends on each other.</p> <p>Depending on each other to meet self-interest operates in any community, the one we live in, the one we work in.</p>

<p>16. Close-ups of sweaty prisoners in separate cells – thinking.</p>	<p>The Prisoners' Dilemma rewards prisoners who recognise that they are now members of a community – whether they like it or not. In this community of two they can both cooperate to meet individual self-interest.</p> <p>Said another way, the Prisoners who do not recognise this will suffer an agony of choice – and may be losers.</p>
<p>17. Graphic: PD matrix</p>	<p>The moral of the Prisoners' Dilemma is to recognise the win/win position – and act accordingly.</p>
<p>18. Graphic: <i>A Culture of Freedom</i> title.</p>	<p>It leads to what I call A CULTURE OF FREEDOM.</p>
<p>19. Extreme close-up of evil eye staring through the key-hole in cell door.</p>	<p>In the Prisoners' Dilemma, the Interrogator is the enforcer.</p>

<p>20. Jeremy drops handcuffs into office bin at his feet.</p> <p>Track with Jeremy - he's in a modern office environment.</p> <p>As Jeremy walks by the cubicles/offices, workers nervously shuffle/hide papers and turn their backs.</p>	<p>But you and I enter into Prisoners' Dilemma situations on a voluntary basis most days of our lives.</p> <p>Like our workplace.</p> <p>Working with other people is the way to get the job done.</p> <p>It's in everyone's interest to co-operate.</p> <p>Yet, organisations rarely foster the full spirit of co-operation - whatever the original intention.</p> <p>Often they create A CULTURE OF FEAR – where mistrust and inequality are the norm. Frightened people excel at mediocrity.</p> <p>Why is mistrust the norm when there is so much to gain from full co-operation?</p>
<p>21. Montage: Photos of schoolboys/girls being stamped with 'first' or 'last'</p>	<p>Because what is actually in our best interest was never explained to us clearly.</p> <p>As children, we were encouraged to look out for our <u>own</u> interests - to compete with others as a way of achieving this.</p>
<p>22. Montage: Businessmen/women handshakes - one hand branded 'winner', the other 'loser'. (against a sandstone wall).</p>	<p>As adults, many still consider that self-interest has more to do with competing than cooperating with others. Competition can bring out the best in us.</p> <p>But if every interaction is taken as an opportunity for competition, then there can only be one winner.</p>

<p>23. Stock footage: Industrial revolution images – machinery/workers.</p>	<p>But we are also victims of history. These behaviours belong to another time - yet we play them out in the present.</p> <p>THE MODERN BUSINESS ORGANISATION IS A PRODUCT OF THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION.</p> <p>In those days, people 'knew their place' in society.</p> <p>The men who funded the new production organised people in the manner they knew best – the military hierarchy.</p>
<p>24. Graphic: Hierarchy model</p> 	<p>A hierarchy. One person at the top, most people at the bottom.</p> <p>A chain of command emanates down throughout the hierarchy.</p>
<p>25. Stock footage: traditional factory floor - labour intensive with chain of command.</p>	<p>This permits the orders of one person to be converted into a series of specific simple tasks at the base of the structure.</p> <p>Your task as a superior is to pass on directives and make sure they are carried out.</p> <p>Your task as a subordinate is to pass on or perform these orders exactly and without question.</p>

<p>26. Graphic: Hierarchy model cracks.</p>	<p>Everybody must comply. If they do not, the whole edifice will crumble because it depends on an exact sequence of simple steps.</p>
<p>27. Stock footage: soldiers revolting.</p>	<p>In the military of the day, this was understood clearly. The big fear is that subordinates will not perform as ordered. They must be forced to if needed. Power and control are essential parts of a hierarchy.</p>
<p>28. Jeremy in skyscraper which looks down onto city street, other buildings and office floors (ie managerial POV).</p>	<p>A hierarchy is a formal structure based on inequality between people - an inequality of power between levels.</p> <p>Power over each other.</p> <p>THIS IS THE BAGGAGE OF TODAY'S BUSINESS ORGANISATION.</p>
<p>29. Montage: Security cameras/monitors Title on executive's door being replaced by another. Darts being thrown at photos of management on canteen wall. Large clock on wall as it strikes 9.00 am. Manager peering through his office blinds, snapping them shut.</p>	<p>Control, surveillance, fear of insubordination, promotion by funeral...</p> <p>...mistrust, cynicism, injustice, dependency and inequality.</p> <p>Occasionally - a benign dictatorship...</p> <p>mostly, a culture of fear.</p>
<p>30. Stock footage/montage: Hi-tech robots on assembly line, computer boards, list of tertiary degrees, modern department store, banks of TV's, mobile phones, etc</p>	<p>Everything has changed since the Industrial Revolution.</p>

<p>31. Graphic: Hierarchy flattens, base gets wider. Then reverses.</p> <p>Hierarchy graphic slowly turns on its side and transforms into cone.</p> <p>Highlight wide end of cone.</p> <p>Arrows appear from tip to open end.</p> <p>CEO symbol appears</p> <p>Arrows become double-ended.</p> 	<p>In response to change, many organisations have flattened the hierarchy.</p> <p>Some businesses have redefined their priority as customer satisfaction.</p> <p>Turn the hierarchy on its side - it becomes a cone placed wide end first into a stream of prospects and customers.</p> <p>Most people are located here. They are available to interact with the outside world – enticing people to become, and remain, customers.</p> <p>The rest of the organisation exists to support this process. Resources move towards the open end – exactly where the support is most needed.</p> <p>The CEO is the navigator - steering the cone toward the desired market.</p> <p>Organisations like this thrive on communication. Your purpose is to serve a customer, or support someone who is.</p>
<p>32. Graphic: Hierarchy model & Cone model</p>	<p>The problem is that neither of these models exist as real structures.</p>
<p>33. POV - person walking down city street.</p>	<p>You can't bump into one of these walking down the street.</p>

