

# How to influence organisational change

A strategic tool kit for middle managers

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SALLY WATSON AND MAGGIE SHANNON

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# **HOW TO INFLUENCE ORGANISATIONAL CHANGE**

A STRATEGIC TOOL KIT FOR  
MIDDLE MANAGERS

How to influence organisational change: A strategic tool kit for middle managers

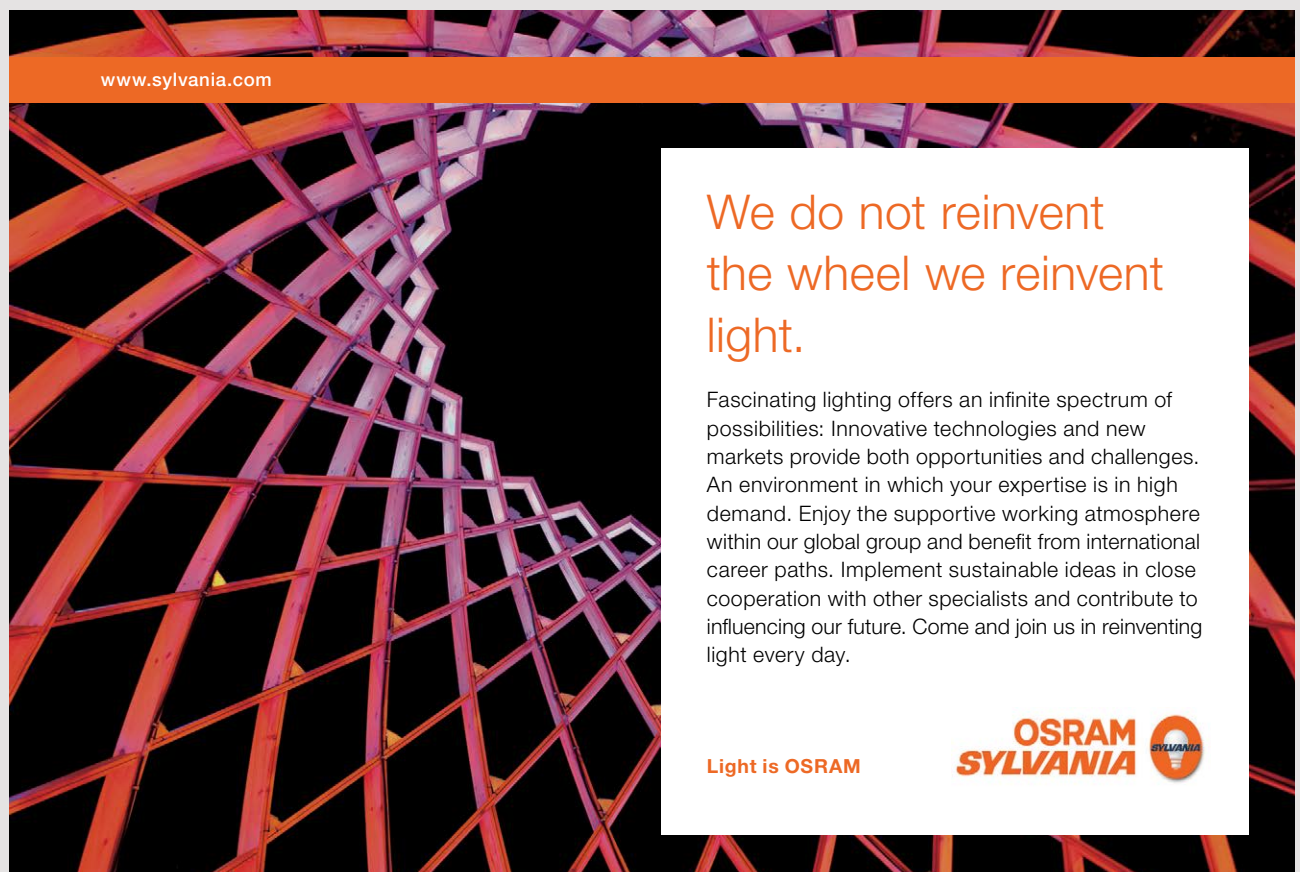
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# INTRODUCTION

## INFLUENCING FROM THE MIDDLE

*'When it comes to envisioning and implementing change, middle managers stand in a unique organisational position'.*

(Huy 2001, page 74)

This workbook is for mid level leaders and professionals who want to change their organisations but lack the confidence to use their power and assert their influence. The key is to become more strategic in outlook and learn how to present clear evidence to senior stakeholders. The first step is to recognise that strategic thinking is not only for senior managers. People, at all levels, are capable of making a plan and then implementing that plan. Professionals working in the middle of organisations possess crucial information about services that is a 'reality check' for senior managers as they develop the next strategic plan. A simplistic division between strategic work and operational work does not reflect the fast paced working environment or demands on people.

This workbook will help you to grow your strategic capability. You will be guided through a series of practical exercises, which will help you to analyse a specific issue, generate evidence and formulate an influencing strategy. You will learn how to conduct a strategic analysis and identify priorities for change. A structured analysis will provide you with a powerful rationale for proposing change to senior managers and key stakeholders.

The workbook is structured into the following sections:

- **Introduction: Rationale and workbook instructions**
- **Part one: What is my current strategic capability?**
- **Part two: How do I grow my influence and facilitate change?**
- **Part three: How do I use the strategic tool kit in my organisation?**
- **Part four: What are the stories of successful influence from the middle?**
- **Part five: How do I initiate new strategic thinking and bring about change?**

The workbook is designed to support the leadership development of middle managers and mid level professionals. It is also a practical resource for leadership coaches, facilitators and trainers. As you work through the sections, you will encounter a number of features designed to support your learning and development. These features are represented by the symbols shown below.



**Information** – this is used to indicate research, quotations, explanations and definitions that you may find helpful.



**Exercise** – these include practical activities, questionnaires and reflective questions which are designed to be thought-provokers.



**Practical tips** – these represent a selection of good practices, questions and tips for learning.



### **Middle managers as organisational strategists**

Westley (1994) was an early writer on the contribution of middle managers to strategy processes. At the time, strategic sense making was regarded as a responsibility of top managers. Sadly, this attitude still prevails and results in strategic decisions that are based on insufficient evidence and poor regard for organisational culture and values. Yet there is expectation and case study evidence that middle managers are capable of thinking strategically, with no detriment to their operational responsibilities:

*'Middle managers who participate in strategic conversations and are permitted some dominance in these discussions will be more likely to sustain high energy levels around strategic issues'.*

(Westley 1994, page 349)

There are now strong arguments for middle managers to have a greater role in the development of strategy (Rouleau & Balogun 2011; Balogun 2006; Balogun 2004; Balogun & Johnson 2004). For two decades, there has been substantial contribution from strategy literature to understanding of the positive contribution of middle managers to organisational performance. Middle managers have been described as culture champions, facilitators and implementers (Wooldridge, Schmidt & Floyd 2008; Floyd & Wooldridge 1994).

Balogun (2003) devised the term ‘change intermediary’ to describe the crucial role of middle managers during the implementation of strategy. People in the middle were key to an understanding the difference between intended and unintended consequences of organisational change. Her work is key to understanding the voices of middle managers and their ability to understand complex issues, despite their apparent ‘lesser’ status. The voices from the middle are not always heard or understood.

The impact of middle managers on culture is crucial (Huy 2011). A top down perspective to implementing change may overlook the cultural response to a new change. The result is invariably positive and negative social and emotional behaviours, which may derail or covertly dismiss the new initiative. Middle managers understand the cultural implications of top-level decisions and are, therefore, a crucial part of strategic change.

The next part is designed to help you reflect on your current attitude to and your assumptions about strategy and includes practical exercises for you to test. The exercises can be completed alone or in collaboration with others.

# 1 WHAT IS MY CURRENT STRATEGIC CAPABILITY?

You may think that strategy is the role of senior management. You may think all things strategic are hard and out of your league. We hope that the previous information section has stimulated your thinking about your influence and the crucial role you have in strategic decision-making.



## Exercise: What are my current perceptions of strategy?

In the box below there is an extract from an organisation's strategic plan. Read this document and use the prompt questions to reflect on the contents.

