Chapter 9.   Towards the Self Managing Organization: Releasing and Focusing

Personal Energy with Organizational Mission Statements

Introduction

This paper was originally published under the title (unauthorized by me!) of

"Harnessing Personal Energy: How Companies Can Inspire Employees (Harrison,

1987*-a). It was originally written as a discussion piece for the Design Team in the

electric utility project referred to in the introduction to "Managing Transition to a More

Responsive Organization: A Blueprint for Implementing Organization Change." The

paper was written during three intensive days in the hotel room I was occupying in

New York, having accompanied my wife, Diana, on one of her business trips to that

city. I wrote the on one of the first laptop computers to come on the market, a Radio

Shack Model 100. It was immensely liberating to have this machine, which enabled

me to write anywhere, any time!

Like "Guidelines for an Internal Organization Development Unit," this paper

took form as a teaching intervention for a group of clients. In this case, I hoped to

inspire the group to craft their own mission statement for the change project in which

we were engaged, and then to energize the rest of the organization with their vision.

The paper was read and understood, but the intervention was too little and too late. I

consoled myself that at least I got a publishable paper out of the work, and was paid

for doing the writing—something that has been rare in my experience!

Much of the content of the paper derives from a long conversation I had with

Bill Kutz, whom I met in San Diego in 1986 at a meeting of the Association for

Humanistic Psychology. Bill had developed a new art form in the way he worked with clients to create a mission statement. He was very generous with his experiences and articulate about why he did what he did, and I was eager to learn as much as I could from him. I integrated my organization culture model into Bill's work on visioning and mission development, and I identified the criteria that need to be met for an organization to "manage by vision." I also describe in this paper a key process by which differing goals, visions and values become one amalgam under the heat and pressure of the Mission Development Workshop. I call this process "alchemical," because the heat and pressure of *differences* are applied to the group within the "crucible" of an intensive offsite meeting. When it is successful, and it often is, the bonding and commitment to the vision that takes place between members can be extremely strong. Unfortunately, as I later found in a major project with an R & D company (Harrison, 1995, Chapter 7.) this bonding can isolate the participants from the rest of the organization, and the vision can become a kind of living tomb.

I have since incorporated the ideas in this paper into a workbook which teams can use to create a vision and a mission statement (Harrison, 1988).

Towards the Self Managing Organization: Releasing and Focusing Personal Energy with Organizational Mission Statements

In discussions of organization productivity and high performance, great importance is often given to the development of vision, purpose and a sense of mission. When leaders and consultants endeavor to focus the organization on a single mission, it quickly becomes apparent that the organization's culture plays a central

role in success or failure. Some organization cultures lend themselves to developing a sense of mission and purpose, while in others the effort seems to become enmeshed in political maneuvering and the conflicting claims of widely differing goals.

The purpose of this paper is to integrate current thinking and practice in helping organizations create effective Mission Statements, with my work in conceptualizing and assessing organization cultures (Harrison, 1972*-b; Harrison, 1975; Harrison, 1987*-b; Harrison and Stokes, 1992). I will show how differing organization cultures handle a central issue which is fundamental to any design or re-design of an organization:

How is each person's personal energy to be released, mobilized and focused in the service of the organization and its stakeholders?

We shall see how certain organization cultures are able to release and access a greater proportion of their members' personal energy, and we shall explore the central role of a shared sense of mission and purpose in focusing this energy. We shall then set out some guidelines from experience in working with organizations to develop powerful and effective Mission Statements.

My thinking about organization missions and mission statements owes a great deal to the generosity of William Kutz, in describing the work he and his partner, Dick Barnett, do with organizations.

The Issue of Personal Energy

Why emphasize "personal energy?" Because that is the difference between a committed, high energy organization, and one where people do the minimum to get

by. Personal energy is a shorthand term for all the capabilities which an individual brings to the workplace every day and which he or she can choose to commit or withhold.

A key to understanding organization design is to be aware that each individual has complete control over the choice of whether and how much to commit their personal energy to the organization. That the choice may in some organizations be influenced by severe pressures and heavy coercion does not mean it ceases to be a choice. To see choice in action in any organization, simply compare the degree of effort and commitment put in by the highest and lowest performing members!

If the issue of personal energy is in fact so central in organizations, we may wonder why people are not talking about it all the time.   I believe the issue is in fact at the heart of those interminable discussions of how to motivate employees which are so often a part of conferences and management training courses. In daily organization life, the question is less often addressed specifically, because the answers are implicit in the structures and processes of the organization. They are "the way things are around here."

When we want to change the way things are, the way we endeavor to tap into people's personal energy is critical to the success or failure of the change. We need to become much more aware, perceptive and playful about this process than we normally are when we are doing business as usual. If we do not plan systematically how we will enlist the personal energy of organization members, our efforts will run

into unexpected difficulties, and the cost of achieving our aims will be much greater than it should be.

This paper presents a way of thinking about how personal energy is accessed, channeled and applied in traditional organizations, and compares it with how this is done in "high performing" organizations. We shall see that the key to the difference is the development of a shared sense of mission and purpose, combined with unusually high trust between leaders and members of the organization.

Traditional Approaches to Accessing Personal Energy

The history of the development of modern business and industry is the story of creative managers and technical experts dedicated to minimizing the influence of workers' choices about committing their personal energy at work. The strategy for productivity improvement has been to develop technology and to design systems which require minimum personal contribution from workers, and then to ensure that they do put in that minimum by providing multiple layers of supervision and tight systems for controlling cost, quality and output.

Like most good strategies, this one paid off handsomely at first, but the returns have diminished with continued application. Currently, most industries are engaged in self defeating circular processes, both in the factory and in the office. Both white collar and blue collar workers respond to boring, repetitive tasks and close supervision by withdrawing effort and attention from the work. Quality and productivity suffer accordingly. Management responds by managing more closely and automating the work as much as possible. Because the workers feel more closely

controlled and have less responsibility, they feel less committed, and they withdraw their commitment and attention from the work. And so the cycle goes around again.

Richard Walton, a pioneering student of the new approaches to productivity, says this "control strategy" to managing the workforce is obsolete. He asserts that any approach "that assumes low employee commitment and that is designed to produce reliable if not outstanding performance simply cannot match the standards of excellence set by world-class competitors" (Walton, 1985, p. 79.