<p>34. People in city streets etc sped up and blurred.</p>	<p>They depict a relationship map – a picture of the way people relate to each other – and the outside world.</p> <p>Organisations are people not structures.</p>
<p>35. Empty revolving doors. Empty offices.</p>	<p>Remove the people and they are only diagrams. It's the people - their behaviour - that bring the structure into being.</p>
<p>36. Graphic: Circling arrows between text of 'Structure' and 'Behaviour' that gets thicker and thicker.</p>	<p>Structure, in turn, affects peoples' behaviour and that behaviour feeds the structure. It's a positive feedback loop that's hard to break.</p>
<p>37. Graphic: Company org chart being rearranged.</p>	<p>Many organisations attempt to re-structure. Yet if you simply change the structure people will create hierarchies all over again, because the belief system has not changed.</p>
<p>38. Graphic: Simulated viewfinder of SLR camera with cross-hairs showing a series of bars. Travel through bars to reveal words 'Paradigm Mentality'.</p>	<p>A belief system called the Paradigm Mentality - the conviction that the conventions we live by are the only ones.</p> <p>It's like pointing a camera. The view is selective - a perspective that generates our entire interpretation of reality.</p>
<p>39. Graphic: Portrait of Karl Popper.</p>	<p>The philosopher Karl Popper once said that conventions are treated as truths until they are proven to be wrong. It's only then that conventional truth becomes a superstition.</p>

<p>40. Sea and horizon – slow pan/zoom out to reveal Jeremy on headland with lighthouse in background.</p>	<p>It often takes a great deal of evidence before cherished conventions become superstition.</p> <p>Instead of the other way around – which would be more logical.</p> <p>The earth was once flat. Intelligent and educated people all knew this. If you sailed too far, you would fall of the edge.</p> <p>Then a trickle of sailors returned, claiming to have sailed right around the world.</p> <p>The evidence did not fit the prevailing conventional truth.</p> <p>Eventually the truth became a superstition.</p> <p>Many of yesterday's truths have become today's superstitions.</p>
<p>41. Montage:</p> <p>City buildings/ reflections of buildings/people going to work.</p>	<p>We like to consider hierarchies of the Industrial Revolution – society, the state, the military, the sweat shops and factories - as a superstition now.</p> <p>Yet hierarchies are still created and recreated. Why?</p> <p>Because we fear the loss of power and control.</p> <p>We fear change.</p> <p>We talk about a Culture of Freedom, but we consent to a Culture of Fear.</p> <p>We are living a lie.</p>

<p>42. Stock footage:</p> <p>Man/woman balancing act above the city streets</p>	<p>What is suppressed in any hierarchy is EQUAL DEPENDENCY between people.</p> <p>This is not equality as it relates to gender or equal opportunity - although it is connected.</p> <p>Nor does this equality mean that we are the same as each other. In any community, people adopt different roles and responsibilities in order that society can function.</p> <p>Equal dependency occurs when people place their self-interest on the line with another, knowing and accepting that both can move ahead in the process.</p> <p>The risk is equal - and the gains are of equal importance to both.</p>
<p>43 Graphic:</p> <p>Full cone model</p> <p>Hierarchy model.</p>	<p>Visually, the cone-shaped model reflects this quality of shared self-interest between individual roles and responsibilities because people are aligned laterally in the diagram.</p> <p>It's a characteristic that's missing in the hierarchy model where people are ranked vertically.</p> <p>But remember they are just pictures.</p>
<p>44. Stock footage:</p> <p>Montage - circus trapezists, balancing act.</p>	<p>Unless that characteristic of shared self-interest is accepted and practiced – actually lived by the people as a normal daily reality - then an organisation is still a hierarchy in terms of peoples' behaviour.</p>
<p>45. Modern CBD building – camera tilts down to reveal Jeremy outside</p>	<p>What part can you or I play in all this?</p> <p>The hard thing about change is... well... change.</p>

<p>46. Pan with Jeremy in foyer of same building to reveal huge moving clock-type sculpture.</p> <p>He opens door and exits...</p>	<p>In the process, you'll confront your own habits, learned responses and traditions – in short, your past.</p> <p>You'll confront other peoples' past as well.</p>
<p>47.... and seemingly straight into a sandstone corridor. Camera moves with him as he rounds the corner and into a corridor we recognize, passed prisoner in cell... and stops outside cell with prisoner #1 staring from cell door.</p>	<p>Forcing other people to change their behaviour is not the answer.</p> <p>History has taught us that.</p> <p>Our ATTITUDE has to change first.</p> <p>Our attitude to sharing self-interest.</p> <p>We see sharing self-interest as a risky business. And at one level it is. There are no guarantees about what may be reciprocated. That's why the Prisoners' Dilemma is a dilemma.</p> <p>It <u>seems</u> to be about trust or mistrust, cooperation or competition.</p> <p>Yet, irrespective of your feelings about sharing self-interest, and whether the other prisoner may be trusted or not, their choices are their own, and exist independently of you and your preferences.</p>
<p>48. Behind the scenes footage - sped up video of Jeremy walking the corridor with crew then normal speed on line.</p>	<p>In any community, self-interest is best served by engaging with others.</p>

<p>49. Graphic: PD matrix - win/win quadrant highlighted.</p> <p>Other quadrants become 'lose' only and 'win/win' becomes just win.</p>	<p>The answer to the dilemma is to live out the win/win position.</p> <p>Anything else is a losing position – for someone. And that someone could be you.</p>
<p>50. Stock footage: Deforestation, factory pollution/greenhouse gases, oil spills, oil wells burning.</p>	<p>We already know the losing position on a global scale.</p>
<p>51. The prison courtyard - the cell block door opens. Prisoner #1 exits, followed by guard and prisoner #2. The light is blinding but they are happier.</p> <p>Guard unlocks their handcuffs.</p> <p>Prisoners shake hands knowing they have made the right decision.</p> <p>They exit to freedom (a year older) as the guard locks the gate behind them</p>	<p>A Culture of Fear or A Culture of Freedom.</p> <p>You choose</p> <p>End credits</p>

Commentaries on *A Culture of Freedom*

We asked a number of colleagues, clients and associates to write commentary that we could print in this guide and put up on our web-site. The commentaries may NOT be reproduced anywhere without express permission of the authors.