### Typical strategic plan

**Organisational mission: To provide a flexible service to those living with life limiting illnesses and those important to them, living within the local community.**

| Theme | Business and financial stability                                       | Care delivery   | Governance  | Workforce planning  | Raising the quality of End of Life care                          |
|-------|--|---|---|---|--|
| Goals | To ensure services are sustainable in a changing external environment. | To provide equity of access to Hospice services for patients and those important to them. | To ensure the Hospice is meeting its regulatory requirements and managing risk. | To develop a workforce that can respond effectively to the changing environment and can meet the needs of the people who access Hospice services. | To influence the End of Life agenda both locally and nationally. |



| Theme                              | Business and financial stability   | Care delivery   | Governance   | Workforce planning   | Raising the quality of End of Life care  |
|------------------------------------|--|---|--|--|--|
| <p><b>Strategic Objectives</b></p> | <p>To maximise organisational impact through robust financial management.</p> <p>To ensure reserves are invested wisely</p> <p>To develop strategies to maximise income.</p> | <p>To maintain high quality care in existing services.</p> <p>To seek service user feedback to ensure equity of access.</p> <p>To grow links with under Represented groups.</p> | <p>To ensure systems are in place to ensure effective governance.</p> <p>To ensure compliance with regulatory standards.</p> <p>To review regularly all areas of risk.</p> | <p>To recruit staff with appropriate skills and knowledge</p> <p>To develop effective and consistence leadership across the organisation.</p> <p>To develop a workforce plan to ensure business sustainability</p> | <p>To develop a strong links to the community</p> <p>To promote the quality of End of Life care other health/ social care providers.</p> |

### Strategic plan exercise

Prompt questions:

- What do you notice about the themes in this strategic plan?
- What is your immediate impression of the document? Does it impress? Is it clear?
- What is the context in which this organisation is operating? Are there financial constraints? Are these political pressures?
- What does the document tell you about the community served by this strategic plan?
- Are the voices of clients, service users and customers present within the plan?
- What is your opinion of the language used?
- What do you think the people who wrote the plan wanted to achieve?
- What would you have written in this plan?
- What do you believe are the gaps between the plan and the reality for people operating in the middle of the organisation?



**Exercise: How can I develop my confidence in analysis?**

**Now review your answers to the previous exercise and use the next set of questions to develop your opinions of the strategic plan.**

**This process will build your confidence in reading strategic plans and show you how to develop an informed view of their quality and feasibility.**

- What are your assumptions about strategy and the people who write strategic plans?
- What is your current level of confidence and capability in understanding strategy?
- What would persuade you to try out the strategic tools in Part three of this resource book?
- What would be the benefit to you or your organisation if you understood the 'bigger picture' in more detail?
- What would be the benefit to you or your organisation if you could develop your influence?

## 2 HOW DO I GROW MY INFLUENCE AND FACILITATE CHANGE?



### Life in the middle

We have seen how writers Balogun & Johnson (2004) made a significant contribution to our understanding of middle managers and change. Their work concluded that people operating in the middle have a capacity for sense making that is independent of their leaders. Rather than blindly following orders or faithfully passing messages in the relay system, people in the middle are capable of an intelligent assessment of strategic issues and operational consequences.

The perceptions of senior managers toward their mid level staff is complicated by historical baggage in the form of organisational structures, organisational culture and collective memories. A negative portrayal of middle managers, as disaffected and impotent individuals, has its roots in major structural changes such as downsizing back in the 1990s (Dopson & Stewart 1994). This image still lingers and sustained flawed assumptions about managerial roles and responsibilities at both middle and senior level.

Middle managers are not only close to the business; they are also closer to values and cultural norms of the organisation. Rather than being resistant to change, they are frequently more adaptable in the face of operational challenge and mindful of the values that support a service culture. In practice, middle managers have learned how to manage continuous operational change. Contrast this to a senior manager who may direct a major change every 2–3 years and then move onto another role.

One of the keys to successful influence is the ability to facilitate others to understand the reason for change and increase their level of readiness for new strategy. The next section will allow you to diagnose your current facilitation skills and prepare a development plan to strengthen this aspect of your personal power and influence.

### How to influence from the middle

We have seen from previous sections that there is huge potential for people working in the middle to have greater power and influence. This may sound a long way off and not your normal comfort zone. In fact, it may sound a bit disloyal or slightly subversive because you care about your work and the people you serve. Try this exercise to reflect on your current situation.



### **Exercise: What is my attitude towards power and influence?**

**Use the short prompt questions to build a picture of your current assumptions:**

- Do you have a good idea for improving a service or developing a new one?
- Do you have a practical solution to a problem that is costing the organisation in terms of finance or reputation?
- Do you know how to get more junior people contributing more at meetings?
- Do you care about morale and helping others to enjoy their work?
- Do you know of a poor practice that is going unchallenged and likely to impact the well being of others?

**If you answered YES to any of these questions, it is time for you to develop your power and influence, and start bringing change in your organisation.**



### **Practical tips: The Three Keys**

**There are three major keys to influencing a situation and facilitating change:**

- How to develop your facilitation and influence
- How to generate evidence and influence
- How to use key strategic tools and help others to influence

A key skill, which can develop your strategic thinking and influence, is the facilitation of groups. Facilitation is a practical tool for middle managers and mid level professionals in a range of activities:

- Action Learning,
- Organisational research,
- Collating evidence for a change,
- Generating ideas for a new strategy,
- Evaluating projects,
- Conducting a cultural audit,
- Managing a focus group,
- Service development,
- Performance improvement,
- Strategic conversation,

At the heart of successful facilitation is self-awareness. Your ability to focus on both the purpose and the process of the group is essential. You may have strong views about the outcomes from the group but at times, you will need to use your influence to get the best out of others.

Self-awareness is manifested in a transparent and honest manner. People are very sensitive to the difference between your intent and impact e.g. a focus group will spot your agenda if you continuously intervene with your views.

Below is a self-assessment tool, to help you reflect on your current facilitation skills. The questionnaire content is useful for trainers, coaches, facilitators, and internal and external consultants.



### **Exercise: Facilitation Skills questionnaire**

**Read the following prompts and score yourself along a scale of 1 (Never) and 10 (Always). You may want to meet a trusted friend or colleague, share your results and ask for some feedback.**

1. Ability to stay in the present and to focus on the group process,
2. Considerable sensitivity to the physical comfort of group members and yourself,
3. Frequent tuning into your emotional reactions and those of the others,
4. Ability to deliver non-judgmental observations and avoid interpretation,
5. Ability to put things succinctly, clearly and directly,
6. Awareness of your motives when you are about to speak,
7. Ability to see where the group is and to respect that,
8. Ability to face and accept emotional situations without taking it personally,
9. Ability to establish good rapport with others,
10. Capacity to be both challenging and supportive,
11. Ability to help the group to reflect on the meaning of their experiences,
12. Ability to handle ambiguity effectively,
13. Ability to summarise and draw out key points,
14. Highly skilled at giving constructive feedback,
15. Ability to manage conflict constructively,
16. Clear understanding of the learning process of both yourself and others.

## Your results

### Check your scores with the comments below:

**Less than 40** This is an area for development, think about how you might actively address these development needs.

**41–80** You have some skills in facilitation, but still have areas to focus on and improve.

**81–120** Your facilitation skills are well developed, but there are still some areas where you can become stronger.

**121–160** You are a skilled facilitator with expertise in the field, how can you maximise your strengths and develop further?



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### What is your initial reaction to the results of the questionnaire?

- What insights has it provided about your skill level?
- What messages are there for you?
- How does the feedback from another person impact your thinking?



### Practical tips: Group facilitation – a ten-step model

One way you might facilitate change is to involve colleagues in a workshop on key issues facing your team. This ten-step guide outlines how you might structure such a process.

1. Welcome with introductions from each person, and what they bring to the day.
2. Five minute discussion to check everyone understands the issue/question.
3. Discussion on the issue/question.
4. Each person identifies the key issues on post-it notes.
5. Facilitator helps to group issues together which are similar.
6. Each person votes on the issues they wish to prioritise. This can be done using sticky dots or stars, or a show of hands.
7. The most popular 3–4 issues to be worked on will be identified.
8. What do we **need** to solve this? What solutions do we **have** already? How can we **improve** in this area? What **opportunities** can we bring to this?
9. Work through the **Need, Have, Improve, Opportunities** ideas for each issue and document on cards/post-its/flip charts to create a solutions board.
10. Decide who will present findings and how to feed back.



### Exercise: How to develop your facilitation skills

Now reflect on your current facilitation style and use the following questions to create a development plan. Consider the opportunities to develop your skills at work e.g. focus groups, action learning groups, collaborative research, problem solving, and team projects.

**What are the current strength(s) of your style?** Record a recent situation where you used this style effectively. In what ways was your influence successful? Reflect on the style of listening or question techniques that gave you the best responses.

**Now consider a situation where you believe your influence was not as successful as you hoped.** Reflect on the context of this situation, other stakeholders and your behaviours.

- What was your goal?
- How important was your influence in this situation?
- How did other people behave in response to your situation?
- What other forms of influence are available to you at the time?



## How to generate evidence and influence upwards

You have now diagnosed your current perception of strategy and assessed your current facilitation skills. Another aspect of influencing upwards is your ability to research the evidence to support your opinion. In Part four of this book, there are case studies of successful influence based on the efforts of middle managers and mid level professionals. The people involved started with a belief that strategy was the work of senior managers. They worked collaboratively with other middle managers to gather the evidence to support their views. Their research findings were shared with senior managers and key stakeholders. The outcomes influenced the actions of senior managers and transformed the credibility and capability of the middle.

In all the case studies, collaborative research, on priority organisational issues, was conducted by small diverse teams of middle managers and mid level professionals. Project teams were created to optimise the knowledge and capability from different parts of the business. The teams applied a range of strategic tools to scope a key strategic issue or challenge. The tools gave them a structure to ensure a robust analysis of both external and internal perspectives. The teams were encouraged identify research topics that they felt passionate about and, at the same time, aligned to the strategic priorities of their organisations.

