

an organisational perspective

new working practices for a new world of work

Jon Stokes and Beverly Clarke



In common with many modern organisations, companies in the media industry are vulnerable to failure resulting from their inability to manage change. **ids** reveals some of the efforts being made to improve itself, alongside an organisational psychology approach to management which endorses such alien office concepts as "emotions".

Critics of the television industry say that its attitude to change is conservative. The tendency has been towards proliferation of what it already knows: produce more, produce more versions, distribute through more channels.¹ The programme off-shoot, the copycat or the variation on a theme has often been regarded, unfortunately, as a safer bet than trying something new or different. However, the downfall of the conventional approach is that viewers' affections are not as readily transposed as the industry likes to think. Those of us in TV need to be clear we are in a creative and service industry rather a manufacturing one.

At **ids**, UKTV and Flextech Television (FTV), we are working to make TV which engages viewers and advertisers alike, which means ensuring they, rather than our traditional ways of working, dictate everything we do. Therefore, we are turning many of our current working practices on their head (as Dick Emery and Lisa Opie have discussed in earlier chapters of this book). We are forming new and different types of relationships with our advertisers and agencies. And we are (deep breath!) looking more closely at ourselves to reappraise what we do and how we do it.

In the 21st century multichannel TV environment our products are more than just 'space': we sell ideas and concepts, and advertiser/consumer connection. The context has changed. And as a result, what

we do and how we do it is more complex.

At **ids**, the commercial arm of FTV, over and above trading airtime, our focus is on delivering customer benefit via the TV brands we represent. For some time we have been using different language that reflects the new style of our relationships. To ensure that we satisfy the strategic objectives of our clients' brands via the investment they make in our channels, we need to be conversant with their marketing vocabulary and the language of those who create our channels.

However, to get clients to engage fully with the potential our medium has to offer we must go further: we must change preconceived ideas that many in the

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industry still have about the way TV advertising sales works. This requires more than a new focus on linguistics. To work more effectively for our clients we need to adopt a different position – we need to see the world from our clients' perspective. And

that will require us to be more objective, self-aware and to scrutinise our own attitudes and beliefs.

our working processes are changing. Now we need to extend the new principles we have embraced to focus on individuals in our organisation.

It is essential that our structure meets our strategy, that is, that our work environment and individual skill sets reflect and embody the philosophy we talk to our clients about. In order to achieve this, everyone across the company – whether they work on the commercial side or not – must cultivate an advertiser focus. For the foreseeable future 'change' will remain an inevitable constant for us all. At FTV we believe we should ensure that as traditional boundaries and job definitions become blurred and redefined so our employees are equipped to manage the challenge of change.

Against the backdrop of a television world currently in a state of flux, how do we create a work environment that facilitates continuous learning, developing new perspective and ideas? In order to understand better our clients' perspective, how can we raise our own self-awareness? And what styles of leadership and management will enable this? In an attempt to answer these questions and more we asked Jon Stokes, consultant psychologist from the organisation and

management development consultants Stokes & Jolly for an organisational psychology perspective.

Beverly Clarke
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The new business environment of ‘discontinuous change’ demands strategic change which, in turn, requires a new organisational architecture and different leadership priorities. How should we respond?

The post-industrial economy is impacting on the world of TV in ways that are by now familiar from other industries. For example, the shift from an economy based on manufacturing – in this case of TV programmes – to far greater emphasis on TV viewers as free agents in a buyer's market requires more finely tuned organisational antennae: the design of roles, structures, and processes that will significantly enhance the ability of those in leadership positions to detect the early warning signs of value migration in advance of the competition.

In order to make use of this intelligence, companies will need to redesign themselves in ways that encourage individual employees' capacity to act in response to early indicators of environmental change. In too many organisations, managers lack clear accountabilities, adequate guidance and sufficient information to carry out their task and are provided with only ambiguous support from above. Faced with either major opportunities or challenges, they will tend to turn a blind eye, freeze in their tracks, or run around like headless chickens. So organisations need to fashion not just the formal structures, processes

and roles but also the informal operating environment necessary to encourage managers at all levels in the enterprise to act swiftly and independently. Leaders in such environments should enter their jobs with the expectation that they may well have to reinvent their organisation several times over in the course of their tenure.

There is a growing realisation that values, culture and shared goals rather than formal structures are the glue that holds organisations together. This trend will accelerate. Notions of brand and identity will assume only growing importance in the management of organisations.