Here is a selection of the commentary material that we received

Commentary on *A Culture of Freedom* by Dr Tony Lynch

Dr. Tony Lynch

Dr Lynch is the Convenor of the Discipline of Philosophy in the School of Social Science at the University of New England. He is also the New South Wales Coordinator for the Higher School Certificate Distinction Courses in Philosophy. Dr Lynch is the author of many scholarly articles and co-author of the recently published book “The Political Ecologist”. His most recent media appearance was with Geraldine Doogue on Radio National discussing the role of values in Education.

The Prisoners’ Dilemma

In 1950 two RAND scientists, Merrill Flood and Melvin Drescher proposed as a challenge to their colleagues what we now call the *Prisoners’ Dilemma*:

Two suspects are taken into custody and separated. The district attorney is certain that they are guilty of a specific crime, but he does not have adequate evidence to convict them at trial. He points out to each prisoner that each has two alternatives: to confess to the crime the police are sure they have done, or not to confess. If they both do not confess, then the district attorney states he will book them on some very minor trumped up charge such as petty larceny and illegal possession of a weapon, and they will both receive minor punishment. If they both confess they will be prosecuted, but he will recommend less than the most severe sentence. But if one confesses and the other does not, then the confessor will receive lenient treatment for turning state’s evidence whereas the latter will get “the book” slapped at him....
The problem for each prisoner is to decide whether to confess or not.¹

The dilemma presented here is a *social dilemma*, and so, inevitably, a *corporate dilemma*. It shows that in many cases the individual’s rational pursuit of their own good leads to a sub-optimal, even disastrous, *collective outcome*.

¹ Duncan R. Luce & Howard Raiffa (1957) *Games and Decisions*, John Wiley and Sons, New York, p. 95.

The lesson of the dilemma is not that pursuing one's own advantage is a mistake, nor is competitive behaviour. Consider the operations of a proper *market* in goods and services. In such a market each individual pursues personal advantage, and in so doing generates a collective benefit: there are more and better goods and services and wealthier consumers. Adam Smith called it the “hidden hand”, and it is something marvellous. But it is not, as the unwary or reckless might think, a magical device that always turns competitive strategies for self-interested gain into a common gold. **This is why we have corporations.**

The Corporation

In 1937 the economist Ronald Coase asked the question: Given the price of goods as determined by the market is the most efficient way of adjusting supply to demand, *why do firms and corporations exist at all?* Wouldn't it be better to have a completely decentralised market system?

In such a system the firm that assembles the final product (microwave ovens, let us say, or silicon chips) would purchase a design from another firm, then purchase the major components from subcontractors. These subcontractors in turn purchase the parts for subassemblies from other independent parts suppliers, and the oven or chip is assembled by workers provided by a labour hire firm. Then the assembled product is sold to an independent marketing organization, which would sell it to a dealer, and thence, finally, to you or me looking for that certain something to fill that shelf in the kitchen.

This is the model of an economy dominated by “virtual” corporations”, but it largely imaginary. Large scale, backward/forward integrating firms will continue to exist, and to dominate the economic scene. And within the corporation goods and services are not allocated by the mechanisms of the market, but by corporate decision.

The reason lies in the *transaction costs* generated by self-interested market rationality under conditions of *low trust*. Market transactions may allocate resources efficiently but they have their own costs. Buyers must be matched to sellers, prices must be negotiated, and deals finalised in the form of long and complex contracts, which may later involve the parties in expensive and extended legal proceedings.

Rather than continually haggle with independent firms over price, quality, and delivery schedules, a firm may find it most economical to institute a system of cooperative relationships in which the level of trust generated and sustained minimises these costs. *The firm becomes a Corporation*, and for the corporation success in the marketplace means creating itself as an *Assurance Game*, where this means that rather than competition, cooperation becomes the dominant strategy.

Many think changes in *technology*, particularly *information technology*, herald the end of corporations as the decentralised market emerges and “virtual corporations” – the product of ruthless “downsizing” until only their “core competence” remains – proliferate. They pin these hopes on the increasing amount of low cost information available to economic agents at the end of their networks, and forget that *trust is not reducible to information alone*.

My “virtual” firm might have plenty of information coming through network wires about our suppliers and contractors, but if they are crooks or frauds, or prone to opportunistic decision-making, then dealing with them will remain a costly process involving complex contracts and time-consuming enforcement. And it will reliably become more costly as the suspicions generated by the occasional malefactor poison the air.

So long as transaction costs exist, the corporation will exist. The sub-optimal outcomes a firm encounters as it pursues its ends in a competitive environment will often be met by creating a realm of cooperative relationships. As the Prisoners’ Dilemma shows us, the way to do this is to see to it that these relationships themselves further their participant’s self-interest. But *how* do we do this?

The Old Corporation

In the history of the corporation the first and dominant mode of ensuring cooperation is the familiar military model, with its implacable commitment to hierarchal authority. Under this model respect between members of the corporation is founded in a “culture of fear”. It is in my interest to cooperate with others in the firm because if I do not then I will be harmed, either by demotion or unemployment; a threat wielded by those above me in the hierarchy.

Such corporate “cultures of fear” have been able to, and to a degree still can, provide the basis for a kind of cooperation, though the cooperation involved is more a matter of *coerced coordination*, and increasingly subject to its own costs.

The rise of corporations in the late nineteenth century, and their use of the hierarchical coercion model for ensuring coordinated decision-making, came against the background of societies and social relations, which exhibited a higher degree of social trust that can be relied upon today. Notions of authority and deference, justified command and obedience, of respect for status, and of one’s “station in life” with its duties and responsibilities, were far more pervasive than they are today.