This scoping process ensured a quality dialogue between middle managers, senior managers and key organisational stakeholders. The middle manager teams were responsible for project planning, conducting the research and presenting their findings and recommendations to an invited audience. Throughout the project, the teams were expected to manage their individual and team leadership development. The final outcome was evaluated on the quality of the 'task' of the project and the quality of teamwork.

In the next part, a range of strategic tools will be introduced. All the tools were used by middle managers and mid level professionals. After an initial demonstration, the manager worked collaboratively to apply the tools and gain in confidence. We encourage you to test them for yourself.



# 3 HOW TO USE A STRATEGIC TOOL KIT



## Strategic tools for leaders in the Middle

### Tools for strategic planning

Below are tools, which can be used to influence senior leaders and strengthen the voice of managers and mid level professionals working in the middle of their organisations. These tools are called:

- An environmental scanning tool (PESTLE),
- An overview strategic analysis tool (SWOT),
- A cultural analysis tool (CULTURAL MAPPING),
- An analysis of the influence of external and internal stakeholders (STAKEHOLDER MAPPING),
- A tool to generate strategic options (STRATEGIC CHOICES),
- A tool to test the feasibility of strategic options (RACES),
- A tool to map dynamic change (FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS).

### **Your ability to complete these exercises is not based on your seniority in the organisation.**

Mid level professionals have significant capability to contribute to the development of organisational strategy. These tools will help you to analyse and interpret both external and internal aspects of the organisation. These tools can be used separately or together, and are usually employed at the early stages of the strategic planning process. These tools are more powerful when you collaborate with others and use the collective knowledge, experience and insights of a wider group of people.

#### Practical tool kit exercises

**The key to this section is to choose a practical issue or challenge that is facing you and your organisation. Try to focus in on a priority issue or one where you have some influence already.**

Initially, we suggest that you test the tools separately and build your confidence in their power. As you grow in confidence, the idea of being a mid level strategist will start to become a practical reality. All the tools have been used in strategy sessions with both middle and senior managers. Later we will demonstrate, how the tools work together to produce a very robust strategic analysis with conclusions and practical recommendations. The case studies in Part four will bring practical insights into how strategic tools make middle managers highly effective.

### How to get started with the Strategic Toolkit:

- Invite a few colleagues to a strategic conversation. They could be your peers or people you manage. Explain that the process is creative and a way of learning how to collaborate in the development of strategy,
- Organise a room and some method of collating the outputs of the conversations. Flipcharts and coloured pens or a white board are ideal. Post-it notes also work well,
- The key to a quality outcome is to ensure that your session has a clear purpose and structure with clear guidelines on timings and how the material will be used,
- The major priority of a strategic conversation is to ensure that all participants are listened to and their views are respected. Your chairing/facilitating skills are very important,
- The outcomes can be used to influence senior leaders about key operational priorities. This will enrich the development of organisational strategy and create a greater awareness of organisational culture.



#### Exercise: Strategy tool one (PESTLE Analysis)

The PESTLE analysis enables you to examine the internal and external environment of your organisation and search for relevant political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental factors:

**Political** factors include, not only, aspects of the wider policy and regulatory environment in which the organisation operates, but also the key role of stakeholders:

How stable is the overall political environment?

Are budget policies shifting, and if so, to what effect?

What is on the political agenda for other stakeholders?

What are the local, regional and national political issues impacting the organisation?

**Economic** factors refer to the long-term prospects for the economy as a whole and in the field where the organisation operates, and include a host of issues such as interest rates, unemployment, income levels, as well as supply and demand aspects from changing needs for services to the degree of competition and cost developments.

**Social and cultural** factors include social or demographic changes such as population growth and migration patterns, gender and diversity issues as well as value and attitudinal changes that might affect the organisation.

**Technological** factors refer to technological developments and innovations in the broad sense and how technology could affect your organisation by creating new needs, changing its mode of operation and channels of communication.

**Legal** factors – Are new laws proposed that will influence how the organisation operates (e.g. welfare reform, charity law)?

**Environmental** factors – Are their requirements to meet environmental regulations, consider the recycling or disposal of waste use natural resources responsibly?



**Exercise: Strategy tool two: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT)**

A SWOT analysis is a way of identifying the strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and threats an organisation faces. Using this tool will help you to focus your operational activity where the greatest opportunities exist. The SWOT tool analyses the strengths and weaknesses (SW), which are usually internal factors that you have the power to influence. Opportunities and threats (OT) are external factors over which you have less influence. The learning from the OT part of the tool will help you to formulate strategies to maximise opportunities and minimise risk.

A SWOT analysis involves a series of questions, which should be directed at a specific issue or problem. Here are a few questions to guide you:

**Strengths:**

- What are the advantages of the organisation relative to others in the field?
- What is it that the organisation does well, better than others? What projects and activities?
- What relevant resources are in place and can be relied on?
- What is the organisation known for?
- What aspects of organisational structure, governance, and accountability work well?
- What are the strengths of our employees and leaders?

**Weaknesses:**

- What are the disadvantages of the organisation relative to others in the same field?
- What is it that the organisation does badly, worse than others?
- What resources are volatile and cannot be relied on?

- What aspects of organisational structure, governance, and accountability need attention?
- What are the weaknesses of employees and leaders?
- What policies, patterns, etc. should be avoided?

### **Opportunities:**

- Where are the good opportunities for the organisation (geographically, reputation, expertise, influence)?
- What are some of the trends that could become, or open up opportunities (changes in technology, demand, supply, etc.)?
- Are there changes in government policies expected?
- Are there changes in social patterns, value changes, population profiles etc.?
- Are there events that could open up opportunities?

### **Threats:**

- What are the obstacles that are most likely to emerge?
- Are there old and new competitors that could pose a threat?
- Are supply and demand changes taking place that could threaten the organisation?
- What technological changes could pose a threat?
- Are there debt or cash flow problems?
- Could changes in policy affect the organisation negatively?



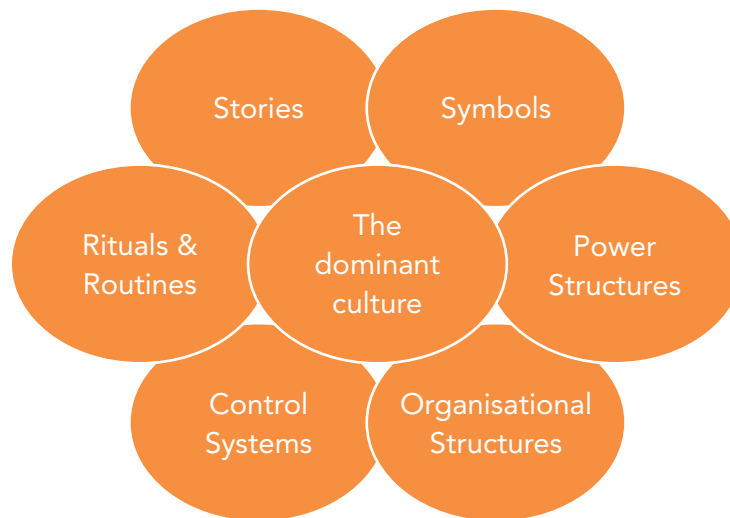
### **Exercise: Strategy tool three (Cultural Mapping)**

#### **Organisational culture**

The culture of your organisation will have an important impact on the way strategy is developed and implemented. The cultural compatibility with planned strategic change is key to achieving strategic goals and priorities. A major indicator of successful organisational change is the way that everyone involved understands cultural norms. Mid level professionals and managers have a crucial role in cultural mapping and analysis. Their experiences of leading staff and teams gives them a practical view of culture and the feasibility of strategic plans.

This tool is a powerful way for you communicate strategically to senior managers and influence change. Your influence is derived from your 'day to day' understanding of how organisation culture and values are sustained.

### The Cultural Audit



#### Step one: collecting cultural information

Use the six outer circles of the model above to collect information about organisational culture. You could choose your own organisation or ask permission to work with people in an external organisation e.g. a provider, a partner or key contact.

You could set up some focus groups or conduct one-to-one interviews with a range of stakeholders. The questions below are provided as a prompt during your step one and you may need to customise them to your specific context.

It is important to establish a relaxed atmosphere when collecting cultural data. People tend to be very responsive and keen to talk about their organisation. The stories and anecdotes are a rich source of information about culture. The six circles will help you collect both objective (factual) information and subjective (human experience) information. You may find that your findings sit in more than one circle and that ideas appear to link across several circles.

**Try to avoid judging the information that you collect – this judgement is coming from your cultural norms and beliefs!**

## Typical cultural mapping questions

### Stories:

- What are the stories told across the organisation?
- Do the stories relate to strengths, weaknesses, successes or failures?
- Who are the heroes and villains?
- Are there stories about mavericks?
- What are the core beliefs that these stories represent?
- How do the stories sustain organisational culture?

