

Start making a difference

Crystal clear thinking in turbulent times

Organisational Health

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What is a healthy organisation?

A healthy organisation is a responsive one that inspires confidence and restless innovation. An unhealthy organisation may be concealing a latent layer of operational risk. An organisational check up reveals potential barriers to optimum performance and, like any medical, will diagnose an appropriate course of medication. Health checks are particularly necessary for organisations that foster highly competitive environments and have high barriers to entry. Employees and contractors are rarely open about both personal and professional concerns in case they are regarded as weaknesses that limit chances of advancement and are often fearful of inadequacy. The potent cocktail of intelligence, ambition and doubt can be toxic and result in unhappy individuals and groups subconsciously or consciously sabotaging multi million pound corporate projects and initiatives with obstructive behaviours and negativity.

The “disengaged” can be so fearful of making mistakes that this can lead to the creation of shocks which current contingency planning models which focus on operational risk and control systems, may struggle to prepare for. Healthy organisations are HOT valuing honesty, openness and trust while discouraging the cult of individual heroes and maverick decision making. They are organisations which encourage experimentation and focus on building collaborative success rather than punishing failure.

Taking care of organisational health is particularly important in periods of transition or change. Contemporary organisations do not respond to command and control management techniques. To affect change leaders have to carry the organisation with them and staff, at all levels, has to buy into an organisation’s vision and culture. A healthy organisation encourages open debate and the gradual development of consensus.

Allowing this debate and encouraging shared ownership of the change is particularly critical in periods of cost reduction where cuts and job losses will be inevitable in both the public and private sectors. Organisations need to avoid whispered conversations by promoting open realistic and meaningful two-way communication which constantly checks out understanding and consensus. Where pockets of negativity persist, immediate action and help is necessary to prevent an “infection” of obstruction growing.

Leaders of organisations need to re-frame negative perceptions into more positive opportunities to re-design and innovate to suit changing customer requirements. This focus on responsiveness gives the healthy organisation the ability to adapt to the “new” in whatever form it comes and generates high levels of commitment to making agreed solutions work.

Organisational health checks

An organisational health check is an essential tool for operational risk assessment and subsequent contingency planning. It can be incorporated into existing on line methods of measuring staff and management competencies or satisfaction. Questionnaire findings form the basis for more detailed qualitative interviews with a cross-section of the sample group (minimum 10% of sample group) to gain a more detailed understanding of the main health issues that affect each organisation.

Expert analysis of survey results focuses on the links between values behaviours and performance and seeks to identify management issues that can be resolved before the distress become acute. Issues with individuals are dealt with on a one to one basis focusing on the internal and external factors that are limiting effective output and developing strategies for overcoming them. The health check grid covers the following:



Values	Behaviours
responsiveness co-operation consensus innovation experimentation shared output/reward	energy open dialogue active listening acknowledgment encouragement honesty
Performance	External Factors
levels of engagement clear understanding of goals in the right role doing the right things getting enough support focus on delivery	market dynamics changes in cost competitive pressures relationship issues shareholder confidence public profile

The health check process in itself sends a positive message to staff that they matter and that their organisations don't just follow the mantra of "our people are our most important asset" but is actively taking steps to listen to their concerns and will take action to address them.

