Beyond The Organisational Script

- Do you need to change the way your organisation operates?
- Do you believe that the culture needs to change?
- Not sure where to start in terms of changes?

Demands on today's organisations often mean that they have to reinvent themselves. However, that is not easy. The organisational culture may have been a long time in the making and new, streamlined ways of working, increased innovation and different styles of leadership can often only change once we recognise what has gone before and how the current culture developed. In Transactional Analysis one way we can explore this is through the concept of script.

In What Do You Say After You Say Hello (1979) Berne offers a variety of definitions stating that the script is unconscious and can be unearthed through questioning. Here is one of Berne's definitions:

> "A script is an ongoing program, developed in early childhood under parental influence, which directs the individual's behaviour in the most important aspects of his life" (p418)

Other theorists have different views and definitions of scripts:

> "In general a script is based on a childhood theory that somewhere there is a kind of Santa Claus who will bring the individual a magic gift to crown his life. People wait varying lengths of time before they fall into despair about the appearance of Santa Claus..."
>
> (James, 1977)

As these are definitions refer to individual script it is easy see that those who start the organisation will have an influence on the development of the culture. If the leader has not worked out their own script issues then their own script apparatus will be transferred onto the organisation and the way it is run.

Organisations and Script

The one difference between human beings and the organisational entity is that the individual's life is finite but an organisation's is not. Even when failing, life can be breathed into it by new leadership, takeovers and so on.

To identify the organisational script we need to observe a variety of aspects.

The culture can be observed through considering the feel of the organisation as you meet it, whether on the phone, through correspondence, or face to face. Is there an aggressive or friendly feeling? Is the organisation thriving or just getting by?

The organisation will be influenced by where it is based. Is it in a back street or in the city? People will view the environmental circumstances and make decisions about the nature of that organisation. This in turn will have an effect on who influences that organisation and what is said about it. The organisation makes decisions about how to survive in these circumstances.

The name of the organisation is part of the script.

What do these names say about the organisation?

➢   Royal Mail
➢   Consignia
➢   Virgin trains
➢   Caterpillar
➢   M&S

Religious and philosophical influences also have an effect on script. The Rudolph Steiner schools have clearly laid out positions. Local authority schools respond to political influences. At one time Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) was known for being in the forefront of action against inequality - this became part of its identity.

Vision and mission statements could be seen as part of an organisational attempt to break out of script and put a new show on the road. The difficulty is that many cultures are pervasive and new people coming in can very often be acculturated in the old ways. Any identity confusion also filters down to new employees.

Drego (1981, Cultural Parent, TAJ 13:4) talked about the personality of a culture, as there is a social conscience which governs ways of looking at things and responding. Drego uses three ellipses to diagram the structure of a group's culture.

> *Etiquette:* inherited values, morals, rules, beliefs about poverty and wealth, expectations, prejudices, methods of rewards and punishments.

Technicalities: inherited knowledge, skills, processes for manufacture and distribution, research, distribution of political power

Character: inherited ways of experiencing and showing love, hate, rejection, acceptance, resistance, acceptance, ways of sabotaging or deviating from the cultural etiquette.

We can assess these different aspects and many more. Take a look at the Dynamic Diagnostic Diagram (the 3-D model) in our book, *Working Together, Organizational Transactional Analysis and Business Performance,* where you will find the model along with the relevant questions to ask to assess where the focus of an intervention needs to be.

To learn more about Organisational Transactional Analysis come on our open training programme. Follow this link to find out more: http://mountainassociates.uk/open-workshops/