### Symbols:

- What forms of language are used across the organisation?
- Look for jargon and specialised language. Is this language internal?
- How accessible is this language to people outside the organisation?
- What are the symbols of the organisation? Look for logos, uniforms, status symbols, websites, vehicles, offices, parking, perks,
- What is communicated about the organisation? Strategic direction, financial concerns, customer experience, staff news, innovation, good news or bad news.

### Power structures:

- How is power distributed in the organisation?
- Which stakeholders appear more powerful?
- How does the use of power sustain cultural norms?
- How does the use of power impact organisational change?
- How do people speak about powerful people in the organisation?

### Organisational structure:

- How flat/hierarchical is the structure?
- How formal/informal is structure of the organisation?
- Does the structure encourage collaboration or competition?
- How do the different parts of the structure interact?
- Is the organisation structured to deliver the strategic plan?
- Is there any evidence of structures that are based in individual power?
- Is the structure aligned to organisational values and culture?

### **Control systems:**

- What is measured by the organisation?
- What do external stakeholders measure?
- How well are control systems and measurements related to strategy?
- Are there control systems that are related to history and largely unchallenged?
- How do the control systems and measurements impact organisational culture?
- How do control systems impact human behaviour?

### **Rituals and routines:**

- What are the key organisational rituals?
- What values and beliefs do they reveal?
- What behaviours do these rituals encourage or discourage?
- How do routines reinforce the cultural norms of the organisation?
- What would look odd if a ritual or routine was changed?
- How easy are ritual and routines easy to change?

### **Step two: analyzing your cultural material**

You will now have substantial information about the culture of the organisation but it may appear a confusing mass of detail. Here are a few practical steps to help you conduct your analysis:

- Choose a visual method for displaying your finding e.g. flipchart, white board. Post-it notes,
- Take each circle in turn and summarise the detail into themes,
- Now look for patterns across the six circles,
- Summarise these patterns,
- Create a statement that reflects the current organisational culture,
- This statement encapsulates all aspects of the culture and is displayed in the centre circle.



## Stakeholder Management

*'Stakeholders are people or organisations that have a real, assumed or imagined stake in the organisation, its performance and sustainability'*


(Anheir 2014, page 409)

Organisations are increasingly adopting collaborative working practices. This brings complex stakeholder relationships and require new forms of both individual and organisational influence. The collaborating organisations have different interests, needs and challenges. In a challenging economic scenario, this diversity can present more of a threat than an opportunity e.g.


- The core mission is subject to different interpretations,
- A dual governance and management structure may present a conflict of interests,
- The impact of values and deeply held convictions on the day to day operations,
- The operational complexity of interplay between altruistic behaviour and commercial requirements,

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- The culture of complex operating environments with a high degree of uncertainty,
- The different expectations and motivations held by different stakeholders,
- The divergent interests and needs of clients and service users.

The diverse interests of multiple stakeholders can have a negative effect and take attention away from the external service to an emphasis on internal politics (Perrott 1996). Over time, this further complicates the leadership challenges facing both senior and middle managers. The presence of multiple stakeholders can be a challenge to middle managers. Day to day service delivery is largely the responsibility of middle managers and yet they are subject to political and economic pressures, which can prevent them from being effective in role.

Studies of middle managers over twenty years have been largely based on the perceptions of other stakeholders. While there is a wealth of conclusions about middle managers' behaviour, there is little understanding of how they make their voices heard. In an environment of continuous change, middle managers have a crucial leadership role to play in balancing the wider organisational system. The pivot is the relationship between strategic decisions and operational reality. The influence of middle managers is a core organisational capability and business asset.



#### **Exercise: Strategy tool four (Stakeholder Mapping)**

An understanding of stakeholder management is key to successful influence within an organisation. As middle managers, you may have a clear view of how a change can be managed but your stakeholders are likely to be in different states of readiness of the proposed change.

#### **Identify your key stakeholders using the following prompts:**

- Do they fund the organisation?
- Do they control the funds of your organisation?
- Do they fund some aspect of your project idea?
- Would they benefit from your project outcomes?
- Will your findings change the way they work?
- Are they ready for change?
- Are they likely to resist change?
- Do they influence policy?
- Do they inspect quality?
- Do they work internally or externally to your organisation?
- Do they sell services or products to your organisation?
- Are they in a partnership or an alliance with yo

**Plan your influencing strategy using the following prompts:**

Review your list of stakeholders and your previous answers. The model below provides a structure to your analysis and will ensure an effective stakeholder strategy. Consider the following questions for each stakeholder:

- What power/influence do they have in your chosen issue or research topic?
- What level of interest are they likely to show in your outcomes and recommendations?

|                     | Low interest in outcomes | High interest in outcomes            |
|---------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Low level of power  | Minimal effort           | Keep informed                        |
| High level of power | Keep satisfied           | Keep involved ( <b>Key Players</b> ) |

*Adapted from Gardner, J.R., Rachlin, R. and Sweeny, H.W.A. (1996)*

**Stakeholder planning**

**Key players** – keep them engaged throughout your proposed change. Listen carefully to their reactions and consider their involvement in your strategic analysis.

**Keeps satisfied** – a tricky political area. This category of stakeholder may move into being a ‘key player’ and start to exert their influence on the project. Be aware of their reactions

**Keep informed** – this could be staff, external contacts and anyone who are helping you with research.

**Minimal effort** – but keep track as the project progresses as this may change as you discover new ideas from your project. Or the context of your project may suddenly change



**Exercise: Strategy tool five: (Strategic Choices)**

Below is a well-established tool for identifying directions for strategic development. It is also helpful ‘reality check’ prior to making decisions. Issues such as market coverage, products and organisational capability can be considered and managed. Long term development in any of the boxes will require the development of competencies to cope with the changing situation. Innovation is therefore a key ingredient of strategic growth.

|                    | Existing services and products                          | New services and products                           |
|--------------------|---|---|
| Existing Customers | A. Protect and build existing offering and markets      | B. Develop product/services for established markets |
| New customers      | C. Market Development of existing products and services | D. Diversify products and services to new markets   |

Ansoff, I (1957) *Strategies for Diversification*, HBR, Sept/Oct, p. 114.

### Now analyse your findings and test your thinking:

- A. Why is this a low risk option?
- B. What do you need to consider in this quadrant?
- C. Why is this an attractive option if your market is shrinking?
- D. What are the implications of this high-risk option?

### Using Ansoff to influence upwards

Review your findings from the exercise above and draw some conclusions. Imagine that you are in a position to influence s senior team or board and script how you would present your views. This is practical opportunity to rehearse a great opportunity to influence a change. Here are some prompt questions to help you:

- How would you advise senior managers to progress?
- What is the evidence in support of your view?
- Which strategic options would benefit the organisation?
- What are the benefits and risks of your recommendations?
- What is your practical advice on the cultural implications of the change?
- How would you implement your recommendations and ensure a successful change?



### Exercise: Strategy tool six (RACES)

The previous exercise identified a range of strategic choices that you might communicate to senior management. Your grasp of the issues supported by evidence will have influenced the situation. The following model brings another dimension to your strategic influence.

Your ability to assess the feasibility of a range of strategic choices is a factor of your understanding of the operational consequences of adopting a particular strategic. This is where your role in the middle gives you valuable insights.

It is important to consider the future challenges and implications of each strategic option. This will enable you and your stakeholders to make wise decisions that are operationally sustainable.

**Take each strategic option/choice in turn and assess it against the following questions:**

- **(R) Resources** – How do we develop the finance, accommodation, knowledge, people, and skills for this option to be successful?
- **(A) Acceptability** – Have we consulted key stakeholders? Do we know what they think? Are key stakeholders in a high state of readiness and acceptance for this strategy?
- **(C) Consistency** – Is this option aligned with our vision, values, brand and reputation? Have we checked our assumptions with people who will be affected by the proposed change?
- **(E) Effectiveness** – What is the issue we are trying to solve? Have we made an accurate assessment of the issue? Does this strategic option solve this issue? Is there a better option?
- **(S) Sustainability** – Will this option bring a lasting result? Is it worth making the investment if the outcome is short term? What happens if the situation changes suddenly?

The **RACES** test will help to avoid taking strategic decisions that are based on flawed logic or insufficient evidence. The outcomes of the test will present a clear position that can be understood and shared with all those who will be affected by the change.



### **Planning strategic change: Force field analysis**

This next tool takes a strategic approach to planning a change and was created by Kurt Lewin. Previous strategic tools were focussed on analysis of the environment and the strategic options open to the organisation. The Force Field tool allows you to map the issues as dynamic forces, which can either help your change or hinder it.

The outcomes from this exercise inform and improve your ability to manage resistance to change. The process of converting a strategy to an operational reality is a major reality check especially if the current cultural norms are not considered. This is where the outcomes of your cultural mapping are key to a well-balanced change plan.

Additionally, Force Field Analysis will help you focus others on the positive aspects of the change and this will leverage your influence. Conversely, an examination of negative aspects of the change will help you to focus your immediate sphere of influence rather than wishing you could change the world overnight.