Whilst the early corporation was hierarchical and coercive, it did not generate the same kind or level of fear that a corporation of the same structure does under modern conditions. Its “culture of fear” was meliorated insofar as the corporation could presuppose levels of social trust on which it could draw on as capital stock. But that capital stock has been severely diminished both by more general social changes associated with the rise and development of individualism and by the unfortunate effects of the military model of corporate governance itself.

The transaction costs of coerced coordination have grown to levels that demand attention from today’s corporate managers. Without traditions of deference, obedience, and satisfaction with occupying “one’s station in life”, the culture of fear ceases to function as way of avoiding the sub-optimal outcomes of uncoordinated individual self-interest. In a competitively structured low trust environment, individuals within a firm pursue strategies for advancement, status and power by exploiting the coercive and collectively costly possibilities of hierarchical power.

The lesson soon becomes as obvious as it is to our two prisoners. For while I may, on one level, be supposed to cooperate with you for the good of the corporation, on another, deeper level I can never be sure that you will not ‘do me down’ if I don’t do it to you first, as we compete for personal advancement.

The New Corporation

The emerging failure of the traditional corporate structure to effectively economise transaction costs is more pronounced because of the changes which have swept, and are continuing to sweep through, modern capitalism. Those who forecast the end of the corporation for the decentralised marketplace of the “virtual” corporation have noticed something, even if it is not what they think.

Today’s corporation needs to be flexible, to be innovative, to be information friendly, and, crucially, *to possess the ability to continually recreate itself*, rather than endlessly *restructure* as do traditional corporations faced with the imperative of change. As Francis Fukuyama points out, the new corporation needs to develop structures which foster *spontaneous sociability*, where this is not “the ability to work under the authority of a traditional community or group, *but the capacity to form new associations and to cooperate within the terms of reference they establish.*”² This is a need that is met, and can only be met, by *A Culture of Freedom*.

² Francis Fukuyama, (1995) *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*, Hamish Hamilton, London, p. 27.

What is it that goes into creating such a culture? To changing the sub-optimal, but individually compelling, outcomes of the Prisoners' Dilemma for the rational and optimal outcomes provided in the assurance game?

Empirical research into this problem has come up with a key finding, and one which makes clear the shortcomings of the traditional hierarchical corporation. That finding is that *when “subjects are permitted to communicate [they] generate much higher levels of cooperation” than otherwise possible or available.*³ This communication must be genuine to be effective. It is a matter of *directed conversation*, where this means conversation engaged in for the attainment of shared goals. Such communication fails if it is not genuine, but is a disguised form of the command/obedience model in which the basic communicative act is an imperative from above, backed by the threat of coercion.

Directed conversation is the basis of what game theorists call rational altruism, where this altruism is not something opposed to self-interest, and so essentially mysterious, but is the result of a broadened and deepened conception of a person's self-interest. As Jon Elster explains, *“communication engenders friendship and a concomitant taste for helping one's fellows”.*⁴

This style of communication is the basis of that culture of freedom essential for the modern corporation to successfully meet the challenges of the contemporary marketplace. It is only possible as a manifestation of mutual interdependency or, more precisely, of an *equal dependency* between corporate agents of a kind incompatible with the limited communicative possibilities available in systems structured through hierarchy and coercion.

Meeting the Challenge

If the strategy for corporate success under modern conditions is clear, it is not easy. It is not easy because there are those who have a vested interest in sustaining traditional corporate structures, both from the side of those in positions of authority who enjoy the power and the easing of personal responsibilities that comes with 'subordinates', and from those 'subordinates' who are more comfortable with obeying than thinking or doing.

The challenge is to ensure we clearly understand the dysfunctional nature of the old corporation under modern market conditions, and understand the need to rectify such failings through developing structures which facilitate and encourage directed conversation - and so mutual trust. This is the challenge met by *A Culture of Freedom*. Familiarity with the ideas, analysis, and recommendations it advances will encourage those capable of change to make such changes, and once made, such changes promise to be self-sustaining as trust, efficiency and success generate the conditions for more of the same. So, once again, a Culture of Fear or a Culture of Freedom. *You* choose.

³ D. P. Green & I. Shapiro, (1994) *Pathologies of Rational Choice Theory*, Yale University Press, New Haven, p. 77.

⁴ Jon Elster (ed.) (1986) *Rational Choice*, New York University Press, New York, p. 7.

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FOR PREVIEW ONLY

Commentary on *A Culture of Freedom* by Dr. Janice Reilly

Dr. Janice Reilly

Dr Reilly lectured in the Philosophy Department at the University of New England for 10 years, from 1988 until 1998. She obtained her PhD in Philosophy in 1997. She then spent fourteen months as CEO/Coordinator of Armidale Aboriginal Land Council, on the Northern Tablelands of NSW. She is currently Information Officer for the Mid North Coast Regional Council for Social Development in NSW.

The Prisoners' Dilemma

In the Prisoners' Dilemma, each prisoner has two options (accuse/don't accuse) with four possible outcomes. Yet neither prisoner has the option to force the choice of the other prisoner.

But the Dilemma does reward prisoners who are able to abuse the trust of the other prisoner.

In addition, the Prisoners' Dilemma is set up so that a prisoner pays the price of at least one year in jail for getting the other prisoner out, even if the other prisoner reciprocates the trust.

These latter two features of the Dilemma reflect the way that our social relations are often set up so that the reward for winning by hurting another is higher than the reward for winning by cooperating with another. This set-up is characteristic of hierarchical patterns of power. It reflects the need to divide and conquer those people whose combined efforts might subvert the power arrangement.

The arrangement of decision costs in such a way that cooperative behaviour which undermines the interests of the powerful is discouraged is characteristic of many institutions and organisations. This is the major objection that most people will have to changing their attitudes to ethical and altruistic behaviour in the workplace and elsewhere.