The upshot of this, as FTV have identified, is ultimately an increase in responsibility and focus on the individual. In the first instance there is a need to raise "self-awareness" in order to enable individuals to accommodate a mindset that regards change as a constant. Today at FTV, managers need to think in terms of how to manage an environment that enables people to give of their best. Over recent years, many of the top performing FTSE companies have reported to the city increased investment in the "self-development" of their employees. Largely, in the non-public service broadcast environment, investment in personal development, has, historically, been limited to senior management. FTV now also recognise the value of a "bottom-up" approach to increasing the overall "mental health" of the organisation and have instituted a more inclusive employee development policy.

All these themes, discussed above, sit with the broader business environment today. The reasons for this are various – changes

in the nature of attitudes towards authority; the fact that telling people to be creative simply doesn't work; the need to encourage creative individuals who are typically not team players in collaborative efforts which produce something greater than the sum of the parts. The risk is that managing people easily slides into manipulating people. This creates cynicism and a lack of trust in managers and leaders and, inevitably, various efforts at counter-manipulation.

In fast-moving industries the problems are exacerbated. On the one hand the fluid environment of television provides challenge and opportunity, but it can also lead to defensiveness and insecurity with employees apprehensive of change. Organisations need to create working environments to empower employees because knowledge and experience rather than capital are now the key resources of organisations. Typically, people at work look for two kinds of support. One is instrumental support that is task-directed and provides resources and assistance – or authority – appropriate to the responsibility attached to the role. However, they also look for emotional support and for feedback. While the provision of the former is important, the provision of the latter is equally so.

Recognising this, FTV are in the process of developing a pilot programme of Organisational Mediation (OM) to support employees as the company continues to re-think many existing working practices. While FTV continue to put viewers at the heart of the business, the OM programme will provide tools to help employees become more sophisticated in responding to the changing business context, enable staff to become more sophisticated in

how they relate to clients and respond to each other.

Organisations and managers can enable employees to work. But they can equally well create conditions that disable creativity and effective work.



toxic environments

Organisations where the culture and climate is particularly negative can be described as 'toxic environments'. The toxins that accumulate in such environments are typically the result of various factors – the nature of the work involved (all work entails a degree of stress and anxiety, some more than others); the consequences of human behaviour in groups (scapegoating, bullying and the various ways that human beings in groups try to simplify and project the causes of complex or painful difficulties into one person or sub-group within the organisation); the structures of the organisation (where these are not clear and there is a lot of confusion they result in a sense of unease, even paranoia); the personality and leadership style of the chief executive and leadership (typically the culture of a company in part reflects the personality and culture of the team at the top); and the way in which a particular

individual handles all of this (their sense of themselves as an agent or alternatively a victim of circumstances in life).

Effective working in a team requires that each member has a sense of belonging, a sense of influence over the direction of the team, and a sense of achievement derived directly from the activities of the team. Those in management positions have, in general, been promoted because of their task skills, their ability to get a job done effectively and to a high standard. However, typically they have less experience in creating the conditions necessary for productive relationships in the work place.

Constantly changing and flexible organisational structures mean that effective performance which typically came from authority derived from position and expertise power also require considerable skill at personal power. That is, the capacity of the individual to manage and express their own talents and relationship building and maintaining skills. Instead of organisations being able to provide a dependable environment they depend more on their employees to provide the container for the ambitions of the enterprise.

Until relatively recently we grew up in an environment where the psychological contract with our employer organisations was based on an exchange, an exchange based on loyalty, and exchange of skills and commitment in return for short term pay and longer term benefits. In short: a culture of dependency where those higher up the organisation, knew more and better how to achieve success than those on the front line.



The rate of change in the business environment means that organisations are no longer able to offer this degree of predictability however, so the mindset of dependency is no longer productive. Organisations just can't provide that

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degree of reliability, and employees need to protect their own interests and have careers in which they will move between as many as five to ten different organisations in the course of a career. There is simply no point in decrying this – however, there is a point in reflecting on the psychological consequences.

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Now it is business critical for companies such as FTV to be considering the 'emotional development' of their organisation if they are to positively affect widespread change throughout the organisation.

The modern corporation is a relative newcomer to the long line of human institutions. Its current state of development could be compared to that of a precocious ten year-old who over-values the collection and counting of information, and who is very attuned to adapting to current circumstances but whose emotional life is largely below the surface and kept under fairly strict control with unfortunate outbreaks periodically.