This tool works well with both the PESTLE and SWOT tools. The best results for a Force Field come from a collaborative approach involving a number of stakeholders who represent a range of views on the change. This is when your facilitation skills will be needed. It is important to engage people creatively during a Force Field so consider visual representations as a method of collating ideas at each stage.

This strategic tool produces a dynamic understanding of a planned change where **driving forces** (strengths and opportunities) are mapped in relationship to **restraining forces** (weaknesses and threats).



### **Exercise: Strategy tool seven (Force Field analysis)**

Follow the next seven steps to analyse the change you want to influence and identify the most effective approach to implementation within your organisation. There are a number of visual aids to choose from that will help your facilitation e.g. white board, post-it notes, coloured marker pens, magnetic board.

The key is to ensure that all voices are heard and views listened to. This approach will give you rich information to analyse and start to build a readiness for change across different stakeholders.

**Step one: Identify** the change required – this could be as a result of a new strategy, a change in service provision, a new internal system or the result of a crisis

**Step two: Discuss** all aspects of the current situation and agree on the scope of the change

**Step three: Vision** and define together the desired situation

**Step four: List** both driving and restraining forces (this can be people, finance, organisation, environment, stakeholder groups, political issues,

**Step five: Discuss** options for the leverage of driving forces to facilitate change

**Step six: Discuss** options for minimizing the impact of restraining forces to improve readiness for change

**Step seven: Prioritise** and agree short and medium actions to bring about dynamic change

## 4 ORGANISATIONAL CASE STUDIES

### Introduction

We now invite you to apply your learning about the strategic tools to some ‘real world’ case studies. In each story, there are examples of middle managers and mid level professionals working collaboratively to bring about change in their organisations. They learned to use the strategic tools in this book and gather robust evidence for change. They developed their influencing skills and facilitated groups of key stakeholders and groups with an interest in the research outcomes.

As a result, they developed organisational readiness for their proposed change and communicated to senior leaders that they were capable of leading from the middle. In all case studies, the story did not end with research findings and recommendations. The quality of strategic thinking combined with operational acumen resulted in practical outcomes that have been sustained. Senior leaders and key stakeholders welcomed the recommendations and in all cases provided funding and support to progress the changes.



### Strategy as a process

Each of the tools introduced in the previous section can be applied separately to generate strategic ideas, options and practical recommendations. We hope that you have experimented with some of the tools and achieved some practical ideas for the future.

It is important to realise that your influence from the middle of the organisation will be so much more powerful when you have significant evidence to support your opinions. The tools allow you to collate valuable information, which will influence senior managers and build your confidence to present your ideas.

The case studies all reveal the experiences of some middle managers and mid level professionals who took a risk, developed their strategic capability and used it to influence senior stakeholders. There was significant collaboration across different professional groups and the result was both first class strategic work and tangible operational plans. The people operating in the middle learned how to influence from the middle and take a vital leadership role.

Strategy became a process of analysis, iteration and collaborative learning between different levels of management. Leadership became a distributed and collaborative activity. The case studies proved that development of workable strategies is the product of collaborative learning. In all case studies the outcomes of strategic analysis became the basis for constructive strategic conversations with senior managers and key organisational stakeholders. Middle managers and mid level professionals became the champions, sense makers and interpreters (Balogun, 2006).

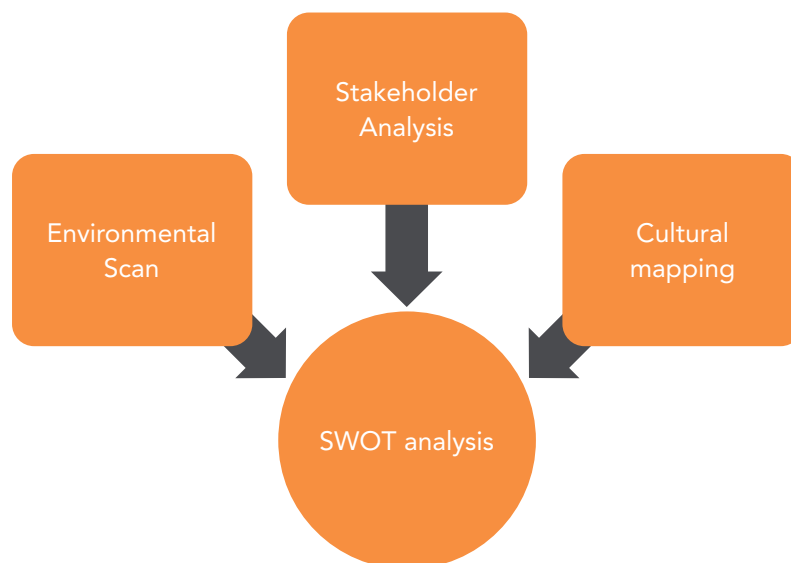


### How strategic tools work together

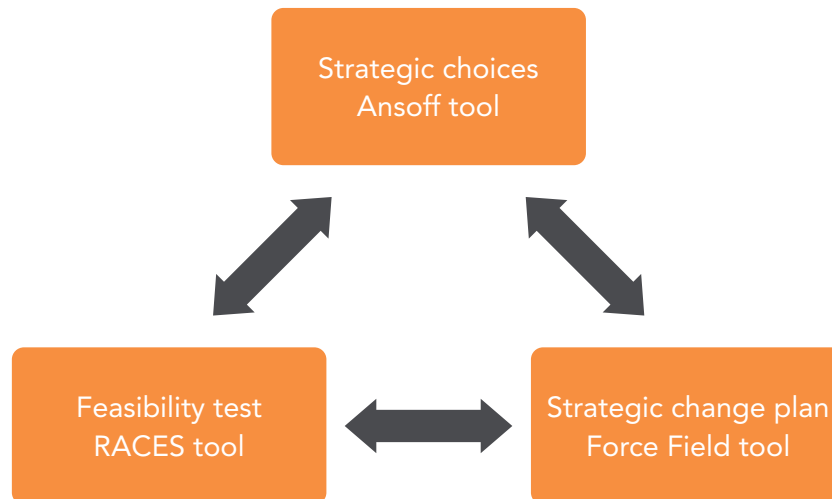
**The first level of strategic analysis** is a scan of external and internal features of the organisation. The environmental scan is conducted using the PESTLE tool and information can be drawn from a study of a range of existing documents and by interviewing key stakeholders. The websites of government departments, industry publications and existing strategic plans will produce a lot of information. The PESTLE is an ideal structure for collating a detailed picture of future trends and challenges, which may impact the organisation.

The stakeholder analysis tool is key to a political understanding of different agendas operating both externally and internally. The insights from this analysis are important during strategic development and planning change. Finally, the cultural mapping is an effective tool to understand the cultural dynamics of the organisation and the probability of effective change.

These three tools work together to give a top-level appreciation of the state of readiness for future challenges and opportunities. The SWOT analysis is a practical overview tool that collates all the information from the first level of analysis and presents the information in a structured format.



**The second level of strategic analysis** is a bridge from ‘big picture’ thinking to the practical reality of implementing new strategies. This a critical stage where the current capabilities and resources of the organisation are mapped to provide a clear operational picture of the feasibility of the proposed strategy.



Strategic choices and options are developed using the Ansoff tool. This allows you to map low and high-risk strategies and priorities elements of the emerging strategy. The RACES model is a robust feasibility test that is used with the full spectrum of strategic choices. The risks of each strategic choice are examined in detail for flawed assumptions. Poor quality analysis at this stage can put the organisation at risk. Insufficient evidence about the implications of the proposed strategy on financial health, organisational reputation, service and people will impact the leadership ability to effect change.

It is now time to convert the strategic choices into tactical decisions and change plans. The Force Field tool is ideal for mapping the dynamics of strategic change. Middle managers and mid level professionals have a significant role to play in both first and second level of strategic analysis. The historical attitudes to people in the middle have left a legacy of deeply flawed assumptions about how strategy is developed.

The future needs a collaborative approach to strategic analysis and development. This means collaborative learning between different levels of management and across all stakeholders in the organisation. The case studies are practical stories of people in the middle applying strategic tools, researching as teams, drawing conclusions and making recommendations to both senior stakeholders and their peers. In recognition that their recommendations would be adopted, the teams influenced their peers and direct reports. In short, they actively sought commitment from others and increased the organisational readiness for change.



## How to work with the case studies

The following case studies will demonstrate the practical learning outcomes of collaborative project work. As you study the case studies look out for the tangible outcomes, organisational benefits and collaborative learning processes. Here are a few of the immediate benefits drawn our evaluation studies with both middle and senior stakeholders:

- Individual leadership development,
- High performance team work,
- Practical recommendations for organisational change,
- Quality strategic analysis supported by research,
- Dual impact on strategic thinking and operational performance,
- Greater understanding of organisational culture and behaviour,
- An empowered and motivated mid level leadership.

The case studies are drawn from both private and public sector organisations. In each example, teams of middle managers and mid level professionals worked together to influence a change in their organisations. The teams presented their findings to senior stakeholders and gained 'sign off' and support for their recommendations. Many of the teams became responsible for the implementation of their research findings and project recommendations.