So this is the place for me to give a general warning that the prisoners' dilemma pay-off matrix does *not* reward 'prisoners' who *individually* feel or act 'in community with others' (as if that's possible). **The changes being advocated here have to be systemic and professional as well as personal attitudinal changes.** For example, there have to be structural changes in business organisations, such as a policy of open and accountable decision-making, so that acting in individual self-interest at cost to others and the community is exposed and not rewarded in the workplace.

A certain pattern of social relations or habits develops between people locked in to a hierarchical power relationship. It can be very hard for managers to withdraw from hierarchical patterns of relating to staff if staff cannot let go of old ways of relating to managers and to each other. It can also be very hard for managers to let go of inappropriate uses of power when this power personally advantages them.

However, social values have changed rapidly over the last ten years, not least because of the dramatic changes in social perspective facilitated by global communications technology. As a result of these subtle but widespread value changes, a lot of key power selection devices and concealment strategies traditionally used in hierarchical organisations are now breaking down.

An example of a power selection device is the traditional treatment of greedy, selfish, rapacious behaviour as ideal workplace behaviour, rewarded with promotion and protection. This type of power selection device ensures that the right sort of bastard rises to the top and perpetuates the hierarchical power system.

The converse concealment strategy is that ‘unsuitable’ categories of people are blamed for problems in the workplace. ‘Unsuitable’ people will tend to be both ethically-minded and disobedient, and will be represented as ‘bad’ in order to diffuse the tension created by unjust and inefficient decision-making in the organisation.

These devices have traditionally relied for their effectiveness upon people’s trust in the ‘powers that be’ to do the right thing, to tell the right story, to know what is best. This trust is now breaking down because we are far more sophisticated and cynical about the ‘powers that be’; we have matured as social beings. As a result of these social transformations, the transformations in patterns of relating in the workplace that are required for positive systemic change are now possible.

In extreme forms, hierarchical power structures will be openly wicked. However, these forms require forms of force or coercion to back them up. Examples include institutions in environments where dissenters are assaulted, imprisoned or murdered, or where the labour force is very poor or otherwise vulnerable. We have to deal with these abuses of power from outside the particular power system, for example by international pressure. But echoes of these patterns can be seen in Australia. They will tend to manifest when the labour force is extremely disadvantaged, for example where there is high unemployment, and where access to institutions which defend rights is restricted (by, for example, cost). It should be obvious that open critique and discussion of abuses of power in these circumstances is a crucial form of protection against them.

Open and accountable decision-making is one way to undermine the ‘culture of fear’. This works because our underlying sense of justice will ‘kick-in’ when misbehaviour occurs openly and in front of everybody. This illustrates that hierarchical power arrangements aren’t ‘natural’ to us, but require concealment, secrecy, intimidation and deceit in order to function. And this again illustrates the value of open communication and engagement with others.

The Prisoners’ Dilemma, as a philosophical ‘thought experiment’, is set up to reflect a pattern of constraints on human decision-making in a hierarchicalised power context that focuses on issues of trust and betrayal, of survival at the expense of the suffering of others, and conversely, of the risk of sacrifice to the self-interest of others.

Some would say that this pattern is the human condition. I would say that this is the spiritually immature human condition, a condition that has persisted through a very long human history in which human understanding has been manipulated in the interests of the powerful.

In my view, the ‘natural’ spiritual condition of humanity is the ability to join one’s will, at will, with the wills of others. This is the full import of our ability to understand the concept ‘we’. I also think that the ‘natural’ spiritual condition of humanity is to *share being* in the world, rather than to attempt to appropriate being in acts of ‘mastery’ or control. This is reflected in our ability to understand the concept ‘this’, which implies a shared presence, at some order of interaction, between an object and a subject.

In the Western philosophical and cultural tradition, we have been trained to view our own being as separate from and superior to the world around us, and our identity and agency as expressed through the idea of power as *control*. We confirm the superiority of our being, our identity as agents, and our power to act, through controlling the environment, controlling animals and plants, controlling other people, controlling the situation.

But we all also know, although we are trained to ignore this, that empathetically ‘feeling’ or ‘knowing’ others and our surroundings, and acting in concert with them, rather than controlling the situation, is also a very important way of successfully experiencing our being, expressing our natures, and achieving positive outcomes from our actions. A model for this is the dancer, who must accommodate rather than change the environment in which she moves, and who must cooperate, rather than compete, with her partners in order to achieve the outcome she wants.

Some people react badly to the idea of dependency, equal or otherwise, because the concept is constructed in opposition to the idea of independence, which is in turn closely connected with *freedom* in our traditional conceptual framework. To undo these connotations, we can think of ourselves as mutually *involved*, but not mutually *enslaved*, by re-conceptualising our relations with each other using a model from the environment, the *ecosystem*, conceived as a *gestalt* entity.

We can think of ourselves as participating in an ecosystem of mutual relations in which the *flourishing of all* is the point of the system. Each participant in the system contributes to the whole from its unique qualities, and yet also benefits from the support provided by the whole.

In this way, we see partnerships, groups, teams, communities, states, and ultimately the world, functioning as (layered) *gestalts*, where the values of each individual part of the whole, on the one hand, and of the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts, on the other hand, are balanced against each other. By this I mean that the individual has as much value as the whole of which it is a part, and vice versa.

Because the unique value of each part carries as much weight as the unique value of the *gestalt* whole, that sort of freedom that derives from being uniquely valued is preserved. This is because, firstly, the value of an individual's freedom is an aspect of the value of that individual's uniqueness. Secondly, if the individual's uniqueness and therefore its freedom carries as much weight as the whole of which that individual is a part, then the preservation of the whole cannot be bought at the price of the destruction of that individual or the loss of its freedom.

Conversely, recognition that the value of the whole has as much weight as the value of the individual honours the value of the mutually supportive and protective intersubjective relations which constitute that whole.