The dilemma is that we cannot design work systems which compel outstanding performance. Systems which focus on control actually discourage outstanding performance by reducing opportunities for the exercise of initiative, creativity and individual contributions to the work. These are qualities prized in our culture, and therefore they can be found in abundance in American workers. It is ironic that we increasingly design the exercise of those qualities out of our work systems.

As Jack Sherwood [Sherwood, 1986 #134) has pointed out, our way of thinking about costs and resources leads us into the self defeating circle of designing demotivating jobs. As he puts it, "If we think that people are principally a variable cost, which can almost always be reduced, then we are most likely to look to changes in technology or in work methods (resulting in less labor input) as ways to control costs." He goes on to say that in order to break the cycle, "the first step is to let go of the idea that our future lies exclusively in ever more highly developed technology. We need to accept modifications in technology which offer more central roles for people in using and managing the production process. ...If we view people both as resources and as

collaborators in the competitive marketplace, then the question becomes how can everyone's commitment, competence, and intelligence be aligned behind the company's purpose!"

This question is equivalent to asking, "How can we release peoples' personal energy in the service of the organization?" Sherwood, in common with other writers who have worked with the design and re-design of production plants, sees the answer in work design which balances the emphasis on technology with an emphasis on people.

In my own practice with R&D organizations, financial service companies, and customer service systems, I have tended to focus on the less tangible aspects of the question, addressing the cultural change process involved in moving from high control/low commitment to its opposite, an organization culture dedicated to performance and service. I see the articulation of the organization's mission as a key to that cultural change.

I want to construct a model which will explain the key role of the organization's mission in mobilizing personal energy. My concept was stimulated by the thinking of Robert Terry of the University of Minnesota (Terry, 1986, Personal communication), but I have taken liberties with Terry's model which he would probably not accept. My version identifies three aspects of an organization which we can manage, manipulate, mess about with, or otherwise change:

MISSION

STRUCTURES

RESOURCES

Resources are the assets which are deployed to pursue the purposes of the organization: equipment, facilities, services, "headcount," and the money to acquire these things.

Structure consists of the organization's arrangements whereby its resources are deployed. Structure is seen in organization charts, job descriptions, work and information systems, budgets and accounting methods, regulations, policies and operating manuals. Because structure controls access to resources and the ways they may be deployed, it is placed above resources in the hierarchy.

Mission refers to the aim of the organization, its purpose or reason for being. The mission leaves its tracks (but may not actually be present) in statements of organization goals and in corporate philosophy statements. It may be more accurately inferred from the priorities and guidelines which organization members follow in their daily decision making. In a well designed organization, the structures are subordinate to and are designed to achieve the mission, so we place it at the top of our hierarchy.

There is another universal element in organizations which I shall treat differently than Terry does. That final ingredient is PEOPLE. It is not people considered as resources or "headcount," however. I refer to people considered as human beings, possessed of those qualities of mind, heart and spirit we think of as distinctively human when we talk about ourselves.

Organizations are people-pursuing-goals-together, and we can represent this connection between PEOPLE and MISSION in a revised hierarchy.

PEOPLE <---> MISSION

STRUCTURES

RESOURCES

To see what all this has to do with accessing personal energy in organizations, let's consider some typical, and some not so typical organizations.

The Power Oriented Organization: Using Resources to Control Personal Energy

A talented and energetic entrepreneur owns a business employing several other people. The employees serve as "hands, ears and eyes" for the entrepreneur, doing his or her bidding in return for money. They serve at the entrepreneur's pleasure. They do what is required to keep their jobs, which basically means being useful to the boss, meeting his or her needs, and staying on his or her "good side." The organization's "mission" is whatever the boss wants, and that may change from day to day. Some of the more dependent employees who were hired in the early days of the firm develop deep loyalty to the person of the boss, identify with him or her and serve faithfully. As the organization grows, those useful, loyal employees are given supervisory authority over others. With increasing size, few of the employees have a personal relationship with the founder, but deal instead with his or her loyal lieutenants. Some of the employees try in their turn to be useful to their bosses and to put themselves in line for the best jobs and for eventual promotion. The majority do not compete. They do whatever is required to keep their jobs, and not much more.

Some may resent being subject to "naked power," and they sometimes commit little acts of neglect or sabotage in retaliation. In public and on the surface, however, they are compliant and subservient to those above them in the hierarchy. Each level is kept "in line" by the control over resources exercised by the level above. Some of the resources used to control workers' behavior are pay, perquisites and privileges, the intrinsic interest and ease of the assigned work, the threat of being fired, praise and blame from the boss, etc. Coordination and integration of individuals' efforts are the responsibility of the boss. Quality and output are managed by personal supervision and the application of appropriate rewards and punishments by the boss.

I have elsewhere written about this type of organization culture as "power oriented" (Harrison, 1972*-b; Harrison, 1987*-b; Harrison and Stokes, 1992). It is characterized by dependency and lack of initiative on the part of subordinates. Compliance is more highly valued than performance. The boss's resources are overused, and everyone else's are underused. People do what they are told, and when they aren't told, they try to guess what the boss would want them to do. When they are not sure, or are afraid of doing the wrong thing, they wait. At times of change, when unexpected or novel situations develop, the organization may become paralyzed. The boss is too busy to tell everyone what to do, and the people are too afraid, dependent, uninformed or otherwise unwilling to take the initiative.

The power oriented organization is good at multiplying the hands available to carry out the ideas of the boss, but it usually fails to mobilize more than a small fraction of the personal energy people have available for work.

Typically, the "pure" power oriented organization does not outlast its entrepreneurial founder. However, the power orientation can be found in mixed or modified form in many organizations which are no longer entrepreneurial. Usually, the occasion for a change in such a culture is some crisis in the organization's life: rapid expansion, a merger, a change in the technologies or markets with which the organization is involved. The next scenario shows how this might happen.

The Role Oriented Organization: Using Structures to Channel Personal Energy

Eventually the founder/owner of the organization described above has a heart attack and sells the company to another firm in the same industry. The new owners want to manage the business at a distance, and they make this possible by setting up a system of regulations, guidelines and policies which direct how the business is to be managed. Each position is minutely described and is evaluated according to the abilities and experience required to do the job. Criteria for determining the adequacy of job performance are specified, and systems are set up to monitor results. In the new organization, the scope of the work, the performance requirements, and the limits of one's authority are clearly defined. When one accepts a job in the new organization, one agrees to perform the prescribed duties, and the organization agrees that you can keep the job as long as you perform it adequately, and as long as that job needs doing.