As you read the case studies, it is important to reflect that the projects were a powerful method of consolidating individual and team development. Project teams applied a range of leadership and high performance team tools to project manage both their research and their leadership development. The team projects delivered recommendations for change, which included their learning reflections. Evaluation outcomes have demonstrated that individual and team development has been sustainable with a major impact on organisational performance. The case studies selected for you to study are:

- An Appy Future (UK Social Housing organisation)
- Oneteam (UK Social Housing organisation)
- Going back to school (North West construction company)
- Valuing our volunteers (UK Hospice)
- Push the Button (Collaborative venture in North West hospices)

### **Before you read the case studies, make some notes using the prompts below:**

What aspect of change am I interested in?

What is the priority for my development as a leader?

What new ideas could benefit my organisation and my influence?

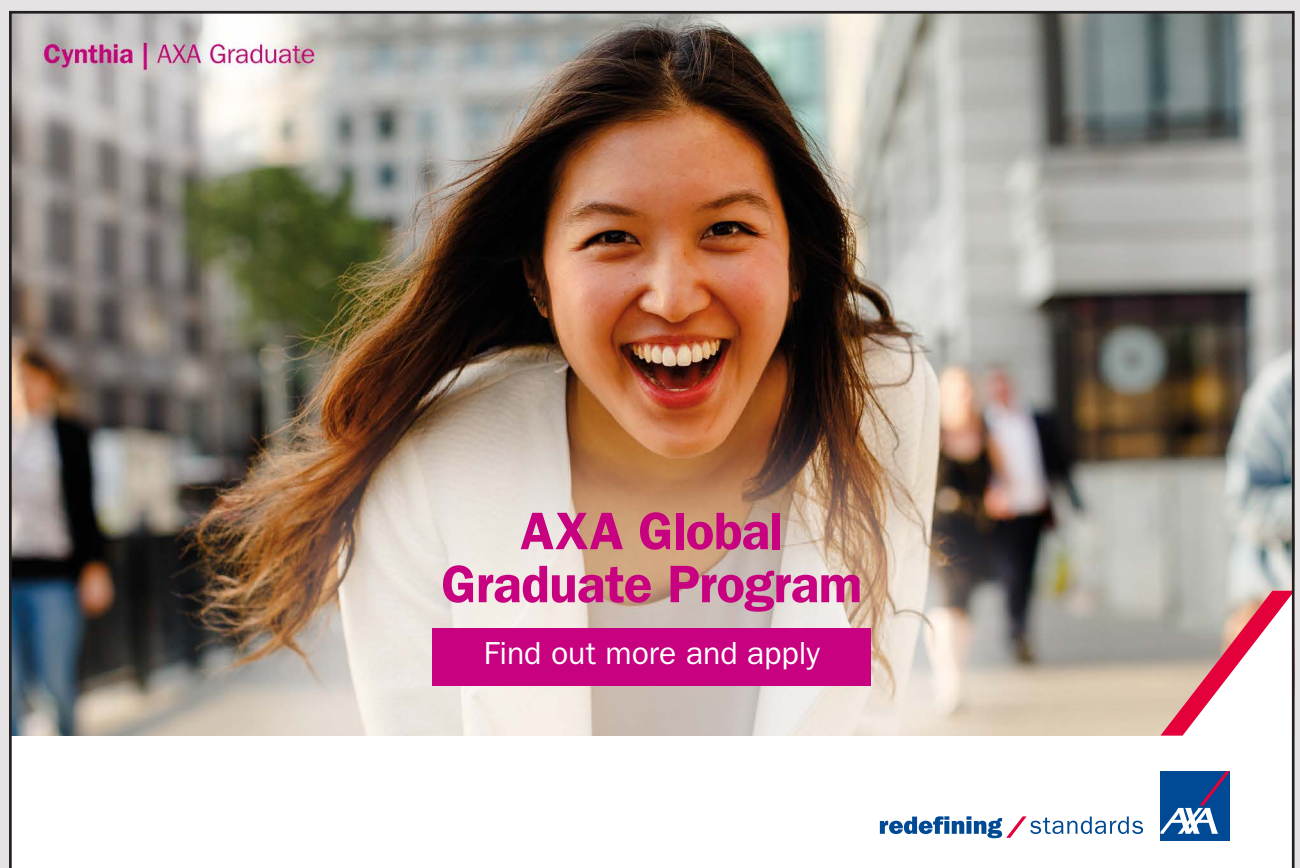
## Case study one: An 'Appy' future

*'We have shaped the future of the business from a systems point of view – our Board agreed to over £350,000 worth of investment for this project. We are anticipating efficiency savings over a three year period to be double this.'*

(Project team, 2016)

### Why this project?


This project team consists of four managers from a Housing Association, an organisation which manages social housing in the North East of England. Many of the houses are in rural locations, and there is a split in the geography of the organisation, with two main towns being separated by an extensive area of moorland and rugged terrain.



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The team was ambitious to bring about change through technology, and keen to create efficiencies by reducing unnecessary paperwork and duplication of effort. The staff group that would be using the new technology was surveyors who gathered information about the condition of properties out in the field. The information was captured on forms and then transported back to the Head Office to be logged onto a database. It was clear that a more efficient process could be developed if the surveyors entered data into an application on their mobile phones when on site at the property.

### **How did the team go about it?**

They started their project by engaging with survey teams to discover what would make them more effective when working offsite. The team also asked a range of colleagues to try out some new ways of working, and to test some free applications they had found on the Apple store. This proved to be an excellent way of gaining trust and confidence with colleagues who had previously been reluctant to use new technology.

The practical testing of applications was also a quick and easy way of testing out innovative solutions. The project team kept the internal IT Department informed but took some risks in the interests of the organisation. Mid way through the project they by-passed the usual processes and protocols involved in commissioning new systems. Early in the project, the team realised that their research would challenge norms and learned the importance of skilful stakeholder management. This learning gave them the confidence to challenge outdated IT processes.

*To do this we need the right systems environment,  
office environment and most importantly the right culture.'*

(Project team, 2015)

### **What were the outcomes?**

In their nine-week project timeline, the team tested three different mobile applications for the delivery of mobile forms with people across the organisation. The impact on service and project management was huge, and became a springboard for a much larger and more significant project. The team developed a longer-term plan to bring about a system change that allowed them to mobilise their aged systems and provide a fully functioning mobile application for customers as well as staff.

The result was the full implementation of a new platform for mobile working across the organisation; a solution which has allowed the organisation to effectively mobilise all their back-office systems for use on site and a complete change in the culture of working without the need for an office base. The change to more agile working practices has improved communication with customers. In addition, site based teams have been able to reshape the way they deliver front line services. The organisational benefits are huge and deliver improved customer service, reduced costs and release teams from the restrictions of manual processes.

*'If you were to ask me whether the programme was worthwhile, it would be a resounding yes. It provided us with a platform and most importantly a license to not only influence the whole company from administrative assistant to Board level but to bring about real change.'*<sup>1</sup>

(Project team leader, 2016)



### **Practical tips: Case study learning**

#### **What did this project show us about mid level influence on organisational change?**

- Be ambitious with your ideas for change,
- Involve the right people and manage the politics,
- Use your influence and power appropriately with different stakeholders,
- Believe in what you do,
- Keep working at it despite signs of resistance,
- Look for new and different ways of doing things,
- Break the rules but choose carefully which ones.

#### **Case study two: Unity #One Team**

One year later, another group of managers, from the same company, embarked on leadership development. They applied their learning about the impact of middle managers on strategy to a second, highly successful project called 'One Team'.

#### **What was the team's purpose?**

This innovative project team undertook a feasibility study for implementing a self-service system to assist customers with enquiries and reduce the pressure on customer services and reception staff. The drivers behind this project were to provide a more accessible service for service users, increase digital inclusion options for customers and try to achieve better value for money for the organisation.

The purpose of the project was to contribute to the organisation's 2020 vision of a digitally inclusive organisation. What this meant in practice was a reduction in 50% of calls to the customer service team. In time, this reduction would enable the customer services team to operate more strategically and develop their capability. However, the customer base represented a full spectrum of confidence and capability in the use of technology. This project team recognised that this diversity would need to be factored the project research.

The project was strategically focused on the vision and direction of the business but it was also aligned to the development of an organisational culture which was forward thinking and innovative.

### **How did they organise themselves?**

This team took a bold and creative approach to the project phase. A successful exercise on a leadership development programme had shown them that collaborating with other teams gave them better access to resources and a quality outcome. This inspired a group of 18 middle managers to create a 'one team' approach to their project work. They created their own learning organisation to structure the project and created team leaders roles to manage different aspects of the project. Four sub-groups then worked on key elements of this project:

- A team researched the physical design and layout of the reception area,
- A team studied the technological options,
- A team focussed on engagement, stakeholder and people affected by the change,
- A team tracked the learning and development of both the whole group and took responsibility for promoting the project both internally and externally.

An overall Chief Executive was elected to oversee the project. The CEO worked across all teams and retained the 'big picture' overview of the whole project.