So what is a good model for the right pattern of relationship in the workplace? 'Equal dependency' is not the term that I would use for it. For me, 'equal dependency' has connotations of mutual slavery that remind me of the former Soviet Union and other communist slave states. 'Equal dependency' could describe the relation between galley slaves. In addition, 'equal dependency' doesn't capture the diversity of mutual needs in a community. So I'd prefer simply *mutuality* as a concept. Mutuality is that intentional orientation in which 'I' am also 'we', and 'we' are in 'this' together. It expresses *that intentional orientation* which is both *to* and *with* the other. This is the spiritual and intentional orientation of beings that share a culture of freedom.

Commentary on *A Culture of Freedom* by Ralph Gartner

Ralph Gartner

Ralph Gartner has been in the people business for 18 years. His roles have included Community Worker, Therapist, Trainer, Internal Organizational Development Consultant and Consultant in private practice. He is currently based in Brisbane offering consultancy, training and Life Coaching services to Public and Private sector organizations and private clients through his company Life Options Pty Ltd.

The Prisoners' Dilemma in the Long Run

In the Prisoners' Dilemma as portrayed in *A Culture of Freedom*, the two prisoners are unable to influence each other's choice directly because they are unable to communicate.

Yet in the everyday life of any organisation the dilemma presents itself over and over again amongst people and groups of people who generally have some ongoing relationship and are permitted to and able to communicate.

In these everyday organisational circumstances there is an opportunity to influence the other prisoner's choice. This opportunity exists whenever and wherever the organisational 'prisoners' become engaged with each other again in a Prisoners' Dilemma situation.

In the Dilemma each prisoner has two options. They can either "accuse" or "not accuse" the other. In daily corporate life, let's say this translates into:

The best outcome for me (immediate self-interest at the expense of the other) – choice X.

The best outcome for both of us (mutual-interest) – choice Y.

The possible combinations of choices after both parties choose are - both choosing Y (Y, Y), both choosing X (X, X), or the alternative combination of either X, Y or Y, X.

The general outcomes from the various choice combinations could be summarised as follows:

Y, Y will lead to increased levels of trust and cooperation and a bright future working relationship for those concerned - a win/win in the short and long term.

X, X will lead to escalating competitiveness, stalemate, mistrust, and separation, a lose/lose in the short and long terms.

X, Y (or vice versa) will perpetuate any negative and hierarchical culture that exists between the prisoners by relegating each to the role of either “victim” or “persecutor”. The future is not bright for the working relationship between these prisoners if they remain locked into the X, Y pattern - just an ever increasing struggle to survive, increasing stress, low productivity, a win/lose in the short term but a lose /lose in the longer term.

In any organisation (a business, community group, family, marriage etc) choices are being made all the time and they are either X or Y choices. In my experience the X, Y and X, X combination are sadly the most common outcomes in our organisations.

In order to move a culture in the direction of a culture of freedom (Y, Y outcomes), we first need to be willing to accept that it is not a perfect world. We need to be realistic about the current culture. From this position we can offer co-operative behaviour through our choices. If this is not reciprocated then we need to be prepared to match the ‘self-interest at your expense’ choice made by the other prisoner with the ‘self-interest at your expense’ choice of our own, while still communicating to the other prisoner that we are willing to cooperate.

This is basically a process of “tit for tat”. If I go Y and you go X, I need to respond at the next opportunity with an X choice. On the next occasion again, I lead with a Y. This let’s you know I can play hardball if you ‘force’ me to - and would rather cooperate.

Without this ability to match X with X, I am being either naïve, or simply righteous about the need for cooperative behaviour. This makes my choices predictable and leaves me open to being “Xed” repeatedly by other prisoners.

The underlying purpose of deliberately choosing “tit for tat” is to influence others to cooperate with us. Tit for tat delivers consequences. In my experience, it’s these consequences that will motivate people to change their behaviour towards us. It’s another paradox – as an individual in any group we can utilise the private self-interest of others to ensure that we meet our own self-interest over the long run.

A Culture of Freedom – The Operating Practices

What are the practices of a culture of freedom? In the following article, a founding member of The Culture Collective outlines three simple yet critical practices.

The following commentary material is from Jeremy's recent publication – *Creating Workplace Culture 2001*, Help Desk and Call Centre Institute – Australia/NZ. These extracts are reprinted here in slightly modified form with the kind permission of the Help Desk and Call Centre Institute – Australia/NZ.

Surfacing Culture

A metaphor for the existence of culture that I particularly like is one that I came across in a manual on workplace culture some years ago. I've long forgotten the source, but I remember the key idea vividly. It suggested that culture in any organisation or group is like an iceberg. There is the dimension of the iceberg that is above the waterline – and is therefore on full view to all. Then there is the dimension of the cultural iceberg that is below the waterline. It represents the majority of the iceberg – and it is not on view to the observer.

Imagine that the bit of the cultural iceberg above the waterline represents the aspects of your culture that are spoken about freely in the public domain of your workplace and organisation generally. The public domain of your organisation is the physical space that your offices occupy, the meetings you engage in with each other – and all the agenda items in these meetings and interactions that are spoken about and dealt with in an up-front and public way.

The huge chunk that is below the waterline represents the unspoken dimension of your culture. It is often large and nasty. The problem is that it remains unspoken in the public forum of your organisation. As such it is the 'secret business' of your organisation.

As a rough rule of thumb, the sicker the culture in any organisation, the more of it that exists in the unspoken domain.



The strategy is a simple one – you need to get as much of the bit that is unspoken and below the waterline into the spoken and public domain as you possibly can. As a group, you need to get past ‘denial’ and talk about your prevailing culture as it really is.

As a manager, you can do this by invading people’s privacy if you want to – and I’d say that you are guaranteed to fail if you take this tack. Invasion of privacy is the hallmark of all repressive regimes. In the process you will simply drive the unspoken into becoming the secret. Do this and you’ll really create problems for yourself.

What you can do is give people the permission and space to speak what has been up until this point the ‘unspoken’. In other words, rather than invading privacy, you create more public communication between you on more subjects – especially culture, but not necessarily just culture. You can communicate on whatever subjects you like, you will surface the culture in the process anyhow.