Instead of close personal supervision, the procedures for doing each job are now made part of a system in which the work is divided into a number of jobs which perform certain operations on materials or on information and pass it along to the

next job in line. Everyone knows what they are supposed to do, so long as the system is working. They need only refer to supervision when an exception comes up, something which the system is not designed to handle. How high up in the organization the decision has to be made depends on the amount of money involved and the extent of the deviation from established policy which is required to solve the problem.

I have written about this type of organization culture as "role oriented" (Harrison, op cit.). We all recognize it as a bureaucracy, where personal control by the boss has been replaced by the impersonal control of structures and agreements. A job or position in the organization represents an agreement between the job holder and the organization, in which the employee undertakes to provide certain services, and the organization agrees to certain levels of compensation and terms and conditions of work.

Instead of the bosses having to run around telling people what to do, their behaviors and interactions are controlled by established structures, systems and procedures which are written down in codes and manuals, or made part of a computer program. The organization still must monitor performance to be sure that the agreements about the work are being kept, but once people know their work and get into the habit of doing it, it generally runs along pretty smoothly until the system has to be changed.

People are less dependent in such an organization. In a well designed and professionally managed system, one has the security of knowing what is expected, and

one is protected by established policies and procedures against abuse of authority by the boss. Of course, the system is ultimately backed up by the power to control resources, to reward for performance and to punish for failure to perform. But the arbitrary exercise of power which can create a rule of fear and a hotbed of political intrigue in the power oriented culture is at least limited and ameliorated. People have some rights; they know what they are; and they know where they stand.

Most of the organizations we know, live with and work in are some combination of power oriented and role oriented, with the leaning in larger organizations being towards the bureaucratic mode. In such organizations, resources are controlled by the system, not by individuals. Even CEOs may be severely limited in the changes they can carry out. Each part of the organization has a sphere of influence and power which is embodied in the structure, and the structure cannot be changed without at least a measure of "due process."

In the role oriented organization, jobs can be designed with varying degrees of latitude, so that differences in ability, expertise and experience can be allowed for. People in our culture generally work more willingly under agreements than they do under capricious authority. At higher levels of the organization, the jobs are frequently designed to give considerable latitude and room for initiative, and this encourages people to bring a greater fraction of their "personal energy" to the job.

The trouble with the role oriented organization is that it overuses the talents and personal energies of designers and underuses those of doers. Much management ingenuity and creativity go into the design and development of structures and

systems, which then limit and frustrate the ingenuity and initiative of the people who are charged with carrying out the work. When the latter perceive the system as irrational, ineffectual, or just plain "stupid," their frustration eventually turns to resignation and apathy. They withdraw their personal energy from the work and become "nine to fivers" or "bureaucrats." When this happens, managers and technicians usually design the jobs into smaller units, install tighter controls, and generally reduce the scope and latitude which individuals have for making a unique contribution. Workers' frustrations with the system increase; they withdraw more of their personal energy; managers institute tighter controls; and the cycle continues.

The role oriented organization thrives in stable situations, especially where its size, economic power or favorable regulatory status permits it to control its markets and sources of supply to a high degree. Thus the railroads, airlines, banks, insurance companies, electric utilities and the oil industry have all known periods which have favored their development as giant bureaucracies. During those periods, stability and economies of scale favor large, role oriented organizations.

We are now in a period of turbulence in markets, technology, regulatory climate and the world economic system, which places great strain on bureaucracies. Part of that strain stems from the structures, systems and procedures which are assets during more stable periods.

Like any complex life form, the more specialized and rigid an organization is, the more vulnerable it is to "unusual" conditions. In the case of the role oriented

organization, the vulnerability arises from the way the organization processes information about exceptions to the rules.

Consider the typical pyramidal bureaucracy, divided into separate functions such as sales, distribution, production, etc., and locating the authority to make exceptions to the rules at higher levels of the organization. When the environment of the organization undergoes rapid change, the information on which decisions have to be taken is generated at the "skin" of the organization (the base of the pyramid) where people are in contact with the environment: customers, suppliers, government inspectors, etc.

In order to take account of changed environmental conditions, the information generated at the base of the pyramid has to travel up the chain of command. During times when systems are working fairly well and change is gradual, this is no great problem. When the pace of change heats up (e.g., foreign competition, an energy crisis, the deregulation of an industry, an instability in world financial markets), then the number of exceptions moving up the chain of command and requiring attention from higher management increases rapidly. The pyramidal structure of bureaucratic organizations forces the information into narrower channels as it goes higher, so those who have the authority to change the rules and make decisions on exceptions, quickly find themselves swamped with work.

The communication channels in a bureaucracy are easily overloaded because of this "funnel effect," delaying needed changes in the design of the system. People at the bottom of the pyramid become frustrated and cynical; they can see the changes

that are needed, and they can't understand why their superiors don't act. People in middle management (those usually responsible for adjusting the system) are overworked and chronically behind in making the decisions and system changes which are required. In addition, because of the overloading of upward communication channels, the information decision makers receive and on which they base their actions is incomplete, out of date, and frequently distorted.

Higher management, seeing the mess, become in their turn frustrated with what appears to them to be the slow response and self protective entrenchment of middle management and frequently move to bypass the middle and manage the firm directly. Since their information is also distorted and out of date, their assumption of control often fails to improve the situation markedly.

Thus, the rational structures and procedures which serve the organization's purposes so well in stable times, become massive barriers to adaptation and change in more turbulent situations. Although it is in some ways an improvement over the power oriented organization, the role oriented organization also fails fully to release and apply the personal energy of its members for reasons which are inherent in its nature. In summary:

People contribute more willingly by agreement than they do by fear. Contractual arrangements, however, not only set a lower limit on performance: they thrust forward the question, "What's in it for me?" when one considers contributing beyond the terms of the contract. Thus, for many organization members in bureaucracies, there seems little point in putting out more than the

mediocre level of performance which we have come to think of as typical in most large organizations.

The very structures and systems which are a strength in the organization in stable environments become barriers to change. When organization members are frustrated by the organization from making the contribution of which they are capable, they withdraw personal energy and become apathetic and cynical.