The stage of emotional development of the organisations in which we work is, all too often, less mature than those who work in them. While organisations and groups can bring out the best in people they can also bring out the worst. All too easily we forget that organisations are human creations. As such, like an individual they have rational elements but also emotional, political and social. Once reflected upon this observation is hopefully self-evident. Nevertheless training and skills in the understanding and management of the emotional life of organisations and those who work in them receives virtually no

serious attention in management training or business schools. This element tends to be ignored or viewed as a constraint. At best emotions are viewed simply as another lever which the manager hopes to be able to pull more effectively.

Happily human beings tend not to be so easily manipulated and are perfectly capable of equally effective responses in return!

What role should and could 'emotional intelligence' now play in business?

Effective leadership today means being more aware of these various repressed or denied elements and becoming skilful in understanding their interactions and management. The emotional life of organisations has, typically, been regarded as a constraint, at best a challenge to be managed away rather than an integral part of the enterprise.

Daniel Goleman² has described emotional intelligence in terms of four factors: Self Awareness and Awareness of Others, which both lead to improved Management of Self, and Relationship Skills. Highly ambitious and successful individuals are not always reflective about themselves, they tend to see the world through their own eyes and assume others values and attitudes are similar. If they find they're not they will tend to dismiss them as irrelevant to their ambitions. However, motivating a team – and beyond that a whole organisation – requires emotional intelligence to be able to see the world through the eyes of your colleagues and employees. Your colleagues and employees will have different values and come to work for different reasons than

you. The way in which you think of yourself, your strength and weaknesses are, almost certainly, not how others see you. Organisations are typically poor at providing effective feedback to those who work in them (at least until it is too late). Becoming self-aware is essential to effective management.

Emotional intelligence is relevant for all workers, not just top management.

The traditional role of the manager was to preserve consistency, stability and a degree of harmony. In addition to these skills, today's manager needs ever more to be able to handle conflict effectively. Conflict management rather than domination by those with the greatest power will become an essential leadership capability. In the media industries this capability will be an organisational capability for all employees from top to bottom. The successful organisations of the future will be those that develop the processes, cultures and behaviours capable of accommodating and resolving conflict in ways that benefit customers and strengthen the value proposition faster than their competitors.

Creative organisations need employees to be passionate about their work. Strategic thinking has typically been a cool, unemotional, rational activity aimed at identifying what we do better than anyone else. Clearly organisations require reason and systems, but they also require passion and a deep capacity for self-management and employee engagement. The strategic question, therefore, now becomes: what do we care about more than anyone else?

Under pressure, leaders and top teams

can tend to regress to a survival mode of thinking, relating to each other unproductively and failing to bring out the best in people. Bringing out the best in people requires putting relationships rather than self first. The culture of the top team creates the culture of the firm. Far easier than large-scale change programmes, then, is to change the culture of this top team and then cascade this out through the organisation. Too many change efforts have started somewhere in the middle of the organisation with a leadership team that is too frightened to examine the effects of its own behaviour.

Creative organisations necessarily tap into both the creative and destructive energies of those who work in them. Effective leadership of such organisations requires an awareness of both of these aspects of human nature. Ultimately this is the leader's task – to provide a setting where this tension can be held and be worked through productively and creatively.

Summary

As a consequence of the rate of change in 21st century media organisations, a structure and processes need to be put in place that can facilitate continuous change. In some ways, organisations like FTV can be viewed as continuously evolving dramas with characters who have their set pieces and others who change and get written in or out of episodes. In just the same way, our behaviours, opinions and even thoughts are constructed by the scripts and the themes played out within the organisation environment. Therefore, rather than managing people, managing the conversations within the media organisation may be a better starting point for establishing a more appropriately

dynamic organisational structure and processes. In this way, not only can FTV become more sophisticated in how they respond to their environment/business context, but employees within the organisation can be more sophisticated in how they respond to each other. ■

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¹ Media Imperative – Exploring emerging company-critical issues of consumer media use. WPP Group. 2003.

² Emotional Intelligence: Why it can matter more than IQ. Daniel Goleman, Bloomsbury, Paperback – 12th September, 1996.

changing the way we work

“The explosion of media choice marketers now enjoy and the corresponding decline in audience attention that has accompanied this require media currency to change. There has been too great an emphasis on measurement of audience size rather than quality. ZenithOptimedia has staked its future on ROI. So we have adopted the principle that outcomes rather than outputs should now be our focus. We need to spend less time worrying about which medium can best maximize reach amongst a target audience and more time - and care - selecting who we reach and how our advertising is received. Better connections with consumers are now a priority. Involvement, interactivity and interruption are the new currencies in the 21st century media world.”

Anthony Young CEO ZenithOptimedia