By the way, this starts with you. Do not worry, everybody knows about this stuff anyhow. After all, it’s right there – it has just been unspoken up until now. What will be shocking for people is that you are actually giving voice to these hitherto unspoken truths. It will scare the hell out of some people. But I guarantee you’ll get some thoughtful and interesting looks from some of your more energetic team members.

So go ahead, take a calculated risk and start talking to your people. Especially start talking about the ‘things that we never talk about around here’. The things that you personally would prefer not to hear is probably a good enough place to start. If you’d prefer not to hear them, there is a strong possibility that you have not allowed these topics a voice – until now.

One more thing, whatever people say, or do not say, in response to your surfacing initiative, just acknowledge the response. Remember that our aim is to create a safe space in our public space where any item may be given an airing. If you request people to divulge and then you get defensive about the response, it’s not going to work. In this instance all we have done is probably driven the subject further underground.

The Word/Action Alignment Index

First a quick stocktake. Which of the following statements do you think most accurately describes the cultural perceptions (spoken or unspoken) amongst your team?

- People mostly do what they say around here. If they cannot come through on their commitments, they apologise and explain. Then they either perform as originally promised or renegotiate a fall back commitment.
- People often do not do what they say around here. Often they seem to say one thing, and do another. Usually they never explain, and rarely take responsibility for their word.

Actions speak louder than words. If your culture is one of “saying one thing, but doing another” then you have probably got a culture where people do not take what each other say (and especially what you say) seriously. They’ve learnt to dismiss what people say and place their focus on what actually happens.

They’ve personally learnt to say all sorts of things, make grand commitments and fulfil very few of them. They’ve learnt to not give this behaviour a second thought. It extends to customers and users as well, thus creating this groundswell of frustration amongst your customer base.

By the way, they’ve also learnt to be cynical and disappointed because in my experience, no self-respecting professional likes to work this way. They are behaving this way because that is the only way to survive in the prevailing culture.

It probably started innocently enough. Let’s see now, once upon a time you made a promise to the team that required you to canvas other members of management for support, resources, budget or whatever. However you found out from these managers that there were good reasons why your request could not be accepted. They were also fairly sensitive and confidential reasons.

Rather than go back and tell the team that you could not come through – for reasons that were confidential but would become apparent to them later on, you probably buried the whole idea because you did not want to face their disappointment.

The point is that you never publicly acknowledged your broken promise – probably because you felt bad about not coming through for them. But you’re not superman/woman. You made a commitment based on your understanding of the situation – and your understanding was wrong, or someone let you down or whatever. No big deal, it happens in any organisation. Yet you made it a big deal when you did not communicate it to your partners in the contract.

Any culture we create is the result or sum total, of the way we communicate, relate and behave with each other in the group. This includes our conversations and discussions – but it is not just a product of conversations and discussions.

While you have a culture of say one thing – do another, no matter the reasons why it has come into being, there is no point in you speaking about culture, or any other important issue for that matter, to anyone on your team. Because that is not where people are placing their attention right now.

Now this is an apparent conundrum. It’s obviously pretty critical that you as a group can communicate with each other about the kind of culture you wish to culture. Actions speak louder than words, but words are still an essential ingredient of any goal directed interaction between people. The words are necessary for each of you to become conscious agents of the process. Yet if in your existing culture, words are considered a cheap

commodity, then how can you as a group speak powerfully about anything important – including culture?

So, there is work to be done. You will need to move your word/action index from a net negative value – ie a number that represents a general lack of alignment between words/actions, to a positive number – ie a number that represents a general alignment between word/actions.

And of course, since you are the manager, and since managers are the most publicly influential group members, the buck stops with us – again! I am sure that part of the reason they give us the job is our high threshold for pain!

Luckily this process does not involve any public floggings for broken promises. What it does require is a public acknowledging of every instance that you have made some kind of commitment or agreement, and been unable to fulfil your commitment for one reason or another. There is no need for sackcloth and ashes – just a simple and public acknowledging.

Right now, you might find it valuable to look back at your diary entries for the last month or so. What agreements, commitments and deadlines have you failed to deliver on? Who do you need to speak to about this and what needs to be said by you?

The good news is that once you've got started on this simple yet challenging procedure – setting an example as it were, you are then in a position to remind other people about their commitments, agreements and deadlines that are as yet unfulfilled.

As you do this though remember your mission. It is to get and keep your culture above the waterline and create a positive alignment between people's words and actions. Thus, it is essential that you do not blame or accuse people – and risk driving your culture back below the waterline.

Transparency – An Antidote to the Hidden Agenda

We've discussed in a previous chapter the need to surface existing culture – to have it freely and publicly spoken about in your organisation. One objective of this surfacing process is to create a collective awareness within the group as to the extent and nature of the existing culture. As I've pointed out, so much of our culture is reaffirmed and reinforced unconsciously, that in order to supersede or transform it, conscious awareness is necessary.

The other objective of surfacing culture is to remove it from the unspoken domain and place it firmly in full view. While it is so obviously in existence but not being talked about, a form of collective denial is in operation. This is not a healthy state of affairs for any group of people in my opinion, let alone a group of professionals who have been around long enough to know – and want something better as a day to day working reality.

As mentioned, this is not a licence on our part as managers to go prying into people's off-line conversations or private affairs. Rather, it is about us providing a safe and public forum within which the unspoken may be spoken – without fear of reprisals.

If you are having difficulty with this whole operating concept then ask yourself whether you would prefer this stuff out in the open, or underground. I know which I'd prefer!

It is interesting to note that a typical operating hallmark of all repressive regimes is the invasion of privacy. It is also the hallmark of all disciplinary regimes – that and the breaking down and control of every moment lived by the one who is disciplined. There is a French Philosopher by the name of Michel Foucault (deceased) who makes interesting reading on this subject.