If we wish to release more fully the personal energy of organization members, we must consider not only how people in the organization are motivated (a common and constant concern in power and role oriented organizations) but how they motivate themselves. This is where the organization's sense of mission and purpose become important.

The Achievement Culture: Evoking Personal Energy through Mission

Both the power oriented and the role oriented organization cultures foster external motivation. Organization members contribute their personal energy in return for rewards. In the case of the power culture, the rewards are administered personally, by more powerful individuals who control the organization's resources. In the role oriented culture, the rewards come through transactions between the individual and the organization: so much salary for this or that job; opportunities for promotion linked to qualification and time in grade; etc.

The relationship between the individual and the source of rewards is essentially dependent: the individual's behavior is manipulated by the combination of incentives

and threats which the organization applies. The organization has available to it that fraction of each person's personal energy which he or she is willing to commit in return for such extrinsic rewards as the organization offers.

In fact, of course, many people like their work, believe they are making a worthwhile contribution to society, and enjoy their interactions with colleagues or customers. These are intrinsic rewards which are qualitative rather than quantitative and which arise from the nature of the work and its associations. For the most part, organizations are not designed to provide these intrinsic satisfactions. They arise incidentally, or through the occupational and job choices which people make on their own.

Some organizational situations seem to provide a positive climate for these intrinsic satisfactions. People who have worked in such diverse situations as new business and new plant startups, nuclear test shots, intensive care units, and political and community organizing campaigns, report that these work cultures can provide deep personal ,satisfactions and evoke personal commitment of a high order. These "high energy" work situations are described by participants as follows:

· The work situation engages the total person.

· The values which people experience in the work transcend personal advantage. A quality of altruism is evoked which is personally satisfying to everyone involved. People feel they are working for something bigger than themselves.

- People give their all, working long hours without complaint. They may willingly sacrifice their family and social lives to the demands of the work.

- People supervise themselves, seeking out what needs to be done without direction from above.

- There is high morale and a sense of camaraderie, of "all for one and one for all." There is close teamwork, and the group frequently feels itself to be elite or special.

- There is a sense of urgency; people live "at the edge," putting out high energy for long periods of time. They may become "addicted" to stress.

Such high energy experiences normally last for a few months, possibly a few years. Then people burn out, or the work system stabilizes and becomes more routine and bureaucratic. However, some organizations manage to maintain this "culture of commitment" over long periods of time. I have, for example, worked with an R & D organization which has operated in such a mode for more than forty years. People seem to burn out after about ten years in the really high intensity jobs. They then move to less stressful positions, (management roles, for example!) and are replaced by "fresh troops."

Sparked initially by stories of high levels of worker commitment in Japanese companies, there has been a great deal of interest in the last few years in high performing organizations, work systems in which some variant of the "commitment culture" can be created and sustained on an ongoing basis. Peters' and Waterman's work on "excellent companies" has focused interest on the sense of mission which

leaders of such companies are said to communicate to all levels of their organizations. Here are some of the qualities which seem to be characteristic of organizations which sustain high performance over a period of time:

- There is a clearly understood mission which is articulated at the highest level of the organization.

- The mission is emphasized and reinforced by everything higher management does: the decisions they make about where money is spent; the questions they ask; the topics they discuss in public presentations and meetings with employees; the amount of time spent in meetings on various topics; the reasons for rewarding, promoting, demoting and firing people; where they make field visits and what they look at; etc.

- The mission is stated in terms which are unambiguous, easy to understand, and difficult to argue about. There is a dominant value which is held to be more important than any other in the organization. People know that they can't go far wrong so long as they are pursuing that value with sincerity and integrity.

- The value embedded in the mission is one which is larger than mere profit or growth. In pursuing it, organization members can experience themselves as making a contribution to society, as well as gaining something for the company.

There are additional qualities which seem to characterize organizations which are "mission driven," organizations whose cultures I call "achievement oriented,"

which have also been characterized as "aligned." (Harrison, 1987*-b), (Kiefer and Senge, 1984).

- The organization is more egalitarian than most. Employees are treated like willing contributors. Those at lower levels are empowered to make decisions which in other organizations are reserved for those in supervision and middle management.

- Communication channels are open, both laterally and vertically. It is easy to be heard if you have an idea or suggestion.

- Failure is viewed as a learning experience, rather than as a sign of personal inadequacy. The organization empowers people to learn and innovate better ways to pursue the mission by making resources available, and by reducing the stigma and the career penalties for unsuccessful experiments.

- People do not argue much about the mission, but only about how to achieve it. People who do not share the basic values and commitments of the organization are made to feel uncomfortable and usually leave.

- People do argue a lot about how best to achieve the mission. Positional authority does not shut off discussion, or curb the expression of employees' ideas.

- People are given effective authority in accordance with their ability to contribute to the mission. Neither the red tape of the bureaucracy, nor the privileges and status of a power elite count for as much as ability and contribution in making decisions about who does what.

In short, the achievement oriented or "aligned" organization uses the mission to attract and release the personal energy of its members in pursuit of common goals. This is in marked contrast to the power and role oriented organizations which rely on the application of rewards and punishment, and on impersonal systems and structures to control and constrain their members. The mission serves to focus the personal energy of individuals. Because contributions are freely given in response to commitment to a shared purpose, people willingly give more to the organization, and the whole prospers accordingly.

None of this means that structures and systems are not necessary in the achievement oriented organization, or that the allocation and distribution of resources is not still a problem to be solved. What it does mean is that the systems and structures serve the mission, rather than the reverse.

Such an organization begins with a sense of mission and purpose, clarifies that sense, and then goes on to create structures and assemble resources to make the mission manifest in the world. Thus, everyone knows why they are there and what they are working for, and they know that anything which doesn't serve the mission is open to question.

In contrast, in the power oriented organization, access to resources is the key to making things happen, and in such organizations, the "golden rule" is sometimes restated as, "he who has the gold, rules." In role oriented organizations, the systems and structures are often more powerful than people, and certainly more powerful than the mission. In such organizations it is often true that "you can't beat the system."

So, a mission driven organization is far different in its character than the organizations which most of us have experienced during most of our working lives.