The four teams were very clear about their outcomes in their project proposal, and this kept them on a strategic track. The possibility of four silos was avoided. Outcomes included:

- A physical design layout of the reception area which integrates the new technology and ensures staff are on hand to support customers,
- Recommendations on the type of technology and housing management systems required enabling a smooth implementation that was compatible with other systems in the organisation,
- Quality engagement with all groups to predict the cultural shift needed,
- A mechanism for managing the individual and team development of the whole group with clear learning outcomes to share with all stakeholders,
- A robust influencing strategy, which promoted the concepts, findings and recommendations of the project.

### How did the team perform?

Unity #Oneteam delivered an outstanding project presentation to an audience which included stakeholders from the senior leadership team and colleagues whose roles were directly impacted by the findings. The Chief Executive (for the project) led her team in a polished and highly influential conference, which included:

- Four workshop stalls where information was displayed, demonstrated, and discussed. Visual images, technological mock-ups, written reports, data, and short demos all engaged the participants and visitors to the stalls. Each team member had a part to play.
- A role play involving members of the invited audience, to experience how the present system can lead to long waiting times, and frustrations for customers. This was compared to the benefits a new self-service option could bring – swifter, more customer friendly, and enabling staff to work more productively and effectively.
- A formal presentation, which highlighted the research findings and conclusions.
- Recommendations arising from the project were made in a clear and concise way, and the Chief executive and four team leaders; the “mini-organisation leadership team” was invited to the “big-organisation” SLT to agree the way forward.
- Learning was discussed in a Strategic Conversation style, with each of the sub-teams reflecting on their development in a small group along with their invited guests. This enabled all voices to be heard and was an influential and interesting method of capturing learning.



#### **Practical tips: Case study learning**

### What did this project show us about mid level influence on organisational change?

- A ‘one team’ approach requires a clear vision, agreed structure, defined roles and leadership,
- A key strategic priority was researched in four teams with clearly defined research and learning outcomes,
- The leadership style was aligned to collaborative working and demonstrated both supportive and challenging behaviours,
- High quality engagement with different stakeholder groups accelerated the readiness for change across the organisation,
- Research outcomes challenged traditional views about the use of technology at the customer interface,
- The creative mix of different forms of communication to present project findings allowed different individuals to build confidence and capability,

### **Case study three: Going back to School**

#### **Why this project?**

The case study is about a construction company in the North West of England, which works with social housing to deliver creative refurbishments of homes and their environment. The company is a family business established in 1984, which has seen a rapid growth in the last five years. A project team chose to look at how they might work with schools to promote the work they do, encourage young people to consider a career in construction, and to overcome negative perceptions of the industry.

The choice of team project was well aligned to the strategic growth ambitions of the business and the need for new talented people to join the business. The development of internal capability and succession was agreed to be an effective way of preserving the strong service focussed organisation culture.

#### **What did the team want to achieve?**

This project team was keen to deliver a practical solution and provide a toolkit so that anyone in the business could use it on school visits and presentations. Team members envisaged a demonstration, which would attract the attention of their audience, be simple to set up and transport, and be fun and interactive. Their long-term ambition was that the company culture would shine through and leave a lasting impression on young people.

#### **How did they go about it?**

A creative process came up with ideas and innovations, which were tested out on friends and family. Prototypes were developed, ditched or designed. Team members shared the task and collaborated on a very good project-scoping phase. The team built on their individual strengths and used their learning during a leadership programme to help them – for example, the more reflective members reined back some of the more activist members when they forged ahead with grandiose plans, and the more confident in the group encouraged and motivated the more reticent ones.

*'We need it to be simple but challenging enough to readily engage with the student to get instant buy-in from them and lead to greater participation'.*

(Project team 2016)



The project needed to reach all young people regardless of gender, ethnicity, ability and educational attainment. Cost was a consideration, with a desire to minimise outlay so that the product could be rolled out across a number of schools. Finally, the team wanted to bring something new and exciting to the table.

### **What were the successes?**

The management of the situation from the drawing board to the light-bulb moment was extremely well organised and the team pulled together to create a truly innovative product. They wanted to showcase the company's culture, as well as its technical background, and this was achieved. It was important to the group that the solution stood out from other competitors. Their presentation tool kit was developed by listening to schools and their students. The outcome was clearly more exciting than the traditional 'hands-on' demonstration of plastering, tiling or bricklaying offered by competitors.

### **The Proposal – Build a school challenge**

The project team for 'Going back to School' produced a competition with a pack of information, which could be used with schools in a practical and engaging way. The students were given the following challenge:

*– 'You are the planning team of a construction company who are about to build a new school. It is your job to make sure that all the work activities happen at the right time so that the building is finished on schedule. You have 47 weeks to complete the school.'*

The pack included the stages involved in building a school, with the time it would take to complete each stage. School students were then asked to work together to put the stages in order, using a simple project plan to achieve the build. Photographs and diagrams brought the project to life, and information about careers at each stage was included. The team tested out the prototype pack during a presentation day with other colleagues and company directors. The pack is now being used across North West schools and has received excellent feedback. Senior stakeholders empowered this project team to implement their strategy for attracting young people into the construction industry.





### **Practical tips: Case study learning**

#### **What did this project show us about mid level influence on organisational change?**

- Collaborative research brings innovative ideas to organisational issues,
- A key strategic priority was analysed by middle managers who went onto implement their own solutions,
- Robust strategic work allowed the team to appreciate the views of young people and the result was a more creative and practical outcome,
- Traditional views about recruitment in the construction industry were challenged releasing the confidence and motivation to change dated processes,
- Despite the clear strategic direction for change, there was no erosion of a strong value led company culture,
- A prototype allowed the team to refine their ideas and gain more support
- Project success was sealed by listening to schools and their students.

#### **Case study four: Valuing our volunteers**

##### **Why this project?**

The project team worked for a hospice based in the south of England and serving an island community with end of life care, both in a hospice and at home. This project team was composed of people from clinical and managerial roles. In UK hospices, paid staff are supported by teams of volunteers, working in a range of roles and locations.

##### **What did the project team want to achieve?**

This project team wanted to research how to create an engaged volunteer workforce, who feel valued for the contribution they make, and confident that their skill sets are being wisely and effectively used.

The topic was relevant to all parts of the organisation where volunteers were employed, but the experiences of volunteers were mixed, and there was a sense of frustration from several groups.

##### **How did they go about it?**

The team set off with an ambition to change the way volunteers were recruited, inducted, trained, managed and communicated with. The initial research included contacting other hospices and organisations to find out how they approached their volunteers, interviews with volunteers and staff were undertaken, and questionnaires were circulated.

The project was not without its difficulties – the power of some volunteers was underestimated, and the initial approach to senior staff resulted in a setback for the team. The enthusiasm with which the group had started off waned, and there was a feeling of despondency that anything would change.

A break-through occurred after a mid-project review with the project coach, and visiting another, larger hospice. Reinvigorated, the team determined to consolidate their findings and make some key recommendations to the senior team and board.

### **What did this team achieve?**

The resulting report included a highly innovative presentation with a board game depicting some of the challenges and risks facing the organisation. The team involved the audience of colleagues, partners and stakeholder to illustrate the current issues facing volunteers, patients and staff, and to show that change was required.

This presentation had a serious message, but was delivered in a creative way, which helped to support the recommendations made by the team in their concluding remarks. This project team produced an excellent volunteering strategy and asked the board of trustees to accept it. The board considered the strategy at their next meeting, and fully adopted and implemented the strategy. The recommendations included the creation of a new post of Volunteer Manager. Five months later, this post was filled and a new middle manager joined the hospice.



### **Practical tips: Case study learning**

#### **What did this project show us about mid level influence on organisational change?**

- With robust evidence, middle managers can influence a board,
- An engaging project presentation persuaded senior leaders to listen,
- Strategic decisions are influenced by organisational politics – people in the middle can learn this fast,
- Stakeholder management is key especially when the proposed change is unpopular,
- Collaborative working is a challenge but it brings innovation and courage to change,
- A team coach can help the team understand their process and make changes,
- A benchmark visit brings fresh perspectives and motivates the team,
- The interaction between paid and unpaid staff is political and requires good stakeholder management.

### Case study five: ‘Push the Button’

#### What was the business project, and why did the team choose it?

The context for this team project was a collaborative ‘Leading from the Middle’ programme for six different UK hospice organisations. The topic researched by this team was about digital fundraising and to discover what makes people press the “Donate now” button on a charity website. The team comprised four managers from different hospices who worked in very different roles within the middle of their organisations. While the research topic was focussed on hospice income generation, some members of the team were from clinical backgrounds.

Their interest in the topic came about after undertaking an environmental scan of their hospices using the Strategic tool called PESTLE (this was described in part three).

This team realised that it was important to raise the profile of digital fundraising for the following reasons:

- **Sustainability.** This was particularly relevant in light of reductions in statutory funding and the austerity agenda,
- **Generational.** The need to embrace new modes of charitable giving as we move from “Dorothy Donor” and baby boomer to Generations X, Y, and Z,
- **Social media.** The success of social media to fundraising, for example, the Ice bucket challenge,
- **Efficiency.** The need to increase the profile of online giving, as a cheaper and more efficient method of donation.

