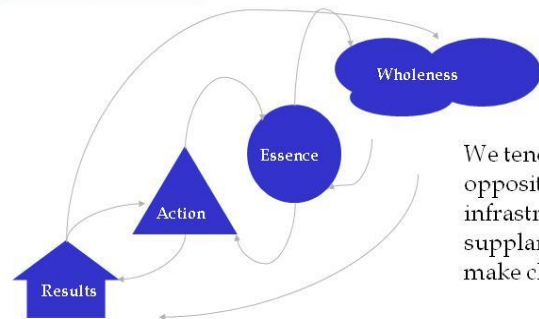


Field Map

Discipline



The triangle of organizational architecture represents the most tangible form of efforts. In the Field Map illustration this triangle is referred to as the Domain of Action. By contrast, the circle represents the more subtle underlying discipline-based learning cycle. The circle in the Field Map is depicted as the Domain of Essence.

The key focus for activity is in the triangle. The central causality of change is in the circle. Both continuously influence one another. Together they represent the tangible, subtle and often invisible forces involved in cultivating large scale transformations.

We tend to assume that which is most tangible is most substantial, and that which is intangible is insubstantial. In fact, the opposite is true. A set of guiding principles articulated by one generation of management can be changed by another. An infrastructure developed and implemented today can be redesigned tomorrow. A current set of tools and methods can be supplanted by a new set of tools and methods. The very reasons why we focus on the triangle - because here is where we can make changes - also means that those changes can be short lived.

By contrast, the deep learning cycle, which seems so evanescent and uncertain at first glance, endures. Once we begin to assimilate systems thinking as a way of seeing the world we become, in the words of one manager, "looped for life." Once we begin to learn to distinguish our assumptions from "data" upon which those assumptions are based, we are forever more aware of our own thinking. Once we begin to operate with a genuine sense of vision, we have a permanent understanding of the difference between reacting and creating. Once a group has participated in true dialogue, its members do not forget. Changes produced by the deep learning cycle are often irreversible. (note: These are direct quotes from the Fieldbook pg. 41-43)

Seeking Balance

While changes in the circle are what really matters, attention is often best placed on the triangle of guiding ideas, infrastructure, and theory, methods and tools. These represent the operational changes where concentrated time and energy can produce results. For a long time it may appear that there is nothing going on except the surface activity of the triangle. People talk about new ideas. They practice the application of tools and methods. They design and implement changes in infrastructure.

Yet, deeper changes start to become evident, many people will not even notice them and those who do will often not connect them with the obvious activity. Yet the two domains are connected in subtle ways. If we stop working to articulate guiding ideas, to improve infrastructure, and to apply the tools and methods embodied in the learning disciplines, the deeper learning cycle will not progress.

Similarly, the deeper changes will gradually affect the work on architecture. Potential guiding ideas like "openness" and "localness" will have little conviction until enough people experience the collective intelligence of the whole that is possible when the capability for dialogue, mental models, shared vision, and systems thinking develop.

Results: The rationale for any strategy or model for transformation revolves around the premise that such organizations and communities will produce dramatically improved results, compared to more traditional organizations. Whether the results include profit, time to market, customer loyalty, or other agreed-upon measures of effectiveness, learning must ultimately be assessed in terms of "how well the game is played." The problem is knowing how and when to measure important results. There are two interrelated issues in assessing results of learning processes: patience and quantification.

Wholeness: Lastly, there is also a level still more subtle than the deep learning cycle. This most subtle level is, however the most difficult to talk about. In fact, we may only infer its presence, since there is no tangible evidence of its existence. But ultimately it may prove vital to a full understanding of the deep shifts in awareness and capabilities of organizations that learn and adapt. It should be said that wholeness is what is real, and that fragmentation is the response of this whole to man's action. Insofar as the quest for learning organizations might reestablish "the primacy of the whole" in human affairs, perhaps the quests are more intertwined than we can presently know. (note: These are direct quotes from the Fieldbook pg. 44-47)