There is a downside to the achievement oriented organization. Members of high performing organizations with a strong sense of mission frequently exploit themselves in the service of the organization's purpose, to the detriment of their own quality of life. If the single minded pursuit of achievement is not balanced by attention to taking care of the people, the people will suffer and may eventually burn out. Over time, even the most enthusiastic contributors may come to realize that they are valued only for their contribution to the organization's mission, as they see others used up and then cast aside.

The pure achievement oriented organization has the deficiencies of its strengths. It is frequently under-organized for the work it has to do, relying on high motivation to overcome deficiencies in structures, systems and planning. It evokes and directs enthusiasm and commitment, but it may not have a heart. The people and their needs are subordinate to the organization's mission and its needs. After a time, people realize this and may begin to mistrust the organization. At that point, they begin to look out for themselves, instead of giving their all to the task. Alternatively, the members may remain steadfast in their commitment, but they suffer high levels of stress, physically (e.g., cardiovascular diseases) or socially (e.g., high divorce rates).

Here are some quotes from interviews of people in a high tech, achievement oriented organization where hard work and long hours substitute for planning, and where the thrust for achievement has nearly completely driven out concern for

people's needs. Many people still drive themselves willingly, but others are beginning to ask if it is worth it.

"The lack of proper planning drives me nuts."

"We're too busy doing to plan objectively."

"There's bound to be organizational problems with tight resources and tight delivery schedules; things are bound to get tense. People who are attracted to our company like this climate - others would go loony here. Pressure is keen, and you have to compromise on quality sometimes."

"People are beginning to burn out; you can't keep putting the pressure on people. We must turn down our expectations of the magic we can perform and do more realistic scheduling."

"One of the craziest things about the company is the founders' 90 hour weeks. My best people look like garbage only putting in 60 hour weeks."

"I'm worried about the health of some of the people; bad things are happening to the founders and old timers."

"Everyone needs positive feedback; even those who show outside self confidence still like to hear the words. It's hard for many to say those words; ...it's easier to criticize than to stroke."

In the long term, you have to take care of the people if you expect them to take care of the organization's mission. This is a point frequently overlooked in discussions of high performing organizations. It is why in outlining a hierarchy of organizational characteristics, I put MISSION <---> PEOPLE at the top. Let us examine the qualities of an organization which gives a high priority to meeting the needs of its people.

The Support Culture: Evoking Personal Energy through People

By the "support culture," I mean to define a climate based on mutual trust between the individual and the organization. In such an organization people believe that they are valued as human beings, not just as cogs in a machine or contributors to a task. In an organization characterized by the "support culture" you can feel warmth and even love, not just driving enthusiasm. People like to come to work in the morning, not only because they like their work, but because they care for the people they work with. Because they feel cared for, they are more human in their interactions with others: customers, suppliers, the public, fellow workers, subordinates.

The support organization is characterized as follows:

- People help each other beyond the formal demands of their jobs. Help is extended not only within one's own work group, but to other groups as well.

- People communicate a lot, not only about work, but about personal concerns. You can always find someone to listen to your ideas and problems.

- People like spending time together. They often see each other off the job, as well as on.

- In hiring employees, weight is given to whether the person is caring and cooperative and will "fit in," as well as to whether they are competent.

- People are viewed as basically good. When things go wrong, they get a second chance.

- People know that the organization will look after them when they need it, beyond the requirements of the policy or the employment contract. In return, they go out of their way to take care of the organization. This may take the form of caring for the facilities and equipment, giving special attention to quality, conserving resources (turning the lights out!), or protecting the company's reputation in the community.

- People celebrate together. They not only take pride in their work achievements, but they recognize one another's personal milestones: promotions, retirements, birthdays and anniversaries, etc.

- People value harmony and avoid confrontation, sometimes to the point of leaving important issues unresolved.

- People "keep the faith." They don't let each other down. This doesn't just mean keeping their word, but it also means doing one's share of the work, or coming in to work when one isn't feeling that great, in order not to overload others.

The support culture is the least visible in the U.S. of all those described in this paper. It is often hard to find, because it is not valued by the dominant power or role oriented organization, and so it goes underground. It can be seen in relatively small groups, where people know one another personally and interact face-to-face. It tends to develop in organizations where people work together for long enough periods of time to build personal relationships, work out their differences and arrive at a degree of trust.

When not balanced by a thrust for success, the pure support culture tends to thrive only in not-for-profit organizations. In business, it makes its best contribution in dynamic tension with the achievement orientation. The latter releases and focuses the personal energy which is evoked for each of us by a love of doing, and by a sense of high purpose and worthy mission. The support orientation taps into the personal energy present in the ties of love and trust which bind us to people, groups and organizations for which we care.

There are two current issues in business where we can clearly see the benefits of a warm and caring organization climate: quality and service. It is no accident that successful approaches to quality improvement are usually based on small work teams or on "quality circles." There is, I believe, a close connection between loving one's work and wanting to do it well, and a sense of caring and trust with the people with whom one works. In quality circles, people develop both a love of quality close ties with the others they work with. When assembly operators who had left their jobs at

Honeywell and later reapplied for employment were asked why they decided to return, the most frequent reason given was, "I missed my quality circle!"

Service in organizations may be internal (e.g., between staff groups and the line units they serve) or external, to customers or the public. Both are influenced by interpersonal relationships among organization members. I have written elsewhere of how the kind of service an organization gives flows naturally from its dominant cultural orientation (Harrison, 1987). The power oriented organization tends to respond to status, prestige, wealth and power in differentiating who gets what kind of service. The role oriented organization strives for equality and consistency of treatment. It creates complex, efficient service delivery systems which are economical to operate and which are experienced by customers as inhuman and inflexible. The achievement oriented organization tends to be oriented to expertise: to providing the best, the latest, the most innovative products and services. Like experts anywhere, its members think they know what's good for the customer better than the customer does (firms of doctors, lawyers and other professionals often exemplify this attitude; so do high tech companies of all kinds).

Increasingly, people in our culture would like to be treated as individual human beings by those who provide them with service. This means caring and responsive service, not just efficiency and competence. Such service is given by people who themselves feel valued and cared for by their organization.

People do not always follow the golden rule in the sense of doing unto others as they would have others do unto them, but they usually do follow another, similar rule:

they do unto others as they are done to. If love and mutual respect exist within the organization (whether or not they are self consciously identified as such), then these qualities will be manifest outwards into the world. Thus, if we would learn to make our service more responsive, we must learn to respond to the needs of those who serve.