#### What were the findings?

The team identified that just 1–2% of donations were made online through the hospices’ websites. This was compared with other organisations, e.g. the Charities Aid Foundation, where 16% of donations were made online.

The team then investigated the reasons for this discrepancy, and looked at the barriers and issues, which were preventing a greater take-up. The project concluded that greater innovation was required, along with investment in new technology and a realisation that failure to embrace online donations would limit fundraising potential, and limit future growth.

### What did this team learn?

For the members of this team, one of the greatest benefits of working in a diverse group was the opportunity to visit other hospices and meet different professionals. The widening of their perspectives and ability to think outside their usual remit brought a sense of confidence and strength to them both as individuals and as a team.

For some team members the research process was a challenge and the topic not their area of expertise. The team project became a great opportunity for the team to view issues from a new perspective, ask questions, and make suggestions for change. The team experts in income generation learned to be open to challenge and not to become defensive.



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Working in a small charity can limit exposure to new technology and the team acknowledged the barriers that small organisations can face in this respect. Younger members of the team were leading the way on technological innovations, but senior leaders did not always share their enthusiasm. The team research identified a number of reasons for resistance to change in fundraising practices:

- Fast pace of technological change,
- Insufficient understanding of technical ability of donors,
- Poor understanding of the opportunities for income generation,
- High initial capital costs.



**Practical tips: Case study learning**

**What did this project show us about mid level influence on organisational change?**

- Research collaboration across middle managers and mid level clinicians challenges traditional perceptions and produces high quality outcomes,
- An engaging and interactive presentation persuaded senior stakeholders from other organisations to listen,
- Experts in a specific field can learn from the input of other professional groups,
- Stakeholder engagement is key especially when the proposed change is unpopular,
- Collaborative working across different professional groups increases trust, builds team relationships and improves organisational performance.

**Case studies: learning review**

You may find it useful to reflect on the case studies and draw out further learning about mid level power and influence. Each case study demonstrated a practical outcome that benefited the organisation, which also had a major impact on the power and confidence of middle manager and mid level professionals to influence strategic decisions. In all case studies, it was people in the middle who challenged the status quo, brought forward innovation solutions and implemented their own proposals for change.

The following questions will help you to reflect on both parts three and four of this book. Your reflections will help you to appreciate how your learning can be used to advantage back in your organisation:

- What did you notice about the behaviour of the people in each case study?
- What were the different types of outcome from the project teams?
- Which strategic tools were used for scoping the project themes?
- How did the teams manage their stakeholders?
- How did the managers behave when they faced opposition?
- Which strategic tools were used to understand how to effect change?
- What was a common thread running through all the case studies?
- What is the most important capability demonstrated by the middle managers and mid level professionals?
- What has inspired you about leadership from the case studies?
- What would persuade you to try something new in your organisation?

**In the next and final part of this book, there are two exercises to prepare you for influencing a change in your organisation. The first exercise will challenge to test your assumptions about your influence. It will highlight where you may have some flawed ideas about your control in a range of situations. The results will reveal the barriers, which may be hindering your ability to influence change. The second exercise is a development plan with prompt questions to guide your thinking and build your confidence as a strategic leader.**

# 4 HOW TO ENSURE YOUR VOICE IS HEARD



## Introduction

In the middle of organisations are highly qualified professionals with a well-developed sense of service and the social value it brings. The speed and complexity of social and economic change mean that traditional models of leadership are not appropriate in the future. The role and contribution of middle managers and mid level professionals needs to change to be more strategic, empowered and political. The centre of gravity for managing change is no longer at the top.

People operating in the middle of organisations have a unique view of organisational change and culture. During change, they have insights and observations about culture that are crucial to the viability of strategic plans. In contrast, senior managers, with their focus on the future, may be removed from the day-to-day operational activity. This makes senior managers less able to appreciate the impact of culture on their strategic plans or the operational knowledge required for change.

The voices of middle managers are assumed to be a form of resistance to change. For senior managers under intense external and political pressure, the voices from the middle may appear to come from the past. You can change this dynamic.

There is an opportunity for middle managers to improve their role and image by delivering evidence of their capability. Vital to organisational readiness for change is a high quality cycle of knowledge production and transfer. This means a speedy iteration of learning between different parts of the organisation. A new, more dynamic circulation of power will be deeply challenging, both for those who occupy a senior role and for those who expect the boss to do all the thinking.

**In the exercise below, there is an opportunity to assess how you regard your sphere of influence.**



**Exercise: My current sphere of influence**

**The Rosa Harvey instrument<sup>2</sup>**

Please respond to the following statements by circling the score number you believe is most representative of your opinion. There are no right or wrong answers.

For example: Statement 1 says, “Whether or not I am in charge of others depends mostly on my ability”. If you disagree strongly with this idea you would circle – 3 below.

| <b>Agree<br/>Strongly</b> | <b>Agree<br/>Slightly</b> | <b>Agree</b> | <b>Disagree<br/>Slightly</b> | <b>Disagree</b> | <b>Disagree<br/>Strongly</b> |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------|------------------------------|
| <b>+ 3</b>                | <b>+ 2</b>                | <b>+ 1</b>   | <b>- 1</b>                   | <b>- 2</b>      | <b>- 3</b>                   |

**1. Whether or not I am in charge of others depends mostly on my ability.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**2. To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**3. I feel as though what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**4. Whether or not I have a car accident depends mostly on how good a car driver I am.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**5. When I make plans I am almost certain to make them work.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3



**6. Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interests from bad luck.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**7. When I get what I want it's usually because I am lucky.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**8. Although I might have ability I will not be in charge unless I appeal to those in positions of power,**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**9. The number of friends I make depends on how nice I am as a person**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**10. Powerful people chiefly control my life.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**11. Whether or not I have a car accident is mostly a matter of luck.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**12. People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**13. It is not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad luck.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**14. Whether or not I get to be in charge of others depends on whether I am lucky to be in the 'right place at the right time'.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**15. If important people were to decide they did not like me I would probably have very few friends.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**16. I am usually able to protect my personal interests.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**17. Whether or not I have a car accident depends mostly on the other drivers.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**18. When I get what I want it's mostly because I worked hard for it.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**19. In order for my plans to work I have to make sure they fit in with what people who have power over me want.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**20. My life is determined by my own actions.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

**21. It is chiefly a matter of luck whether I have a few friends or many friends.**

+ 3      + 2      + 1      - 1      - 2      - 3

### Total scores

| Question Numbers | Group A | Question Numbers | Group B | Question Numbers | Group C |
|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|------------------|---------|
| 1                |         | 2                |         | 3                |         |
| 4                |         | 6                |         | 8                |         |
| 5                |         | 7                |         | 10               |         |
| 9                |         | 11               |         | 12               |         |
| 16               |         | 13               |         | 15               |         |
| 18               |         | 14               |         | 17               |         |
| 20               |         | 21               |         | 19               |         |
| TOTAL            |         | TOTAL            |         | TOTAL            |         |

### Scoring and analysis

A positive score in the **left hand box** (your total for Group A) indicates the extent to which you have an internal locus of control. How much you believe that you have influence and control over events and circumstances.

The **central box** (your total for Group B) indicates the extent to which you believe circumstances and events are governed by chance or luck.

A positive score in the **right-hand box** (Your total for Group C) indicates an external locus of control. The extent to which you believe that external factors and influences control you.

### Locus of control: reflection questions

- What do you notice about your scores for columns A, B and C?
- What does this mean to you?
- Where could you make immediate adjustments to your attitude to influence and control?
- How would these adjustments benefit you in your working life?
- Identify a key relationship and draft a personal strategy, which will develop your influence.



### **Exercise: Developing my strategic capability**

You are now invited to think about your future development as a strategic leader. Information, exercises and practical tips will have stimulated your thoughts about your power and influence. Use the following prompt questions to plan how you intend to influence your senior managers in the future:

- What are the most important challenges facing your service delivery or operational management?
- How does this challenge fit into the overall context in which your organisation is operating?
- Who are the key stakeholders (internal and external) who might be interested in your ideas?
- What are the benefits to these stakeholders if you could provide evidence to support your thinking?
- Are there any like-minded people who would join you in a project team to work on this challenge?
- What aspect of your current situation frustrates you most?
- What are the strengths and weaknesses in the current situation?
- What are the opportunities that your ideas bring?
- What are the risks associated with your new ideas?
- Will your new ideas stand up to a feasibility test?

**What is holding you back?**

**What action are you going to take?**

**Who will you influence to help you?**



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# ENDNOTES

1. This middle manager won ‘Young Leader of 2016’ by the National Housing Federation.
2. This questionnaire is based on original research by Dr Julian Rotter who created a forced choice profile tool focused on identifying an individual’s locus of control. This was adapted by Dr Patricia Duttweiler who introduced a Likert scale into the scoring. That version was further adapted with changes in language by Peter Rosa and Charles Harvey of Stirling University Business School in the 1990s.