A noted thinker of about a century ago – a 'gentleman' by the name of Jeremy Bentham, designed what he believed to be the perfect prison. In this prison, what he referred to as a 'Panopticon', the guards are situated in a central well, and all the cells radiate out from this central hub. In theory any guard can therefore inspect any prisoner at any time s/he likes. The guard may or may not be monitoring any particular prisoner at any specific time, but the individual prisoner can never know whether they are being watched or not. Therefore, all prisoners must assume they are under observation at all times.

Twisted stuff - and not something we want to replicate accidentally in the work environment that we manage.

The existence of a hidden agenda – real or implied, in any communication by any group member at any time, will replace a free and positive operating culture with a suppressed and negative culture.

In other words, a critical operating practice that distinguishes a culture of fear from a culture of freedom, is the explicit or implicit existence of a hidden agenda in the communication. By the way, this applies mostly to your management communications and interactions with people because you are the most influential person, simply in virtue of the fact that you are the 'Boss'.

To cap this off, I am going to make an even more outrageous suggestion. Even if you as the Manager do not have any hidden agenda in your public communications with people, it will be assumed by many people that you do have a hidden agenda simply because you are the 'Boss' – and this is what 'Bosses' do, after all!

Now please don't throw your hands up in despair at this point. Help is at hand. Having said that, one can really get a sense of the care we need to take in every interaction and every communication we have with any member of our team. No more half-baked communication and throw away lines please – unless it is in a space designated for this kind of discussion – for example a brainstorming/ creative session.

Now, I am sure that you can appreciate the apparent paradox of being careful about what you say as an antidote to people assuming that you have a hidden agenda. Surely that would make matters worse, I hear you thinking?

What I am actually suggesting is that you take an incredible amount of care to ensure that you do not communicate with a hidden agenda, and are not perceived to be running some hidden agenda in your communication.

As managers we need to censor our communication of any trace of a hidden agenda.

If there is some kind of confidentiality issue to hand that is censoring the nature and extent of your communication, that you do not create any hidden agenda about the confidentiality. In other words, be open about those things that you may not speak about.

So a fundamental operating practice is to own your communication agenda – and state it as an essential preliminary to all interactions – all of them!

The Public : Private Alignment Index

This is a useful calibration tool that will help you check out whether you do indeed operate with a hidden agenda in your communication for part of the time. This index represents the amount of alignment or congruence that exists between what you communicate publicly to your team, and what you communicate in private.

This index is not the same as the waterline on the iceberg, although it is related to the non-specific and generalised activity of ensuring that the unspoken may become the spoken – and thus public.

The Public:Private Alignment Index measures a qualitative rather than quantitative difference between public and private communication.

To access a base reading, ask yourself whether your management communications in private are different to your public management communications. In other words, is what you say in private – the stuff you talk about to other managers and your trusted people, the same as what you say publicly?

Or, to put it another way, after you've discussed various matters off line, do you then disseminate the same information through the public forum of your organisation? If you are not in the habit of doing so, and there is a qualitative difference in what you communicate publicly versus privately, then I suggest that you have probably created a culture of a hidden agenda in communication around your workplace.

This does not suggest that you do operate with any hidden agenda. The issue is whether a hidden agenda may be implied by your behaviour. Remember, unless there is strong evidence to the contrary, people will interpret a hidden agenda as a kind of de-fault assumption about the way people (and especially managers!) behave.

I've come across entire organisations that operate with virtually no congruence between the private and public domain of information. Hardly surprisingly, I usually find them to be the most dysfunctional organisations – not to mention the least profitable! If people are led to believe by your behaviour that management 'secrets' exist in your organisation, then they will assume that secrets exist because there is something to hide.

Secret knowledge that is only available to the elite or ruling cadre is a defining trait of repressive regimes. It is also a hallmark of hierarchical organisations in general. I've found that it usually comes as part and parcel of all power relations between people.

It's my contention that a lot of what you have considered to be confidential up until now probably does need to be communicated publicly throughout your organisation. As a rule of thumb, my observation is that managers can communicate more of the 'private' stuff publicly. It has a great effect on the prevailing culture, and is simple to do. Just communicate more stuff to more people more often.

What I am talking about here is any existence of a hidden agenda that may be construed by our behaviour as a manager. This is not to suggest that confidentiality can and will exist, and certain communications should remain 'in confidence'.

For example, should you privately confront a member of your team who richly deserves it and then tell the team publicly? Naturally not - your team will respect you all the more for your behaviour too. Some issues need to be handled confidentially.

Interestingly, repressive regimes also do a nice line in public humiliation of certain citizens through publicising details that should remain confidential.

What I am saying is that you operate wherever possible, on aligning your private and public communication. If there are issues that need to remain in confidence, then publicly state that position.

We're the leaders of this show, we're responsible for the operating culture, so we get to start the ball rolling. Simple stuff, yet challenging.

Remember that none of us has the right to invade other people's privacy. If you have this effect, then your initiative will have a negative effect on culture. Instead of creating a culture of alignment between the public and private domain, you will actually drive the private domain underground. The 'private' domain of culture in your organisation should itself be in full public view, yet respected as the private domain.

Effectively I am saying that we must keep as few secrets as possible personally, and allow other people the right to be secretive, if that is their bag. The only secrets we do keep are those confidences that would unnecessarily damage somebody if they became public property at this time.

One final point – the best way to ensure that you do not invade the privacy of your team, consciously or unconsciously, is to assume that what is discussed by team-members privately is the same as what they say publicly. In other words, give them the benefit of the doubt. Assume that there is already congruence between their private and public speaking, unless there is evidence to the contrary.

Our job as the manager of culture is to keep as few secrets as possible and always make sure that there is congruence between our public and private communications.

The previous commentary material is from Jeremy's recent publication – *Creating Workplace Culture 2001*, Help Desk and Call Centre Institute – Australia/NZ. These extracts are reprinted here in slightly modified form with the kind permission of the Help Desk and Call Centre Institute – Australia/NZ.

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