When the enthusiasm of the mission driven culture is balanced by mutual support and caring, then we have conditions where people will not only contribute their personal energy for the intrinsic satisfactions found in pursuing a common goal, but they will contribute for the good will they bear each other. And they can feel safe in contributing fully of their personal energy, knowing that when they need a little extra support or consideration, it will be there for them.

This, then, is a model of a balanced organization culture. It is one where people are brought together by common goals and values, by a mission which is worth pursuing in its own right, and not simply because there are "bottom line" considerations to be met. It is one where people are bound together by mutual caring and loyalty. Because they feel good about one another, they are moved to give do their work with care, and to give caring and responsive service to customers and the public.

It is an organization in which structures, rules, systems and procedures serve the mission and the people, rather than being experienced as tyrannous and frustrating. It is one in which resources are made available where they are needed by the mission and the people, and where access to the organization's resources is not an automatic and undeserved perquisite of power and position.

The Mission Statement: Catalyzing the Balanced Organization

How do we move toward such a balanced organization? For most organizations, the identification of the mission and the crafting of an agreed mission statement is a key to moving forward. The balance of this paper will address the considerations involved in framing a coherent, simple statement of the mission.

Most organization change efforts do focus on Structure and the distribution of Resources, which is why organization members become cynical about the possibility of "real change." When we experience "real change" we know it by the sense of excitement which always accompanies a significant shift in how we are choosing to direct our own personal energy. When we work with Structure and Resources and leave People and Mission alone, it is as though we created an increasingly elegant piece of machinery, but gave no attention to its power source. When we move towards an organization which is animated by Mission and bound together by trust, we increase the total personal energy or power which each organization member commits to the Mission.

The organization's Mission Statement can be one key to increasing the amount of personal energy which people expend in work. An inspiring Mission attracts personal energy like a magnet attracts iron filings. It energizes at the same time as it orients people to align themselves with the goals and values of the organization.

Of course, a Mission Statement may or may not reflect the true Mission of the organization. The true Mission is what people know and believe the organization stands for and strives toward, not a hopeful wish about what the goals and values of

the organization may be at some unspecified date in the future. The Mission is what energizes, aligns and attracts people now. It reflects a present commitment of personal energy on the part of the people in the organization. Thus the real Mission is an ongoing process, not a thing. Most organizations' real Missions are real Messes. They are a hodgepodge of goals, values and pious hopes, some of which support one another; some of which contradict and weaken others. This confusion is reflected in Mission Statements which are a compound of "motherhood" statements and qualifiers. They inspire nothing but cynicism among employees and managers.

In fact, this sort of mission statement is the product of a political process. Like most such products, it is a compromise and is neither focused nor exciting. Dr William Kutz, a partner in the firm, Missions That Work, explains the difficulty in agreeing on a mission statement as a difference in the self interest of the key players. He points out that in making decisions about where and how to commit personal energy in the organization, everyone, from the CEO on down, follows what they conceive to be their self interest, their personal mission. When people are criticized for not doing their jobs, it is just that they have a different sense of their personal mission than those who are criticizing them.

It is possible, however, to create a mission statement which reflects and which can in turn influence the living process which is the organization's real Mission: clarifying it, simplifying it, and focusing its direction. Bill Kutz has articulated guidelines for crafting an effective Mission Statement, although he says that it is more a matter of "impassioned struggle" than it is a question of technique!

Guidelines for Creating an Effective Mission Statement

- A good Mission Statement is short, clear and unambiguous.   It is less than 14 words; 6-8 words is even better! It "rolls off of everyone's tongue."

- It evokes an emotional attachment which is bone deep. People have got to be able to have a sense of passion about it. Unless the Mission Statement connects with people's compelling interests, you don't have it.

- It differentiates your organization from everyone else. It delineates what is unique about you; what value you add for customers or for the wider society.

- None of its terms should be subject to interpretive argument among organization members. It should be free of qualifiers and value modifiers ("motherhood" words like "creative," or "excellent") because people will argue endlessly about their meaning.

- It expresses what the organization intends to be now, rather than some wish for the future. Although the Mission Statement may not be totally realized in the present (and may never be completely manifest), it reflects the essence of what people consider themselves to be as an organization. Deviations from the Mission Statement are thus experienced as deviations from the true identity of the organization.

Examples of Good Mission Statements:

- "Keep the lights on!" (an electric utility)

- "Provide service which brings guests back." (a hotel).

- "Satisfy each customer every time!"

- "Avis tries harder!"

- "Fix it right the first time!"

- "News that people want to read." (a newspaper).

Examples of Less Effective Mission Statements:

- "Hertz is Number One." (Number One what? What do we do that makes us Number One?)

- "Best quality for the money." (Pits quality against money – you never know whether you're there or not.)

- "Provide customers the best products and services, consistent with safety and cost." (Creates debates about how safe to be, what costs are "appropriate," what level of service is too costly.)

- "Maximum profit for stockholders, consistent with our responsibilities to employees, customers, suppliers and the community." (Profit for stockholders is not inspiring for employees; what the responsibilities are is arguable; pits employees, customers, etc. against one another.)

It isn't easy to come up with a Mission Statement which acts as a magnet to attract and align the personal energy of organization members. In some organizations, it is impossible, and its impossibility reflects the reality of the political struggles and power conflicts within the organization. Even within such an organization, however, it may be possible to energize a part of the organization with its own Mission Statement.

The process of agreeing a Mission Statement among a group of managers or leaders can be difficult and conflictual, because it involves each member choosing to allow the organization to claim his or her personal energy. Individualistic as we Americans are, we will often settle for less than excellence, rather than choose to give up some of the autonomy which each of us has to choose how to spend our personal energy.

We each have, after all, our own personal missions. Unless the Mission of the organization genuinely attracts us, appealing to deeper values or longings, we continue to pursue our more narrow interests. We resist the process of agreeing the organization's Mission, choosing to retain our own personal power, rather than trust in the increased collective power which a single unitary Mission will give us as an organization.

Giving or withholding our personal energy is, for each of us, the one inalienable freedom we have. No matter how coercive the organization, its structures, or its leadership, no matter how dull and closely supervised our tasks, we make a choice at each moment in the work day as to how much of our own energy we devote to pursuit of the organization's goals. To genuinely adopt a Mission is to accept, at least provisionally, a higher criterion for making that choice than our own wishes and preferences, and therefore voluntarily to surrender some of our autonomy.

Trust is thus the key to the creation of a unitary Mission. Unless we trust that we shall receive value in return for the autonomy we surrender to the organization, we block or resist the clarification of the Mission. This sense of trust (or mistrust) is

built by the relationships between people and their leaders in the organization. It is a

key part of what I've referred to above as the People side of the Mission <---> People

dimension.

The behavior of the group's leader is a key to the clarification of the

organization's Mission. Because he or she has the most (apparent) autonomy, he or

she has the most to give up in establishing an agreed Mission of the simple, unitary

sort proposed here. The reason is that once the Mission Statement is agreed and

established as the "highest authority," it becomes the criterion by which every decision

and every action may be judged, argued about, and influenced, including the decisions

and actions of the leader. Since everyone in the organization has equal access to the

power of the Mission Statement, everyone can legitimately dispute or question any

decision or action of anyone else, including the CEO.

Many organizations tend to promote people who want power. For such people,

the idea of having executive decision and privilege subject to question by the lowest

organization member is not appealing! One would think the powerful people at the

top of organizations stand to gain a lot from the alignment of everyone's energy with a

simple, easily understood Mission. In fact, they often seem to squabble interminably

over the details of a proposed Mission Statement, coming out in the end with

something so vague in its celebration of "motherhood," that it really enrolls no one and

attracts little energy to it. In part this is perhaps explained by the leaders' intuitive

understanding that agreement on a unified, energy focusing Mission will give

everyone in the organization a simple yardstick for assessing their leaders' dedication

to the organization's greater good, and the appropriateness of their choices and decisions to the ultimate goal.

Thus the willingness of leaders to accept and be guided by the same simple, unitary standard as everyone else in the organization is both a crucial test of their sincerity and commitment, and also a key to others becoming willing to trust the process and give their own hearts, minds and energy to the Mission.

The power of a clear, unitary Mission is that, together with information, it can become a substitute for hands-on management. If each individual 1) knows and is committed to the goal (Mission) and 2) understands the context and the situation (information), then people can manage themselves most of the time. What, after all, are the functions of management, other than to process information and control the behavior of those under them so that it supports the organization's goals?

New technology in production and data processing frequently provides sophisticated information systems which permit people at any level to have the same access to information as their bosses, and commitment of the workforce to a clear Mission allows them to direct their own personal energy in fulfillment of the organization's goals. It has been shown that when these conditions exist, it is possible to have far fewer levels and greater "span of control" than in organizations which lack these characteristics. (Note that "span of control" is placed in quotes, because in fact what is happening is that self control is substituted for control by others.)

To recapitulate the reasons why agreeing on a simple, unitary Mission Statement can focus and release energy for the work of the organization:

- The Mission organizes and releases the power which resides in individuals' choices over how they direct their personal energy.

- Organization change efforts which ignore Mission and personal energy may change the distribution of effort, but they do not release or focus large amounts of new energy.

- An effective statement of Mission is less than 14 words, and it articulates a single, attractive, unambiguous goal which can be understood by anyone.

- The Mission serves as a single standard against which each action and each decision can be evaluated. It "levels" ranks, in the sense that the actions of the CEO are evaluated against the same standard as those of the lowest clerk or worker.

- To embrace and be governed by the Mission, each individual must be willing to subordinate control over his or her personal energy to the claims of the Mission. This requires trust in the sincerity and good will of higher management and fellow workers, the People side of the Mission <---> People dimension.

- People for whom the exercise of organizational power and authority is an important source of satisfaction have difficulty in accepting a clear and unambiguous Mission, because it subjects them to the same standards as everyone else.

- When combined with effective information systems, a clear, attractive and unambiguous Mission permits a flat organization with a large "span of

control," because people become both capable of managing themselves in pursuit of the Mission, and motivated to do so.

Guidelines for Choosing a Mission

Understand that for most organizations, the choice of a Mission is not simply a way of restating "business as usual." It is the making of a new choice – a refocusing of the activities, decisions, and energies of all the organization's people, from top to bottom.

Because the Mission must be attractive to all the people, it must be free of bias towards the interests of one or another group of the organization's "stakeholders." It needs to have an appeal above and beyond personal advantage and interests.

The Mission should reflect the highest purpose of the organization – values people can identify with what they consider to be "good," not only for the organization, but for the world beyond the organization's boundaries. Organizations which enlist the hearts and minds of all their people always seem to aim for something higher than material success. This is the ancient concept of "right livelihood" – making a living by being of service to others.

The most important thing is to tell the truth. The Mission must be congruent with peoples' idea of what the organization is actually becoming. It is not necessary that the organization totally manifests its Mission, but it is essential that the leadership are clearly seen to be moving in that direction.

Because few leaders are capable on their own of articulating a single, unified vision of the Mission with which their followers can all identify, choosing a mission

needs to be a participative process, contributed to by more than just a few people at the top. If the Mission does not come to be "owned" by all, it will be ineffective, so we may as well start as we mean to go on, with joint ownership during the creative part of the process.

The Mission should be short, and "single-valued." It should identify one goal or value towards which the organization is to direct its energies, and it should not contain qualifying or balancing goals which modify that dominant value.

The Mission should be stated in positive terms, not in terms of something which is to be avoided. It should be stated in the present tense, as befits a statement of the organization's true identity.

In Praise of Struggle: Using a Mission Workshop to Build a Support Culture

I have been pondering a dilemma which comes up when I work with top management groups to help them develop statements of their purpose and mission. I find that clients approach the task with a wish for clarity and structure, and I have noticed that consultants who do visioning work with organizations often provide a good deal of direction to their clients. A typical scenario might look something like this:

The consultant begins by leading the group through an exploration of their individual values and operating styles, perhaps using the Meyers-Briggs Type Indicator. Then s/he moves the group into some work opens up their intuitive capabilities. They may do collages of the desired future, or bring in objects which symbolize that future. They may do some drawing or painting as a group. The

consultant will perhaps also lead the group in a guided fantasy of the organization's future.

After loosening up the creative faculties, each individual may be asked to produce an individual vision of the future. Sometimes, the CEO is asked to write a vision which is then presented to the group for their reactions. The consultant facilitates the group in resolving their differing visions and writing corporate statements of purpose and mission.

Scenarios such as the above usually seem to work fairly well, if the individuals in the group are not too polarized in their values and interests, and if the organization is not overly political. For a long time it was hard for me to know why I found working this way unsatisfying, since clients seemed happy enough.

I think I know the reason now, and that it is important. My discomfort has to do with the balance between achievement and support orientation engendered by the process. In our interest in fostering alignment, and a sense of mission and purpose, we sometimes overlook the side of effective organizations which has to do with relationships and group dynamics, the support orientation. The sense of focus, direction and purpose needs to be matched and balanced by a sense of commitment *to one another* in the top group in the company. The pursuit of an ambitious vision requires a very different kind of personal commitment than just doing your job and looking out for your own career. The implementation of a vision requires a lot more from people than "business as usual." It also requires that they work togther with a much higher degree of cooperation and coordinated effort than they are used to.

Most high level executives are highly ambitious; often they are more dedicated to their own careers than they are to the organization's welfare. I do not believe that in crafting our "technologies" of organization transformation, we have paid nearly enough attention to the question of building that sense of community and mutual support which must form the basis for any sustained effort towards real organization change.

I believe we can create the conditions for the development of an achievement/support orientation or, to define it another way, of mutual respect and love. However, when we provide well planned and structured means for our clients to move towards agreement, we unwittingly frustrate or suboptimize the building of those "ties that bind" typical of the support orientation.

In a group of individuals, each with their own goals and interests, each with the intentions and the means of pursuing their own self interest, the development of respect and love is fostered by any process which keeps the parties in contact and focused on their issues, and which also prevents premature resolution of conflict through the exercise of power.

Ideal conditions for the development of the support orientation can occur in a group working on a task like visioning or developing a mission statement. Such a task requires the group to resolve differing interests and strongly held values, and there is no objective criterion for the "right" answer. The right conditions occur when neither the formal leader of the group (e.g., the CEO) nor the consultant intervenes too actively to prevent the "floundering" or struggling together. The process of forming consensus

on an ill defined task is one of the most powerful ways commitment can be created in a group of managers who are highly differentiated in their outlook, interests and values. The process is subtle, but the rationale is simple.

In the process of hammering out a mission statement, each member of the group has to take seriously, often for the first time, his or her colleagues' differing values, points of view and priorities. If the process is not cut off by the intervention of an authority figure, and if the group doesn't give up in frustration, then coming together to consensus on a mission statement is a powerful process for bonding strong, disparate individuals into a cohesive group.

As the members hammer out differences in their visions of the future, the group becomes a kind of crucible in which are forged bonds of mutual respect, affection, and appreciation for one another's differing gifts and strengths. Such bonds make for a closely knit team. Such a team can work cooperatively together under the stresses and pressures of which will surely be a concomitant of any serious effort to implement the mission.

When the CEO articulates the vision and "sells" it to the group, or when either the consultant or the CEO moves the consensus process to closure while the group is not substantially in agreement, this bonding process is interrupted prematurely. In that case, the group becomes dependent on the authority figure to resolve its differences. Compared to a group which works through their differences without much intervention, the members of a group which has been "helped" to resolve its differences experience less commitment, less confidence in themselves and their

colleagues, and more feelings of dependency. The price of "rescuing" the group is paid later when conflict among the members disrupts the implementation process. When the group has not gone through the "attunement" process in which they learn to manage their own confict, resolving their differences will require continued and repeated intervention on the part of CEO and perhaps also the consultant. The continued politicking and squabbling takes energy from the positive leadership tasks which should be occupying the time of the top management group.

It is thus a delicate question when and how hard to push for agreement. If the conflict becomes too deep and polarized, the group will become frustrated, and the visioning process will lose its credibility. If, as is more often the case, the visioning process is structured in a way which keeps conflicts somewhat under wraps, or the consultant helps too much, or the CEO pushes too hard, then the process fails to bear the fruit of mutual respect and caring on the part of the team members.

As a consultant, what I try to do is keep the dialogue going, and make sure that the points of view of minority members or those less articulate get a fair hearing. I insist so far as I'm able, that people listen to one another with as much respect as they can muster. I clarify the differences and the issues, and I try to uncover the positive motives which underly seemingly stubborn obtuseness on the part of "deviant" members. In short, I try to keep people in contact and actively engaged with one another, even when they don't like it much.

When I provide conditions where clients can truly contend together in this way, they seem to develop really strong commitment to the vision and to one another.

I want my client groups to develop bonds which will survive both adversity and success, without depending on the CEO to hold everything together. Those bonds will enable them to solve business problems creatively as a group, overcome differences, and reach much more rapid agreement on strategy and tactics than would be possible if each member of the group were bonded only to the leader, and not to his colleagues as well.

That's why I tend to take more of a "hands off" stance than some other consultants, when present in a group which is working their issues. I aim for a process of fairly deep encounter with one another over personal goals and organizational values. My experience so far indicates that when I manage the process (as opposed to the outcomes) well (in the sense of keeping the level of energy high and avoiding deadlock), it ends by strengthening the top team a great deal.

My thinking about these matters goes back to my professional roots as a T group trainer, and to my work in the seventies in training leaders and managers in initiative, autonomy and risk taking (Harrison, 1972*-a. While the T group has, for good reasons, lost its credibility as a team building intervention, allowing a group to struggle over consensus in order to build trust and intimacy is still as good as gold. The practice of giving people "maximum feasible choice," that I developed in my work on self directed learning [Harrison, 1978* #4) continues to enhance my effectiveness as a consultant. It just isn't easy, and I have to put my credibility on the line to carry it through.

For example, I suspect I may look less competent at first to my clients than do some other consultants who stage-manage the process more actively. That can be uncomfortable for me at first. My way requires both more trust and more willingness to risk on the part of the clients than it would if I did more of the work for them. The outcomes, while I believe they are deeper, are less certain. The process is less controllable, and it is more likely to get stuck for periods of time. It is less comfortable for the clients and, because they are the ones who extricate themselves from their difficulties, there is less credit given the consultant for success.

On the positive side, there is enormous satisfaction for me in seeing a group of managers come through the crucible and move on confidently, having accepted personal responsibility for their organization and for one another. For me, that is worth the confusion and frustration, and the personal risks that I assume in taking a more hands-off stance to my work.